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HERITAGISING THE EVERYDAY
THE CASE OF MUYUGE

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PHD

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2018

HERITAGISING THE EVERYDAY
THE CASE OF MUYUGE

by
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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies

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ABSTRACT

Heritagising the Everyday The Case of *Muyuge* by

WEN Cuiyan

Doctor of Philosophy

Ever since the commencement of the new millennium, intangible cultural heritage, the cultural concept and campaign promoted by the UNESCO has rapidly spread the world. In China, thousands of traditional cultures and everyday practices have been absorbed into the intangible heritage system over the past decade, which is reshaping people's perception and engagement with everyday life and traditions. Intangible cultural heritage as an 'imported' concept has been highly localised and resituated in contemporary China. I seek to examine how intangible heritage as a prevalent cultural phenomenon incorporates everyday practices into regional and national narratives in China in light of the marketization of traditional culture and the political and cultural agenda of 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'. Furthermore, I attempt to historicise the concept of heritage in China's history of modernisation especially since around the establishment of the PRC in 1949. Through the historicised approach, I aim to demystify the imaginary of heritage and interrogate how cultural heritage turns from something to be reformed in the revolutionary era to something to be 'protected' and 'preserved' in the consumer society.

Under such scope, I examine in detail the changes of *muyuge* (木鱼歌), a former popular everyday practice in the Pearl River Delta area, as it successively becomes an intangible heritage of the provincial and national levels. Despite its prevalence, *muyuge* was peripheral, marginalised in the both the cultural and geographical senses. I contextualise *muyuge* in the economic restructuring of the Pearl River Delta area and analyse the process of an everyday practice being reconstructed as an intangible heritage. Based on fieldwork interviews, policy analysis and media analysis, I particularly examine the reconstruction of *muyuge*'s performing practices, the reshaping of *muyuge* practitioners and its connection with the restructuring of an industrial town. I argue that intangible heritage is gradually replacing previous values and understanding of folk culture with ideas of capital, market and nationalistic identities, and that the autonomy of everyday life has been dissolved and re-incorporated into the dominant discourse.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

WEN Cuiyan

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

HERITAGISING THE EVERYDAY, THE CASE OF MUYUGE

by

WEN Cuiyan

Doctor of Philosophy

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Introduction

Research questions

Muyuge (literally wooden fish song) was inscribed in the Chinese national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2011. The town of Dongkeng in Dongguan, an economically developed city of the southern province of Guangdong, became the unit in charge of preserving *muyuge* as an intangible heritage. Despite the national recognition, it was not until recent years that '*muyuge*' as an official expression began to be acknowledged by local people in Dongguan. Before then, very few local people had even heard of the term '*muyuge*'. Born in the city of Dongguan in the early 1980s, I grew up in a local family for the following 18 years until the early 2000s. Although I have not studied or worked in Dongguan ever after, I go back to the city to visit family members several times a year and regularly follow up cultural and social events there. Therefore, my personal experience of acknowledging the term should be a vivid and representative example to illuminate the friction between *muyuge* as an everyday practice and *muyuge* as an intangible heritage.

It was around 2007 that the term '*muyuge*' began to catch my attention via newspaper and television reports. It was described as one of the long lasting traditional cultures in Dongguan. In news pictures and video reports, *muyuge* looked like a normal staged performance with certain traditional Chinese visual elements. None of these gave me any sense of what *muyuge* truly was. As a natively born Dongguan person, I used to feel a moment of shame when coming across reports related to *muyuge* because I had no knowledge of the 'long lasting tradition' of my own city. The turning point came on a Saturday afternoon in May 2012, when I went to a lecture on *muyuge* in a local library. The lecturer Yang Baolin was a respected

and learned expert in local literature and history, and a lover and researcher of *muyuge*. During the lecture, he performed a piece of *muyuge*. At the very moment he sang the first few lines, my senses and memories were awakened. This was exactly what my grandmother had been singing for years! When I came back from the lecture, I asked grandma to sing '*muyuge*'. Grandma looked confused and asked me what it was. I was totally surprised a second time when I realised that my grandma did not know about *muyuge*. Then I played the recordings of the lecturer's singing, grandma knew everything and said, 'I know it. He's singing *the songs*, too.' For grandma, a local woman with little formal education, those were only 'the songs'. I realised that there was a gulf between everyday life and the official expression of its practice as an intangible heritage.

Muyuge was the most impressive 'cultural shock' I experienced in recent years, but it was not the only one. Since around the years of 2006 and 2007, 'intangible cultural heritage' appeared almost everywhere in media, cultural events and public spaces. The rapidly growing intangible heritage list includes local food, snack, daily necessities and ordinary practices that are still common in local everyday life. I felt surprised by the large number of cultural tradition items that suddenly sprung up. At the same time, I was urged to re-learn and re-locate the once familiar everyday practices under the new knowledge map of intangible heritage. At the same time, questions did not stop lingering in my mind. Why do an increasing number of everyday practices become intangible heritage? What does it mean to and what impact does it have on the actual everyday life we live in? Such confusion sowed the seeds of my further inquiry into the relationship between heritage and everyday life. In stark contrast to the 1980s and the early 1990s when the denial of traditional culture and the canonisation of the West dominated in Chinese society, a craze for

traditional culture spread all over China at the juncture between the 20th and 21st century. Unlike previous cultural campaigns and movements in which the party-state took a dominating leading role, the shift to traditional culture involved various social forces (He, 2014) ranging from various levels of governments, to the mass media, private companies, educational sectors and non-governmental organisations. In 2004, China ratified the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Soon after this, the central government promulgated related policies, regulations, and laws, which meant intangible heritage was implemented in full swing across the country. The fever of intangible heritage lasts until today and does not see any sign of decline. Significantly, the craze of cultural heritage coincides with the emergence of two other significant agendas. One is China's entry to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as a member in 2001, which anchored the country's involvement into the global economic system. The other is the promotion of 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' as a high-profile national cultural strategy in 2002. The two agendas, correlating with each other, have emerged against the rise of China as a potential superpower.

Intangible heritage is not only a neologism imported from the international heritage regime, but also a new cultural discourse (Smith, 2006) which displaces what has been known as 'folk culture', thus reshaping the field of everyday life and the embedded cultural traditions. It uses traditional practices of everyday life as the essential and indispensable resource. Therefore, the other side of the story was common people's cognitive struggle and re-adjustment of their everyday experience and knowledge. Everyday life is complex and elusive, as Goldsterin (2006) states, as it 'refuses to fit into any single historical framework or linear narrative'. Instead of embracing and justifying the prevalence of intangible heritage, I am more concerned

about the friction, confusion and struggles in the everyday sphere where heritage intervenes. In other words, I want to problematize intangible heritage, the concept and the cultural phenomenon it brought about, in contemporary China. Hence, this thesis seeks to discuss the following questions:

- What are the relations between everyday practices and the process of heritage making in light of the marketization of traditional culture and the political and cultural agenda of ‘the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’?
- Why and how does intangible heritage as a discourse incorporate everyday practices, especially minor traditional practices which used to be a part of ‘folk culture’, into China’s dominant discourse?

In addressing these questions, I shall adopt two approaches, to historicise intangible heritage in the Chinese context and to anchor the study in the context of everyday life. Thus, the two approaches respond to the two major inclinations in current intangible heritage studies in China. The first tend to emphasise intangible heritage as an imported international idea and ignore that it has been a constituent part of the historical process in the making and re-making folk culture in China’s modernisation. The second tendency is one that associates the idea of intangible heritage closely with the grand narratives of development, civilisation and nationalism. It eclipses the fact that these heritages are actually drawn from everyday practices and traditions which people still live in, live with and live by. What needs to be asked are the following questions. How has intangible heritage as a state-led campaign intervened into the cultural traditions of everyday life? How do people perceive and accept the new concept of intangible heritage in relation to their knowledge of traditions and embodiment of practices which has taken shape since the last century? Discussions of these questions are usually excluded in the

official heritage discourse. Hence, it is necessary to break away from the dominant official heritage discourse (Smith & Zhu, 2014) and develop alternative approaches to heritage studies.

The critical shift in heritage studies

The concept of heritage emerged as modern nation-states rose in Europe in the 19th century. Entangled with agendas of nation making and identity building, the Eurocentric idea of heritage focuses on the preservation of material cultures like historical sites, buildings, and monuments which are considered embodiments of inherent and immutable national values. In the following century, cultural heritage had been reinforced through a series of promotion and legislation in the international regime. The setting up of the Venice Charter by ICOMOS in 1964 and the World Heritage Convention by UNESCO in 1972 marked the peak of the Eurocentric tradition of heritage making. What is more, the consensus and implementation of the convention through UNESCO reinforced the Eurocentric heritage ideas as 'universal' values. Studies based on this prevalent heritage philosophy centred on the physicality of heritage and expertise in the disciplines of archaeology, architecture, history and art history.

However, it was also in the 1970s that the Eurocentric conceptualisation of heritage began to encounter challenges. Three factors have contributed to this trend. Firstly, the idea of heritage characterised by the World Heritage Convention conflicted with various representations of heritage and traditions in non-Western countries that privileged the immaterial aspects of tradition. Secondly, European and North American countries experienced decline in traditional industries and significant shifts in economic and consumption patterns, which resulted in the proliferation of heritage tourism since the 1970s (Harrison, 2013, p. 95). Thirdly, studies of

post-colonialism and nationalism have provided critical approaches to heritage as social process, discursive practice and power relations. One such study is Said's *Orientalism* (Said, 1978). Said perceives Orientalism as 'a mode of discourse' constitutive of colonial cultural and political forms of literature, history, scholarship, and bureaucracies, etc. It was produced as 'the other' to the West within the asymmetric colonial power relationship. Many newly independent nations and sub-national communities demanded to construct new cultural identities and gain firm ownership of their past so as to intervene in the colonial power relations and cultural politics. Even though colonial rule ended in most African and Asian countries during the 1950s-60s, the colonial power dynamics and cultural oppressions still prevailed. In need of constructing new cultural identities and seizing ownership of the past, many sub-national and indigenous communities called for changes in heritage standards and operational models (Blake, 2009; Harrison & Hughes, 2010; Peng, 2014). Another academic impact comes from Hobsbawm and Ranger's edited volume *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). They point out that many traditions in modern nation-states were most recently invented or created with a sense of historic continuity and nationhood. Their inputs provide critical approach for reflecting on the role nationalism played in the contemporary heritagisation process.

Before the emergence of intangible heritage, most scholarship of heritage in the English world came from western countries. Britain was one of the areas where debates of heritage were most vibrant in the mid-1980s and 1990s. Rather than merely a 'thing' or a set of fixed historical accounts, heritage began to be perceived as a socio-historical phenomenon related to nationalism, patriotism and the commodification of experience in the late-modern period. Drawing on a theoretical

angle of everyday life, Wright (2009) questions the extensive use of heritage to produce patriotism and a sense of Britishness during the Thatcher period. Informed by Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of 'cultural industry', Hewison (1987) notes in his book *the Heritage Industry* the conspiracy between heritage and popular entertainment industry in post-war Britain (Harrison, 2013). Lowenthal (1985; 1998) also alerts us to the omnipresent phenomenon of heritage in late 20th century Britain, and examines the relations and differences between heritage and history. He argues that heritage is not equivalent with history; instead, it 'borrows from and enlivens historical study... (Heritage) is a profession of faith in a past tailored to present-day purposes' (Lowenthal, 1998, p. x). Lowenthal's work opens a new angle for history and heritage scholars especially with his highlighting of the distinction between 'history as presented and history as lived and experienced' (Harrison, 2013, p. 98). Following Lowenthal, Walsh (1992) perceives heritage and museum as a modern experience. The fleeting experience of modern urban life stimulates the demand for the past. Heritage and museums became the discursive form to accommodate the modern demands for the past. Walsh (1992, p. 182) noted that the heritage industry actually 'denies historical process, and radiates only historical surfaces' by commodifying the past and creating 'an uncritical patriotism' (Walsh, 1992, p. 1). By recognising heritage as a set of power relation and a discursive practice, Stuart Hall (1999) has critiqued that the structured inequalities embodied in the heritage has centred the notion of 'greatness' of the Great Britain. He proposes to 'rewrite the margins into the centre' and incorporates minor culture into British heritage so as to reshape 'Englishness'.

Thus, the idea of intangible heritage has brought significant impact to both the practice and scholarship of heritage. Originating from the interrogation of the

Eurocentric heritage discourse, it aimed to establish an alternative heritage norm that embodies diverse cultures and values. The concept of 'intangibility' does not only suggest an alternative heritage standard, but also challenges the notion of 'heritage' as material existence and calls for the re-theorisation of heritage studies (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Smith, 2006). By arguing that 'all heritage is intangible', Smith (2006, p. 3) seeks to de-naturalise the physicality of heritage and re-conceptualise it as a cultural process and discursive practice that construct identities and create meanings. This has become a commonly accepted scholarly approach to conceptualise heritage since the early 21st century. For example, Harvey (2001) defines heritage 'as a verb, related to human action and agency, and as an instrument of cultural power in whatever period of time one chooses to examine'. Likewise, drawing on previous scholarship, Harrison (2013, p. 14) refuses to see heritage as a 'thing'. Instead, he refers it to 'a set of attitudes to, and relationships with, the past. Arguments as such demonstrate a critical shift in heritage studies to deconstruct the physicality-based definition of heritage and the power relationship in which it was embedded. The new approach to heritage energises the study and practices in this field. As Harrison (2013, p. 227) puts it, heritage is 'a form of creative engagement with the past in the present'. Such a perception enables heritage participants to 'take an active and informed role in the production' of their own future.

Nevertheless, the authority of previous heritage standards still prevails. A problem lies before current heritage scholars: how should we reflect on and deal with previous heritage scholarship and practices based on values of the Venice Charter and the World Heritage Convention? Laurajane Smith (2006)'s re-conceptualisation of previous heritage values is most influential. She coins the term authorised

heritage discourse (AHD), which, she argues, universalises Western values, consolidates and naturalises the notion of nation-states. Most importantly, this defines what heritage is and how heritage should be discussed and dealt with. Smith points out that the AHD constructs a material reality of heritage, and thus honours material objects, sites, and landscapes of monumentality and pleasing aesthetics. As a result, AHD authorises the voice of expertise, but brings restriction to broader social engagement. Smith maintains that while AHD should be challenged and interrogated, heritage studies need to be 'rebuilt from the ground up' (Smith, 2011). On the basis of Smith's conceptualisation and challenge to the AHD, the Association of Critical Heritage Studies was established in 2011, forming an interdisciplinary scholarly network with critical enquiries to contemporary heritage and museum studies.

The ideals of intangible heritage?

The idea of 'immaterial' and 'non-form' heritage was first found in the post-war Japan. During the 1950s, Japan developed its own national heritage system emphasising 'intangible cultural properties'¹, which was initially related to craftsmanship and later extended to wider artistic practices like music and drama (Akagawa, 2016; Howard, 2012). As a legacy of Japanese colonial rule, South Korea also legalised the protection of 'intangible cultural properties' in the early 1960s (Pai, 2013; Akagawa, 2016). However, the alternative definition of heritage did not impact the international heritage regime until the 1980s when the heritage norm encountered challenges both conceptually and legally. The formation of intangible heritage as a new heritage discourse has resulted in years of discussions, debates,

¹ '*Mukei bunkazai*' in Japanese. There are several other equivalent English translations, including non-form cultural properties and non-physical cultural properties.

and negotiations among representatives from different countries and regions especially those in the third world. With the redefinition, a wider range of traditions and scholarship have been included in heritage studies. The emergence of intangible heritage demonstrates at least four features, or ideals, which can be distinguished from the heritage discourse built upon the World Heritage Convention.

- 1) Non-western countries and areas have demonstrated more passion and commitment in interpreting and establishing intangible heritage at a legal and practical level, while responses from Europe and North American countries were generally passive (Kurin, 2004)². This indicates that non-western World countries are more eager to establish cultural identities and power through the intangible heritage platform.
- 2) There have been constant voices of anti-canonisation in regard to intangible heritage, posing a stark contrast to the canonising inclination in the World Heritage Convention. The 2003 Convention carefully avoids expressions like 'masterpieces' and stresses the action of 'safeguarding'³. Debates about wording point to the core question in heritage making: what deserves to be named heritage? Should heritage be masterpieces of 'outstanding quality'? Is competition necessary for safeguarding? Who owns heritage? (Hafstein,

² According to Kurin (2004), no member state vetoed the 2003 Convention, but a number of countries abstained, including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and the United States.

³ Hafstein (2009) has detailed analysis of one of the UNESCO intergovernmental meetings in 2003, where delegates discussed selective standards of intangible heritage. Uses of expressions like 'masterpiece', 'treasure', 'representative list' had aroused heated discussion. Also, from the 1998 *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* to the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, changes of wordings in the two UNESCO documents demonstrate different ideas of intangible heritage.

2009)

- 3) The 2003 Convention proposes a community-led, rather than state-led, heritage process, which aims to return the production and interpretation to indigenous and local people.
- 4) Different from the strict standards and detailed instructions in the World Heritage Convention, the 2003 Convention contains limited technical instructions for safeguarding intangible heritage on a local basis. Therefore, member states have to re-formulate regulation strategies according to the respective conditions of various countries and areas (Smith & Zhu, 2014). To a certain extent, the 2003 Convention is more open to local appeals and agendas.

Admittedly, the idea and implementation of intangible heritage at both international and local levels encounter constant challenges and contestations. The sharpest criticism points to UNESCO's state-centred heritage system (Lixinski, 2011; Smith, 2015). Intangible heritage does not only fail to challenge the state-based heritage structure, but also enhances state competition in heritage inscription and, in some cases, strengthens state control in the name of protecting cultural diversity in minority areas (Lixinski, 2011; Smith, 2015). Power struggles related to cultural inclusion and exclusion still exist and prevail. Despite the careful wording in the 2003 Convention, i.e. the omission of terms such as 'masterpiece' and 'treasure', the action of listing and itemising still lies at the heart of the convention (Hafstein, 2009). The entanglement between heritage and tourism stimulates ever more fierce competition over the inscription of heritage lists. The authority of expertise persists, and does not see any trace of diminishment (Hafstein, 2009; Smith, 2015; Maags & Holbig, 2016). Intangible heritage is criticised as 'just another list' and a repetition of

the AHD (Smith, 2015; Sargent, 2016).

However, I want to argue that equating intangible heritage as 'just another list' overlooks the ambitions of developing countries, especially China, to reclaim rights of cultural interpretation and re-build a different cultural map at both the international and domestic levels. The development of intangible heritage in the past fifteen years has brought about the changes in the international heritage discourse and the shift of political power. From questioning the Eurocentric heritage discourse to rendering more rights to local interpretation, intangible heritage demonstrates the proneness to de-centralise the heritage authority and becomes more integrated with domestic agendas. It is a process of reshuffling cultural resources based on the undercurrent shifts of political and economic power. According to the enlisted items, there is no doubt that China has become the biggest winner in intangible heritage with the highest number of inscribed items. Compared with China's slow response to the World Heritage in the 1970s and 1980s, the country's proactive engagement with intangible heritage and the dramatic rise of related items is noteworthy. At the same time, China also accelerated its pace in World Heritage inscription. By 2016, it already ranked second in the World Heritage list (UNESCO, 2018). China is investing much more effort than any other countries in cultivating cultural heritages both at the domestic and international levels. With the rise in the economic realm in the past two decades, China requires some corresponding 'soft power' to reinforce its comprehensive strengths.

China's proactive involvement with intangible heritage, on the one hand, is resulted from the country's further opening up to the international capital system since the economic reform, especially since the 1990s. On the other hand, China was eager to construct new national culture and discourse since she relinquished socialist

ideology and started to embrace market-oriented economy. The Chinese authority is not satisfied with only connecting to the global system, but also attempts to take an active role in the global society and becomes a subject of globalisation (He, 2012). Huntington's thoughts of clash of civilisation (1996) reverberated among Chinese intellectual circle since the 1990s. Some scholars (Gan, 2007; Pan, 2009; Zhang, 2011) attempted to replace the cold-war pattern of 'socialism vs. capitalism' with 'civilisation paradigm'. They argued that Chinese cultural tradition and civilisation has its inherent coherence with no reference to the West, and a new narrative paradigm based on China's historical tradition and experiences should be developed to re-interpret China's history, present and future. Such scholarly thoughts coincided with the cultural and political appeals of the state and were soon absorbed into the dominant discourse. The emphasis of 'cultural consciousness' (Fei, 2004), 'the subjectivity of Chinese civilisation' (Gan, 2007), and 'the Chinese model' etc. turns from cultural appeals to a set of political practices to legitimise the ruling order and re-establish the country's international status (He, 2012).

With the fertilisation of the above thoughts, intangible heritage as an important part of heritage making and cultural construction burgeons across the country. As a term which travels from the international realm, intangible heritage changes its connotation according to the domestic agendas in China. The State Council (2005a) interpret the significance of intangible heritage as follows,

(Intangible cultural heritage) is the crystallisation of wisdom and civilisation of the Chinese nation, the link of national feelings, the foundation of unity of the country... (and) the basis of maintaining cultural identity and cultural sovereignty.

The promotion of community-based safeguarding in the 2003 Convention is shifted to the emphasis of maintaining national identity and unity. Essential ideas of groups,

communities and individuals in the 2003 Convention have become absent in the Chinese heritage narratives. Regarding implementation, the loosely formulated standards and definitions in the 2003 Convention render leeway for re-adjusting provisions of the convention into local regulations. Echoing the domesticated interpretation by the State Council, the assessment standards also diminish the role of local communities and ethnic groups, and strengthen the involvement of experts and official cultural sectors (State Council, 2005a) that represent state authority. In short, I argue that China has developed a distinctive discourse of intangible heritage through not only the reified implementation of regulations, but also the embodiment of China's contemporary cultural and political agendas. As a corollary, the discussion of intangible heritage should be anchored in the particular social and political context of China.

According to the Chinese academic database *duxiu.com*, 'intangible heritage' began to mount as a search keyword in the early 2000s. The number soared up dramatically shortly after the full publicity and implementation in December 2005. It emerged as a brand new academic field interwoven with various disciplines of folklore studies, archive studies, legal studies, tourism, economics, cultural industry, etc. Due to the exponential growth of intangible heritage studies and the vast literature resources since the mid-2000s, it is hard to categorise existing studies of this field. My attempt is to classify the Chinese literature I encountered based on my research. I roughly divide the existing studies of intangible heritage into four categories. 1) The interpretation and clarification of the UNESCO imported term and system in the context of mainland China. The awkward grammar composition of the term 'intangible heritage' in Chinese (*feiwuzhi wenhua yichan*, literally non-material heritage) caused constant debates and re-interpretation in the academia. Scholars

also attempt to sort out its connection to several related expressions, i.e. 'folk culture', 'spiritual culture', 'cultural heritage' and 'traditional cultural heritage' (Yang, 2001; Yang, 2003; Xiao, 2009; Zhuang, 2015; Yang & Gu, 2017; Peng, 2014; Bamoqubumo, 2008; 2015). Based on detailed differentiation of the term between Chinese and other languages, most studies of this category seek to re-adjust the foreign term into the Chinese context. 2) Critical examination of the heritage policies and its relations with local traditional practice. Articles of this kind are not in big quantity. I will have more analysis in later part of this chapter. 3) General issues concerning preservation, legalisation, education, touristic development and cultural industry related to intangible heritage at a national level. 4) Specific case studies of regional heritage practices. The vast majority of the latter two kinds are based on the embracement of intangible heritage. Therefore, even though some critique specific implementations and regulations, most of these studies aim to provide suggestions, proposals and justifications for the government-led heritage process. As is evident now, studies of intangible heritage in China tend to reinforce the authority of an emerging heritage discourse of the country. This trend in Chinese heritage studies coincides with the intellectual challenge to the dominant heritage discourse at the international level, while attempts to nurture and bring up another substitute heritage norm. At the domestic level, the majority of scholars are not likely to produce radical challenges and contestations to the dominant narratives of intangible heritage. As Maags and Holbig (2016) point out, heritage scholars with 'the aura of expertise' and local governments authorised with state power and local resources have formed 'symbiotic government-scholar networks' in which they 'mutually reinforce each other'. In other words, such academic production comprises an active part of the making of intangible heritage.

Historicising intangible heritage in China

In the approach I propose to historicise intangible heritage in China, my aim is to de-stabilise the validity of intangible heritage and re-think its cultural and social values in the contemporary Chinese context. Intangible heritage, admittedly, is a brand new concept, but it does not emerge from nowhere. Folk culture and folklore study is the major academic source for intangible heritage in China. To examine its current fever, it is impossible to neglect the historical development of folk culture, the predecessor of intangible heritage. Although the expression of folk (*min* or *minjian*) and folksong collecting (*caifeng*) had existed in the Chinese society for thousands of years, folklore studies (*minsuxue*) was a neologism only about a hundred years ago with influence from folklore studies in Europe and Japan. The attention to folk cultures and practices was a modern intellectual phenomenon in China, with the pursuit of national identities and cultural expressions. The relationship between folk culture and dominant social thoughts and cultural policies had undergone dramatic changes in the past century. I organized this relationship into four stages, 1) the exploratory attempt of collecting and systematising folk culture before the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) ; 2) the radical reform for revolutionary and political agenda by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from the anti-Japanese War to the early People's Republic years; 3) the suppression of traditional cultures and practices in the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976); 4) spontaneous revival in everyday life from the end of the Cultural Revolution to the early 2000s. Under this historical context, how should we interpret the revival of traditional folk culture in the name of intangible heritage? How should we interpret the relations between intangible heritage and the radical transformation of folk culture in the past century, especially after the establishment of People's Republic of

China (PRC)?

I highlight the 1950s-70s period because the official attitudes towards folk culture and practices of this period were basically negative and oppressive. However, the CCP still made use of folk culture to create 'national forms' for cultural expression. These cultural practices made stark contrast with the current craze and advocacy of intangible heritage preservation. As Wang Xiaoming (2010) notes, a new kind of dominant ideology, distinct from the domination of Maoism during the 1950s-70s, has come into being. The dominant ideology which is based on the operation of capitalism (Wang, 2000) becomes an important way of social production and reproduction, impacting every aspect of people's life from cultural value to material life. Wang further points out that the new dominant ideology is formed by the socialist history of the 1950s-70s. To some extent, the current dominant ideology is resulted from the previous socialist history, but in the meantime, it also dominates people's perception of the 'socialist' history. In other words, today's perception of China's 'socialist' history, to a great extent, is an outcome of the new dominant ideology. Based on the above argument, Wang identifies the main subject of cultural studies in China today to be 'the production mechanism of the contemporary dominant culture' and its mutual relationship with the 'socialist' history. Following Wang's insight, I will examine studies concerning intangible heritage in China with specific reference to their interpretation of the two historical periods.

In terms of intangible heritage, the official attitude is ambiguous. *The State Council's proposal of Strengthening China's Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage* promulgated in 2005 is the first official document on intangible heritage. It identifies intangible heritage as traditions passed on through generations and 'the embodiment of the wisdom and civilisation of the Chinese nation' (State Council,

2005a). The proposal neither denies nor recognises the history, without any mentioning of the reform and suppression of folk culture since the 1949. However, there has been an academic attention to the interpretation of intangible heritage in relation to its historical context. There are generally two trends of thoughts. A number of scholars take the stance that intangible heritage indicates a rupture from ideologies and cultural policies of the 'revolutionary' years. Zhou Xing's argument is representative.

Not only does it (intangible heritage) indicate the end of absolute ideological control over culture in China, but also means a thorough transformation of the 'revolutionary' cultural policies. Also, it means that the 'cultural consciousness' in Chinese society has reached a new stage, and that China has already got rid of the feeling of cultural inferiority that had perplexed us for a whole century and regained cultural confidence (Zhou, 2009).

Zhou (2012) considers the prevalence of intangible heritage as the formation of 'new cultural values' in China, by which he means that the function of culture has fundamentally changed 'from the front of revolution and class struggle to the common wealth in the harmonious society'. Zhou's idea is resonated by Gao Bingzhong. Gao (2013) believes that the campaign of intangible heritage in China marks the end of the century-long 'cultural revolution'. With 'cultural revolution', Gao underscores the denial and subversion of Chinese traditional culture since the New Cultural Movement of the early 20th century, with the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 as the climax. The 'cultural revolution', as Gao states, had transformed inherent Chinese cultural order and ways of living with western thoughts. On the contrary, the idea of intangible heritage completely differs from that of 'cultural revolution' since it re-affirms what had been denied, subverted and revolutionised in the past century (Gao, 2013). What is more, Gao maintains that the implementation of intangible heritage marks the end of 'cultural revolution'. Gao's

argument tends to homogenise the rather complicated cultural and political struggles of the 20th century in China. By identifying intangible heritage as a fracture from the past century, both Zhou and Gao aim to demonstrate that China has grown from a nation of cultural inferiority into one with cultural consciousness and confidence. Their views represent the mainstream scholarly thoughts of intangible heritage in mainland China (Feng, 2007; 2012; Zhang & Zhou, 2017; Zhang, 2018; Yuan & Gu, 2013). These heritage ideas also align with the dominant official stance of intangible heritage (State Council, 2005a) as well as the 'civilisation paradigm' of the intellectual thoughts since the mid-1990s. However, perceiving intangible heritage as a rupture from the 'revolutionary past' and a sign of re-entry to the international regime is not enough to explain the rapid pace of 'revival' and the many 'socialist' traces in the publicity and practices of intangible heritage today.

The other trend concerning the historical relation of intangible heritage stresses intangible heritage's inheritance from the revolutionary years. Ma Guoqing and Zhu Wei (2014) maintain that as an inheritance of 'socialist new tradition', intangible heritage provides folk culture with a new identity frame to re-enter the state discourse. They deny that the 'socialist' years during the 1950s-70s had created a rupture in folk traditions. Rather, the practical and revolutionary function of folk traditions was transformed into forms of mass activities. In the same vein, a large number of folk traditions and practices collected, categorised and revised during the 'socialist' period have become intangible heritage today. Ma and Zhu attempt to include the 'socialist' influence into the context of intangible heritage, which has been omitted by many scholars. However, regarding their arguments, I have two reservations. First, they obscure the distinction between intangible heritage and folk culture. As a cultural discourse and practice of the state, intangible heritage is not

completely equivalent to folk culture. It is firstly a set of administrative discourse (Xuan, 2014), the channel through which the state discourse enters and intervenes the everyday. The state-oriented perspective restrains their concerns about the dynamics and complication of folk culture during the interaction with the official discourse of intangible heritage. Second, they are too eager to integrate the distinctive 'socialist' period and the 'reform' era, and thus avoid the conflicts and struggles in-between. Notwithstanding different point of view on the impact of 'socialist' cultural policies on folk traditions, Ma and Zhu's final stance coincides with scholars of the first trend, and stress the cultural continuity of the Chinese nation. They believe that folk culture revived in the name of intangible heritage demonstrates strong coherence and confidence of the Chinese nation (Ma & Zhu, 2014).

Sha Yao also notices the absence of socialist cultural and artistic narratives in the craze of traditional culture since the late 20th century. The socialist practices, especially those of the peasantry, seemed 'shameful and unaccepted' experiences in China's modernisation process (Sha, 2017, p. 179). Unlike Ma and Zhu's state-based framework, Sha examines the historical impact of socialist culture from the perspective of peasants. He bases the anthropological studies of shadow play in the northern province of Shaanxi from 1949 to the present time. Sha observes that shadow play, as the cultural expression of peasantry, has not declined due to high political control in the early PRC years. By contrast, *xiqu* (Chinese traditional opera) reform in the 1950s had rendered most peasant artists the feeling of 'turn-over'⁴ by incorporating them into the socialist cultural system and recognising them with the

⁴ Turnover, *fanshen*, literally means 'turning over one's body', indicating the transformation of land ownership of the peasants during the land reform led by the CCP since the late 1940s to 1950s.

official title of 'folk artists'. With new social identities, peasants and peasant artists started to develop subjectivity of their cultural expressions. Even in the toughest years of the Cultural Revolutions, as Sha (2017, p. 90) observes, the practice of shadow plays never stopped. According to Sha (2017, p. 109), this 'new tradition' of peasantry developed during the socialist years did not build upon state infrastructure, but upon peasants' absorption and transformation of the dominant ideology in everyday life as well as the formation of subjectivity during the process. The subjectivity of peasantry declined as the rural social structure changed after the dissolution of the people's commune in 1983. In the era of intangible heritage, the ideology of capital and market have deeply influenced the culture of peasants. However, Sha (2017, p. 166), notes that 'the new tradition' formulated during the 'socialist' period, on the one hand, dissolved the capitalist logic. On the other hand, peasants learn to integrate different discursive resources from different historical periods to express and inherit their cultures. Anchoring to the subjectivity of peasantry, Sha is aware of the complexity in the interaction between peasants and the intangible heritage discourse, especially in relation to the problematic influence of capitalism and consumerism. Also, he acknowledges the cultural inheritance in China's rural folk culture based on rich fieldwork and nuanced cultural analysis.

The Hong Kong scholar Wu Ka-Ming studies the folk practices of paper cuts, storytelling and spirit cults in the northern city of Yan'an, Shaanxi province. Since the 1940s, Yan'an has transformed from a mecca of the socialist revolution, to an abandoned under-developed rural area and now a place revived with 'red tourism'. Accordingly, folk culture in Yan'an has also shifted from 'a site of state control' in Mao's period to a site of contest in the late socialist period'. By 'a site of contest', Wu (2015, p. 4) sees the heritage making process as a 'narrative battle' (2015, p. 66),

and a complex where 'socialist legacy, state propaganda, local initiatives and, lately, market forces, heritage campaigns, and communal participation play out with each other'. Wu recognises that party-state, local governments, scholars, and local practitioners all attempt to make use of both the socialist legacy and the market discourse to inject their own voices in heritage making. The party-state is not the sole force to interpret folk traditions any more. Therefore, Wu's argument reminds us once again that the complexity of heritagisation process requires multiple entry points, other than merely the grand perspectives of the state and the nation.

Historicising intangible heritage is not only about interpreting its relations with previous cultural policies in history, but also concerns where the research perspective is anchored. For many, intangible heritage is the latest cultural policy that marks the fracture from previous periods. From the international perspective, it marks a fracture from the Western-oriented cultural discourse and the ambition to achieve greater power in cultural interpretation. From the domestic perspective, it indicates the denial of previous approaches to modernity which privileged western thoughts and downplayed Chinese traditional culture (Feng, 2007; Zhou, 2009; Ma & Zhu, 2014). However, rupture at the state level does not necessarily mean a corresponding rupture in local practices and everyday life. Scholars of the first trend analysed in this section emphasise changes of state policies and ideologies, but do not pay enough attention to the complexity of practices at the local and everyday level. Ma and Zhu attempt to articulate China's 'socialist' with the intangible heritage discourse under the framework of 'Chinese civilisation'. However, they overlook the possibility of the socialist ideology being dissolved and transformed in local and everyday practices (Zhang, 2012; Wu, 2015; Sha, 2017). Sha and Wu employ different approaches to examine the folk practices in Shaanxi Province. Sha

focuses on the subjectivity of peasants, while Wu attends to the involvement and struggles of different stakeholders of folk culture. Both of their studies show a diverse and complicated picture of the 'revival' of tradition in relation to the 'socialist' period. In light of this, I decide to take everyday life as an approach to problematize the idea of intangible heritage in China.

Everyday life

Since the post-war period in the mid-1940s, everyday life entered the academic realm as a critical category for examining the culture of capitalism and a new entry point to reflect social change and resistance. Henri Lefebvre (1987; 1991) calls upon the extraordinary attention to the ordinary realm where capitalist power has emerged and prevailed, and perceives everyday consciousness, expressions and gestures as actions instead of 'some ready-made internal reality' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 135). After Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau further investigates the everyday and its mode of resistance to demonstrate its complex and nuanced relationship with the dominant. In de Certeau's theory, 'the way of operation' is an overarching focus. Within the dominant consumeristic economic order, the act of consumption should no longer be considered passive and subordinated. Instead, de Certeau subverts the asymmetric binary by shifting emphasis to the very act of consumption. De Certeau (1988) sees consumption as the 'second production', 'arts of making', and the re-appropriation of what has been organised by 'the techniques of sociocultural production'. In other words, consumption is an active, productive and creative act. De Certeau calls it 'tactics' in contrast to the 'strategy' on which the 'rational' and the 'proper' foundation of modern society are based. Strategies are explicit and manifest, while tactics are concealed, silent and devious. Though 'a silent production', 'the way of operation' insinuates into the dominant. It is 'the victories

of the “weak” over the “strong” (de Certeau, 1988, p. xix)’. De Certeau’s conceptualisation of the everyday is significant in that it not only reveals the intricate existence of the everyday within the dominant structure (whether economic, political or institutional), but also articulates the everyday with the agency of resistance, even though it might be an implicit and non-confrontational kind of resistance. In the rest of this section, I will discuss the conceptualisation of everyday life and *minjian* in the Chinese academia which is a strong resonance to de Certeau’s everyday theory as well as a significant reference, for the purpose of this thesis, in constructing the everydayness of folk culture and intangible heritage.

In China, everyday life as a critical concept first caught the scholarly attention in the early 1990s. The relation between the everyday and consumer culture was collectivised life as well as the strict political control in the ‘socialist’ period. As free market, consumerism and globalisation became the new dominant ideologies after the economic reform, especially after the 1990s, individual liberty, cultural diversity and other western modern thoughts began to redefine the Chinese everyday.

Everyday life was perceived as a phenomenon of modernity. It does not mean that everyday life did not exist in ‘pre-modern’ society, but that in the modern society everyday life is ripped off the sacred, poetic and symbolic meanings and reduced to tediousness, secularity and banality (Tang, 1993; Cai, 1993). Tang Xiaobing characterises the periods before and after the economic reform as ‘the time of the heroic’ and ‘the time of the quotidian’ respectively. The time of the heroic, spanning from the early 20th century to the late 1970s, was a time oriented by the admiration of heroes and the ambition of nation salvation and liberation, while the everyday, the tedious and the banal, were obstacles to social transformation and progression. The time of the quotidian refers to the contemporary Chinese society

ever since the 1980s. In praise of the peaceful and stable everyday life, it dissolves the grand narratives of the revolutionary period. Tang (2000; 2001) believes that the true heroic action in modern secular society is to dysfunction the role of the hero and to honestly face the secular everyday life.

Tang's perception of everyday life embodies the typical social atmosphere of the 1990s China. Tang perceives the revival of everyday life as both the end of an era with high political control and the celebration of the burgeoning market economy. In other words, everyday life was equated with material life and consumption. Reflecting on this phenomenon, He Zhaotian (2016) traces back to ideological construction in the 'socialist' period. He does not completely deny the impact of socialism. Instead, he considers idealism and social commitment as positive socialist characteristics. However, the construction of such grand narratives had excluded the mundane experiences and problems, and thus led to the disassociation between the two. Worse, the frustrating experiences in the Cultural Revolution had destroyed people's faith even in the positive side of socialism. Therefore, once the political suppression was unshackled in the 1980s, people quickly turned to the pragmatic and tangible everyday life, whose meanings were reduced to interests, especially material interests (He, 2016, pp. 117-118). Admittedly, the material-based, consumerism-oriented everyday constitutes an ever expanding part of people's daily life in China. The equation between everyday life and consumerism also keeps another realm of everyday life away from the public's scope, that is, the realm relating to folk traditions, which are not readily associated with consumption and commerciality.

In the recent two decades, scholars began to pay attention to the more complex role that the everyday life plays in the dominant discourses of capitalist modernity

and political suppression. New perceptions of the everyday also indicate the richer and more sophisticated reflection on the cultural and social impacts of the economic reform and the relations with the 'socialist' period. Cultural scholars and historians take everyday life as a significant point of entry to re-examine the unique process of Chinese modernization. Goldsterin (2006) uses the everyday to challenge the simplified but prevailing notion of the west equalling modernity. Modernity, as Goldsterin argues, always has to articulate in the concrete everyday context and reshapes the everyday. However, the everyday is complex and elusive. It 'refuses to fit into any single historical framework or linear narrative'. Thereby, the everyday becomes a new approach to complicate and problematize capitalist modernity and state ideologies. Historian Wang Di (2003; 2008) takes an everyday perspective to scrutinise the modernisation history in Chengdu before the 1950s. Ever since the late 19th century, China had been deeply involved into the process of modernisation. On the one hand, the uniqueness of local cultures was eclipsed by the homogenising tendency of urban transformation. On the other hand, the flexibility and tenacity of everyday networks and local lives were potential resistance against the state power and the homogenous urban culture promoted by modernisation. In the studies of Chen Sihe and Zhang Lianhong, emphasis is put on the persistence and resistance of folk cultural forms in confrontation with the dominant discourse. Chen and Zhang's insights of folk cultural practices help to comprehend the tension between everyday life and intangible heritage today.

Chen (1994) proposes the concept of 'the invisible structure of *minjian*'. Ever since the New Cultural Movement, intellectuals attempted to utilise and reform folk cultural forms, while the forms also entered the text of their own creative works, thus shaping an invisible structure that would impact the aesthetics of Chinese

literature for decades. Chen argues that the dominant political ideology only succeeded in reforming the contents of folk culture; however, at the aesthetic level, the invisible structure played its part and did not yield to ideological manipulation. 'The folk tradition means', as Chen (1994) states, 'the process of primitive vitality closely embracing everyday life, and thus spurting out love, hate, and the pursuit of desire. It contains the freedom which no morality could ever regulate, no political laws could ever restrain, and even the abstract concept of civilisation, progress or aesthetics could hardly cover. 'The invisible structure of *minjian* reflects local people's strong pursuit for freedom. Moreover, the forms of folk culture always reside in marginal areas far away from the centre of state power. Its manifestation becomes obscure and fragmentary as it approaches dominant cultural expressions (Chen, 1994). For instance, most of the highly politicised model plays in the Cultural Revolution had borrowed from folk cultural forms like the Peking opera. Chen (1994) compares the folk factors to 'lubricants' which smoothen the rigid and stagnant politicised symbols and render a degree of aesthetic vitality. Chen thus sees in *minjian* an important aesthetic dimension equivalent in effect to the dimension of state ideologies and intellectual thoughts which together shaped the form of Chinese literature of the 20th century.

Similarly, Zhang Lianhong (2012; 2013) also recognises the flexibility and tenacity of the folk cultural forms. Her arguments are mostly based on the literary analysis of the operatic plays during the *xiqu* reform period spanning from the 1950s to the 1970s. She invokes the term 'living world' by which she refers to the entity whereby people, especially common people, live their daily life. 'The living world' is complex, chaotic, and uncontrollable from dominant forces. Zhang (2012) not only perceives the living world as an aesthetic concept, but also stretches its meaning to the

empirical realities and feelings that people encounter in everyday life. Zhang (2013, pp. 3,11) realises the strong connection between traditional operas, especially regional operas, and the everyday world lived on the local ground. Operatic performances used to be an important component in people's daily life as well as spiritual world. It infiltrated into different layers of everyday life and reshaped the 'living world' as it was. On the one hand, traditional operas opened up space for common people to express their emotions, feelings and desires. On the other hand, it set the social foundation for state ideologies to absorb and adopt the folk resources for its uses. Zhang (2012) points out that the relationship between common people and the dominant control of the state is interdependent, for which she coins the term 'the structure of interdependence/oppression'. In Zhang's observation, the common people's everyday life does not docilely compromise or directly confront with the dominant ideologies of the state. Rather, they struggle to survive within the domination of oppressing forces while at the same time resist them in a subtle manner. Zhang emphasises the significance of 'the sense of pain' in everyday life. The everyday experiences of pain, loss, struggle and frustration raise and awaken awareness of the tough realities people had to endure at the local level. With such consciousness, people re-adjust their relations with the everyday world, thus keeping themselves at a certain distance from the hegemonic oppressing forces. At the same time, the everyday absorbs the resources of the dominant and accumulate power for people to survive and sustain life on the ground, while this dissipates and hinders the advance of dominant forces. To put it simply, the state is not able to gain complete control over the everyday despite its omnipresence. As a representation of common people's everyday life, Chinese traditional operas reflect the everyday struggles and subtle resistance against the dominant oppression. State ideologies thus penetrated through traditional opera and performances as the

latter underwent the unprecedented reform of traditional culture of the 1950s-70s. Nevertheless, the reformed plays and performances still kept the unique nutrition of the folk and had not been fully reduced to mere political propaganda. Zhang characterises the lurking resistance of the living world as 'the subtle revolution'. Both 'the invisible structure of *minjian*' and 'the subtle revolution' articulate the potential agency of folk culture against the dominant ideology. The folk culture concerned in both articulations is not the abstracted folk culture per se, but folk culture's ongoing compliance and perennial tension with the dominant discourse and their representation in the later intellectual works. *Minjian* in Chen and Zhang's articulation largely echoes de Certeau's everyday life in terms of its evasiveness, interdependence with and insinuation within the dominant structure. In this thesis, I adopt the concept of everyday life instead of *minjian* or folk culture, a more common term in studies of contemporary Chinese literature, for two important reasons. First, my study of intangible heritage is deeply rooted in the actual cultural practices in the present time, which goes beyond the literary and artistic realms, including the economic and nationalist appropriation of folk culture today except for the socialist reformation of it. Second, the concept of everyday life connects the examination of folk culture to a broader cultural phenomenon under the ongoing prevalence of capitalist development and cultural nationalism as well as the critical academic debate on the potential agency of the everyday. Hence, by everyday life, I want to cover two levels of meanings. First, it refers to the entity of the living world, the actual life wherein common people perform their daily routines. Second, it conjures up the conceptual everyday world which contains the agency of the persistent and resistant local subjects against dominant forces.

It follows that everyday life should be recognised not only as a conceptual

framework but also as a methodological approach. As is interpreted by Highmore, de Certeau's emphasis on the everyday is more of a 'methodological imagination' for it 'seeks to alter the very meeting ground for attending to culture' (Highmore, 2006, p.2). What has been altered is the emphasis of rationality, generality and abstraction in scientific and social research. By everyday practices, de Certeau (1998) suggests 'a practical science of the singular'. As de Certeau states, an everyday practice 'opens up a unique space within an imposed order' (de Certeau, 1998, p. 254). In other words, it is hard to reach the actuality by merely looking into the abstract and the general. Everyday practices 'hides a fundamental diversity of situations, interests, and contexts under the apparent repetition of objects that it uses' (de Certeau, 1998, p. 256), which could not be reduced to general regulations or norms. As Highmore (2006, p. 4) stresses, the shifted attention to the singularity implies the crucial reorienting of culture as a practice, as 'a field of practical operations'.

The everyday also provides a more nuanced perspective to understanding resistance. Paula Saukko's discussion of 'lived resistance' provides some insights. Following Laclau and Mouffe's articulation theory, Saukko (2003, pp. 50-54) suggests the 'contingent approach', which concerns the relations between lived resistance and other issues, like its process in different contexts and how it manifests meanings. Lived resistance might not always bring systematic challenges. Saukko proposes to go beyond the evaluation of actual resistant effects. The significance of studying lived resistance is to resituate everyday practices in power relations and examine how it formulate struggles, and thus complicated the dominant structure (Saukko, 2003, p. 53). Therefore, in response to Chen's 'invisible structure of *minjian*' and Zhang's 'subtle revolution', the significance of their ideas is not to prove whether the 'invisible structure' will turn visible or when the 'subtle revolution' will come

true. It is not even necessary to define which practice belongs, or does not, belong to the everyday. It should be noted that everyday life is highly situated, and that its resistance is an ever ongoing process. As de Certeau (1998) would have it, the examination of the everyday calls for a critical engagement with ‘the science of the singularity’. The science of singularity is the study of how tacit knowledge happens and comes into being. It complicates and problematizes the dominant and the imposed order. It might not be the changes itself, but it is where the alternative resides.

Intangible heritage serves to re-activate a number of traditional folk practices that are on the decline or still constitute a part of people’s everyday life. As the ongoing socio-cultural campaign, it re-organises the inscribed projects into various categories and sub-categories. Under the mainstream project-based preservation, many intangible heritages have been detached from the original everyday contexts and re-integrated in daily life in a new formation. By resituating intangible heritage into the everyday, I seek to complicate the heritage making process with a critical historical approach.

Muyuge

‘The living world’, as Zhang Lianhong (2012, pp. 50-51) points out, differs from the elite’s culture, which is constructed and transmitted through writing and explicit acknowledgement. The manner that common people engaging with everyday life is instinctive, implicit and unconscious. It does not mean that people do not learn or accumulate power through daily life. Rather, they ‘learn through the unknowable

and write through the inexplicable' (Zhang, 2012, p. 51)⁵. The story of *muyuge* I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter deeply echoes Zhang's observation. Older local people sing it every day; younger generations (like me) grew up with the singing. However, no one had ever been aware of it, talked about it, or even thought of what it was. It used to prevail in our life, but it was invisible. However, the intervention of intangible heritage makes it visible. People started to talk about it, make use of it and study it. Even older people, my grandma for example, start to use the new term *muyuge* occasionally. For them, the 'songs' are no longer nothing. Indeed, *muyuge* can hardly be accounted for as a prominent performing art or cultural practice. Despite its popularity among common people in Cantonese-speaking areas, it is still minor, marginal, and known only to a small number of people. However, this is the very reason that I want to take it as the case study in my thesis. That it becomes a national intangible heritage typically reflects the ongoing tensions between everyday traditions and the heritage fever in mainland China. The process of heritage is not only about how intangible heritage as a state discourse appropriates everyday traditions, but also about how common people make sense of it and make use of it.

Scholarly attention to *muyushu* (songbooks of *muyuge*) started from the late 1920s as folklore studies emerged in China. During the 1950s to 1970s, the locality of *muyuge/muyushu* studies shifted to Hong Kong (Leung, 1978) and the overseas (Hatano, 1974; 1977). Related studies have been revived on a small scale in the mainland after the 1980s. Most studies focused on the literary studies of *muyushu*. Research perspectives adopted include the origins and transmission of *muyushu* (Tan & Tan, 1982; Ng, 1989), *muyushu* catalogues (Tan & Tan, 1982), revising

⁵ The original text in Chinese, '不知之知，莫名之名' (Zhang, 2012, p. 51).

muyushu pieces (Xue, 1985b; 1985a; Leung, 1998), literary forms (Ng, 1989). The rise of *muyushu* and *muyuge* studies coincided with the promotion of intangible heritage after the mid-2000s. Except for *muyushu*, the study of *muyuge* increased significantly. In addition to further literary studies (Yang, 2002; 2005; 2006; Guan, 2009), approaches to *muyuge* and *muyushu* becomes diverse, including ethnography (Zhu, 2009), ethnomusicology (Huang, 2014; 2015), literary analysis (Cui, 2011), historical studies (Ren, 2010) and heritage transmission (He, 2016; Yang, 2017). Studies in the new century opens up more dimensions of *muyuge* and *muyushu*.

Nevertheless, current studies tend to focus on two historical aspects, the historical condition, and the pros and cons of the development in the intangible heritage era. The situations of *muyuge/muyushu* from the 1940s to the early 2000s are always lightly mentioned. The period spanning for more than half a century is considered as the declining years of *muyuge/muyushu* due to high political pressure and the later impact of modern popular cultures. However, I believe this is a critical period for two reasons. First, it is important to examine what had sustained the transmission of *muyuge* even when social environments were tough. Second, it should be noted that the heritage reconstruction does not directly inherit from what *muyuge* was in its primetime. Cultural practices in China had experienced the most radical transformation during the period of more than half a century. It will be ahistorical if we discuss the heritage making of *muyuge* without considering its development in this period. Therefore, my study will pay specific attention to this period in-between, and seeks to delineate a richer picture of *muyuge* that has been neglected by most scholars.

Methods

I mainly apply three research methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, archival and textual analysis. Before the PhD programme officially started, I worked as a volunteer in the Cultural Centre of Dongguan in March 2014. Cultural Hall is the local cultural office in charge of the application and supervision of intangible heritage projects (more introduction will be in Chapter 3). I take this four-week long volunteer experience as pilot study, from which I gained an



Figure 1 Map of China

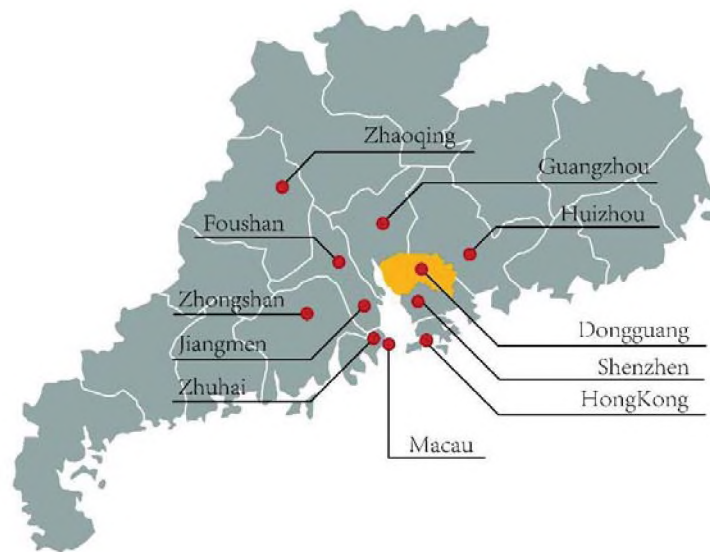


Figure 2 Map of Guangdong and the Pearl River Delta Cities

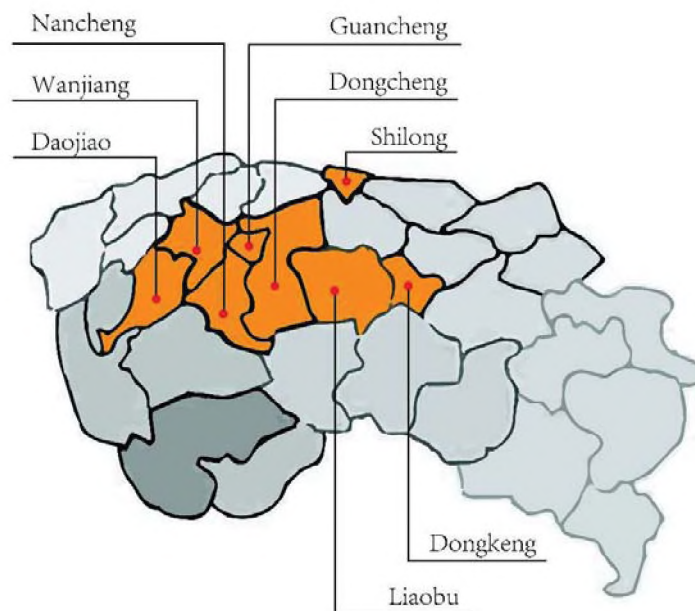


Figure 3 Map of Dongguan and the places where I conducted fieldwork

overview of the general situation of intangible heritage of the city. Also, through the official network, I got contacts of some interviewees, including *muyuge* inheritors, town officials in charge of intangible heritage. Although I did not have any relation with the Cultural Centre when I conducted fieldwork, I should admit that my identity as a ‘familiar person’ with the Cultural Centre made me more readily accepted by officials at the town level. However, impacts of the official ‘aura’ were limited. My identity as a Dongguan local gave me more credits during fieldwork. Except for the clues from official sectors, I also made use of my personal network to look for people with interest in *muyuge*. Besides, I wandered in the streets, parks and squares where older people gathered. As most local older people speak very limited Putonghua or even standard Cantonese, my ability of speaking local accents granted me an easy pass especially when talking with older local people. Through conversations with random older people, I found that singing songbooks (*muyushu*)

was the hobby of only a particular number of people. For example, communist cadres are not likely to be fond of songbooks as songbooks were associated with feudal superstition after 1949. Those at the bottom of society are not interested either, as they are not literate to read or had enough spare time to sing or listen to *muyuge* for entertainment. However, many of them would sing more or less when they conducted worshipping activities and other rituals. These conversations were important for me to discover the complexities of practices under the term of '*muyuge*' (see chapter 1) and notice the hierarchies of local singing practices.

To examine the practice history before intangible heritage, I mainly apply methods of oral history and archival analysis. I have conducted oral history interview with 15 elderly people⁶ in Dongguan, including ordinary practitioners, blind singers, scholars and the representative inheritor. Most interviewees were born in the 1930s and 1940s. Due to the lack of official documentation, their reminiscence is pivotal to make up the blank history of *muyuge* practices in Dongguan from the 1940s to the early 2000s. Nevertheless, personal reminiscence is limited to depict a larger historical picture. I also referred to studies of related narrative singing genres in nearby areas to delineate *muyuge* practices in the latter half of the 20th century. For example, Leung Pui-chee's (1978) study of Ng Gwai Tong, the last *muyushu* printing shop in Hong Kong, the institutionalisation of folk performing artists during the 1950s in Guangzhou (Chen, 2005), and the idea of creativity in Cantonese narrative singing by Cai Yanfen (1978). Most studies have little to do with the particular *muyuge* practices in Dongguan, but it would be helpful to understand the historical environment for similar singing practices.

In terms of the contemporary practices, except in-depth interviews, I attended a

⁶ See appendix Table 1.

number of activities and events to study how *muyuge* is practiced as an intangible heritage⁷. Besides, my lived experiences in Dongguan before the early 2000s and the frequent travels back to the city from 2014 to 2016 provide rich empirical experiences for me to reflect on the construction of local culture in the past thirty years. Textual analysis, including media and performance analysis, is another key approach to examine the complicated details in heritage making.

Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned about the historical formation of *muyuge*. The preamble of the first part reviews the history of folk culture being incorporated respectively into the intellectual and state discourses, and situates the formation of *muyuge* in China's modernisation history. *Muyuge* is generally considered as a genre of folk literature and speaking and singing performance. However, in Chapter 1, I propose to re-define it as an everyday practice. I revisit the formulation of *muyuge* as commercial entertainment, political propaganda and an academic subject in the late Qing and early Republican years, while at the same time unearth related everyday expressions used by common people. '*Muyuge*' perceived in the academic and everyday contexts is not completely the same. By resituating *muyuge* into the everyday context, I aim to open up more diversities in the discussion of folk cultural practices. Chapter 2 addresses the cultural and geographical marginality of *muyuge*. The marginal status kept the practice of *muyuge* away from the swirl of social and political turbulences, while in the meantime distanced its voice from the dominant, thus making it difficult to be heard. The intervention of intangible heritage changed this situation to some extent by articulating the practice to the dominant discourse.

⁷ See appendix Table 2.

The second part, consisting of four chapters, discusses how *muyuge* is transformed into intangible heritage. Chapter 3 analyses the rise of intangible heritage in mainland China since the early 2000s in relation to the current discourse of ‘the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ and the historical trajectory of ‘heritage’ in the past century. I argue that intangible heritage is becoming the incarnation of ‘folk culture’ in the 21st century; it is not merely the replacement of terms, but also of ideas and values with strong emphasis of capital, market and nationalistic identities. The following chapters respectively examines the construction of *muyuge* as intangible heritage from three different perspectives. The analysis in Chapter 4 is based on the town of Dongkeng, the official unit responsible for preserving *muyuge* as intangible heritage. Constructing *muyuge* as an intangible heritage and pushing it for higher recognition is one of the town’s efforts in reconstructing its cultural image. The obsession of developing heritage-based economy` stems from the decline of the local labour-intensive industry and the urge for economic upgrade. Through the case of heritage making in Dongkeng, I argue that local governments now become the most active role in re-organising local traditions and incorporating local everyday life into its cultural and economic scheme. Chapter 5 examines different groups of *muyuge* practitioners, ordinary practitioners, blind singers and the representative inheritors. The images of the three groups of practitioners, whether the former two in a declining status or the latter one with seemingly promising future, are all shaped in a de-politicised manner with an emphasis on market production and national identities. Based on fieldwork, media analysis and historical reference to folk artists in the early PRC years, I discover that *muyuge* practitioners’ autonomy under the heritage discourse is diminished to a great extent. However, the official transmission process is not merely nominal, but also entangles with people’s everyday experiences and feelings, manifesting in a subtle

and obscure way. Chapter 6 concerns about changes of performing practices and the notion of creativity of *muyuge*. It is also a response to the constant debate of ‘authenticity vs. innovation’ in the heritage making process. I try to historicise the debate by tracing back to the reform of traditional performing arts in mainland China since the 1950s, and argue that the dichotomy between authenticity and innovation indicates the shift of creativity ideas in the modernisation of Chinese traditional performing arts. According to traditional ideas of creativity, performers play a central role in the creative process (Yung, 1989; Chan, 1991; Yu, 2005). However, the changes in production modes put increasing weight on the role of scriptwriters and directors since the 1950s. The trend is growing more obvious today as traditional performances are further normalised due to heritage making, economic and touristic needs.

In this thesis, all general Chinese terms, names and expressions are translated into the Putonghua-based *pinyin*, the official Romanisation system for Standard Chinese in the mainland. For certain names of Hong Kong people and places, I maintain the original spellings or use the *Jyutping* Cantonese Romanisation System. Also, a list of original Chinese expressions and the equivalent English translations is alphabetically organised in the glossary at the end the thesis.

Part One The historical formation of myyuge

Preamble Discovery and Reformation, China's folk culture in the 20th century

Intangible cultural heritage is a concept imported from the international heritage regime in the early 2000s, which has since brought about a prevailing social phenomenon and transformed people's perception of folk culture in China in the past 15 years. On China's modernisation history in the 20th century, the stance of Chinese political and intellectual elites on traditional cultures and folk practices contrasted significantly with the contemporary craze for intangible cultural heritage and traditional culture. For a critical examination of the current heritage phenomenon, it is important to consider the role of folk culture in the history of China's modernisation and the construction of nationalism and national identity. Likewise, to investigate *muyuge* as an intangible heritage in the contemporary context, it is inevitable that we trace its historical construction to at least the New Cultural Movement in the early 20th century. There were two critical periods in the process of folk culture's incorporation into the mainstream cultural discourses. One is the intellectual conceptualisation of folk culture spanning from the late 1910s to the late 1930s marked by the New Cultural Movement as inception and the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War (also called the anti-Japanese war) as a closure. The other is the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) cultural practices and reform between the Sino-Japanese War from the late 1930s and the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s-70s. The former was a key period noted for the integration of folk culture into the discourse of Chinese modernity, while the latter witnessed the radical reform of folk culture for revolutionary purposes and socialist construction. The legacy left from both periods provides crucial knowledge resources and institutional base for the current heritage making process. For example, the systematic collection and categorisation of folk practices since the

early 1920s set up the basic frame for the organisation of intangible heritage items. Also, the administrative system of intangible heritage today is directly inherited from the mass cultural system⁸ since the early PRC age. Therefore, the craze for intangible heritage should be perceived as an ongoing historical process of mutual interaction and construction between folk culture and the mainstream cultural discourses. As one of the numerous local cultural practices in China, the recognition and reconstruction of *muyuge* as intangible heritage is inseparable from this historical context. Part One of the thesis provides an account of this context in two chapters preceded by a preamble. For this research, the preamble seeks to contextualise *minjian*, the folk society, in China's modernisation process, focusing on the 'pre-heritage' periods, in order to situate practices of the everyday historically. Chapter 1 discusses how the use of '*muyuge*' as an official term, and suggests that the adoption of the term reflects the re-organisation of knowledge pertaining everyday practices. Chapter 2 analyses the periphery status of *muyuge* as an everyday practice and its incorporation and interaction with the radically changing socio-cultural politics in mainland China.

Minjian literally means the folk society and the folk in Chinese, referring to the non-official, non-elite sociocultural space inhabited by the grassroots people. As general expressions, *min* and *minjian* have existed in Chinese for thousands of years. However, it was not until the late Qing and the early Republican period that the expressions gained specific nationalistic and political meanings. According to Chen Sihe (1994), there were three cultural domains in China's society since the 20th century: 1) the political ideology supported by the state power, 2) western thoughts

⁸ In the Chinese context, the connotation of 'mass culture' is different from that of the European and North American context. 'Mass culture' in China is related to the socialist propaganda and pedagogy rather than the cultural production or the entertainment industry (Hong, 1994).

promoted by modern Chinese intellectuals, and 3) folk cultural practices preserved in the Chinese folk society. Based on Chen's tripartite division, I argue that the modernisation of *minjian* took place as the culture of the folk society began to integrate with the state political ideology and modern intellectual thoughts since the New Cultural Movement of the May-Fourth Period.

The New Culture Movement in the early Republican China brought profound transformation to Chinese intellectual and knowledge environment. Modern intellectuals attempted to discard the elitist 'high culture' of Confucianism, which they considered as the root problems of Chinese society, and sought after new cultural and national identities (Hung, 1985, p. xii). Influenced by the Russian *Narodnik* movement (the populist movement) of the 1870s, Chinese intellectuals began to turn their eyes to the folk, the 'low culture' of ordinary people, and advocated 'going to the people' (Hung, 1985, p. 10). Also, with the introduction of folklore theories and studies from Europe and Japan⁹, a number of Chinese intellectuals started to dive into the area of folk culture and practices, which had been ignored and underrated for millenaries. On 1st February 1918, *Peking University Daily* posted a notice for the collection of folksongs. In the following year,

⁹ The study of folklore in China had been greatly inspired by the research conducted by foreigners who lived in China. The Italian interpreter Baron Guido Amedeo Vitale (1872-1918) had collected Chinese folksongs and folktales, and made relevant publication. Isaac Taylor Headland (1859-1942), a professor of Peking University, contributed in collecting Chinese nursery rhymes and children's tales (Hung, 1985; Xu, 2006). As the folksong collecting movement started, especially in the period of Sun Yat-Sen University, a number of European theories of folklore studies had been translated and introduced, including British folklorists Andrew Lang, Charlotte S. Burne, Arthur R. Wright, French scholars Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Arnold van Gennep, and the German Brothers Grimm. There were also introductory articles about folklore studies in Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Austria, the US, etc (Hung, 1985; Chen, 1993). Japanese folklorists Kobayashi Issa, Sassa Masa Kazu, and Yanagita Kunio also had impacts on Zhou Zuoren's scholarship of folklore (Hung, 1985).

the convenor received over one thousand folksongs from across the country. This event was generally considered as the inception of the folksong collecting movement, one of the landmarks of the New Cultural Movement (Xu, 2006, p. 17). Key figures involved in the folksong collecting movement included Liu Fu (also known as Liu Bannong), Gu Jiegang, Zhou Zuoren, Dong Zuobin and Zhong Jinwen. Folksong Study Society was established in 1920 with Zhou Zuoren as the person in charge. From December 1922 to June 1925, the weekly journal of *Geyao* (Folksong) published 2,226 folksongs collected from various provinces. As the *Kuomintang* government set off the Northern Expedition to fight warlord forces in the civil war from 1926 to 1928, *Geyao* ceased publication. Consequently, the centre of folksong and folklore studies moved to the southern city of Guangzhou at Sun Yat-Sen University. Gu Jiegang and Zhong Jingwen established a new folklore study centre in Guangzhou and resumed what they had initiated in Beijing. They founded the new weekly journal of *Minsu* (Folklore) in November 1927¹⁰ (Hung, 1985, pp. 49-54). *Minsu* lasted until June 1933. Compared with *Geyao*, *Minsu* did not only focus on folksongs, but also myths, legends, riddles, proverbs and other everyday customs. The emergence of folklore studies in Guangzhou created a 'chain reaction' in other provinces. Many provinces and cities set up their own research centres and publication venues (Hung, 1985, p. 54). The prosperity of folklore studies lasted for nearly two decades and only ceased when the Sino-Japanese War broke out. The attempt at a systematic study of folksongs and folklore culture had developed alongside with the intellectual vision and exploration of a new national identity. The definition of folk literature by Chinese intellectuals strongly echoed that of

¹⁰ The journal was originally named as '*Minjian Wenyi*' (Folk Literature and Arts). It was renamed as '*Minsu*' in March 1928 (Hung, 1985).

their western predecessors of folklore studies. Zheng Zhenduo's definition of folk literature serves as a representative example of the general intellectual comprehension of folk literature in the 1920s to 1930s. As Zheng stated (1984, pp. 2-6), folk literature 'is born from the folk, written for the folk and exist for the folk'; they are anonymously and collectively created; they are oral, fluid, unsophisticated, sometimes vulgar, and always open to changes. Intellectuals of the New Cultural Movement believed that compared with elite literature, the influence of folk literature and songs to Chinese culture and society was more significant and extensive (Hung, 1985, p. 6). Thus, they legitimised their attempt to integrate folk culture into the modern knowledge system and use folk culture to re-interpret the nation (Xu, 2006, p. 22).

Unlike traditional Confucian scholars, intellectuals of the New Cultural Movement intentionally fashioned folklore studies as a serious academic discipline. The early folklore researchers were mostly amateurs with little formal training in relevant methods or theories. In the earlier phase, folksong collections were conducted in a relatively rough and simple manner (Hung, 1985, p. 51). Nevertheless, theories and methodologies were gradually built up and developed in the following two decades. The urge to establish a discipline in folklore studies was greatly influenced by the emerging scientific discourse in the New Cultural Movement. Science's profound impacts on China's modern history were not limited in scientific areas per se but also brought repercussions in the whole knowledge structure affecting culture, aesthetics, politics and other public debates. It was rendered as a fundamentally new perspective and approach to study, examine and evaluate the world (Wang, 2006). As is observed by Wang Hui (2006), science as a discursive practice had effectively reconstituted the modern structure of non-scientific areas as well as the

domain of everyday life. The application of scientific methodologies rendered the scholarly attention to folk culture fundamentally different from folksong collecting activities prevalent in feudal China. Xu Xinjian (2006, p. 65) observes that folklore researchers generally adopted the term of 'investigation' rather than 'song collecting' as used in previous dynasties. 'Investigation' conveys a modern sense of scholarship, foregrounds the requirements of scientific evidence and stresses 'being in the scene' for the researchers. Further, *Geyao* specifically reminded contributors of maintaining the originality of the songs they collected. 'No revision should be made. Colloquial words or expressions should not be rendered into Mandarin language' (Chang, 1922, cited from Hung, 1985). Similar statements emphasising originality, objectivity and accuracy in studying folksongs and folklore were commonly found in the articles of both *Geyao* and *Minsu* (Chang, 1922; 1923; Rong, 1929). Hu Shi (1937) proposed a systematic nationwide investigation into folksongs. He compared folksong collection with the studies of geology, biology, minerals and earth, and suggested that 'we should have detailed statistics of the collected folksongs based on provinces and counties, and make a preliminary national folksong distribution map according to the statistics' (Hu, 1937). His plan, idea and vocabulary of studying folksongs were embedded in a strong scientific spirit. Despite criticism of the feudal legacy, folksongs and folk customs were integrated into the knowledge system of modern China as folklore studies.

It is noteworthy that folksong collecting movement and the folklore movement in a broader sense was an intellectual campaign with little influence on people's everyday practices. Most New Cultural Movement intellectuals positioned themselves as enlighteners vis-à-vis ordinary people. Common people and their life were those to be studied, with their voices often excluded (Xu, 2006, p. 23).

Further, many intellectuals of New Cultural Movement believed that folk culture was full of feudal toxins effective only for perpetuating the traditional social system. Therefore, common people should be enlightened and educated with the values of new national identity (Zhou, 1920; Chang, 1922; Zheng, 1984). As Chen Sihe (1994) argues, intellectuals did not 'go to the people' to better express people's voices but to reform them. Chen points out that intellectuals built up an alternative realm with the knowledge source of folk society outside of state power. They saw themselves as the sole subject of the emerging folksong collecting movement. On the one hand, the emergence of folklore studies was often critiqued for the intellectuals' elite position and detachment from common people. On the other hand, it is the new folk culture movement that integrated folk culture and practices with China's modern knowledge structure emergent at that historical juncture. This provided the essential knowledge source and methodological reference for the socialist reformation of folk practices and the current heritage making.

The Chinese communist movement was conceived in and grew out from the New Cultural Movement. *Minjian*, folk culture and common people were some of the crucial concerns of Chinese communist intellectuals. For the latter, the folks were interpreted as workers, peasantry, soldiers, in short, 'the people'¹¹, with a strong connotation of class politics and revolution (Wang, 2010, p. 7). The communists

¹¹ 'The people' carries strong political connotation in the Chinese communist theories and practices. He Zhaotian (He, 2016) considers 'the people' as a political concept based on classes but at the same time beyond classes. Especially after the establishment of the PRC, the advocacy of 'the people' aimed to stimulate the state identity both out of one's own class and connecting with other classes (like workers, peasantry and soldiers). Zhang Lianhong (2013, p. 10) pays attention to the mutual converting relationship between 'the people' and the folk society. She argues that the character of the folk society ('民间性') were turned into the people with the integration of state ideologies; and that when state ideologies withdrew, the political concept of 'people' can render into a new kind of 'folk'.

believed that the proletariat, rather than the intellectuals, should play the essential role in China's revolution with peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie as revolutionary allies. Mostly non-proletariat born, the intellectuals were required to identify with the revolutionary class of workers, peasantry and soldiers so as to develop a mutual enlightening and educating relationship (He, 2016). According to the communist positionality of intellectuals, folk arts and culture were not merely a means to explore and establish new national identity, but more importantly, they stood for a viable approach for the intellectuals to mobilise, connect with and learn from the people. This marked a significant distinction from the position of New Cultural Movement intellectuals. The prospective mutual enlightening relationship between intellectuals and common people would determine that the communists' concern over folk arts and culture went far beyond the scholarly realm, but deep as an act of intervention into common people's everyday practices. The Japanese invasion in 1937 was a critical trigger pushing folk cultural forms onto the forefront of social concerns (Hung, 1994, p. 189). In 1938, the anti-Japanese war prompted Mao Zedong and the communist party to re-identify the dominated contradiction in China as national issue rather than class issue. Mao wrote in an article in 1938 proposing the localisation of Marxism in China: 'only when the nation is liberated can the proletariat and the working people be possibly liberated...Therefore, patriotism is the implementation of internationalism during the national liberation war (Mao, 1966, cited in Wang, 2010)'. Mao's proposal led to some heated discussions of the 'national forms' in the literary and artistic circles. As Wang Hui (2010, p. 243) observes, almost all participants of the discussion were aware that 'national form' was not ready-made forms; rather, they were new modern forms to be created. In this light, folk arts and cultural practices became the indispensable materials and resources in the construction of the modern national cultural form.

From 1938 to 1942, a great number of experiments in adopting folk cultural forms were undertaken especially in areas controlled by the Communist Party. The idea of 'putting new wine in old bottles' was proposed at this historical moment, which advocated using traditional cultural forms to convey and propagate revolutionary and anti-Japanese thoughts. In May 1942, Mao Zedong gave the notable talk in the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art. Mao's talk (1975) stressed that all forms of literature and arts should serve and represent the standpoint of the proletariat, and that cultural forms should become a powerful weapon of class struggle and revolution. His talk theoretically justified the political orientation of the communists' approach to arts and literature, and fundamentally set the direction of literary and artistic creation in mainland China in the following half century. Once again, intellectuals were required to 'have their eyes looking downwards' (Sun, 2008). Despite similarity with 'going to the people' during the New Cultural Movement, the communist stance towards folk culture was by no means the same. In 1942, Mao also proposed the idea of 'weeding through the old and bringing forth the new'. 'The old' to be weeded referred to 'the feudal dross', while 'the new' meant the cultural forms that represented the life and thoughts of the people, or in other words, 'socialist spirits'. A thorough reform of traditional performing arts had been brewed since then. The new *yangge* movement was an iconic example of the CCP's reform of folk cultural practices in Yan'an. *Yangge* (literally sprout song) is a popular traditional folk dance, sometimes involving simple plays, in the rural areas of northern China. It originally had close relations with religious and festive practices. The communist intellectuals attempted to transform the religious and entertaining position of *yangge*, and redirected it to the nationalistic and revolutionary discourse (Mao, 2011). A number of new *yangge* plays were created. In these new plays, workers, peasants and soldiers replaced traditional male and

female roles as protagonists. The role type of comical clown was taken off. Flirtation contents were removed to highlight the moral stance of new *yangge* (Chen, 1994; Hung, 2005). By reworking the folk cultural forms of the peasants, the communists strove to mobilise the people and construct revolutionary subjectivity. During the anti-Japanese period, the CCP gradually permeated the once neglected and unruly folk society with revolutionary and nationalistic contents in the communist-controlled areas.

The CCP's thoughts and practices in culture in Yan'an were believed to be the prototype of the influential reform in the 1950s of traditional opera, also known as *xiqu* reform in the 1950s. In May 1951, shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Premier Zhou Enlai promulgated the governmental document 'The State Council's Instruction of *Xiqu* Reform' (the State Council, 2016). The document identified three major tasks in the reform of traditional operas: reform the repertoire, reform the artists and reform the institution. The communists believed that traditional operas contained too much 'feudal dross', which represented everything the communist and socialist ideologies were opposed to. However, traditional operas and other related performing arts still played a significant role in common people's everyday life. A large-scale 'sterilising' operation on traditional performing arts was believed to be imperative for the communist government to reinforce its ideological control over the newly established regime (Sun, 2011; Wang, 2002). Hence, the systematic modification of old operatic repertoire and production model was implemented as a top-down campaign to re-order social life and discipline public imaginary of history (Zhang, 2002). Apart from repertory reform, institution reform was another major concern of *xiqu* reform. It aimed to transform the older system of artistic production, opera

troupe operation and ownership issues. The reform abolished the traditional apprentice system and tea-tip profiting model, and fundamentally changed the traditional training system and profit models. The purpose was to nationalise and collectivise the business of actors of traditional performing arts and rectify their practices to serve socialist ideologies (Zhang, 2002). At the same time, research institutes, performance troupes and official training schools were successively set up (Sun, 2011). *Xiqu* reform was an unprecedented reformation of traditional opera and performing arts in China's history (Wang, 2002; Sun, 2011). The position of actors and performers had fundamentally changed. With the reforms of production models, training and transmission system, traditional actors and their performers were more closely and deeply involved into and controlled by the state institution. During the Cultural Revolution, the autocratic government pushed the reformation of traditional performing arts to an extreme. In the name of 'destroying the old in order to establish the new'¹², the government banned most local performing forms and deployed all possible resources from across the country to create a number of so-called 'revolutionary model plays'. Several model plays were based on traditional Peking operas, absorbing elements of spoken drama, film performance, martial arts, ballad and acrobatics to create a new performance model associated with modern life. The model play of *Taking Tiger Mountain with Strategy* even mixed Chinese traditional music with western orchestra (Sun, 2011). Model Peking operas were distinctive compared to traditional Peking operas as they carried evident traces of western music and drama. It was a radical attempt of innovation and modernisation of Chinese traditional performance. Its completion was based on full power support

¹² 'The olds' included old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits, while accordingly, 'the new' are new ideas, new culture, new customs and new habits. It is also widely known as 'destroying the four olds and establish the four news'.

from the state (Sun, 2011). It was the extreme reformation and utilisation of traditional operas to reinforce the ideological control of the state. By then, the folk culture had been fully co-opted by the state ideology; the actual forms and practices had consequently been largely altered in common people's daily life.

In sum, in the above I have outlined the brief history of how folk culture had been discovered and incorporated into the mainstream discourse in different historical periods of the 20th century. During the early Republican years, modern scholars started to pay attention to folk culture and incorporated it into the new discipline of folklore studies. The scholarly attempts shifted folk culture from the everyday domain to the modern knowledge system. The fundamental change of folk culture and practices took place as the CCP applied the communist ideology to folk culture and transformed it to mobilise revolution and later reinforce ideologies and the state regime. The discovery and development of *muyuge* in the past century is indispensable to this historical context. With the outline of historical framework, we will proceed to the next two chapters.

Chapter One *Muyuge* as an everyday practice

Muyuge (literally wooden fish song), was inscribed in the national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2010. The town of Dongkeng in Dongguan, an economically developed city of the southern province of Guangdong, became the unit in charge of preserving *muyuge* as an intangible heritage. Despite the national recognition, it was not until recent years that '*muyuge*' as an official expression began to be acknowledged by local people in Dongguan. Before then, very few local people had even heard of the term '*muyuge*'. However, this does not mean that the practice of *muyuge* did not exist in Dongguan or the intangible heritage campaign had created a heritage from nowhere. Rather, I consider it the result of the disjunction between the relevant official statist expression and actual local practices on the ground. As I examine the history of *muyuge*, I find out that the emergence of the term is not an isolated or sudden case due to the recent heritage fever. Based on fieldwork and archival materials, I will argue in the following that the history of emergence and application of the term reflects the re-organisation of knowledge pertaining to local everyday practices under the ongoing intangible heritage campaign. To establish the argument, this chapter will start with questioning the definition and popular categorisation of *muyuge* based on my fieldwork on local *muyuge* practices. I will then proceed to examine *muyuge* as a term used in historical archive and literatures especially in relation to the development of folk culture in China's modernisation since the early 20th century.

1.1 What is *muyuge*?

In the list of intangible cultural heritage, *muyuge* is under the category of *quyi*. *Quyi* is also called narrative singing or *shuochang*, which means the telling of stories through both singing and speaking with little stage movement. This kind of

performance has been popular across China for nearly a thousand years with over 260 different regional kinds (Yung, 1989). *Muyuge* is performed in Cantonese. It used to be popular around the Cantonese-speaking areas in the southern province of Guangdong. Defined as a *quyi* genre, *muyuge* is commonly found in various official and unofficial introduction and publicity. Before moving further into the definition of *muyuge*, I would like to first introduce local expressions in relation to *muyuge* which I collected during fieldwork. In the earlier phase of fieldwork, I directly used terms such as *muyuge*, *muyushu* and songbooks. Many people I encountered often responded with confusion, especially when I used the former two. I thus realised that common people's understanding of these official terms might vary a lot. Later, each time I did fieldwork research I played audios of my grandma's singing to the older people I met. On listening to the recordings, they knew immediately and began to relate to their own experiences of singing. From fieldwork interviews, I found that in Dongguan, there is not a precisely equal term to '*muyuge*', but a number of relevant expressions¹³. These expressions show a more vivid picture of how local people perceive and practice *muyuge* in their everyday life, which are not in complete alignment with the current definition of *muyuge* under the intangible heritage list.

- *Changge*, singing songs. As general expression, the term *changge* is used by

¹³ According to Leung (1978, pp. 223-224) and Tan (1982, p. 14), the expression '*muyu*' was used in some Guangdong cities. For example, *muyushu* had been used for divination in Foshan, and Guangzhou areas, and was called '*zhuanggua muyu ying*'. As '*shu*' (book) pronounces the same as '*shu*' (to lose) in Cantonese, people changed '*shu*' into '*ying*', which means 'to win'. However, I never heard of similar customs of *muyushu* in Dongguan during my interviews. Even Yang Baolin, who grew up in a local scholarly family surrounded by the atmosphere of *muyushu*, had never known of the term '*muyu*' until he read Zheng Zhenduo's book on folk literature in 1956. It indicates that terms related to '*muyu*' were not familiar with both common and well-educated people in Dongguan. This thesis focuses the development of the term in Dongguan area.

people of almost all ages, occupations and social classes in daily expression. However, for local people of Dongguan, especially those of older ages, singing songs has a specific meaning. The songs refer to a particular kind of verses based on seven syllables. It is sung with loose rhythmic and rhyming patterns in local Cantonese accents. The songs can be applied to a vast array of daily practices, including singing songbooks (which will be introduced later), informal singing contests for daily entertainment, singings for religious and ritual practices.

- *Manglaoge*, the blind men's song. As the term suggests, *manglaoge* refers to songs performed by blind men. Up until the late 1980s, singing had been a common occupation for blind people. People invited blind singers to sing for festivals, rituals, religious events like dispelling evils and asking for auspiciousness, special events like celebrations for shop opening, house moving, etc. Besides, oral storytelling used to be another important part of blind singers' job. They memorised popular songbook stories from their mentors (usually other blind singers), sometimes from local literati¹⁴. Blind singers always performed with *sanxian*, a plucked three-string instrument. The singing might last for hours or days, which was catered to the common people's demand demand before the mass media ages¹⁵.
- Expressions which directly depict the function of songs, including *baishengge*, worshipping songs, *xinniange*, new year songs, *miaohuige*, temple songs, *puchuangge*, bed-making songs sung in wedding ceremonies, *laorenge*,

¹⁴ According to Yang Baolin (2005a), his grandfather and his literati friends used to teach a blind singer, Blind Ji, to sing and refined his singing skills.

¹⁵ More discussion of the practices and identity of blind singers will be in Chapters 3 and 6.

songs sung in funeral, and etc. As their names indicate respectively, these songs are sung for specific ritual and religious purposes. By the end of the Cultural Revolution, many local religious and ritual practices have been resumed in the past four decades. Deities worship and ancestral worship are popular and frequent practices in festivals like the Chinese New Year, Qing Ming, the Mid-Autumn Festival as well as in special days related to religions and myths like Qixi festival, the birthdays of Guanyin, and Emperor Guan. Traditionally, blind singers would be invited to sing on special days; sometimes common people also performed the songs by themselves. Blind singers as a profession has disappeared in the past two decades, but local people, mostly middle-aged and older women, still maintain the custom of singing in religious and ritualistic events.

- *Geshu* or *geben*, songbooks. The expression of songbook is equivalent to what is known as *muyushu* (the wooden fish book). Songbooks were made in the form of pamphlets, the length of which ranges from a dozen to a hundred pages per pamphlet (Guan, 2009). Their contents included stories, moral preaching texts, and texts for worship singing. The majority of the texts in songbooks are written in seven-syllable verses. Songbooks have been the main source of reading for many older local people with limited education.
- *Zejin*, or *zhaijin*, excerpts. Most of the *zejin* are excerpts from full-length songbook stories. The popularity of *zejin* was partly attributed to the profit-making songbook publication. Publishers attempted to increase sales by shortening the volumes to cater to audience's needs (Leung, 1978, p. 223).

‘Singing songs’ and ‘singing songbooks’ are descriptions of actual practices. ‘Blind men’s song’ is based on the special identity of singers. ‘Worshipping songs’, ‘temple songs’ and the like directly express the song’s social functions. Songbooks and *zejin* are based on material forms of songs. These expressions are informal. They vary slightly in different occasions and for different people. However, people reach implicit consensus of such expressions due to common local experiences. More details of songbooks and related singing practices will be discussed later in this and the following chapters, but here I want to point out the wide varieties of everyday practices and expressions related to *muyuge*.

According to their social functions, I divide the local singing practices into two categories. One is the singing for religious and ritual purposes, and the other is the singing for entertainment. Singing on religious and ritual occasions is still a popular everyday life practice in Dongguan. Most local people, especially those of my generation or younger, become familiar with the tune of local singing (or *muyuge*) through religious and ritual practices performed by senior family members and elders in the neighbourhood. *Han tongnian*¹⁶, for instance, is a kind of evocation which is performed to conjure up the lost spirits of children. This has been popular in Dongguan. Whenever a child is not in good condition, caught up with frequent illness, in bad mood, or haunted by nightmares, senior female family members would conduct evocation for the child. With a number of worshipping materials prepared, the evocator begins to sing and call up the lost spirits. The lyrics are not strictly in seven syllables, but the tunes resemble what is known as Dongguan *muyuge* today¹⁷ (He , 2010, pp. 102-108). During my own childhood, my

¹⁶ *Han tongnian* (喊童年), is also called *hanjing* (喊惊) in some areas.

¹⁷ Aunt Runzhen (Fang, 2017), one of my interviewees, tells me that the evocation singing is exactly

grandmother conducted a number of such rituals of evocation for me. As my daughter was born several years ago, my mother-in-law began to learn *han tongnian* in the hope of healing my daughter's occasional emotional disturbances. The practice is also common in other local families. I use the particular example of evocation practice in Dongguan to point out that such religious and ritual practices are important medium to circulate tunes of local singing. Local singing is common in other local religious and ritual practices, through which younger generations are familiarised with and even inherit the local tune of *muyuge*.

Singing for entertainment includes practices of songbook singing and improvising without any set lyrics. Songbook singing is very much related to folk literature and *quyi*, or the speaking and singing performances. People singing songbooks were those with a certain literacy (though not necessarily well educated); more importantly, they demonstrate specific aesthetic pleasure in the singing and listening to the songs. The aesthetic experience tends to be mediated both by the stories per se as well as how they are written and represented. Singers often convey their understanding and feeling of the songbook stories through singing. For blind singers in particular, qualified performing skills were essential to attract and maintain an audience. However, this kind of singing declined in recent decades as practitioners and audience get old and pass away.

Improvisational singing is an informal entertaining activity common among local elderly people. Their lyrics are mostly composed of auspicious words like good health, rich harvest, family harmony and the like. And the relevant singing events are usually in festivals when people gather at temples. Other occasions for such singing include places older people often meet, such as public parks and squares.

the same with *muyuge* singing.

These activities are informal and seldom organised in advance. It largely depends on the interest and moods of participants on the spot. The early Qing scholar Qu Dajun (1985, p. 358) had mentioned the popular singing contests around the Guangdong area. In festivals and ceremonies, people used to compete with each other in improvising verses and singing skills. On some occasions, the winner would be recognised as ‘the singing man’ and rewarded (Qu, 1985, p. 358). I speculate that some improvisational singing activities in Dongguan today might be associated with the singing contests Qu Dajun referred to in the early Qing period. I came across such an unexpected informal singing event during fieldwork. I went to a temple in the town of Daojiao (located in the western part of Dongguan city and 38km away from Guangzhou) on Qixi festival in 2016. Qixi festival is the seventh day of the seventh lunar month each year. It celebrates the annual reunion of the cowherd and weaver girl according to Chinese legend. The festival is believed to bring luck and happiness to women. Even today, many local women still maintain the tradition of making handicraft, and cleaning bodies, utensils and rooms to welcome the weaver girl. I went to the temple to find out whether women also sang to celebrate the festival. As people from the neighbourhood kept coming and going, the temple was busy with women talking and laughing and children running about. I interviewed Aunt Di, the women in charge of the tribute table, and several others who came by to appreciate the tribute table and offer incense. All of them denied the tradition of singing on Qixi festival (I later found that people had different understanding of ‘singing songs’ and ‘singing *muyuge*’, which I will further discuss in the later part of the chapter). As I decided that I finished the interview for the day and was about to leave, a woman, perhaps in her late fifties, burst out singing. She sang out auspicious verses in local accents and in tunes of *muyuge*. She was in an exciting mood, while the baby on her back, probably her grandchild,

looked rather impatient with the small and crowded temple room. As soon as the woman paused after the nearly two-minute singing, Aunt Di began to sing. The two women took turns to sing for nearly ten minutes, creating soon a sense of competing with each other by improvising the most auspicious verses they could. The atmosphere became even more active. Other women gathered and cheered them up. The casual competition ended as the first women could not handle the baby's temper, and rushed home to feed him dinner. The playful moment ignited another round of singing by some of the other women gathered. However, as the climax had already gone, the singing did not draw as much attention. Events like this occasionally happened. Uncle Huang (2016), in his early seventies, is a frequent goer to temple fairs. Except that he is a devout believer in *Guanyin*¹⁸ and other local gods and goddesses, he also enjoys the improvisational singing with other temple goers.

The number of *muyuge*-related expressions reflects the wide range of social functions of singing in everyday life in Dongguan. However, there are not any efficient terms to properly frame people's daily expression and discussion of the singing practices. 'Singing songs' as an expression is too all-inclusive that it actually dissolves the unique meanings of the local practice especially when numerous modern and popular singing and songs flood into the city's cultural and social life. Uncle Chen (2014), in his eighties, is also an enthusiast for 'singing songs and songbooks'. Not surprisingly, he never heard of '*muyuge*' or '*muyushu*'. During our conversation, he even seldom used the expression of 'songbook'. Instead, he tended to refer to his songbooks as 'this stuff' or 'these things' ('*nei-dik-je*' in

¹⁸ Guanyin, also *guanshiyin*, is a bodhisattva, namely 'goddess of mercy'. It is followed by many Chinese even though they are not Buddhists.

Cantonese). A clear signifier of the 'songs' sung in local everyday life is absent. Due to the lack of a commonly accepted expression and concept, it is difficult to discuss or talk about the practice. The unspeakable status hinders its visibility, not to mention transmission, to younger generations. My own experience is a typical example. Although I grew up with my grandmother's singing and I am familiar with the tunes, I never knew what it was or even thought of asking what it was¹⁹. With the publicity of intangible cultural heritage, *muyuge* as a formal expression has gradually become known to the local people. Now several new questions arose with this publicity. Why does *muyuge* become the official expression? How does *muyuge* as a term re-organise the knowledge of local practices, and how does it re-shape people's practices of local singing? The rest of the chapter seeks to answer these questions by tracing the emergence of the term in the past century.

1.2 Formalising the term '*muyuge*'

General introduction of several basic terms

Before tracing the history of terminology, I will first briefly introduce the general use of several terms in the current cultural context in Guangdong.

- *Muyu* literally means wooden fish. It is more popularly known as a kind of Buddhist percussion instrument. In this thesis, *muyu* refers to a kind of Cantonese *quyi*, or narrative singing. To some extent, it equals with *muyuge*. In some context, it specifically refers to the narrative singing style in

¹⁹ Throughout my fieldwork from 2014 to 2016, I also did informal tests among local young people in Dongguan. I played a pre-recorded audio to them. Almost all of them were familiar with the tunes and were able to associate it to certain daily practices, like senior family members' singing songbooks, worshipping, wedding and even funerals. But few of them could tell what these songs were.

Cantonese opera. In the early 20th century, *muyu* was absorbed into the performance of Cantonese opera (Yung, 1989). According to my observation, many people nowadays know of *muyu* from the stage of Cantonese opera rather than everyday practices.

- *Muyuge*, wooden fish song, is considered as a kind of Cantonese narrative singing, which I will have a more thorough discussion. Generally, it does not refer to *muyu* of the operatic forms.

- *Muyushu*, wooden fish book, is the umbrella term of songbooks for several kinds of Cantonese singing, including *muyuge*, *nanyin* and *longzhou*²⁰. The same text of *muyushu* can be performed respectively in the tunes of *muyu*, *nanyin* and *longzhou* (Ng, 1989). It is also considered as a genre of speaking and singing literature (Guan, 2009).

The singing practice without a name

The origin of *muyuge* as a practice and a name for the practice is nearly impossible to trace. Related conjectures and argumentations are made and built up intermittently since the early 20th century. As to the origin of *muyuge* as a practice, there are mainly two conjectures. One suggests a historical connection with the circulation of Buddhism. Due to the literal meaning of ‘*muyu*’, a number of scholars

²⁰ The concept of *muyushu* and *muyuge* used to cause confusion in academic studies. The mainland Chinese scholar Tan Zhengbi (Tan & Tan, 1982, p. 1) equalled *muyushu* to *muyuge*. He also claims that the longer length *muyushu* are *nanyin*, while the shorter ones are *longzhou*. Tan’s definition was contested by a number of Cantonese-speaking researchers. *Muyuge*, *nanyin* and *longzhou* are similar in literary forms, but distinctive in singing due to their respective performing accents, rhythms and melodies. However, Tan was a researcher based in Shanghai, and was thus impossible to access audio archive or empirical experiences of these performances during the 1970s and 1980s. Therefore, it is understandable that Tan, mainly based on textual archive, made such a definition. Nevertheless, Tan’s studies of *muyuge* is still an important academic reference for later scholars.

believed that the practice was derived from the Buddhist percussion instrument wooden fish, which monks use when they chant sutra and other Buddhist texts (Ma, 1929; Li, 1958; Xu, 1958; Cai, 1978; Tan & Tan, 1982). Also, Zheng Zhenduo (1984) noticed the similar literary structure between *muyushu* and *bianwen* of Tang Dynasty (618-907). *Bianwen* was a form of storytelling that had been used by monks to disseminate Buddhist sutra to ordinary people. It combined verses and prose in literary structure, and the performance also contains both singing and speaking. Apart from moral and religious preaching, people also used this form to tell secular stories for entertainment. It was considered as a prototype of Chinese narrative singing. Zheng's argument of the *bianwen* origin was adopted by many later scholars and gave weight to categorising *muyuge* as a kind of narrative singing. The other assumption holds that *muyuge* was originated from the indigenous Cantonese singing *xianshuige* (salted water song). *Xianshuige*, also called *dange* (the boat people song), is the song sung by people who had lived and worked on boats by the sea and the Pearl River in Guangdong (Tan & Tan, 1982; Ren, 2010). This assumption is supported by poems and literature of the late Ming and early Qing²¹ dynasties. However, for either assumption, there is not enough evidence to reach a solid conclusion.

Although the practice of *muyuge* is believed to have existed for hundreds of years, expressions such as '*muyu*', '*muyuge*' or '*muyushu*' were not found until the late Ming and Qing dynasty. According to the relevant archive, *muyuge* was also called *moyuge* (literally 'catching fish song') and *muyuge* (literally 'the bathing song'). The three expressions are similar in Cantonese pronunciation, but none was claimed to

²¹ For example, a poem from the early Qing poet Wang Shizhen (1634-1711) writes 'railings of the boats dye the water red; people on the boats compete to sing *muyuge*' (in Chinese, '两岸画栏红照水, 蟹船争唱木鱼歌') (cited from Tan, 1982).

be official. The historical literature gave important hints of how *muyuge* had been practiced in relation to identities of practitioners, performing occasions, places, instruments, etc²². The literary documentations indicate that *muyuge* was already a popular folk practice before the mid-19th century, though no evidence shows it was formally defined as a singing genre or a specific practice.

Regarding the textual form of *muyuge*, the emergence of *muyushu* as a term that names it was also very late. The earliest use of songbook, instead of *muyushu*, is found in the writing of the early Qing writer Zhong Yingxue (also named as Zhong Daicang, 1683-1768) and Zhu Guangceng (early Qing). Some three hundred years ago, Zhong and Zhu did an unprecedented act to write and recommend a songbook *The Floral Writing Paper* to the educated elite class. The reason that made Zhong and Zhu's recommendation unusual was that literati were not supposed to be fond of songbooks as songbooks represented underclass and vulgarity. As Zhu (1985) described in the preface, he was sneered at by other literati because he wrote about a work of songbook. The jeerer said, 'it is nothing but a go-bun, something even the village boys and vulgar women could read. Why should we, the literati, waste time on even the most inferior of ballads?' Zhu thus became determined to correct the bias. However, their strategy was not to recommend the songbook as songbook *per se*, but to promote it as classic literature. Therefore, they avoided engraving the texts with punctuation like normal songbooks did. The purpose was

²² The literature includes 1) Kuang Lu (1604-1650), 'Plucking *pipa*, came the sound of *muyu*; strumming *qin*, flew the smell of wine.' Chinese, , '琵琶弹木鱼, 锦瑟传香蚁' in '婆猴戏韵学宫体诗'; 2) Zhu Yizun's (1629-1709) poem, 'the singing of mo-jyu hasn't yet ended, while the cooling moon already rises from the forest '摸鱼歌未阕, 凉月出林间' (《曝书亭集》卷三《东官书所见》); 3) Qu Dajun (1630-1696), 'A New Account of Guangdong'; 4) Li Tiaoyuan (1734-1803), 'Cantonese Folk Songs' ('粤风'); 5) Wu Qi (the early Qing), 'Cantonese Folk Songs after Jiuge' ('粤风续九'); 6) Luo Tianchi (early Qing), *Wushan Zhilin* ('五山志林'). (cited from Tan, 1982, Yang, 2005 and Ng, 1989)

to 'differentiate it from the rest songbooks in the world' (Zhu, 1985). Zhong (1985) stated that he would absolutely not read *the Floral Writing Paper* in the way of reading songbook; rather, he read it in the way he read *Zhuangzi* and *Records of the Grand Historian*²³. He stressed that *the Floral Writing Paper* was a book of no association to village boys or vulgar women. Zhu and Zhong attempted to make it acceptable to the literati class by singling it out from other songbooks and aligning it with traditional classical masterpieces.

Thanks to their effort, *the Floral Writing Paper* became the earliest known songbook. The earliest found copy of the songbook was proven to be published in the late Ming and early Qing. In terms of literature value and story structure, *the Floral Writing Paper* is sophisticated (Yang, 2006). It could be inferred that the form of go-bun must have already been popular for a long time. However, rarely has the term '*muyushu*' been found in the Ming and Qing literature. Throughout Zhu and Zhong's articles, no traces of '*muyuge*', or '*muyushu*' are found, either. This indicates that songbook, rather than *muyushu*, was a popular expression. I further infer that the term *muyu* and other related expressions were not widely used by both literati and ordinary people of the Ming and Qing. Even though expressions like *muyuge* and *moyuge* sporadically appeared in poems and proses, they were unstable and informal. They might be terms that people used with tacit consensus but had never been officially recognised. The condition of the practice without a name acquiesced in overt disdain and neglect for the songbooks. Compared with classic literature and traditional elite culture, songbooks were of little value of in-depth studies.

²³ Classic masterpieces from ancient China.

The commercial, political and scholarly adoptions of *muyuge* in the early 20th century

From the late Qing to the Republican period, expressions in relation to ‘*muyu*’ began to take shape. There are three possible reasons. Firstly, the development of urban life bred out new genres of narrative singings, and specific terms were in need to distinguish one from another. Second, commercial and revolutionary propaganda adopted local literary and musical genres thus making them better known to a wider audience. Third, during the folklore movement from the late 1910s to 1930s, *muyuge* was ‘rediscovered’ and introduced to the Chinese scholarly world as a kind of folk literature.

During the Qing period, several other Cantonese narrative singing genres began to take shape, including *nanyin*, *longzhou* and *yue’ou*. These genres, especially *nanyin* and *longzhou*, are similar to *muyuge* in literary structure. However, the singing and performance vary a lot in terms of performing accents, instruments and performing occasions. Based on the assumption that musical forms are generally evolved and developed from a simpler to a complex form, some scholars (leung, 1988; Ng, 1989; Ou, 1995) believed that they were derived from the more ‘primitive’ *muyuge*. The emergence of these genres was closely associated with the social and economic development of the particular historical time. For instance, it is generally believed that *longzhou* (the dragon boat song) emerged during the Qianlong period (1735-1796) of the Qing dynasty. *Longzhou* performers also nicknamed ‘the gentle beggar’ (Cai, 1978), with a woodcut dragon boat in hand and a set of gong and drum on the neck, performed and asked for money while singing and walking along the street. Compared with *muyuge*, the musical form of *longzhou* is more specific with shorter length and stronger rhythms. *Nanyin* (the southern tune) performance could also be found on the streets in the past, but brothels in the late Qing and

early Republican period were the more popular hub for its development. According to Leung Pui-chee (1988, pp. 31-34), there used to be three competing schools in brothels in Guangzhou, the Yangzhou school, the Chaozhou school and the Guangzhou school. In order to attract customers, the Guangzhou school worked on existing narrative singing genres, including *muyuge*, *longzhou*, Chaozhou and Yangzhou music, and developed the new genre of *nanyin*. With the involvement of literati and well-educated officials, *nanyin* became more sophisticated in both writing and singing. Musical instruments of *nanyin* are more diverse, including *saxian*, *zheng* (also called the Chinese zither, a plucked string instrument), *dongxiao* (a kind of vertical bamboo flute), *pipa* (a four-string plucked instrument) and the like. Similar to *nanyin*, the birth of *yue'ou* (the Cantonese ballad) also stemmed from the prosperous entertainment and brothel industry in the late Qing. *Yue'ou* is generally shorter in length and contains more colloquial expression. It is rather flexible in rhythmic and tonal patterns, and does not confine to the seven-syllable based verse structure. The popularity of these genres, together with *muyuge*, composed of a diverse and richer spectrum of Cantonese narrative singing.

The development of Cantonese Opera in the early 20th century brought in new publicity for Cantonese narrative singing. Cantonese opera had absorbed and evolved from a variety of operatic styles during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Before the 1920s, Cantonese Opera was mainly performed in the 'official language of the stage', also called *zhongzhouyin*, which was mostly based on northern Chinese dialects. Between the years of 1921 to 1927, the stage official language was gradually replaced by Standard Cantonese. The musical and tonal styles of the stage official language did not fit with Cantonese. Therefore, various genres of Cantonese

narrative singing were introduced into the repertory of Cantonese opera (Ou, 1995). As is absorbed into the operatic repertory, the performances of narrative singing were reciprocally influenced by *banghuang* music of traditional operas and artistically refined due to stage presentation. Therefore, the staged *muyu*, *nanyin* and *longzhou* are distinctive from their original styles (Ou, 1995). The exposure in Cantonese Opera expanded the public reputation and even preserved the basic music styles of these genres. Moreover, as part of the operatic repertory, books on Cantonese opera would specifically introduce the musical and literary forms of narrative singing, especially the more frequently used *nanyin* and *muyu*²⁴. In the past three decades, many people know of *muyu*, *longzhou* and *nanyin* through Cantonese Opera rather than the actual narrative singing performance (Yung, 1989, p. 139). Therefore, I argue that the incorporation of narrative singing genres into Cantonese Opera has formalised the categories of these co-related narrative singing genres.

It is also during the early decades of the Republican period that many songbooks began to use subtitles of '*nanyin*' and '*longzhou*' on the front pages²⁵. There were also a small number of front pages titled with '*muyu*', though the number is much smaller compared to that of '*nanyin*' and '*longzhou*'. It is noteworthy that subtitles

²⁴ See Bell Yung (1989), *Cantonese Opera, Performance as Creative Process*; and Chen Zhuoying (1984), *Studies of the Writing and Singing of Cantonese Music*. Also see video link, Wang Yuesheng teaching *Muyu*, *Nanyin* and *Longzhou*, etc, in <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvZKDzX2SGN2tJndDpmOKTw>

²⁵ The titles of '*nanyin*', '*longzhou*' and '*muk-jyu*' on song books appeared relatively late in history. Yang (2005b) finds out that songbooks with '*nanyin*' were all machine printed in Guangzhou. The first printing machine was introduced into Guangzhou by Guangzhou Ng Gwai Tong publishing house in the early years of the Republican period. Therefore, titles of '*nanyin*' should had emerged after the early years of the Republican period. Moreover, this period coincided with the introduction of local narrative singing genres into Cantonese Opera.

usually did not match the contents inside. A good number of songbooks with titles of ‘*nanyin*’ are actually *muyu* or *longzhou* pieces, vice versa²⁶. Yang (2005b) and Mai (2009) observe that the seemingly random use of subtitles might be related to the tactics of promotion of songbooks. In order to attract readers, many printing shops titled the booklets ‘*nanyin*’, ‘*longzhou*’ or ‘*muyu*’. Mai (2009) notes that booksellers might choose subtitles according to their judgement of the most popular genre at that period. If *nanyin* was taking the trend, publishers would highlight songbooks with ‘*nanyin*’ regardless of the actual contents. There are two possible reasons that could explain the interchangeable frontpage titles. Firstly, although the musical and performance styles of *muyu*, *longzhou*, *nanyin* and *yue’ou* are distinct from each other, their literary structures look similar. It is not easy to distinguish a piece of *muyu* from *nanyin* or *longzhou* merely by text, and vice versa. Secondly, as inferred by Yang (2005) and Mai (2009), the majority of songbook readers were average people who would like to appreciate story plots rather than the accuracy of titles. Despite the random use, songbook titles in this period indicate that ‘*muyu*’ as an expression was in use in society. However, there is no clear clue to indicate whether *muyushu* was a popular expression then.

Between the juncture of the late Qing and the early Republic, dialects including Cantonese became a symbol of revolution. Through dialects, revolutionists attempted to express and explored their ideas and visions of a new country (Cheng, 2006, p. 163). A lot of dialect-written newspapers, textbooks and fictions emerged since the early 20th century. *Muyushu*, including *muyu*, *nanyin*, *longzhou* and *yue’ou*, were frequently found in local newspapers in Guangzhou, Hong Kong and

²⁶ A *Sad Traveller* is the most popular *nanyin* piece. Mai (2009) even found a songbook titled as ‘A *Sad Traveller, Longzhouge*’. Contents inside are nearly the same as the *nanyin* copy.

Maucau (Leung, 1978; Ng, 1989; Cheng, 2006). The pieces were mostly short, focusing on political satire, promotion of modern life style and revolutionary thoughts. For example, from 1922 to 1925, there used to be a daily *muyu* column in the culture page of *Gonghe Bao (the Republic Paper)* in Guangzhou. According to the literary forms, each piece in the column was entitled as 'news songs', 'revolutionary folk *longzhou*', 'satire *longzhou*', 'revolutionary *nanyin*', etc (Ng, 1989, pp. 132-133). The political attention to *muyushu* did not last for long. For revolutionists in the late Qing, dialect writing was an effective way to subvert the Qing Empire and distribute revolutionary thoughts among common people (Cheng, 2006, p. 160). During this period, vernacular languages, local dialects did contribute to building up the modern notion of nation-state and provided easier access for common people to learn about them. However, once the new regime was established and its power consolidated, the formal use of dialects posed threats to the new authority, and was thus suppressed (Cheng, 2006, p. 162). During the New Cultural Movement, the vernacular Chinese based on Beijing-dialect replaced classic Chinese to be the official written language. As a result, dialects of other regions were not encouraged. The experiment of adopting *muyushu* for political use was cooled down accordingly.

Thanks to the burgeoning of folksong collecting movement and folklore studies, *muyushu* was 'rediscovered' again, and included into the system of Chinese folk literature. In 1927, writer and historian Zheng Zhenduo (1898-1958) published an article to introduce his research findings of the Chinese novels and drama collections in Paris National Library, among which he discovered *the Floral Writing Paper*²⁷. Zheng (1927) did not identify the volume as anything connected to '*muyu*'

²⁷ The copy Zheng Zhenduo mentioned is also the earliest found copy of *the Floral Writing Paper*. It

yet. He described the found text as a kind of Cantonese songs, written in the form of *tanci*²⁸ and mixed with Cantonese dialects. Zheng's discovery posed an interesting contrast to Zhong Yingxue and Zhu Guangceng's recommendation two hundred years earlier. Zheng Zhenduo did not think highly of Zhong Yingxue's commentating skills, but recognised Zhong's contribution of entitling the songbook as *the Eighth Scholar's Book* and juxtaposing it with other well-known Chinese *xiaoshuo* masterpieces, such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Water Margin* and *the Story of the Western Wing*. Zheng states that Zhong Yingxue was the first person in history to value *tanci*, a kind of folk culture undervalued by the elite class for centuries, as serious literature. Although both Zhong Yingxue and Zheng Zhenduo aimed to canonise *the Floral Writing Paper* as literature, their approaches were exactly the opposite. Zhong did not recognise the value of songbook. He attempted to value *the Floral Writing Paper* by removing its trace as a songbook. To the contrary, Zheng, by making use of Zhong's words, aimed to value *tanci* and other folk literature as they were. Eleven years later in 1938, Zheng published *History of Chinese Folk Literature* (1984). It was the first academic attempt to systematically historicise and categorise Chinese folk literature. In this book, *myu* was contextualised in Chinese literature and brought forth to the attention of modern Chinese academia for the first time. According to its literary and performance form,

was published by Jingjing Zhai, a printing shop in Dongguan, in Kangxi period (1662-1722). According to Zhong Yingxue's comments in this copy, there had already been a number of other copies of this book circulated in Dongguan and nearby areas (Yang, 2006).

²⁸ *Tanci*, meaning 'plucking rhymes', is a genre of narrative singing which is popular in the lower Yangtze River Delta area. The literary form is based on seven-syllable verses. There are two categories of *tanci*. One is orally performed as an entertainment, and the other is fictions written in the form of seven-syllable rhymed verses. The latter was characterised by the large number of women writers in the Qing dynasty (Li, 2015).

Zheng categorises *muyu* as a kind of *tanci*, which is widely accepted and adopted by later scholars²⁹.

Muyushu, including *muyu*, *longzhou* and *nanyin*, and related studies also appeared in folklorist periodicals founded in the heyday of the folksong collecting movement. Based on the spirit of scientific investigation, the *muyushu* pieces published by scholars were mostly original pieces from common people. *Folklore Weekly*, founded in Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou in 1928, had listed over 250 *muyushu* titles (Leung, 1978, p. 240). Sporadic articles introducing *muyushu* were also found in academic journals. For example, Ma Yijian's essay in *Folklore Weekly* and Li Guoxiang's in *Fudan Shizhong Quarterly*. Studies in this period was limited, relatively superficial, and focused on *muyushu* as a kind of folk literature.

The significance of folklore movement was well recognised by later scholars. However, at that particular historical moment, the movement had raised great controversies and suspicion since its birth. With the introduction of western modern thoughts, folksongs and folk customs were considered as old and harmful which should be eradicated. The nationalist government launched a series of campaigns including 'Superstition Destruction Movement' in 1928-1929 and the New Life Movement in 1934. Folklore scholars underwent hard time sustaining the

²⁹ Guan Jinhua (2009, pp. 29-31) contests the categorization of *muyu* as *tanci*. She observes that the performing forms of *muyu* and *tanci* vary a lot. The performance of *tanci* relies on string instruments, while the performance of *muyushu* inclines to percussion instruments. According to instrument composition, *muyushu* should not be a kind of *tanci*. Guan's argument confuses the concepts of *muyushu* and the performances of *muyushu*. *Muyushu* is a kind of literature, while *muyuge* is a kind of performance. As folk literature, the literary structure of *muyushu* is of the same system with *tanci*. In terms of performance, *muyushu* can be performed in different Cantonese singing styles, *muyuge*, *nanyin* and *longzhou*. *Muyuge* is often accompanied with *sanxian*, a string instrument. *Longzhou* performers use percussion instruments. Instruments for *nanyin* are more flexible and diverse. Guan takes the performance of *muyushu* too generally and makes an inaccurate argument.

movement against such social and political pressures and strained economic conditions (Hung, 1985, pp. 158-160). As the anti-Japanese War broke out in 1937, the movement came to an end. As a kind of dialect writing and regional folk literature, *muyushu* comprised a small fraction of these movements. As the campaigns and movements ended, the interest in *muyushu* ceased. As the folklore movement was an academic practice, the discussion of *muyushu* had little effect in local people's everyday practice.

Studies of *muyushu* went quiet after the 1940s. According to the available documentations, there were only three related books published in Guangdong, the revised version of *the Floral Writing Paper* by Chen Ruheng, the revised version of *Storiess of Two Lotuses* by Xue Shan and *the History of Cantonese Narrative and Folk Singing* by Li hanshu (refer to table 1). However, neither book roused much attention. Worse, as Leung (1978, p. 242) observed, neither *muyushu* nor *muyuge* was included in major textbooks or outlines of the Chinese literature or folk literature courses at several prestigious universities in Beijing, Shanghai and the north-eastern provinces. From the 1960s to the mid-1970s, related studies came to a complete halt due to the Cultural Revolution. However, outside of mainland China, *muyushu* was still kept in the system of Chinese folk literature. Though in a small scale, *muyushu* was included and introduced in several books on folk literature published in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Besides, *muyushu* attracted the attention from sinologists and sinology centres from the US, the UK and Japan (Leung, 1978, p. 242). Funded and supported by the Centre of Asian Studies of University of Hong Kong, Leung Pui-chee published the first monograph of *muyushu* in 1978. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, studies of *muyushu* and *muyuge* resumed scatteredly in the mainland.

Although small in quantity, the studies of *muyushu* and Cantonese narrative singing during the 1940s to 1970s have further shaped the meanings of *muyu*, *muyushu* and *muyuge*. Scholars approached *muyushu* and *muyuge* from two domains. One is literature and archive, and the other is the performing form. Compared with the 1920s-30s, both approaches of this period were more clearly structured and oriented. From the literary approach, Tan Zhengbi divided his research into separate parts: definition, origins and development, forms and contents, authors and publication, and the performance forms. Leung Pui-chee's study outline was similar. He also conducted interviews with Ceoi Jing-kai, the last *muyushu* publisher Ng Gwai Tong in Hong Kong, and provided valuable historical details of the engravings and publishing of *muyushu* in the late Qing and the Republican period. *Muyu* as a performing form was discussed in detail by two seasoned Cantonese opera scriptwriters, Cai Yanfen and Chen Zhuoying respectively. Both Cai and Chen deliberately distinguished the three similar genres in relation to different rhythm patterns, musical structures, singing styles and etc., and offered suggestions for writing proper lyrics. The summaries of musical regulations further consolidate *muyu*, *nanyin* and *longzhou* as independent narrative singing genres. It is noteworthy that both Chen and Cai used '*muyu*' instead of '*muyuge*', which is more frequently used in Cantonese opera.

Table 1 Books and thesis related to *muyushu* and *muyuge* from the 1950s to 1980s

Author	Title	Year	Place	Note
Chen Zhuoying	<i>Basic Knowledge of Cantonese Music Writing and Singing (Yuequ Xiechang Changshi)</i>	1952	Guangzhou	Chapter 2 introduces the writing and singing of Guangdong ballads, including

				<i>nanyin, longzhou, muyu, yue'ou and xianshuige.</i>
Chen Ruheng (Reviser)	<i>The Floral Writing Paper, the Eighth Scholar the Floral Writing Paper, Two Volumes (Huan Jian Ji, Diba Caizi Hua Jian Ji, Erjuan)</i>	1958	Guangzhou	
Xue Shan (Reviser)	<i>Stories of Two Lotuses, 4 Volumes (Er He Hua Shi, Si Juan)</i>	1958	Guangzhou	
Li Hanshu	<i>History of Cantonese Speaking and Singing Folksongs (Yuediao Shuochang Minge Yangge)</i>	1958	Guangzhou	
Feng Mingzhi	<i>Chinese Folk Literature (Zhongguo Minjian Wenxue Jianghua)</i>	1958, first edition; second edition in 1978	Hong Kong	
Xu Fuqin	<i>Studies of Guangdong Folk Literature (Guangdong Minjian Wenxue de Yanjiu)</i>	1958	Hong Kong	
Lou Zikuang, Zhu Jiefan	<i>China's Folk Literature in the Past Fifty Years (Wushi Nian lai Zhi Zhongguo Su Wenxue)</i>	1963	Taipei	
Cai Yanfen	<i>The Writing and Composition of Nanyin, Longzhou and Muyu (Nanyin, Longzhou he Muyu de Bianxie)</i>	1978	Guangzhou	
Tan Zhengbi, Tan Xun	<i>Catalogues of Muyuge and Chaozhouge (Muyuge chaozhouge xulu)</i>	1982, first edition	Beijing	

Xue Shan (Reviser)	<i>Stories of Two Lotuses (Er He Hua Shi)</i>	1985	Beijing	
Xue Shan (Reviser)	<i>the Floral Writing Paper (Hua Jian Ji)</i>	1985	Beijing	
Chen Zhuoying	<i>Basic Knowledge of Cantonese Song Writing and Singing (revised version);(Yuequ Xiechang Changshi (Xiuding ben))</i> ³⁰	1984; 1985(Part2)	Guangzhou	
Xue Baokun	<i>Chinese Quyí; (Zhongguo de Quyí)</i>	1987	Beijing	The chapter of 'Brief introduction of Guangdong <i>muyuge</i> ' pp.177-183
Ng Shui Hing	<i>Studies of Muyushu, Songbooks of Cantonese Speaking and Singing Performance (Guangfuhua Shuochang Ben Muyushu de Yanjiu)</i>	1989	Hong Kong	PhD thesis

1.3 Intangible cultural heritage and the term

The studies of *muyushu* and *muyuge* before the 2000s were conducted mainly within the scholarly field and thus had limited impact on the actual everyday practices. However, the next wave of studies of beginning from the early 2000s has closer alignments with the government and Chinese cultural heritage policies. The new trend is attributed to the fever of Chinese traditional cultures and associated with top-down supports from the state for the studies of traditional and folk culture. Since Kunqu Opera was enlisted as one of *the Masterpieces of the Oral and*

³⁰ The book was divided into two parts and published in 1984 and 1985 respectively. In 2010, a newly revised version of Chen's work by his son Chen Zhongyan was published under a new title of *Chen Zhuoying's Studies on Writing and Singing Cantonese Music*.

Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, the protection of national and folk cultures has been put on a nationwide agenda. In 2004, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance jointly released a guiding scheme for protecting national and folk cultures³¹. The Ministry of Finance formally included the project of protecting national and folk cultures in the national financial budget. A total budget of 25 million RMB (about 3 million USD) was made especially for the folk culture project during 2003 and 2004 (Liu , 2004). In 2004, China also ratified the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* to accelerate and systemise the protection of national and folk cultures. Policies from the central government have ignited widespread engagement and brought about numerous projects across the country. National and regional conferences and exhibitions about national cultures and cultural heritages sprung up since 2001. In 2002 and 2003, the China Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and Sun-Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou set up research centres of intangible cultural heritage (Kang, 2011, p. 328). Research of folk cultures has been on the rapid rise as well. Unlike studies of the 20th century which were mainly initiated by the intellectual circle, the current wave of scholarship is largely ignited and supported by the government. A number of master and doctoral theses in the past 15 years were produced on these topics. Also, research projects supported by national, provincial and municipal academic research funds sprung up. Grounded in diverse backgrounds, studies of *muyuge* in the new millennium extend to the fields of literature³², musicology,

³¹ 'Notice about the implementation of the protecting project of national and folk cultures' ('Guanyu shishi Zhongguo Minzu *Minjian* Wenhua Baohu Gongcheng de Tongzhi')

³² As to catalogues , see Guan Jinhua (2009), Mai Shuxian (2009), Zhang Xiaoqi (2014), Zeng Chimin and Zhu Peijian (2009). Discussions on general topics of *muyuge*, see Yang Baolin, Ren Baiqiang (2010), Guan Jinhua (2009), Zhang Xiaoqi (2014) etc. Studies of classics of *muyushu* concentrated on *the Floral Writing Paper*, see Leung Pui-chee (Leung, 1998), Yang Baolin (2006) and the like. *The*

ethnomusicology³³, cross-cultural³⁴ studies and other humanity disciplines³⁵. There are also individual studies, mostly done by local researchers such as Yang Baolin and Zhang Tiewen in Dongguan, Chen Yongxin and Ren Baiqiang in Foshan. Born in the 1930s and 1940s, most of these scholars did not have institutional academic training, but have been involved in studies of local literature, folk customs and history for many decades. Their studies have been integrated into regional cultural resources and narratives.

Muyuge and *muyushu* studies show an increasingly strong inclination of local focus. Scholars tend to relate *muyuge* and *muyushu* as a local cultural resource. In the past decade, Dongguan, Foshan³⁶ and Wuchuan³⁷ (another two cities in Guangdong Province) have witnessed research in *muyushu* and *muyuge* done in

Story of Two Lotus has attracted comparatively less attention. Liang Chunyan (2007) has an essay on *the Story of Two Lotus* and the literature of scholars and beauties. Yang Baolin says he is revising *the Story of Two Lotus* in recent years in several formal and informal occasions, but no related essays have been published.

³³ Huang Qiong and Liang Baozhong (2014; 2015; 2013) conducted a research project funded by the Qingmiao Project of Guangdong ‘the Fieldwork research and studies of Dongguan *muyuge*’, and have published several separate essays so far. Li Dan (2015) also published an essay concerning the musical aspects of *muyuge* under the project of ‘the study of China’s traditional *Quyí* Xuanjuan and Baojuan’ funded by the Ministry of Education.

³⁴ Translation and cross-cultural studies are concentrated on the translation and dissemination of *the Floral Writing Paper*. See Wang Yan (2014)

³⁵ Zhu Jia (Zhu, 2009), He Yan (2016) and Ren Baiqiang (2010) also attempt to study *muyuge* in the theoretical approach of social sciences and humanities.

³⁶ *Muyushu* research in Foshan, see Zeng Chimin and Zhu Peijian (2009), an archival study of the *muyushu* collection in Foshan Library, Foshan Museum and Shunde Museum; Ren Baiqiang (2010)’s work on the history of the performance of *muyuge* in Guangdong; Chen Yongxin (2005; 2009)’s books on *longzhou* and *nanyin*.

³⁷ Studies in Wuchuan area focus on *muyuge*. See Zhu Jia’s (2009) master dissertation with an ethnographic approach to the local blind women singers, and Yang Shifan’s (2017) articles on *muyuge* performance in Wuchuan.

relation to their respective regional cultures. Up until now, studies of *muyuge* in Dongguan are the most extensive. Yang Baolin, a retired high school Chinese teacher, is the most important figure in discovering and organising the resources of *muyuge* and *muyushu* in Dongguan. He (Yang, 2002) published the first essay about *muyuge* in 2002, arguing that Dongguan had been the centre of *muyuge* practice and *muyushu* publishing. For instance, he found out that a number of slangs and dialects used in *muyushu* were unique in Dongguan, and that many stories were situated in local villages, towns and temples. Among the Dongguan-originated pieces include the best-known *the Floral Writing Paper* and *Stories of Two Lotuses* (2005; 2006). Yang also believes that Dongguan was the hub of *muyushu* publishing, consisting of 16 *muyushu* printing shops since the late Ming Dynasty³⁸. Yang's research becomes an important knowledge source to build up Dongguan's authority of *muyushu* and *muyuge*. Zhang Tiewen is another well-known folklore scholar and collector in Dongguan. He began consciously collecting copies of *muyushu* and taking audio records of *muyu* singing from the local blind singers since 1981 (Liang, 2008). He now owns the largest private collection of *muyushu* of the city. He took charge in revising and archiving the *muyushu* catalogue for the People's Cultural Centre of Dongguan³⁹. Based on Zhang's research, the local cultural centre published a series of four books of Dongguan *Muyushu* from 2006 to 2009. The book series was financially supported by the municipal government, and

³⁸ Among the list, there is whose publication of *the Floral Writing Paper* was collected by the Paris National Library and discovered by Zheng Zhenduo in 1928, as well as Cuiying Lou, a printing shop and bookstore with a history of over 150 years from 1807 to the 1950s (Yang, 2005a).

³⁹ The People's Cultural Centre is a public cultural service sector affiliated to the cultural system of the Chinese government. Cultural Centres spread in cities and counties over the country. The People's Cultural Hall of Dongguan was re-titled as Dongguan Cultural Hall in March 2010. Later chapters will have more arguments.

was taken to be a response to the 2004 scheme of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance (People's Cultural Centre of Dongguan, 2007).

Scholarly research on *muyuge* and *muyushu* went into the view of local public after the mid-2000s. With this surge in the state-funded projects and studies, the terms of '*muyuge*' and '*muyushu*' became known to the ordinary people. The result was largely attributed to the nationwide promotion of intangible cultural heritage. As the cyber space has become an increasingly important space for knowledge production and public communication since the late 1990s, I turn to the Internet to check the popularity and the trend of use of the terms '*muyuge*' and '*muyushu*'. I mainly investigate with Baidu.com, the largest online search engine in mainland China. My search on Baidu spans from 2000, the year Baidu was established as well as the year before the fever of intangible cultural heritage, to 2015 when the term *muyuge* and *muyushu* already gained local acceptance and recognition. Based on online observation and analysis of the contents and trends of *muyushu* and *muyuge* in media, I argue that the (relative) boom of *muyuge* in online posts was largely caused by the intangible cultural heritage campaign and the fever of cultural tourism.

The period marked by the year 2005 and 2006 was a critical threshold. Before 2005, there were only a few related online articles and posts. In 2000, there was no relevant search result. From 2001 to 2004, data related to '*muyuge*' and '*muyushu*' was scattered in news reports of local newspapers and overseas Chinese newspapers. However, '*muyuge*' and '*muyushu*' rarely made up the main topic, but was tangentially mentioned to introduce other folk culture and traditional practices (Yan, 2002; Xinhuanet, 2001; Liu & Hong, 2003; He, 2003). Also, relevant results were mostly from state-owned news agencies and newspaper controlled by local

CCP committees. China ratified the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in December 2004. Less than four months later in March 2005, the State Council promulgated an official proposal of strengthening the preservation of China's intangible cultural heritage. Since then, the publicity and surveys of intangible heritage spread all over the country. Online information of *muyushu* and *muyuge* have significant changed in terms of quantities, sources, contents, and focuses.

Search results related to *muyushu* and *muyuge* increased in 2006 and registered with an explosive rise in 2007. Apart from government-related sources, a large number of reports came from popular newspapers. Reports from these newspapers tended to provide more detailed histories and local *muyuge* stories. Apart from media reports, '*muyuge*' and '*muyushu*' also appeared in the emerging user-generated-contents websites⁴⁰. Diverse content sources, to some extent, indicate that the local public began to pay attention to *muyuge*.

Contents from 2005 onwards can be divided into four groups. 1) *Muyuge* as a disappearing tradition. 'Disappearing voices' and 'disappearing songs' frequently emerged (Guangzhou Daily, 2007; Wu, 2009; Wang, 2012). 2) Urgent calls and measures of rescuing and protecting *muyuge*, for example, initiating governmental projects of protecting folk cultures (Tan, 2006) and establishing a *muyuge* museum (YangCheng Evening News, 2007; Tan, 2007). 3) *Muyuge* being applied and registered in intangible cultural heritage lists (Pan, 2007; Sun0769, 2011); 4) Cultural events and cultural tourism, for instance, *muyuge* lectures, performances

⁴⁰ For example, Hudong Baike (Bolatude, 2005) and Baidu Baike, the two most popular online encyclopedia websites in mainland China, Baidu Tieba (Baimixiren, 2008), the largest online communication platform, and Baidu Knows, the question-and-answer website also provided by the company of Baidu.

integrating with *muyuge* (Li, 2006; Guangzhou Daily, 2006), towns and villages where *muyuge* could still be heard (Wang , 2009).

Ever since 2005, the publicity of *muyuge* has also been more closely associated with particular regions. A number of cities in Guangdong Province started to include *muyuge* and *muyushu* into government schemes for ‘cultural construction’, and claimed them as their regional cultural heritages. Before 2006, there was no specific indication of Dongguan’s relation to *muyuge*. However, since 2006, the majority of reports and posts directly related *muyuge* to Dongguan. In 2006, Dongguan started to prepare applications to make *muyuge* as an intangible heritage item, and began to use *muyuge* as an artistic element in government-supported performances in galas and arts competitions (Li, 2006; Tan, 2007). In 2007, *muyuge* was inscribed in the municipal intangible heritage inventory of Dongguan. Conferences and cultural events were held one after another in Dongguan in the following years, which eclipsed the popularity of *muyuge* in other Guangdong cities. Another shift between 2005 and 2006 was that the increase of ‘*muyuge*’ was more dramatic than that of ‘*muyushu*’. Among the few relevant posts and articles before 2006, the use of ‘*muyuge*’ and ‘*muyushu*’ were often mixed. As *muyuge*, rather than *muyushu*, became an intangible heritage, more attention was drawn to *muyuge*. Up until the chapter was written (March 2017), there were 96,200 results of ‘*muyuge*’ in Baidu, but only 53,600 related to ‘*muyushu*’.

The use of *muyu*-related expressions in the intangible heritage era is basically built on previous scholarly research. With strong promotion by governments of different levels and more importantly multimedia dissemination such as television, pictures, audios, and the Internet, *muyuge* and *muyushu* became ‘tangible’ for local people to relate with their own singing practices. The terms begin to enter the scope of

local people and urge them to re-organise the knowledge to local singing practices.

1.4 Rethinking *muyuge* as a *quyi* genre

This chapter investigates the development of terms related to *muyu*, *muyuge* and *muyushu* in the academic and everyday domains from the late Qing till today. In the Chinese list of the national intangible cultural heritage, *muyuge* is categorised under the umbrella term of *quyi*. The classification is similar in most official contexts. As has been analysed throughout this chapter, the legitimacy of these terms has been gradually established through its development in urban entertainment, political propaganda, and continuous academic studies in the late Qing and early Republican period. The Chinese folklore studies have shaped the structure and orientation of *muyuge* studies, and more notably, provided basic knowledge resources for the subsequent construction of *muyuge* as intangible heritage. In this concluding section, I am going to rethink *muyuge* as a *quyi* genre and re-open the discussion of *muyuge* in the context of intangible heritage.

The categorisation could be traced to Zheng Zhenduo's 'unearthing' of *muyuge* in Paris National Library in 1927. Zheng identified *muyuge* as a kind of *tanci* written in Cantonese dialect (1927), and later included it as a form of speaking and singing literature in his monograph, *the History of China's Folk Literature* (1984). According to Zheng, China's folk literature could be divided into five categories: poems, novels, operas, speaking and singing literature and entertaining essays. Among the five, 'speaking and singing literature (*jangchang wenxue*)' was a new expression to facilitate the large amount of the folk literature and practices which rarely appeared in the accounts of traditional cultural elites. Zheng stressed that speaking and singing literature had played an essential role in the history of China's folk literature. Ordinary people might not read novels or watch opera performances, but speaking

and singing literature was the key ‘spiritual food’ that ordinary people were able and willing to access. Being aware of its popularity among common people and the potential of revolutionary mobilisation, the CCP put considerable efforts in reforming and utilising the speaking and singing performances. After 1949, the CCP replaced the term ‘speaking and singing performance’ with *Quyí*. According to Wang Youlan’s study (2010), *quyí* originally meant acrobatics and jugglery performed by street artists in northern China. ‘*Qu*’ mainly referred to speaking and singing performances, while ‘*yi*’ referred to acrobats and jugglery. Shortly after taking control of Beijing in July 1949, the CCP convened the First Congress of the All-China Literary and Art Workers⁴¹. During the Congress, Zhao Shuli, the renounced left-wing writer, proposed to set up a national association for folk performing artists, including performers of storytelling, speaking and singing, acrobats and jugglery. After the conference, the National Preparatory Committee of the Improvement of *Quyí* was established. Consequently, the term of *quyí* was recognised by the literary and arts communities. During the Second Congress of Literary and Art Workers in 1953, *quyí* was re-defined specifically as singing and speaking performance with acrobats and jugglery deleted from the original categories (Wang, 2010). Therefore, the meaning of *quyí* generally coincided with that of speaking and singing literature.

Quyí is generally considered as a unique artistic form combining literature, music, and sometimes dance, drama and acrobatics (Duan, 1989; Xue, 1987). *Muyúge*, as a *quyí* genre, is recognised for its values in literature and performing skills. However, as was discussed earlier, there is a ‘grey area’ of *muyúge* difficult to define as any

⁴¹ In Chinese, 全名中华全国文学艺术工作者代表大会, abbreviated and more popularly known as 第一次文代会.

artistic genre, for instance, in casual singing activities at temple fairs, and singing practices on religious and ritualistic occasions. They are neither folk literature, nor any other kind of performing art. Rather, they are part of common people's everyday life. Therefore, in order to re-open the studies of *muyuge* and intangible heritage, this thesis resituates *muyuge* as an everyday practice, to underscore the *muyuge* practice as *quyi* in common people's daily life.

Chapter Two Periphery and the survival of *muyuge*

The previous chapter examines the historical uses of *muyu*, *muyuge* and *muyushu* as official terms to reflect the process of everyday practices being incorporated into the modern folklore knowledge system. However, this process has not changed the marginality of *muyuge*. The practice of *muyuge* has been lingering at the edge of China's dominant discourse. The marginal status had 'protected' *muyuge* from the constant social and political turmoil of the past century, while keeping the practice out and shielding its voices and images from the mainstream culture. This chapter focuses on how *muyuge* practitioners made use of the dominant discourse and thus survived the incorporation of this practice through many decades. It firstly concerns the marginality of *muyuge* and *muyushu* from the perspectives of cultural politics, commercial production models and the periphery of its practitioners and geographical location. The second section will go on to examine how *muyuge* practitioners negotiated between the marginal status of the practice and the dominant political and social control. The last part of the chapter will focus on how practitioners of local singing articulate their practices with the *muyuge* as an intangible heritage and the new dominant discourse of folk culture.

2.1 Practice of the peripheral

Central China has long been considered civilised and the origin of cultural identity of China and the Han people. Located in the far south from central China (*zhongyuan*), the Guangdong area had been considered as a barbarian place in history due to its regional differences in language, culture and customs. Cheng Meibao (2006, pp. 32-38) observes the complex and paradoxical relations between regional culture and state identity in Guangdong. The regional identity of Guangdong was built upon the state identity of China. Therefore, to justify the

authority of Guangdong culture and identity Guangdong people had to convince themselves of their cultural connection with central China. This apparently straightforward logic underscores the situation that the regional culture of Guangdong is indeed peripheral to that of central China. Based on this cultural hierarchy, non-mainstream cultural practices with strong regional characteristics such as *muyushu* and *muyuge* were considered inferior to classical Chinese literature and culture. It also explains the disdains from traditional literati to songbooks, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1. In the late Qing and early Republican period, local dialects and vernacular writing had been used as a subversive tool to establish ideas of a new state. During this period, Cantonese writing forms such as *nanyin*, *longzhou*, and *muyu* had been incorporated into the mainstream revolutionary narratives. However, this did not last for long. Once the new state regime became stable, the local cultural forms returned to the peripheral position (Cheng, 2006, pp. 162-163). The political utilisation of *muyushu* in the early 20th century has been covered in detail in Chapter 1. The rest of this section will analyse the marginal status of *muyuge* in relation to *muyushu*'s commercial production, geographical locations and the cultural hierarchy among narrative singing genres.

As a local singing practice, *muyuge* had existed for centuries. However, it was not until the late Ming⁴² Dynasty that *muyuge* became a kind of popular literature due to the emergence of the commercial production of *muyushu*. Ng Shui Hing proposes (1989, pp. 244-266) the term 'commercial folk literature'. She challenges the tendency in conceptualising folk literature since the New Cultural Movement, which believes that folk literature was orally transmitted, collectively and

⁴² The popularity of *muyushu* might happen earlier. As the earliest copy of *muyushu* discovered dates back to the Late Ming, it is generally acknowledged that *muyushu* emerged no later than the late Ming.

anonymously created, and therefore unrefined (Zheng, 1984, pp. 4-6). She argues that genres like *muyushu*, *tanci*, *guci*, to name a few, were more complicated to define as they contained both characteristics of commercial literature and folk literature. Ng captures the commercial characteristics of *muyushu*, which is echoed by the broader studies of the publishing and book culture of the late Ming and Qing dynasties (Chow, 2004; Brokaw, 2005; McDermott, 2006). Since the 18th and 19th century, the printing and publishing business thrived in urban centres and even some peripheral town areas across China. In order to gain profit, printing shops produced a diverse range of books to cater to the heterogeneous tastes and habits of the ever increasing reading public. Except for traditional classics like the Four Books and Five Classics (*sishu wujing*), popular readings made up the majority of the publications, including household encyclopedias, daily writing guides, medical manuals, calligraphy guides, vernacular and classic fictions, poetry collections, songbooks, etc (Brokaw, 2005; Chow, 2004).

Among these studies, Brokaw's study of the printing industry of Sibao⁴³ and Chow Kai-Wing's investigation of the publishing culture in early modern China are worth mentioning for their methodological insights. To demystify the assumed impression of the uniformity of China's cultural heritage, Brokaw (2005) focuses on how books were used rather than what the books expressed. Therefore, she turns to the layouts, annotations, commentaries and the marketing of books, and reveals a heterogeneous spectrum of reading practices. Likewise, Chow (2004) also pays attention to the analysis of paratexts, for instance, title pages, prefaces, postscript, fonts, spatial structure, comments and references. Paratexts provide 'a vastly expanded space for comment, dissent, and even subversion of the imperial

⁴³ A regional publishing centre located in the mountainous areas of the southern province of Fujian.

ideology as well as government policies' (Chow, 2004, p. 13). Both studies shift focus to the auxiliary constituents of the publishing process. These hidden aspects offer a richer and more diverse picture of the actual reading practices which had been camouflaged under the dominant attention to the contents of texts. Their methodological approaches also resonate with de Certeau's emphasis on 'the way of use'. According to de Certeau (1988, p. xii), consumption, or the use of products, is 'devious', 'dispersed', but 'it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly'. This is exactly where the strength of everyday practices resides. Through actual practices, the weak and the marginal manage to escape the dominant order without leaving it. This methodological approach provides insights for resituating *muyuge* and *muyushu* as everyday practices since its prosperity in the late Ming and Qing.

Muyushu became popular in the Pearl River Delta area in the Ming and Qing periods. It was part of the broader history of the printing and publishing boom during that period. In order to make profits, *muyushu* publishers aimed to reach the widest audience and strove to keep the booklets at an affordable price. They targeted not only at those well-educated, but also ordinary people who were half-literate and even non-literate. To cater to a wide range of tastes among the audience, *muyushu* contents were almost all-inclusive, ranging from romantic stories, historical and legendary stories, moral preaching texts to introductory texts about folk customs and religious rituals. Although all *muyushu* were written in vernacular Cantonese, their literary styles vary a lot. Some adopted plain and straightforward quotidian languages so that they were highly accessible for those with little education. Others were written sophisticatedly with exquisite wording

and nuanced emotional expressions⁴⁴. To keep *muyushu* at an affordable price, publishers carefully controlled the lengths of texts and the size of each booklet (Guan, 2009). All *muyushu* are kept thin from a dozen pages to around 100 pages per booklet. Long stories were often divided into several booklets. *Zejin* is a particular kind of *muyushu* tailored for short reading. Publishers extracted specific pieces, usually those more wonderful ones, from long stories and made it into independent booklets for sale.

Profit was the essential drive for *muyushu* production. The majority of its readers were common people with little education. With more interest in contents, they were not likely to care about the versions, layouts, or the accuracy of wording, which provided big potential for making profits from low-cost production (Yang, 2005). Printing technique was another key element to keep *muyushu* inexpensive. Although the more progressive movable-type printing had been available since as early as the 11th century, woodblock printing remained the dominant technique in China's printing industry until the 20th century. Woodblock printing guaranteed lower labour cost, which gave rise especially to numerous smaller-scale and economic minded publishers (McDermott, 2006, pp. 8-9). Ceoi Jing-kai, the publisher of Ng Gwai Tong in Hong Kong, recollected that they used to assign village people to engrave woodblocks (Leung, 1978). Chinese characters are pictograms. Even illiterate people were able to engrave characters the way they copy graphics. The sacrifice of low cost was the frequent appearances of wrong characters. Another advantage of woodblock print was that once a woodblock was engraved, it

⁴⁴ For more analysis of the combination of Cantonese and classical Chinese in *muyushu*, refer to Don Snow (2004, pp. 77-90) and Cheng Meibao (2006, pp. 119-127). Snow concentrates on the development of Cantonese writing while Cheng examines the cultural identities of Cantonese literati through the use of languages in local texts including *muyushu*.

could be unlimitedly reprinted without re-typesetting the blocks. Furthermore, engraved blocks could be resold to other publishers if the original owners wanted to clear stocks or change business. Therefore, woodblock printing was an economic way of publishing *muyushu* (and other popular readings). To compensate for low quality, it ensured the largest production with the most economical cost (Leung, 1978, pp. 245-260; Ng, 1989, pp. 167-172; Yang, 2005).

The commercial prosperity of *muyushu* also brought business to blind singers. In addition to festivals and rituals, singers were also invited to sing popular *muyushu* pieces for entertainment (Leung, 1978, p. 223; Li, 1998). As urban life thrived since the late Qing, singers performed in teahouses and brothels in Guangzhou (Leung, 1988, pp. 28-31; Yung, 1997) and later in Hong Kong after the curfew policy ended (Li, 1998). Repertoires included classic *muyushu* pieces and those created and improvised by performers. At the request of audience, some contained obscene contents. Folk singers played a reciprocal role with *muyushu* publishers. *Muyuge* pieces might become popular due to certain singer's performance. By contrary, certain published *muyushu* might get so well-received that singers had to add it to their repertoire. Acute publishers also kept an eye on popular folk singers. Once they spotted anything popular from the singers, they transcribed the lyrics into text and printed them out⁴⁵, even though such cases did not frequently happen (Ng, 1989, pp. 157-158;173-174).

The profit-driven values and production of *muyushu* significantly differed from that of the orthodox cultural traditions in China. The inferior quality of songbooks, the adoption of vernacular Cantonese, and the low social status of its readers and

⁴⁵ Many pieces created by folk singers might be revised by literati before published (Ng, 1989, p. 157).

audience all kept *muyushu* out of the mainstream cultural attention of traditional Chinese literati, and thus be restricted in a peripheral cultural position.

The prevalence of *muyushu* was also accompanied by the popularity of songbook singing and reciting among common people. As has been mentioned previously, the same *muyushu* text could be sung in different styles such as *muyu*, *nanyin* and *longzhou*. In Guangzhou, all three genres are performed in Standard Cantonese as it is the dominant accent of the city. Among the narrative singing genres, *nanyin* was most appreciated for its aesthetics and literary values. The birth of *nanyin* was closely associated with the prosperity of teahouses and brothels in Guangzhou. Literati and officials, the frequent guests to these entertainment venues, played an important role in refining the literary and musical expressions of *nanyin*. In the late Qing and early Republican period, publishers would entitle their booklets as *nanyin* to attract audience. Even singers tended to emphasise their singing as *nanyin* to distinguish themselves from *muyuge* singers. For instance, *Min Ziqian Yuche*, one popular *nanyin* piece by blind singer Chen Jian, stresses in the ending lines, ‘there’s no vulgar tunes, but only the ingenious silver *zheng*. Please do not take it as *muyu* or other inferior and vulgar texts’ (Chen, 2005, pp. 84-85)⁴⁶. It does not only indicate the popularity of *nanyin* but also the inferior cultural status of *muyuge*. Nevertheless, due to the low skill threshold and wider compatibility with local accents, *muyuge* was practiced by a larger population. In peripheral Cantonese speaking areas, local accents vary a lot from one another, which resulted in a different picture of singing practices. In Dongguan, *nanyin* was not as welcome as in Guangzhou. According to Yang (2005), booklets entitled with *nanyin* were mostly published in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, none of them from Dongguan. My

⁴⁶ The original text. ‘无俗韵, 银筝刚妙衬, 莫作木鱼观, 当作鄙里下文.’ From ‘*Min Ziqian Yuche*’.

fieldwork also shows that few older locals had any memories of *nanyin*, not to mention performing it. *Muyuge* was the most popular genres among both blind singers and common practitioners. In Dongguan, people speak local accents. Dongguan accents⁴⁷ also belong to the Cantonese language system, but they vary a lot in intonation and certain everyday vocabularies. Today local young people can speak fluent Standard Cantonese, but for many older people, Standard Cantonese is still hard to pronounce. Yang (2005) notes that in Dongguan, *muyu* was performed in Dongguan accents, while *longzhou* and *nanyin* were performed in Standard Cantonese. In Dongguan, *muyu* was a much more popular genre than *longzhou* and *nanyin*⁴⁸.

The practices of *muyuge* was scattered in the inconspicuous occasions and places of everyday life. Many reminiscences of *muyuge* come from experiences of listening to the singing of family members. Most were women who sang *muyuge* when doing household chores and taking care of children. Singing could be a personal as well as a collective activity. Sometimes friends and family members gathered to sing. Those literate were usually the singers (or the reciters) while the others listened. Audience and singers might comment on the story plots and characters. Over sad stories, they wept (Yang, 2015). According to my fieldwork interviews, many women learned *muyuge* when they stayed in girls' houses. Girls' houses were common in the rural Pearl River Delta areas. Prestigious families provided houses or rooms for

⁴⁷ Even in Dongguan, accents could differ a lot in different towns and villages. There is not an authentic Dongguan accent, but generally people consider the accent spoken in Guancheng where the city government had been situated until the mid-2000s.

⁴⁸ In addition, unlike in Guangzhou, there were not as many as reminiscences or documentation of singing performances in teahouses in Dongguan. One reason, and also one limitation of my fieldwork, is that many of the interviewees were born in the 1930s-1940s when the prime time of tea house was interrupted by continuous warfare and social turbulences.

free to accommodate local girls whose families had limited living space. Young girls worked and ate in their own families during daytime, while stayed in girls' houses in the evening. Girls' houses used to be importance places for young rural girls to share daily experiences and learn about puberty changes from one another. Many of them developed interest in singing and reciting *muyushu* here, and gained certain literacy skills through learning to read and recite *muyushu*.

Female enthusiasts constitute a large number of *muyuge* audiences. In contrast to their absence in classical literature, women readers did make a prominent feature of this popular reading (Leung, 1978; Yung, 1987; Yang, 2006). However, male *muyuge* enthusiasts were also common. I encountered a number of male *muyuge* and *muyushu* enthusiasts during fieldwork, including common people with little education (More in the Chapter 5) as well as well-educated scholars like Yang Baolin. However, common male *muyuge* practitioners (excluding blind singers) are rarely mentioned in the historical or current narratives of *muyuge*, while the latter, Yang Balin, is often represented as a *muyuge* expert rather than a mere enthusiast. In reminiscence, Yang (2016) emphasises the difference of men's practice of *muyuge* from women. Unlike women who were interested in longer stories, men preferred *zejin*, shorter pieces normally with exquisite literary expressions. They also enjoyed reciting with friends. Male reciters were comparably less emotional, and tended to concentrate on literary expressions rather than story plots. In Yang's account, men were more able to appreciate the aesthetic and literary dimension of *muyuge* while women tended to focus on the 'trivial' plots. This is not accurate. Among my interviewees, Aunt Fang and Aunt Runzhen also enjoy the aesthetics of verses and performance (more details in Chapter 5) despite their limited education background. Yang's account reveals that male enthusiasts were also common in

muyuge practice, but at the same time, he promotes male enthusiasts' status by degrading the aesthetic quality and depth of female practitioners. Women were taken as a symbol of inferior cultural status. Following this logic, the one-sided emphasis of female *muyuge* enthusiasts is also a reflection of the peripheral status of *muyuge*.

In sum, although *muyuge* was more popular in the Pearl River Delta area in terms of the population of practitioners and audience, it was a marginal cultural practice. Firstly, as a local Cantonese culture, *muyuge* and *muyushu* were peripheral to the culture of central China. Secondly, the profit-driven production resulted in the low quality of *muyushu*, which marked its inferiority for the elite and classic culture. Last but not least, Cantonese narrative singing is marginal. *Muyuge* is even among the bottom of the narrative singing genres due to its peripheral geographic location and the marginality of its practitioners. On the one hand, *muyuge* received very little cultural and commercial resources to be refined as a more sophisticated performing art or to be promoted to attract more social attention. On the other hand, it is also due to this distance from the dominant discourse that *muyuge* got the leeway of survival amongst the political turbulences in the 20th century.

2.2 Surviving in political turbulences

As was introduced earlier, the CCP launched a *xiqu* reform in 1951 to consolidate the new regime through governing traditional performing practices. *Quyí* performances such as Cantonese singing genres were also impacted. However, due to the unique characteristics of *quyí* performances and its production model, the impacts of *xiqu* reform on *quyí* did not surface immediately, but were registered gradually so that the new and the old, the revolutionary and the traditional manage to co-exist.

The business of folk singers used to be highly individualistic. Many folk singers were self-employed. Their business was often entangled with the everyday life of ordinary people and had escaped the attention and control of mainstream politics and culture. The 1950s' *xiqu* reform brought severe challenges to the unruly status of folk singing practices. Registration was a key measure to regulate and supervise folk artists. After a series of remediation of drama troupes since 1951, the communist cultural department turned their eyes to the so-called 'mobile artists', referring to independent drama actors, musicians as well as folk singers. The registration system aimed to limit the mobility of artists because the mobile business model was believed to represent the free market of capitalism⁴⁹. By officially incorporating artists into cultural units, it was more effective to re-educate folk artists and scrutinise their thoughts and activities. Moreover, registration granted folk artists legal status. On the one hand, it raised folk artists' social status and enhanced their identification with the new regime. On the other hand, it rendered those who did not register or obey new regulations of mobility and practices more disadvantaged. In 1952, Guangzhou government founded the Guangzhou *Quyí* Brigade, the first government-subsidised folk performance cultural group. The *quyi* brigade was composed of Cantonese Opera actors and musicians instead of folk singers or storytellers. In 1954, Guangzhou *Quyí* Association was established. The association was organised and managed by communist cadres. Until 1956 there were nearly four hundred folk artists registered in the

⁴⁹ In 1954, Provinces of Heilongjiang, Liaoning and Jilin jointly promulgated 'The Notice of Strengthening Management over Mobile Artists', which caused emulation from other provinces. In 1958, Ministry of Culture issued 'Interim Measures of Registration and Management of Mobile Artists' and several more related regulations in the following years (Zhang , 2013, pp. 365-395).

association⁵⁰, including performers of *muyu*, *nanyin*, storytelling and Cantonese songs (with both defective and normal eyesight). They were divided into 33 *quyi* groups, and dispatched to different administrative districts of Guangzhou. Later the *Yuexiu* Blind Singer *Quyi* Group was established out of the *Quyi* Association. Blind singers were organised to perform around the city and villages near Guangzhou (Li & Xie, 2008; Zhong, 2016; Li & Kong, 1980). The establishment of *Quyi* Association and *quyi* groups in Guangzhou were both measures that aimed to end the market-based business model of traditional performing arts and further regulate people's everyday cultural practices.

The communist government played a strong role in organising and patronising activities of *quyi* performances. It should be noted that measures towards the mobile artists, especially self-employed folk singers did not always take effect. As is argued earlier, performances were increasingly organised by government departments and affiliated associations. However, it was noteworthy that the repertoires were still mainly classic and popular pieces rather than revised works after the *xiqu* reform. To maintain attention from the audience, performances could not change too radically or go too far away from popular tastes. Performances and patronage were still mainly driven by audience's needs. In the study of the post-1949 *pingtan* storytelling in the Yangtze Delta, He Qiliang (2012, pp. 5-8) points out that market still played a significant role in *pingtan* storytelling. Although many *pingtan* troupes were collectivised, the state did not fully fund all *pingtan* activities. Therefore, performers still needed to cater to the tastes of audience instead of fully following the requirements of political propaganda. Moreover, the

⁵⁰ According to an earlier article written by Li Tian and Kong Xiantao in 1980, the number of registered folk artists in Guangzhou was more than five hundred.

business model of self-employment could not be completely eradicated. Performers always managed to squeeze out business space. The urban commercial basis of *pingtan* storytelling also rendered a different process of reformation from the Yan'an storytelling. As urban storytellers generally earned higher revenues from the market than complying with state-planned model of performance, *pingtan* storytellers were not as likely to identify with their new cultural role and respond to the call of the state as their counterparts in Yan'an (He, 2012, p. 28). In terms of *muyuge* and other Cantonese narrative singing, there are not substantial materials to restore the historical situation of government's funding to folk singing in Guangdong Province or details of singers' income composition since the 1950s. However, according to the relatively loose atmosphere of folk singing in Guangzhou and Dongguan as was described earlier, the situation of *pingtan* in the 1950s to 1960s provides a useful reference to understand the urban practices of Cantonese folk singing.

The implementation of reforms to folk singing differed between bigger cities and peripheral town areas. Folk artists made their living mostly in the commercially developed urban areas, and thus became the main targets of *xiqu* reform. Another large number of folk artists, especially *muyuge* and *longzhou* performers, were scattered in peripheral and remote towns and villages in the broader rural areas. In addition to the highly individualistic and mobile model of street singing, it made an overall management of folk singers difficult and even impossible. According to my research so far, there was very little documentation of registered folk singers in Dongguan. One reason might be that individual folk singers were marginal and minority. With limited financial and human resources shortly after the establishment of PRC, local communist governments were unlikely to prioritise

reforming folk singers in their socialist reformation schemes. The rest of this section will outline the practices of *muyuge* from the late 1940s to the 1970s, and analyse how these practices had been maintained under severe political pressure.

In 1930s-1940s, Cantonese narrative singing suffered a heavy downturn due to social turbulences and the emergence of modern urban entertainment. Around the late 1940s, revolutionary songs began to take place of the 'old songs' in Guangzhou and Dongguan. Although there were still a small number of young fans, *muyuge* lovers tended to be the their middle ages or above (Yang, 2015; Peng & Shan, 2015). *Muyushu* printing withered. Cuiying Lou, the biggest printing shop in Dongguan and one of the most productive in Pearl Delta Area, ceased printing new *muyushu*, and changed the business into selling stationaries and remaining copies of *muyushu*. Despite all the setbacks, narrative singing genres still gained a short prosperity in the early and mid-1950s. As the civil war between the CCP and Kuomintang ended, society restored stability; production and business resumed. Yang Baolin (2005a) still vividly remembers the sound of *muyuge* in the 1950s when he was still a normal school student. Every night he walked home from school, he 'heard *muyuge* coming out from the neighbourhood along the way home'. Until the early 1950s, blind singers were still popular; some were famous for their distinctive styles. Blind Pei, Blind Ji and Blind Ying were the big names. On big festivals and holidays such as the Labour's Day, Mid-Autumn Festival and the National Day, Guancheng Cultural Hall would invite Blind Ji to sing at the Worker's Playground⁵¹. Repertoire were mostly classic pieces, including *Tears Wetting the Clothes of a Frustrated Official*, *Visiting a Friend in Baisha* and *the Broken Jade and Sinking Jewelry*. All were short-length *zejin*. Zhang Tiewen was born in 1944 and grew up in the busiest

⁵¹ The location of the current Cultural Square in Guancheng, Dongguan.

commercial district of Guancheng, the former capital town of Dongguan. He recollected that stores took turns to invite performances for two weeks before Yulan Festival (also called the Ghost Festival). Bigger storeowners set up stages for Cantonese Opera. Smaller stores invited folk singers and storytellers as singing and storytelling were more affordable than Cantonese operas. Streets were full of people and bustled with noises. It was the busiest season for both businesspersons and blind singers.

In Guangzhou, up until the mid-1950s, many teahouses invited blind singers with the purpose of promoting sales. A cup of tea usually cost five *fen*. If there were performances, patrons should pay 10 *fen* per cup with a commission of five *fen* for singers. With 10 *fen*, patrons could stay drinking tea and listening to music for a whole day. In the early 1950s, Guangdong People's Broadcasting Station aired a series of *muyu* singing shows by Li Shaofang, a popular Cantonese opera performer. The programme was broadcasted during lunch and dinnertime. According to the reminiscence of Li Shaofang (Ren, 2010, p. 263), the aired performances of *muyushu Chen Shimei*⁵² were especially well received. Almost every store and household were listening. Li's performance was still mentioned in a report of the broadcast stations' 55th anniversary celebration in 2004 (Bu, 2004).

An obvious decline of *muyuge* and other folk singing occurred around the mid- and late-1950s. After collectivising lands in rural areas during the land reform campaign

⁵² Chen Shimei is a household character in Chinese legendary stories and operas. Chen Shimei is portrayed as a heartless man who goes after fame and fortune and attempts to abandon his original wife Qin Xianglian. During the xiqu reform, many regional operas of 'Qin Xianglian' were re-corrected, in which Chen Shimei was highlighted as a class enemy, and the moral conflicts between Chen and Qin were transformed into class conflicts (Zhang , 2013, pp. 85-92). However, due to lack of materials, I could not verify whether Li Shaofang's broadcast version of 'Chen Shimei' was the original classic version or a revised version in response to xiqu reform.

in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the CCP began to nationalise private enterprises and commerce in cities. Not only big enterprises but also small businesses were collectivised. Commerce became gloomy. As Zhang Tiewen (2015) recalls, since the mid-1950s, stores no longer invited folk performers for sale promotion. Folk singers lost a major business source. The tougher ordeal came during the Cultural Revolution. During the campaign of destroying the 'four olds'⁵³, a large number of *muyushu* were burned down. It became risky to sing *muyuge* in public.

Nevertheless, the reformation of folk performances since the 1950s was not a simple process of indoctrination vs. compliance/resistance between the state regime and folk artists. The flexibility of folk performance reflected not only on the capability of business model to circumvent political reformation, but also their agency in absorbing dominant ideologies and discourse as necessities into their everyday practices. I will use one example in the periods of the Great Leap Forward and two cases of the Cultural Revolution to examine how practitioners actively adjusted the contents according to the dominant narrative as they continued practicing *muyuge*.

'Long live the mountains and rivers of Communism'

A *muyuge* called '*Long live the mountains and rivers of Communism*' (abbr. '*Long live*') was popular around Dongkeng in Dongguan. It was believed that folk singer Lu Canpei, nicknamed Blind Lu, created the song during the Great Leap Forward period (1958-1962). The song has been orally transmitted throughout decades until recent

⁵³ 'Old Fours' referred to old customs, old culture, old habits and old ideas. The campaign, full named 'Destroy the Four Olds and Cultivate the Four News', was launched in August 1966 in Beijing and was soon spread across the country.

years⁵⁴. In the wake of the national call of suppressing the U.S. and the U.K and realising modern socialist industrialisation, the CCP established the people's commune system, a new socio-political and economic structure, in rural areas across the country since 1958. Agriculture was compulsorily collectivised to support the development of industry in cities. Rural economy must thus face a great recession. Also due to droughts and floods, a serious famine was widespread across the country, which was known as Great Chinese Famine, or the Three Years of Difficulty. Considering the historical and social backgrounds, the meaning of the song is more intriguing. The title indicates that it is a praise of the communist ideology. The song starts with the perspective of a folk singer who drifted in villages between the counties of Dongguan and Bao'an⁵⁵. He witnessed people leading a miserable life. His description was full of everyday details and sympathy with the poor peasants and hired workers, the two subaltern rural classes which the CCP defined in land reform⁵⁶. For instance, the song reveals feelings of starvation and coldness in detail:

It's barely okay to go through summer with very little food; but who'd give us mercy when it's severely cold and (we) don't have any cotton cloths?...(I had to) use a broken cotton coat as sheet; however, when the head is covered, legs are exposed.

⁵⁴ The song was initially discovered by Li Zhongqiu, the *muyuge* inheritor. Li encountered the song when he heard a woman employee singing in the high school where he used to be a physics teacher. He documented the lyrics as personal notes. It has not been published or printed on any publicity materials. Li also made slight revision of words to make the tones and intonation smoother (see appendix). The original version was lost.

⁵⁵ Bao'an is now an administrative district of Shenzhen.

⁵⁶ The State Council of PRC approved 'the decision on the division of rural class composition' in 1950, which divided rural population into five classes, landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and hired workers. The latter two were identified as proletarians and those on whom socialist revolutionary ought to rely.

As the subjects of these sentences are ambiguous, it is difficult to tell whether the singer was relating his own story or that of another person'. As one of the lines says, 'the poor felt even more upset (when seeing others' miserable life). He could just walk away in tears and sadness'. Common tragic experiences of the kind brought the storyteller, the audience and the characters of the story together. The literal expression is unsophisticated, but the experiences and emotions described are sincere and deeply embedded in everyday life. After spending 17 lines to talk about the adversity and hopelessness of the poor, the song makes an abrupt and awkward turn in the last two lines to praise the revolution, which were unnatural in expression and hollow in content.

'We were lucky to have the revolution. Everyone has enough food and clothing. (The communist party) robbed the rich and helped the poor; May the communist mountains and rivers live for thousands of years'.

The narrative of 'Long live' follows the common pattern used by the CCP for class education dating back to the 1920s. In general, people, mostly from lower classes, were guided to compare the transformation between the past and the present to strengthen class consciousness and recognition of the communist party. This narrative model was widely used during land reform after 1949. To stimulate passion of class struggle and raise hatred to landlords and rich peasants, communist cadres organised public assemblies for people to pour out their bitterness (*suku*) of 'the old society'. In the 1960s to the 1970s, it developed into the *yiku sitian* movement, which literally means the movement of remembering the bitterness of the past and appreciating the sweetness of the present. Campaigns of *suku* and its variations played a significant role in shaping the consciousness of the state and class after the establishment of PRC. Moreover, the narrative model has become a dominant way for ordinary people's everyday self-expression (Li, 2010).

However, Lu's '*Long Live*' was not a sophisticatedly created *muyuge* in terms of literary skills. For instance, its expressions were vernacular and unsophisticated; narratives were not smooth or coherent enough. This indicated the lack of intellectual involvement in remoulding *muyuge* in tune with new ideologies. Despite the absence of official involvement, Blind Lu actively incorporated political narratives into his singing. The song was popular among local people. Hence, it must have raised resonance. The most touching part of the song was not the superficial compliments, but rather, the common everyday experiences shared by the singer and the audience. The unfamiliar utilisation of mainstream discourse made it fail to comply completely with the dominant political discourse and retained the necessary room for expressions from the below. It is noteworthy that the dissatisfaction with social realities was clandestine and camouflaged with the dominant discourse.

Li Zhongqiu the propagandist and Shi Luguang the blind singer

During the Cultural Revolution, the practice of *muyuge* still survived in a subtle and clandestine way. Li Zhongqiu, who later became the official inheritor of *muyuge*, recollected his experiences of creating and singing *muyuge* in the early 1970s. Li graduated from high school in 1966 the year when the Cultural Revolution began. He joined a local cultural propaganda team, writing big character posters⁵⁷ and making performances to propagate Mao's thinking and the revolution. He soon became a core member of the propaganda team in Dongkeng, and thereby had opportunities to take courses organised by local cultural centres. In these courses, he learned the basic knowledge of Chinese music as well as playing Chinese

⁵⁷ Big character poster is a kind of wall poster written in big characters. It is a popular political tool from the 1950s to the late 1970s, especially during the Cultural Revolution.

instruments like *dizi*, *erhu* and *qinqin*. He mostly sang revolutionary songs in performance. But he once made use of the musical structure of *muyuge* and wrote a piece called 'A hired worker speaking his bitterness' (abbr. 'Hired worker'). He wrote the song in response to the *yiku sitian* campaign. 'Hired worker' was a short piece with only eighteen lines. It was written in the voice of a hired worker from the old society. Like most other *yiku sitian* accounts, the protagonist contrasted the sufferings of his family in the old society and happy life in the new China. It ended with the determination of working for the party and the people. According to Li (2016), 'Hired worker' was unexpectedly well received. 'The audience were in perfect silence, many of them even in tears.' However, *muyuge* was not a politically correct cultural form in the early 1970s. Li felt that it was a kind of transgression to perform *muyuge* in public in spite of correct contents. 'We only had Peking Opera at that time. Even Cantonese opera was rare, not to mention *muyuge*... Imagine the sensational effect when people heard *muyuge* (on that particular occasion),' said Li. Despite positive effects, 'Hired worker' was performed only once due to the fear of political punishment.

Political and ideological pressure was not an airtight network. There were more surreptitious practices in the cracks of everyday life. Shi Luguang, born in 1957, lost his eyesight at the age of three. He was supposed to learn singing from local blind singer Master Liu at the age of 12. However, his family was too impoverished to afford the tuition. As a result, his apprentice career as a singer was deferred until he was 19 (Shi, 2016). Shi's experience of seeking mentors indicated that the apprentice system of *muyuge* singers and the practice of *muyuge* continued through the years of the Cultural Revolution but in a surreptitious way. According to Shi's recollection, there were around 20 blind people the Liaobu Commune (the

town of Liaobu today) during the 1960s to 1970s. Unlike normal people who could earn work points⁵⁸ by labour, blind people could do little to sustain their life. There was no policy support from the government. Blind people took the risk to continue singing. Compared with fortune telling, the other popular business for blind people, singing could be easier to camouflage under strict political control, and thus became the major means for them to make a living. In public occasions like farmlands and construction sites of water conservation, they sang songs to eulogise Mao and socialism, or songs to encourage production and construction. People usually dropped some tips to the singer. Some invited them home in secret to sing old tunes. Many blind singers managed to make ends meet during the hard years by singing in camouflage and in secret. The secret continuity of singing was indispensable with the tolerance from the neighbourhood and local cadres who turned a blind eye to the transgressive acts of blind people and their audience against dominant political restriction.

Li and Shi's *muyuge* experiences during the Cultural Revolution were not the only cases. As an alternative to the highly collectivised political life, everyday practices had never been terminated. After heavy blows of political and social turmoil, *muyuge* still survived. Everyday practices are always motivated by the will to survive and sustain. Blind people carried on singing because it was the only way for them to sustain living. Common people took risk to sing and listen to *muyuge* as they had to balance emotional and spiritual needs in the highly politicised work and life. However, everyday life cannot afford to be radical. It is neither completely compliant with the dominant discourse, or directly confrontational with it. Instead,

⁵⁸ The work point system was a distribution system in rural areas during the socialist period. It calculated commune members' reward by work points according to their production.

everyday life lives with the dominant. It always exploits the loopholes of the dominant system, and makes use of the dominant so as to live on and accumulate power.

2.3 Articulating the intangible heritage

The campaign of intangible heritage provides new opportunities for many marginal folk practices to articulate with the dominant discourse. This section concerns how local practitioners perceive, absorb, and make use of the new discourse of folk culture. Compared to the promotion of *muyuge* in the official heritage context, the response from local practitioners is slow. Partly due to the long-time peripheral status, the absorption of mainstream information somehow lags behind. In addition, the main motivation for local government to develop intangible heritage is not to improve communities of local practitioners, but to accelerate development and strengthen cultural credits (more discussion will be in Chapter 4). Therefore, local *muyuge* practitioners, mostly older, marginalized people of low social status, are not the focus of intangible heritage publicity. Nevertheless, local cultural halls, researchers and media have to interview local practitioners for further information of the practice and sometimes invite them to events and video shooting. But the number of local practitioners involved into the official heritage making is rather limited. A larger number of them are separated from the heritage discourse. As discussed earlier in detail, *muyuge* was not a common expression in local everyday practices. This situation continued in the first few years even after *muyuge* became an intangible heritage. When I started my fieldwork in 2014, seven years after *muyuge* was inscribed in the municipal list and three years in the national list, many older people I encountered knew little of the term. Some of them learned the terms '*muyuge*' and '*muyushu*' from me, even though they have been reading and

singing it for years. However, once they find articulation with the mainstream narratives, local practitioners will respond and work out their own interpretation. The practitioners's acknowledgement of the term varies according to the specific contexts of singing practices. Songbook singers are easier to relate their singing to 'muyuge'. However, the improvisational singing for religious, ritual and entertainment purposes is ambiguous in terms of whether or not it is 'muyuge'. The current definition of *muyuge* in the intangible heritage context is more likely to refer to songbook singing. Take the definition in Baidu Baike, the most popular Chinese online encyclopedic website, for example. '*Muyuge*, or *muyu* for short, is also called *moyuge*. Belonging to the *tanci* system, it is one of the traditional singing and speaking arts in Guangdong Province' (Baidu Baike, 2018). The definition borrows terminologies, like '*tanci* system', 'speaking and singing arts', from previous academic studies, which has little connection with the actual practice. The website also quotes the local saying in Dongguan, 'if you want to be crazy, sing *Floral Writing Paper*; if you want to be a fool, sing *Two Lotuses*; if you want to cry, sing *Goldleaf Chrysanthemum*'⁵⁹ (Baidu Baike, 2018). The three titles mentioned here are all popular songbooks in Dongguan. *Muyuge* tends to be understood as folk literature, which directly associates with the local practice of songbook singing. The songbook enthusiasts are more likely to re-identify their practice as *muyuge*. Aunt Fang is one of them. She is an enthusiastic and outgoing songbook singer who made and sold songbook copies after retirement in the 1990s (more on this in Chapter 6). As the intangible heritage campaign went heated, Aunt Fang was one of the few who had taken part in heritage activities related to *muyuge*. She has been invited to perform *muyuge* singing in a number of intangible heritage promos, and

⁵⁹ The original Chinese: '要想癡, 唱花箋; 要想傻, 唱二荷; 要想哭, 唱金叶菊.'

was even featured as the ‘singing queen’ in a local television news programme (Dongguan Radio_TV Station, 2015). Aunt Fang was proud of her *muyuge* presentation in the public. For her, ‘*muyuge*’ equals songbook singing. The formalised term made her life-long hobby visible, and connected her and her passion to a larger social context.

Except for songbook singing, the definition of other singing practices are ambiguous in terms of their identity with the expression of *muyuge*. There is no official recognition of the singing for religious and ritualistic practices as ‘*muyuge*’. However, as they share similar musicality with songbook singing, people sometimes identify such singing practices as *muyuge*. I will elaborate on the negotiation process through the stories of Uncle Huang and Aunt Di. Uncle Huang, in his early seventies, leads a strained life as a security guard. He does not read any songbooks due to limited literacy, but is very fond of worshipping deities and singing. He sings when he does daily religious rituals in order to underscore his sincerity. I met him through Ajiao, a young woman who is a close family friend of Uncle Huang. Ajiao has been sympathetic with Uncle Huang’s situation and tried to ease his financial stress. She was willing to introduce me to Uncle Huang because she had a glimmer of hope that I might bring him performing opportunities⁶⁰. In 2012, when Ajiao worked in a local governmental cultural sector, she invited Uncle Huang to perform ‘*muyuge*’ in a traditional cultural festival. At the beginning, staff members were suspicious of Uncle Huang’s ‘*muyuge*’. They sent an audio copy to Yang Baolin, the local scholar, for verification. According to Ajiao, Yang responded that there was no set criterion,

⁶⁰ Ajiao hoped that I might have some performing placement for Uncle Huang, I was not able to help with it so far. The day when I left, with Ajiao’s reminder, I left Uncle Huang 200 *yuan* after a whole afternoon’s conversation. During the following Chinese New Year in 2016, Uncle Huang asked Ajiao to give me a red envelope of 60 *yuan* for auspice.

and that everyone had their own *muyuge* styles. In other words, Yang did not recognise nor deny Uncle Huang's singing as *muyuge*. Eventually, Uncle Huang performed under the title of *muyuge* in the festival and got a small amount of performance allowance.

Another case is Aunt Di and her singing in Qixi festival which I mentioned earlier. I visited Aunt Di at the Qixi Festival in 2016 because I heard that Aunt Di and other local women would sing *muyuge* that day. At 72, Aunt Di was good at conducting religious rituals for traditional wedding, house moving, new car purchasing, etc. To express sincerity, she usually sings during rituals. Her reputation of doing rituals is largely built upon her ability of singing worshipping songs. For the Qixi festival, Aunt Di made up a song to sing the story of the cowherd and weaver girl and other folk stories that were presented on the tribute table. She did not write or read, but improvised the song as she drew on her memory on it. Aunt Di told me frankly that singing *muyuge* was not a necessary practice at the Qixi festival. She only sang when media or researchers came. Aunt Di's saying was proved accurate by several other local women. However, it would be unfair to say that the cultural sector and the older women 'fabricated' the custom of singing in Qixi. As I described earlier, they did sing. The women said those were just 'casual singing', not *muyuge*.

However, they recognised what Aunt Di sang as *muyuge*, and recommended me to record her singing. Their denial of *muyuge* might mean that 1) they did not think their singing was good enough; 2) Aunt Di had the best singing skill among them and she was the one who sang to the media and outsiders. In other words, *muyuge*, as was understood by local women, should be something ritualistic rather than routine.

Local singing in Dongguan, as a kind of folk cultural practice, has long been kept out

of the official narratives. The emergence of '*muyuge*' as a term in the past decade is supported by governmental promotion of intangible cultural heritage. Unlike previous academic discourse, the intangible heritage campaign covers the domains of the official, the academia and the everyday. '*Muyuge*' now gradually reached the once 'nameless' local singing practices. It is a process of re-organising the knowledge of everyday singing practices. Via the official concept, local practitioners are able to connect their daily practices to larger social and historical contexts, and become possible to identify and situate themselves within the mainstream cultural discourse.

The official and media publicity is more likely to refer to *muyuge* as songbook singing rather than other singing practices. There are two reasons. One is that the scholarly studies in the past century mainly focused on the songbook-based *muyuge/muyushu*, which provides richer information for reference. The other is that the literary aspect of *muyuge* is more convincingly constructed as an intangible heritage due to the 'tangible' *muyushu* collections and substantial studies. On the contrary, other local singing practices cover a wider range of everyday life, and are thus not easy to be categorised. Some practices involving singing have been inscribed as independent intangible heritage projects, such as the evocation for kids (*han tongnian*) and the crying wedding song. Others are still folk practices without any heritage titles, like the worshipping songs sung by Uncle Huang and Aunt Di. The ambiguous definition of *muyuge* renders a grey area for individuals and small cultural sectors to selectively name such singing practices as *muyuge* according to their particular interest.

2.4 Conclusion

In historicising *muyuge*, it is impossible not to encounter the peripheral status of

the practice. Due to geopolitical reasons, local cultural practices like *muyushu* and Cantonese narrative singing had received little attention from the mainstream literati and elites. Most *muyuge* practitioners and their audience came from the lower strata of society. Though a large population by quantity, they were always the 'silent' group. *Muyushu* and *muyuge* maintained a relatively unsophisticated and inferior quality by the elite standard of literature and performing arts. Therefore, *muyuge* is even at the bottom inside the hierarchy of the already peripheral Cantonese narrative singing. Periphery is not equivalent to complete isolation from the dominant. Instead, it is about surviving and sustaining at the margin of the dominant spheres by tactically making use of mainstream narratives and ideologies. Thereby, the practice of *muyuge* has sustained rather unobtrusively throughout the years. Sometimes it absorbed the mainstream narratives and sometimes it transgressed the ideological control and maintained its unique performance. The rise of intangible heritage indicates the transformation of dominant attitudes towards folk culture. This heritage discourse provides new opportunities for *muyuge* practitioners to articulate their practice to the mainstream narrative and redefine the official term of *muyuge*. However, it does not change *muyuge's* peripheral situation, and even further marginalises the local practitioners. The next part of the thesis will examine (1) the reasons why intangible heritage is incorporating peripheral practices like *muyuge*; and (2) the relations between *muyuge* as an everyday practice and the contemporary heritage discourse.

Part Two **The making of muyuge into heritage**

Chapter Three Intangible cultural heritage under the great rejuvenation

Compared with its gloomy fate since the late 1940s, *muyuge*, a marginal and declining everyday practice, has resumed in a rather unexpected manner since the inception of the 21st century. As a result of the heritage boom, *muyuge* gains the new title of intangible cultural heritage and becomes incorporated into the dominant discourse of the 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'. This chapter is an examination of the emergence of intangible heritage in mainland China since the early 21st century. The ongoing heritage boom is indispensably related to the increasing emphasis of traditional culture in China's dominant discourse and the formation of the narrative of the 'great rejuvenation' since the 1990s. This new nationalistic discourse engages a wide range of social domains from governmental policies, school education, academic studies, media culture, etc. It significantly changes common people's views of the traditional practices in everyday life, and also cultivates the conceptual soil for the later nationwide making of intangible heritage. Intangible heritage does not merely re-incarnate the concept of 'folk culture', but also injects the field with strong emphasis of capital, market and nationalistic identities. It is part of the discursive shift with increasing stress on China as a subject of civilisation since the early 2000s. Based on the above perspectives, this chapter is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the changing views of everyday life and the narrative of the 'great rejuvenation'. The second part analyses the conceptual trajectory of 'cultural heritage' in the respective contexts of China's modernisation and the international heritage regime. The third part goes back to the contemporary heritage practice and points out the close relations of China's proactive involvement between the international heritage regime and global capital market.

3.1 The re-defined everyday and the great rejuvination

Turning from a socialist planned economy to a state-led market economy was a fundamental transformation. The embracing of market economy after the late 1970s brought about significant transformations in every aspect of Chinese society. During the early years of the reform era, people's perception of everyday life showed increasingly distinctive signs from the highly political pattern, which tended to stress individualism, material and profits. In reflecting the mental and value shift in mainland China between the 1980s and 1990s, He Zhaotian (2016, pp. 117-118) poses a question: Chinese culture has a long history of stressing morality and has it nurtured and accumulated in many aspects of everyday life. Why does such a society instead become so easy to be captivated and enveloped by the logic of market and consumerism? It is beyond the capacity of the section to discuss this question, but the question captures the conceptual transformation of everyday life at the historical juncture between the socialist period and the reform era. According to He's analysis (2016, pp. 157-158), many Chinese had high expectation and passions towards the communist party and the establishment of PRC due to the turbulences and adversities in the first half of the 20th century. In the socialist period, according to communist and socialist ideals, strong emphasis was placed on the meaning of life, and concerns of big, sublime social issues were appreciated. Hence, socialist ethnics took the place of Chinese traditional ethnicity to become the guidance for people's everyday life. However, the actual everyday life and social life was neglected and even absent in the dominant discourse. New socialist morality and ideals were radically constructed upon ideologies rather than existing social structures and daily life (He, 2016, p. 109). Situation became even worse during the Cultural Revolution. Zhang Lianhong's analysis of the Hu Opera '*Ludang huozhong*'

(*Rippling sparks in the reeds*), a Hu Opera (*huju*, or Shanghai Opera), being transformed into model operas '*Shajiang*' during the Cultural Revolution provides a typical example for He's insight. The original Hu Opera of *Ludang huozhong* rooted the anti-Japanese story in rich local and everyday experiences. However, when it was revised into the model opera of *Shajiang*, many concrete everyday plots and rich characters were turned into generalised and homogenised images to represent the ideologically correct revolutionary images and ensure the leading position of the communist party (Zhang , 2013, p. 342). Consequently, revolutionary ideologies became detached from specific historical contexts and corrupted the interdependence structure with ordinary people's everyday life (Zhang , 2013, p. 301). As a result, the abstract and hollow idealism corroded people's faith in it. Especially with the strong frustration followed by the Cultural Revolution, big words like idealism, socialism became awkward signifier without actual signifieds.

Many people did not believe in ideologies of communism or socialism any more since the 1970s, along with idealism and the meaning of life advocated in the socialist period. People tended to anchor their belief and everyday pursues in the more down-to-earth realm of material life (He, 2016). The fetish of consumerism and material life quickly took place in the wake of the collapse of socialist ideology. As a resistance to the over-emphasised ideologies and hollow moral preaching, ordinary people in society was eager to firmly grasp something substantive and of the everyday (He, 2016, pp. 117-118). After the democratic movement in 1989, the CCP had to consolidate and justify its ruling position by economic growth and modernisation. Especially after Deng Xiaoping's southern tour⁶¹ in 1992, the

⁶¹ Deng Xiaoping took a series of historical visits to several southern cities of China from 18th January to 21st February 1992, and made several far-reaching talks. Deng's southern tour reaffirmed

country underwent deeper and wider economic reform and got more involved into the global capital market. Beliefs in market economy and consumerism dominated both people's everyday life and the discursive domain, and become the new dominant ideology of contemporary mainland China (Wang, 2000; Wang, 2008; He, 2016). Instead of the grand values of collectivism, socialism and idealism, people generally believe in profits, wealth and material life. Without questioning social injustice, the new dominant ideology advocates competition, individual achievement and widening the gap between the rich and the poor (Wang, 2000). Without guarantee of democratic system, it legitimises radical economic reform and privatisation (Wang, 2008). Under such social atmosphere, a new perception of everyday life emerged. It is noteworthy that the new senses of everyday life are closely related with, if not completely reduced to material interest and desires. Since the 1990s, people's everyday life has been increasingly associated and marked with consumption indicators and the market values. The relatively diverse and rich everyday life, in stark contrast to the collectively homogeneous socialist everyday, justifies the advancing of market and consumerism. Everyday life was embraced and celebrated as the end to the previous political control and the highly collectivised life during the socialist period. In a consumeristic perspective, the everyday appreciates modern ideas of diversity, freedom, individualism. However, it missed many necessary nuances which is embedded in the actual experiences and the textures of the everyday (He, 2016, pp. 117-118), such as emotional feelings, inclusiveness to alternative lives, community connections and the consciousness to oppressing social forces. Socialist idealism and the concerns for collectives and society were smashed with residuals scattered in the isolated individuals, and the

economic reform which had been interrupted by the June Fourth Movement in 1989.

consumeristic daily life. On the one hand, depression, anxiety and nihilism followed with the decline of idealism. On the other hand, the residual idealism from the socialist period was re-oriented towards, or re-articulated to, market development and economic profits.

Since the early 1990s, the craze for ‘national studies’⁶² has become a prominent nationwide phenomenon, which constituted a dramatic contrast to the criticism of Chinese traditional cultures and the enthusiasm for western cultural thoughts in the 1980s. The popularity of ‘national studies’ was indispensable to the promotion of state power (Chen & Shi, 2007, pp. 17-18; Wang, 2012; Lei, 2014). Ever since the crackdown of 1989 democratic protest in mainland China, some intellectuals became suspicious about the western modern thoughts they had believed in the 1980s and turned to seek solutions through Chinese traditional thoughts and values, especially Confucian thoughts (Wang, 2008, p. 76). The advocacy of traditional cultures were constrained within the academic circle until 1993 when the People’s Daily published two articles about ‘national studies fever’ on its prominent pages (Chen & Shi, 2007, pp. 17-18; Lei, 2014)⁶³. Both articles emphasise that ‘studying and promoting traditional culture is a basic approach of constructing socialist spiritual civilisation’, and that Chinese cultural tradition comprises an important part of what is called ‘Chinese characteristics’ (cited from Lei, 2014). It shows an unprecedented stance in promoting Chinese traditions by state-owned media (Lei, 2014). In 1994, the CCP promulgated an implementation guideline for patriotic

⁶² The term of ‘national studies’ was proposed in relation to ‘western thoughts’ (‘西学’), and refers to traditional Chinese cultures and thoughts, especially the Confucianism-based elite classics.

⁶³ The two People Daily articles are ‘National Studies Quietly Rises in the Campus of Peking University’ (‘国学，在燕园悄然兴起’) on 16th August, 1993 and ‘See You Again after Ages, National Studies’, (‘久违了，国学’) on 17 August, 1993.

education. The guideline stresses that historical education of the Chinese nation and cultural education of Chinese traditions comprise a critical part of patriotic education. Since March 1995, hundreds of patriotic educational bases have been released. Apart from the majority of sites which mark the CCP's revolutionary events, there were a number of cultural sites that closely associated with the identification of the Chinese traditions (Xinhua Net, 2009). It marked the official attempt to incorporate national studies into ideological construction and the nationalistic turn in the CCP's ideologies (Lei, 2014).

The embracing of national culture is not only a conceptual transformation but also, more importantly, a hegemonic social practice engaging all walks of life (He, 2014). In 1992, Peking University established the Institute of Chinese Traditional Culture⁶⁴. Many universities followed and founded national studies programmes and departments. With support from official education sectors, some secondary and primary schools in cities set up classic readings projects. Popular culture also embraced and fuelled the heated wave. In 2001, the state-owned China Central Television (CCTV) launched a programme called *Lecture Room* which invited scholars to give lectures, on topics as Chinese history, literature, philosophy and traditional culture. The TV programme fuelled up a widespread wave of national studies in society. In 2005, a proposal about using traditional festivals to promote national cultural traditions was jointly released by five state departments and ministries⁶⁵. The proposal (State Council, 2005d) states that making use of traditional festivals is

⁶⁴ Institute of Chinese Traditional Culture ('中国传统文化研究中心') was renamed as Institute of Chinese Studies, Peking University ('北京大学国学研究院') in 2000.

⁶⁵ The five state departments and ministries include the Publicity Department, Central Commission for Guiding Cultural and Ethical Progress, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Civil Affairs, and Ministry of Culture (the State Council, 2005d).

significant for strengthening Chinese culture, reinforcing national identities and coherence, and guaranteeing national cultural interest and cultural security. Moreover, the proposal argues that national cultural tradition is a valuable resource for moral education of children and youth. Therefore, it proposes to include the education of traditional festivals into school systems to enhance the study and conservation of traditional festivals, and calls for more institutional research and conservation subjects to follow (State Council, 2005d). Two years later in 2007, the eve of Chinese New Year, Qingming Festival, Duanwu Festival (also called the dragon boat festival) and the Mid-autumn Day were officially set as national holidays⁶⁶. It is also in 2005, less than one year after China ratified the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2004, that the State Council promulgated an official proposal of safeguarding domestic intangible heritage. The proposal (State Council, 2005b) stresses that ‘intangible cultural heritage embodies the spiritual values, ways of thinking, imagination and cultural consciousness of the Chinese nation. Thus, it is the foundation of maintaining the Chinese cultural identity and cultural sovereignty’. By implementing these official documents, the CCP re-defines what it means by traditional culture in the 21st century. Traditional culture becomes a rather broad concept. It does not only refer to elite traditions like Confucianism, traditional classics and national histories, but also include practices once considered as oppositional to ‘tradition’ (in the elite sense) such as traditional festivals, rituals, oral traditions and knowledge. Many of these practices have now

⁶⁶ In mainland China, there have been three official holidays of Chinese New Year since 1999. By re-arranging the surrounding weekends, there are continuous seven holidays in total. In 2013, the eve of Chinese New Year was deleted in the official holiday list in 2013. But the total number of holidays does not change as the holiday of New Year’s Eve was moved to the third day of the Lunar New Year.

been recognised as 'intangible cultural heritage'. Traditional culture now covers nearly all aspects and dimensions of society, from state image, to knowledge construction, to everyday practices. Followed by the redefinition of traditional culture and its incorporation into the state ideology, people's everyday practices are widely involved in the construction of national identity.

It should be noted that since the commencement of the new century, narratives of traditional culture has been increasingly included into the grand discourse of 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'. The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation as an official slogan was proposed in the 15th National Congress of the CCP in 1997. In the subsequent national congresses of the CCP which take place every five years, the so-called great rejuvenation has been given increasing weight as an idea and has since grown into a mature and systematic narrative. In 1997, the great rejuvenation was considered as a long-term national goal (The Central People's Government of the PRC, 1997). In the 16th CCP national congress in 2002, the report emphasised the realisation of the great rejuvenation in the opening paragraphs and identified it as the party's historical mission. Also, the 2002 report clearly adopted 'the great rejuvenation' as a cultural strategy to unite forces of different social classes, political parties, ethnic and religious groups, especially a cultural tie to mobilise the Chinese society in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and the international society (The Central People's Government of the PRC, 2002). In 2007 around the period of the 17th CCP national congress, CCTV broadcasted the six-episode political documentary, *the Road to Rejuvenation*, and opened an online forum called 'the rejuvenation forum'. The TV documentary started its narrative from the Opium War in 1840, the epoch-making event that marks the Chinese people's humiliated awareness of the distance to the western capitalist empires as well as the starting

point of the century-long path of national rejuvenation (Ren, 2007). The documentary series also confirms that the significance of the CCP does not only lie in socialist revolution and modernisation, but also more importantly, in 'national rejuvenation', that is, to restore the glory of the Chinese nation to what it used to be (He, 2014). Two years later in 2009, a large-scale music and dance performance *the Road to Rejuvenation* was premiered to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of PRC. The ever closer tie between the CCP and its involvement and fulfilment of national rejuvenation is officially and systematically represented in the 2012 report of the 18th CCP national congress. The congress was a milestone in the CCP's narration of national rejuvenation. In addition to the prominent connection between the CCP and its representativeness of the Chinese nation, it also proactively proposes to accelerate the construction of a strong state of socialist culture and enhance the state's soft power. Hence, national rejuvenation is explicitly connected to national cultural strategy. In the first plenary session of the 18th central committee of the CCP on 15th November 2012, closely after the closure of the 18th national congress, Xi Jinping became the CCP general secretary. On 29th November, less than two weeks after taking power, Xi visited the exhibition of *the Road to Rejuvenation* in China's National Museum. During the visit, Xi proposed the idea of the China's Dream, stating that to realise the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation was the greatest dream of the Chinese people ever in the country's modern history.

As can be seen, since the commencement of the 21st century, 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' has emerged and taken a central role in the CCP's official narratives and was progressively popularised among the common people. The craze for national studies and traditional culture since the 1990s did not

show any sign of decline, but has become ever more feverish and blended into the growing grand narrative of ‘the great rejuvenation’. It should also be noted that the ever strengthened nationalistic discourse has developed synchronously with the advancing of market economy in the Chinese society. Building up socialist market economy has become a pivotal goal of China’s reform since 1992 after Deng Xiaoping’s southern talk and the 14th CCP’s national congress. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the central government promulgated a series of far-reaching economic and social reform policies, including privatising state-owned enterprises, commodifying and marketising housing system, developing educational and medical industries. As China became a member of WTO in 2001, the capital market has been further opened. China replaced Japan and became the second largest economy after the United States in 2011. However, at the same time, the gap between the rich and the poor, urban and rural areas has never ceased widening. Social stratification is in a trend of being solidified. Domestic social conflicts concerning uneven wealth distribution, education, medication and employment grow severe⁶⁷. Due to the CCP’s increasing marriage with capital, the original working class position of the party has rendered the ruling regime into a deep crisis of legitimacy, or the crisis of ‘fractured representativeness’ (Wang, 2015). In order to address growing social conflicts, the CCP successively propounded the theory of ‘three representatives’⁶⁸,

⁶⁷ The Gini coefficient in China has been over 0.4, the warning level set by the United Nation, since 2006 to 2016, which shows severe income inequality (Statista.com, 2017). For more information, refer to the annual reports of Chinese People’s Livelihood Development of 2014, 2015 and 2016.

⁶⁸ ‘Three representatives’ was proposed by Jiang Zemin in 2000, written into the CCP charter in 2002 as one of the guiding thoughts for the CCP and later written into the Constitution of China in 2004. ‘Three representatives’ requires CCP members to ‘represent the requirements for developing China’s advanced productive forces, the orientation of China’s advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people’ (the Chinese Communist Party, 2002). ‘Three representatives’ expands its representativeness to a larger range of society, especially

scientific development perspective⁶⁹ and building socialist harmonious society⁷⁰. The party has been adjusting its mission and looking for more universal representativeness. It could be seen in the varying expressions of the definition of the CCP in the party's charter over the years after the economic reform. In 1982, the first CCP national congress took place after the Cultural Revolution. The definition of the Chinese communist party was changed from 'a proletariat party' to 'the pioneer of Chinese working class' and 'the loyal representative of the interests of people from all ethnic groups of China'. This expression has remained in the dominant discourse for the following two decades (the Chinese Communist Party, 1977; 1982; 2002). Although China has the largest population of workers in the world today, the workers' political power is asymmetrically weak. 'The pioneer of Chinese working class' is becoming more of a symbolic rhetoric rather than a substantive definition with political agency. It was not until 2002 that significant amendments were made to the party's charter in the 16th CCP's national congress. The most eye-catching one is 'the three representatives', which was believed to have expanded the representativeness of the CCP to a broader range of social groups, to include the market and capital forces in particular. Another less obvious but important change was the expression that the CCP is 'the pioneer of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation' (the Chinese Communist Party, 2002). 'The Chinese nation' is

including market economic forces.

⁶⁹ Scientific development perspective was proposed by Hu Jintao, the paramount leader of China from 2002 to 2012. It emphasises the idea of 'people-oriented' ('以人为本') and aims to rebalance the relationship between urban and rural areas, economic and social development, human and nature and etc.

⁷⁰ The concept of harmonious society also proposed by Hu Jintao as a prospect for the country's future development. It stems from ideas of Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism, and responded to the growing social injustice and conflicts during rapid social transformation.

ambiguous in terms of the expressional accuracy of ethnic groups. However, it conveys a stronger sense of integration and continuity. As has been mentioned earlier, it was at the same year that ‘the great rejuvenation’ had been significantly emphasised in official narratives. The CCP has gradually shifted away its legitimacy from representing specific political classes, but naturalises its association with the entire ‘Chinese nation’ and Chinese civilisation and constructs new narratives of its legitimacy.

Together with ‘the great rejuvenation’, a number of related terms sprung up and quickly popularised since the new millennium, such as the ‘Chinese model’, ‘Chinese path’, ‘cultural consciousness’, ‘cultural awakening’, and ‘three confidences’⁷¹ to name just a few. It marks a prominent turn in the CCP’s ideology and the narration of China. These narratives indicate China’s eagerness to construct a distinctive system from the western modern discourse to correspond with its rising status in the global society (He, 2012). Deng Xiaoping first brought forth the concept of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ in 1982. The emphasis of the concept of on ‘Chinese characteristics’ rather than ‘socialism’. However, the denotation of the former is rather ambiguous. Due to this ambiguity, the concept is able to accommodate various thoughts (Qian, 2012). Examining the exact denotations of the ‘Chinese characteristics’ can be an approach to learn about the evolution of the CCP’s dominant ideologies. In the 1980s and 1990s, ‘socialist with Chinese characteristics’ mainly referred to introducing and developing market-oriented economy and constructing a modernised socialist country. The term was utilised to justify implementing market economy in a socialist country. After absorbing newer

⁷¹ ‘Path confidence, theory confidence and system confidence’ was firstly advocated by Hu Jintao at the 18th CCP national congress in 2012, and has been strengthened by Xi Jinping, Hu’s successor, the current paramount leader of China. Xi called for unwavering determination to the Chinese path.

ideologies of ‘the three representatives’, ‘scientific development perspective’ and ‘the harmonious society’, the focus has shifted to ‘Chinese characteristics’ in a more cultural-oriented sense. It was interwoven with ideas such as ‘cultural confidence’, ‘national rejuvenation’ and ‘the Chinese dream’. This indicates a significant cognitive shift in constructing a new cultural subject of China (He, 2012). In the 1980s and 1990s, China was positioned as a late comer to modernity and the global capital market. Hence, ‘catching up with international standards’ was perceived as a main objective of the ‘preliminary stage of socialism’. However, since the first decade of the new century, especially since 2008 when the Olympic Game were held in Beijing and China maintained high economic growth during the financial crisis stemming from the U.S, the Chinese government and its people gained more confidence in the Chinese way of development. The Chinese model became an emerging hot issue among the academia and the public. This unprecedented optimism was not confined to the economic sphere either, but also associated with political and cultural ideas (He, 2016). Resorting to a discourse of cultural tradition and civilisation shows China’s inclination and determination to create a distinctive narrative from the 20th century. It attempts to redefine China from the perspective of its own historical and cultural traditions instead of the paradigm of western modernity. As is pointed out by He Guimei (2014; 2017), China has put on a new state image of ‘China on the way of rejuvenation’ which differs from either Mao’s ‘socialist China’ or Deng’s ‘modernised China’.

3.2 Historicising Intangible heritage

Even though the Chinese translation (*feiwuzhi wenhua yichan*) sounds awkward, intangible heritage underwent an explosive popularity around 2005 and 2006. The direct ignition was South Korea’s attempt to inscribe Gangneung Danoje Festival to

the UNESCO list of Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2004. It aroused extensive nationalistic emotions and senses of cultural crisis among the Chinese society. Chinese people have a long history of celebrating Duanwu Festival on the same day. The Danoje Festival is said to have originated from China, but Korean people have developed distinctive ways of celebrating it. However, the majority of Chinese media and even scholars assumed it was the same, or at least a very similar festival as China's Duanwu Festival. In addition, the Chinese translation of Danoje shares the same Chinese characters with Duanwu. Many Chinese believed that South Korean had 'robbed' a Chinese cultural tradition. As the former vice Minister of Culture Zhou Heping complained, 'how embarrassed we will feel if a foreign country lists the festival as its own cultural property? Where should we put our face to see our ancestors (China Daily, 2004; Liu, 2004)?' To a large extent, the misunderstanding and nationalistic emotions were misled by the mass media. The focus of media was on the competition of the festivals of two countries, but little interest was shown to what Gangneung Danoje actually was or how the two festivals differ from each other. Gangneung Danoje Festival successfully became a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage on 25th November 2005⁷². Meanwhile, China also speeded up its own agenda of protecting cultural tradition. The State Council of China promulgated a notice on reinforcing cultural heritage preservation on 22nd December 2005, less than one month after the UNESCO inscription of Gangneung Danoje Festival. There is no doubt that the emergence of intangible heritage in mainland China was situated in a nationalistic narrative, which has far-reaching impacts in shaping people's perception of cultural heritage.

⁷² After the 2003 Convention entered into force, Gangneung Danoje Festival was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008 (UNESCO, 2017d). China's Dragon Boat Festival was also inscribed on the same list in 2009 (UNESCO, 2017e).

Feng Jikai, a novelist and CPPCC national committee member⁷³, played a crucial part in arousing public awareness and realising the campaign and policies of preserving cultural heritage, especially intangible heritage in China. He writes about the cultural crisis that China is facing,

[F]rom the economic perspective, the collapse of agrarian society indicates the social progress and historical necessity; however, from the cultural perspective, the meanings of (agrarian) heritage is invaluable. By contrast, we should preserve this precious heritage of humanity. However, modernity came about abruptly, without any cultural preparation or self-protection. Foreign culture is a kind of dominant culture. It comes alongside with a dominant kind of economy, and we are inevitably affected. Our culture is vulnerable. Some part of it will be inevitably washed away by foreign culture. (Under the currents of modernisation), folk culture bears the brunt (of the attack) (Feng, 2007, p. 26).

Feng is a key figure in the process of cultural heritage preservation in China. His statement represents the dominant social attitudes towards cultural heritage today. I do not mean to diminish Feng's contribution in preserving the country's heritage. What I want to examine is his narrative and justification of heritage preservation. Firstly, Feng positions China's traditional culture, especially folk culture which is extensively embedded in people's everyday life, as a kind of vulnerable culture in relation to an oppositional and aggressive foreign (western) culture. It greatly echoes the discourse of national humiliation developed since the early 1990s. In analysing the patriotic narrative of the 1990s, Wang Zheng (2012, pp. 98-101) points out that China gradually shifted its self-positionality from a victor of class struggle to a victim from foreign invasion so as to re-adjust the CCP's legitimacy since the crackdown at Tiananmen Square in 1989. Similar logic applies to Feng's narrative of cultural crisis. The momentum of preserving cultural heritage is also driven by the

⁷³ CPPCC stands for the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a political advisory body for multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CCP.

sense of 'national humiliation' (Wang, 2012), but at the present time, military invasion is turned into cultural invasion. The blueprint of cultural heritage preservation is conducted as a cultural counterattack. 'A great nation of culture' (*wenhua daguo*), 'an ancient nation of culture' (*wenhua guguo*), 're-organising classics and traditions in the flourishing era' (*shengshi xiudian*) are frequent expressions in Feng's writing (2007) as well as popular rhetoric in public speech and media concerning heritage preservation. Second, it is noteworthy that Feng contextualises the cultural crisis in the transition from an 'agrarian society' to a 'modern society'. The simplified division of the Reform era and previous historical times is hard to stand in any further scrutiny as it ignores the complex processes of modernisation in the past 150 years. Feng (2007, p. 6) is deeply aware of the destruction done to cultural traditions caused by the Cultural Revolution. However, his narrative fails to reach coherent explanation on either the radical sabotage to cultural traditions by the Cultural Revolution or the 'abrupt' marketization and commoditisation of society after the economic reform. Another argument of intangible heritage which is seemingly different from Feng's notion is given by Gao Bingzhong (2013) who argues that the introduction of intangible heritage into China marks the end of the century-long 'cultural revolution'⁷⁴, a movement which somehow privileged western modern thoughts while downgrading national culture. Unlike Feng, Gao acknowledges the relationship between different historical periods in the past century as the process of modernisation. However, he tends to simplify the historical process as westernisation, but ignores the multi-layered struggles of modernisation. For instance, he appears to be negligent of the efforts to establish

⁷⁴ 'Cultural revolution' is referred by Gao (2013) to the period between the New Cultural Movement to the beginning of the 2000s. He argues that it was a period of westernisation while the introduction of intangible cultural heritage marked the return to Chinese tradition.

national forms in cultural expression since the New Cultural Movement in the early 20th century and the appropriation of folk literature and performing arts for ideological purposes by the CCP after the 1940s. In his argument, the modernisation process is likewise perceived as the ‘invasion’ of Western culture in the face of the vulnerability of Chinese national culture. As a corollary, both Feng and Gao’s narratives and arguments neglect many crucial historical details, thus downplaying the impact of folk cultures and cultural practices in the socialist period (which they explain away with the destruction brought by the Cultural Revolution).

Notwithstanding this, Gao (2013) acknowledges that socialist culture, together with foreign culture and the revitalised traditional culture, still play key roles in shaping China’s cultural landscape today. The mechanical separation of cultural forces does little to help us understand the flourishing of intangible heritage in a historical and contemporary context. To address this gap, I will examine the emergence of intangible heritage in a historical and comparative perspective in relation to the conceptual development of ‘cultural heritage’ respectively in the Chinese and international context.

The concept of heritage has gone through a different trajectory in China. Debates and practices on cultural traditions and heritages are not new in the country’s modern history. As has been discussed in previous chapters, the question of approach and adjustment to traditional thoughts and practices against the prevalent infiltration of western thoughts has been a central issue in China’s modernisation. However, it is only until the recent two decades that heritage, or cultural heritage, becomes a social phenomenon and a hegemonic discourse which deeply entangled with the political and economic life of the country. The term ‘cultural heritage’ (*wenhua yichan*) denotes differently in Chinese compared to what it does in a

Western-based context. Before China's ratification of the World Heritage Convention in 1985, 'heritage' was not a specific term. 'Cultural heritage' was more commonly referred to the spiritual, philosophical, historical and literature domains⁷⁵, which partly overlapped with what is called 'intangible cultural heritage' today. In terms of 'tangible cultural heritage', 'cultural relics' ('*wenwu*') and 'historical sites' ('*guji*') have been more officially and commonly used. In order to historically locate the cultural phenomena of heritage in contemporary China, it is necessary to stretch our scope to a longer historical context of how cultural heritage as a concept has been formulated and evolved into what it is today.

Unlike the material-based conception of heritage in the Western world, traditions and heritage in China's history have close association with the spiritual and ideological domains. Ruling classes in Chinese history placed heavier emphasises on the inheritance of ideas and thoughts (e.g. the indoctrination of Confucianism throughout China's history since the Han Dynasty over two thousand years ago) (Zhu, 2017). From the inception of China's modernisation, traditional Chinese culture represented by Confucianism bore the brunt of the decay of the nation and was fiercely criticised by reformers and revolutionists. Amid radical questioning and subversion of traditional thoughts, the first agenda of cultural relic conservation in modern China was also raised during the years of the Late Qing Reform. In order to turn the feudal society into a modern state, the Qing government launched a series of reformation on politics, economy, education and military from 1901 to 1911. Among the series of transformative policies and measurements, there was a decree of preserving antiquity issued in 1909. It was the first decree concerning cultural

⁷⁵ I searched the term 'cultural heritage' in CNKI, one of the biggest Chinese academic databases. Articles back in the 1950s to 1970s about cultural heritage mainly concerned the fields of literature, philosophy, history and arts.

relics in China's history. The official concerns of preserving cultural relics did not contradict with the subversive stance towards traditional culture had by intellectuals. Instead, the official attempt to preserve cultural relics also reflected the desire of imagining and constructing a modern state of China. As a large number of cultural relics had been lost during imperial invasion and the collapse of Chinese dynastic system, the treasures which once belonged only to the emperor entered the vision of scholars and ordinary people. Antiquities and cultural relics were no longer considered as private belongings of the emperor, but public properties and 'national treasure's representing the history and dignity of a nation (Li, 2015; Ji, 2014). They also became a symbol of China's humiliated situation of the unequal global power structures (Ji, 2014). In 1930, the Republican government (starting from 1912) promulgated the first relic conservation law of China. After the establishment of PRC, the CCP set up the administration bureau of cultural relics (with Zheng Zhenduo as the bureau head) affiliated to the Cultural Ministry. From 1950 to 1956, the PRC government issued several regulations in relation to cultural relics, historical sites and architectures. In 1961, the first group of 180 key national units of cultural relics was approved. For more than half a century, even though under constant political and social turbulences, China gradually established a national system of preserving cultural relics and historical sites, as well as a modern concept of cultural relic, which is basically on par with what is internationally acknowledged as cultural heritage today.

Throughout the period spanning the late Qing, Republic of China to the People's Republic of China, cultural heritage in China was often referred to the 'intangible' domain of tradition, such as history, philosophy, literature and performing arts. From 'Chinese learning as essence and Western learning as application' in the late

19th century to ‘privileging the present over the past’ and ‘using the past for present purposes’ in the 1950s, traditional culture has been an object to be questioned and transformed. ‘Cultural heritage’ was by no means something to be protected or preserved, but something to be critically inherited and transformed. Especially during the 1950s and 1960s, traditional cultural practices had been re-hierarchized and fundamentally transformed in order to comply with ideological requirements of socialistic modernisation. The guiding ideologies on ‘cultural heritage’ also influenced the conceptions and attitudes towards the preservation of cultural relics. In terms of preserving cultural relics and historical sites, there was not an explicit definition either, despite *the Provisional Regulation for the Protection and Management of Cultural Relics* as approved by the State Council in 1960. The provisional regulation placed more emphasis on defining state ownership and authority over cultural relics and providing instructions for the official sectors and governments at different levels to deal with existing and potential relics (the State Council, 1961). Cultural relic was an important means of declaring sovereignty in the first half of the 20th century. Therefore, one of the key themes of the regulations of cultural relic conservation had been the recovery of lost relics from overseas for the Qing regime, the Republican and the PRC governments. Propagating spirits of socialist revolution was another main issue about cultural relics after 1949. Among the 180 units of the first cultural relic group, there were 33 units of revolutionary sites and monuments, including the Monument to the People’s Heroes which was completed in 1958, only three years apart from the announcement of the relic list. Few of these regulations addressed matters of authenticity as the Venice Charter did during the same period. Against the backdrop of socialist construction, fierce conflicts emerged as high-profile CCP cadres held contradictory views on how to

deal with historical buildings and sites. For example, Zhou Enlai as Prime Minister and Xi Zhongxun as Secretary General of the State Council, strongly opposed the demolition of the more than five-century old city walls of Beijing. However, the city walls were ultimately demolished to make way for the construction of the second ring road with Mao Zedong's approval in 1958 (Yao, 2014). The case indicates that debates of relic preservation at the time were fierce and contentious. While official regulations concerning relic conservation and first group of conservation units were announced, a great number of ancient temples and other historical sites had been demolished to give way to modern industrial production. The second national list of cultural relics had been collected and reported to the State Council in 1964. However, due to the interruption of the Cultural Revolution, the second list had not been announced until 1982 (Yao, 2014). Under the strict planned economic system before the late 1970s, tourist industry was non-existent in China. The recognition of cultural relics and historical sites did not boost any commodity production or economic output, but aimed to strengthened socialist ideologies and patriotic education. In addition to the split between the capitalist and socialist camps during the Cold War, the Chinese heritage system had been a self-contained system totally separated from the Western capitalist world. China resumed its seat with the title of PRC in the UN and later UNESCO in 1971. However, it had been a cautious observer rather than a participant in the 1970s. It was not until the implementation of opening and reform policy that China began to be more engaged with the UN and UNESCO.

It is noteworthy that a Europe-dominated international heritage system was also in the making during the middle decades of the 20th century, with the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (1972) as a milestone. The World Heritage

Convention is also known as *the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. Its formation was based on two previous international charters concerning heritage preservation, the Athens Charter and the Venice Charter, respectively adopted by the First and Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in 1931 and 1964. These two charters, especially the Venice Charter, raised international awareness, outlined detailed guidelines concerning heritage preservation and restoration, and brought forth the establishment of International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964) clearly defines what heritage should be and stresses the idea of authenticity through its detailed instructions on heritage conservation and restoration. The basic ideas and concepts of the World Heritage Convention were developed from the Venice Charter. With professional advices from ICOMOS and influence from 'the American practices of jointly managing and conserving natural and cultural sites' (Smith, 2006), UNESCO approved the World Heritage Convention in November 1972. The approval and implementation of the convention marks a milestone in the institutionalisation and legitimisation of heritage discourse at an international level. It defines cultural heritage as monuments, groups of buildings and sites of 'outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science' (UNESCO, 1972). Through years of amendment and improvement, the Western-dominated definition of cultural heritage became very explicit and detailed. Generally, it is material-based, privileges pleasing aesthetics, senses of monumentality, and associated with innate human values. Smith (2006; 2015) perceives this knowledge and practice system as 'authorised heritage discourse'. As such, this discourse is 'reliant on the power/knowledge claims of technical and aesthetic experts, and institutionalized in state cultural agencies and amenity societies. This discourse takes its cue from the

grand narratives of nation and class on the one hand, and technical expertise and aesthetic judgement on the other' (Smith, 2006, p. 11).

The western-centric discourse and understanding of heritage has been constantly challenged by scholars, especially those from the non-western world (Cleere, 2001; Smith, 2006; Byrne, 2008; Akagawa, 2016). According to Cleere's (2001) analysis of the statistics in 2000, 60 per cent of the 630 sites and monuments on the World Heritage List came from countries of Europe, Canada and the US. Africa and regions of Australia and Oceania, where cultures were more diverse and complicated, only held 4 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. Byrne (2008) argues that it was not that these non-Western regions and countries were indifferent or ignorant to their own heritages, but that it was difficult for these countries to 'develop appropriate mechanisms to implement it beset, as they are, by outside insistence on the Western model'. It indicates a conceptual gulf of what heritage should be between the dominating West and the rest. Actually, Japan has developed concern and practices for heritage since the period of Meiji Restoration in the mid-19th century as a response to its rapid modernisation and the increasing Western influence since Japan's opening up. In contrast to the physical-based understanding of heritage, Japan considered skills, values and ideas as more prominent symbols as national identities (Akagawa, 2016). At the same time as the rapid heritage development in the western world in post-war period, Japan also improved and developed its heritage practices and corresponding national system since the 1950s. The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties went into force in 1950. It significantly focused on 'non-form cultural properties'. In the following two decades, cultural properties law was revised and further improved, raising close attention to issues like 'holders of important intangible cultural heritage', 'preservation districts for groups of

traditional buildings' and 'the protection of conservation techniques for cultural properties' (Akagawa, 2016). Due to Japanese colonisation in the first half of the 20th century, South Korea develops its own heritage system which includes intangible cultures (Pai, 2013; Akagawa, 2016). At the international level, the explicit demonstration to emphasise the intangible tradition did not happen until 1989 when *the UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* was approved. It is the first document that established an international standard of protecting traditional culture and folklore. However, the Recommendation was criticised for its tendency to defining culture in 'essentialist, tangible, archival terms' (Kurin, 2004) and the ineffective binding force over member states, not to mention effects to local cultural practitioners and communities (Aikawa-Faure, 2009). Nevertheless, the notion of heritage has been contested and negotiated throughout the following decade. With the push of Japan, the term 'intangible cultural heritage' was firstly introduced in a UNESCO conference in 1993. In 1994, also initiated by the Japanese government, a conference jointly organised by UNESCO, ICOMOS and ICCROM⁷⁶ approved the Nara Document on Authenticity, which questioned the dominant standard of authenticity and urged for a broader understanding of cultural diversity concerning cultural heritage (Akagawa, 2016). In 2001, UNESCO approved *the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*. Three years later, *the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (the 2003 Convention), with stronger binding forces over state parties, was adopted by the UNESCO in October 2003 and came into force in April 2006.

The 2003 Convention legitimises the intangibility of heritage, including practices,

⁷⁶ International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

representations, expressions, knowledge and skills as part of human heritage. Furthermore, it emphasises the significance of cultural groups and communities in protecting and transmitting heritages (UNESCO, 2003). In other words, the heritage discourse has shifted its focus from physical forms to people, their practices, knowledge and skills. Also, in comparison with the 1989 Proclamation, the 2003 Convention places more weight on sustaining traditional practices by supporting practitioners instead of emphasising the role of professional folklorists and related institutions (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). However, contestations still emerge on whether intangible cultural heritage has truly challenged the authorised discourse set up by the World Heritage Convention (Smith, 2015) or it has merely created another category of masterpieces (Hafstein, 2009). Nevertheless, the introduction of intangibility at an international level is fundamentally changing the epistemic approach to heritage. As Smith (2006) argues, 'all heritage is intangible'. The notion of intangible heritage does not only open up an alternative heritage field to the Eurocentric discourse set by the Venice Charter and the World Heritage Convention, but also re-theorising heritage as a cultural process (Harvey, 2001; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004), a practice and an embodied performance (Smith, 2006).

3.3 Intangible heritage and China's 'opening up'

Let us turn our eyes to the process of China's engagement with the international heritage system. In what follows, I argue that China's proactive engagement with UNESCO's heritage system and development of its domestic heritage discourse is a result of the country's opening up to the international capital system over the past three decades, and that it is also a process of reshaping national image and cultural identity as well as the ambitious attempt to construct new international

relationship.

It was not until December 1985, seven years after its opening up policy that China ratified the World Heritage Convention. China's encounter with the World Heritage Convention has been narrated as an accidental discovery of the Chinese scholar Hou Renzhi. During Hou's academic visit to the U.S in 1984, he got shocked over the fact that China, as an ancient country with rich cultural heritages, was not involved with the Convention and thus had been silent in the world's contemporary cultural arena. Therefore, as soon as Hou returned to China he drafted a proposal to prompt the government to ratify the World Heritage Convention. Hou's proposal got approved in April 1985, and subsequently China ratified the World Heritage Convention in December 1985 (Yin, 2006). This is a story of an awakening ancient nation embarking on its rejuvenating journey. In 1987, Mount Tai became the first world heritage site recognised by UNESCO in China. Despite being a late comer, the number of world heritage sites in China has soared in the past three decades. Up until 2016, China has a total number of 52 sites inscribed on the World Heritage list, next only to Italy with 53 inscribed sites.

Reconstructing and strengthening national identity is one key cause of the rise of heritage sites in China, while the state promotion of leisure and holiday consumptions is another. In the 1990s, the party-state began to promote leisure culture as a popular lifestyle and a means to stimulate domestic consumption demands. The nationwide implementation of the double leisure day system in 1995 and three 'golden weeks' in 1999⁷⁷ marked the upsurge of tourism. Heritage sites

⁷⁷ In 1999, the official rest days of Labour's Day, National Day and Spring Festival were extended to three days. Together with the weekends before and after the official holidays, people are able to enjoy three seven-day holidays in a year. People call these long holidays the 'golden weeks'. In 2008, the official holiday of the Labour's Day was shortened to one day.

became hot touristic destinations. Therefore, 'heritage' in the Chinese context expands its meaning inconspicuously to include tangible cultural relics and historical sites. The linguistic use of 'heritage' in Chinese is more closely related to the UNESCO system of World Heritage. Apart from the 52 World Heritage sites, the national system of cultural relic and historical sites developed since 1961 has been constantly expanding. The number of national cultural relics and sites saw a particular rise since the early 2000s. From June 2001 to April 2014, the State Council announced three groups of national key cultural relics with a total number of 3,545 preservation units (State Council, 2001; 2006a; 2013). Compared with the number of 750 of the four groups announced from 1961 to 1996 (the State Council, 1961; 1982; 1988; 1996), the increase after 2001 is a prominent. As is reported, the eighth group of national preservation units are under evaluation (Ministry of Culture, 2017a). The heritage making process demonstrates an undiminishing momentum of expansion in this emergent field.

Intangible heritage as a concept became known to the Chinese public in 2001. In this year, *kunqu*, the classical Chinese opera form, was successfully nominated for the UNESCO's *Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, followed by the nominations of *qin*, the elite practice of the seven-string zither in 2003, and the *muqam*, suites of musical and dancing practices of the Uyghur minority of Xinjiang in 2005. After *the Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* got approved in UNESCO in 2003, China acted quickly to become the sixth country to ratify the convention in December 2004 (UNESCO, 2017). Over the past decade, China turns out to be the country with the most intangible cultural heritage items inscribed in the UNESCO list. Moreover, with 39 items in total (including the urgent safeguarding list, the representative list, and register of good safeguarding

practices), China far exceeds Japan (21 items) and South Korea (19 items) who occupy respectively the second and third places (UNESCO, 2017). According to requirements of state parties by the 2003 Convention, China set up a domestic safeguarding system for the evaluation of recognition of intangible cultural heritages evaluated and recognised respectively by different administrative levels of national, provinces, cities and counties. Until the latest group of national intangible cultural heritages announced in 2014, a total number of 1519 items of cultural practices across the country were recognised as national intangible heritages (State Council, 2006b; 2008; 2011b; 2014).

It was around the year of 2001 that ‘intangible cultural heritage’ began to mount as a popular term in China. According to the Chinese academic journal database *duxiu.com*, no matched search results were found in relation to intangible cultural heritage before 2000. In 2001 and 2002, there are 26 and 36 results respectively. Number of related results steadily rose from 102 to 320 from 2003 to 2005 around China’s ratification of the 2003 Convention. However, the number soared up since 2006 to over 1300 and grows every year during the following decade. In 2016, there were over 6800 related academic results. As is shown by the statistics, intangible cultural heritage has become a hot academic field since 2003. During the past 15 years, intangible cultural heritage, together with its abbreviation ‘*feiyi*’, also became a household expression across the country. The sudden heat of the term did not come without questions and debates. Before the official adoption of ‘intangible cultural heritage’ by the 2003 Convention, related expressions were not uniform. Expressions like ‘intangible cultural heritage’, (or the application of the Japanese expression ‘*wuxing wenhua yichan*’), ‘intangible heritage’ (‘*fei wuzhi yichan*’), and even ‘cultural heritage’ (‘*wenhua yichan*’) were often interchangeably used

(*duxiu.com*, 2017). A number of scholars rose doubts and debates concerning the Chinese translation in the first few years of its prevalent usage. Questions are mainly focused on two aspects. Firstly, the meaning of inheritance, heritage, '*yichan*' (left-behind properties), carries a stronger connotation of 'left behind' and 'dead'. It was confusing that many cultural practices inscribed as intangible cultural heritage are still alive, if not popular, in everyday life (Sun, 2011). The second concern argues that the translation strengthens the materiality of intangible cultural heritage. For example, translating 'intangible' into '*feiwuzhi*' (literally non-material) instead of '*wuxing*' (literally non-form) or '*feishiwu*' (non-physical) (Lei, 2006), and stressing 'property' by using '*yichan*' instead of '*chuantong*' (tradition) (Yu, 2011). However, scholars' suggestions of an alternative Chinese translation were not considered by government officials (Yu, 2011; Li, 2011). Without dwelling on the accuracy of translation, I want to point out that these debates delivered the concerns of fossilising and the reluctance of monetising cultural traditions. While Western scholars are shifting their focus of cultural heritage from tangibility to intangibility, people get confused over the stress of intangibility of cultural heritage in the new term as cultural heritage has always been intangible in the Chinese context. Therefore, it was no surprise that during the early phase of implementation, some cultural sectors even attempted to register local ancient villages as intangible heritage (Yuan & Gu, 2013). It took time for local officials, potential stakeholders and ordinary people to make sense of the new jargon, and fit it into their already existing knowledge of cultural heritage. In other words, it is a process of adjusting the long-developed notion of cultural traditions and cultural heritage during the Chinese revolutionary years to the new UNESCO concept of heritage. Cultural heritage, as defined by UNESCO nowadays, is a concept in relation to natural heritage, including tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage

(UNESCO, 2017). In 2005, the Chinese government also clarified that cultural heritage includes both tangible and intangible cultural heritage (State Council, 2005c), which keeps well in accord with the UNESCO definition. Notwithstanding the awkwardness of Chinese expression in '*feiwuzhi wenhua yichan*' ('non-material cultural heritage'), the translated jargon embodies a more straightforward and operable denotation to differentiate it from cultural relics which is known as both cultural heritage and material cultural heritage. Also, it is a strategic consideration to keep the domestic heritage system in accordance with the international heritage system which generally separate cultural heritage into 'tangible cultural heritage' and 'intangible cultural heritage'.

This is a large-scale project of heritage making. Instead of elite, monumental, aesthetically pleasing cultural forms, the campaign of intangible cultural heritage aims at the folk, the grassroots, the mass and the everyday (Gao, 2008; Zhou, 2009; Ma & Zhu, 2014). Feng Jicai (2007, p. 31) considers the policy of intangible cultural heritage as the revitalization of 'another half of the Chinese culture'. It is not the first time in China's modern history that folk culture and everyday practices had raised social and scholarly attention. However, it should be admitted that the degree of recognition and identification through intangible heritage is unprecedented. What's more, folk culture and everyday practices have been institutionalised and legitimised through a series of central government policies and the provision of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law (approved in 2011). 'Folk culture' used to be a term bearing negative values (i.e. backward, superstitious, vulgar, etc.). However, having been entitled as 'intangible cultural heritage', folk culture turns into cultural wealth, objects of legal protection and receivers of government subsidy. Through the state institution, folk culture becomes an approach of building up regional and national

cultural identity (Gao, 2013). However, as Xuan (2014) points out, intangible heritage and folk culture are not equivalent. Intangible heritage is first of all a governmental set of 'administrative discourse'. From definition, classification, investigation to preservation, almost all related works of intangible heritage are conducted under administrative systems of different levels, from international organisations, state governments to regional cultural sectors. In China, the implementation of intangible cultural heritage policy is realised through the country's particular cultural institution and system, especially the nationwide system of cultural halls and cultural stations⁷⁸ (Ma & Zhu, 2014). The predecessor of cultural halls was the people's education halls scattered in provinces and cities. They were set up by the Republican government in 1927 under the public education campaign of 'transforming society through education' (Zhou, 2008). After the establishment of the PRC, the CCP reformed the education halls according to the Soviet experiences, setting up the cultural station system comprising of the provincial, municipal, county and town levels. The cultural hall system is indispensable with the state's acknowledge and close attention to mass culture. On the one hand, through cultural stations at different administrative levels, the state conducted large-scale documentation and identification of regional cultural forms and practices, especially in ethnic minority areas. On the other hand, cultural stations transformed local cultures and practices into means of propagating revolutionary ideas and mobilising the mass (Ma & Zhu, 2014)⁷⁹. Nowadays, many

⁷⁸ The administrative level of cultural halls is usually of the county or above levels. They are also called the people's arts hall. Official cultural sectors of town levels are usually called cultural stations, or the cultural and broadcasting centre.

⁷⁹ It should not be neglected that many folk cultures and practices had also been filtered and destroyed during the socialist period, especially the campaign of 'destroying the four olds' (Ma & Zhu, 2014). Cultural halls and stations, as primary local cultural organisations, played a direct role in these

of the cultural forms documented by cultural stations in the socialist years become important sources of intangible heritage. Consequently, the cultural stations at various levels become the major executors and local managers of intangible cultural heritage. They also serve as the official preservation units and evaluation organs of applications channelled through the subordinate levels. They still play an essential role as thresholds of intangible heritage. However, any sort of revolutionary values, even though they might have significantly reshaped the forms and ideologies of folk culture, is no longer today's filtering standard. Instead, cultural values and social values are gaining more weight. Cultural forms representing national and collective identities, senses of history, common social morality and orders are more preferable candidates of intangible heritage (Yuan & Gu, 2013, pp. 39-76). According to the empirical experiences of ordinary people, the 'traditional culture' in everyday life is something which had never been officially recognised or theorised, and something which common people use every day but never realise the Dao of it⁸⁰ (He, 2014). Nowadays, a huge number of these lower-class practices and everyday culture are 'rejuvenated' by subsuming under into the state institutions and dominant ideologies via central government policy, legislation and a nationwide cultural administrative system.

As a matter of fact, the concept of *minjian*, sometimes society, has been gradually articulated with the sense of market-oriented economy. As Wang Hui (2008, p. 111) points out, since 1990s neo-liberalism borrows the names of *minjian*, society and market to construct an alternative and oppositional force to the state power of planned economy, communism and totalitarianism. However, it does not indicate a

cultural campaigns.

⁸⁰ He Guimei borrows a popular sentence from the Chinese classic *Zhouyi* here, '日用而不知'.

confrontational relationship between the neo-liberals and the state. Instead, the state and the neo-liberals are co-related and inter-independent with a large number of shared market interests. Through appropriating the name of *minjian* and developing a narrative relationship between *minjian* and the market, the state attempts to justify its neoliberal acts of promoting free market, free trade and large scale of privatisation. By contrast, as neo-liberalism has become the new dominant ideology (Wang, 2000; Wang, 2008), the preservation of cultural heritage also adopts the neo-liberal discourse for self-justification. For instance, Zhou Xing (2009), a professor of folklore studies and anthropologist, juxtaposes China's engagement with WTO (World Trade Organisation) and UNESCO's heritage systems. China's ratification of the World Heritage Convention and the 2003 Convention should be understood as a parallel 'opening-up' in the cultural domain. Through the opening-up of heritage protection process to the international consensus of globalisation and cultural diversity, as Zhou (2009) goes on to argue, the government is more likely to avoid disruptions from power struggle and (radical) ideology in cultural heritage preservation. The relationship between WTO and UNESCO's heritage system is not irrelevant. Neither is it a coincidence that China joined WTO in 2001, the same year that intangible heritage emerged as a concept from UNESCO in China. As China grows ever stronger in economy since the 1990s and took over Japan to become the world's second largest economy in 2011 (McCurry & Kollwe, 2011), the legitimacy of opening up to the international capital market is further consolidated. So does the 'opening up' to the international heritage system. 'Opening up' and embracing of the capital market, therefore, stand for a more tolerant attitude towards cultural diversity in comparison with the ideological suppression to traditional culture during the earlier socialist years.

In addition, as involved into the international cultural regime, issues concerning capitalist cultural production followed. Intellectual property right is one of the most difficult issues. Folk culture are mostly created and shared collectively. However, as the title of intangible heritage is directly related to cultural capital and economic profits, conflicts and law suits over heritage ownership have never ceased⁸¹. As stated by the Law of Intangible Cultural Heritage (State Council, 2011a), related laws and regulations concerning intellectual property also apply to intangible heritage. With the intervention of intellectual property, intangible heritage possesses great market potentials and is well involved into the cultural market. In addition to ‘rescue preservation’, ‘productive preservation’ is another major guiding policy (Ministry of Culture, 2012). To put it simply, it is a policy of encouraging the involvement of private capital (*‘minjian ziben’*, or *‘minjian capital’* in the original text) into intangible heritage preservation. With the prosperity of cultural industry and internet commerce, many intangible cultural heritage items, especially traditional crafts, food ways, and traditional medicines, are rapidly turned into cultural commodities. A large number of registered enterprises in relation to intangible cultural heritage sprung up in the mid-2010s, including manufactures, sales platforms, and cultural publicity. Small and medium enterprises account for the majority, while there are also a few big listed enterprises which are ambitious to be more engaged with the national and international capital markets (Zheng & Wu, 2016; Hua, 2017). ‘Integrating into modern life and entering into everyday life’ becomes a public consensus in relation to revitalising intangible heritage (Worker's Daily, 2017). Ma Wenhui, vice president of the Association of China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage

⁸¹ For example, the disputes over the authorship of a piece of Anshun Dixi (Anshun Opera), a national intangible cultural heritage item from Guizhou Province in Zhang Yimou’s film *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* (Lin, 2010).

Preservation, said, 'we have to productively preserve intangible heritage. Based on traditional skills, heritage inheritors should connect with modern everyday life, enhance their creativity and then enter the market (China Culture's Paper, 2015).' 'Modern' and 'everyday life' are two important expressions in their narratives. Only being 'modern' could traditions have a future. Similarly, only re-entering into the everyday could traditions be truly revitalised. However, 'modern' here is directly connected to the capital and the market. 'Everyday life' mainly stands for everyday consumption. As such, the re-defined concepts of modernisation and everyday life since the 1990s is reshaping people's perception through 'intangible cultural heritage' and reconstructing the folk and everyday culture according to rules of the market-oriented economy.

3.4 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter examines the heritagisation process in contemporary China through the perspective of everyday life and the historical scope of how heritage as a concept has evolved according to the changing domestic and international situations. Resulted from the market economic reform and the rising of nationalism in the 1990s, the first two decades of the 21st century rendered as a critical turning point of China's national and cultural identity shaping. The state objective of 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation', the emergence of cultural industry, and the booming of cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage, by no coincidence, all emerged and prospered since the early 2000s. In regards to intangible heritage, the new concept becomes the incarnation of folk culture of the contemporary time. However, as Xuan (2014) points out, intangible heritage is not the same as folk culture. As a modern concept developed since the New Cultural Movement, folk culture has become a pivotal component in the Chinese modernisation process

especially due to its counter position to dominant powers and political association with 'the people'. Shaped by the new state cultural agenda and market momentums, intangible heritage is gradually replacing previous values and understanding of folk culture with ideas of capital, markets and nationalistic identities through the process of being revived in the consumptive everyday life. With such a scope, the following three chapters will respectively investigate the construction of *muyuge* as intangible cultural heritage from three perspectives, 1) the use of heritage in the cultural regeneration of an industrial town; 2) heritage inheritor and the reversed image of practitioners; 3) performing forms and the notion of creativity.

Chapter Four The cultural reconstruction of an industrial town

I perceive the ongoing intangible heritage fever in China as a process of normalising traditional cultural practices. To some extent, it is partly the result of China's economic restructuring in the past two decades. From the late 1970s to the 1990s, China's rapid economic growth was largely attributed to joint ventures and export-oriented economy, many of which were labour-intensive and resulted in social inequality and environmental destruction. The Pearl River Delta in Guangdong Province is one of the most important manufacture hubs in China. As global capital and industry expands, many industry-based cities and towns in this area faced the challenge of economic restructuring since the early 2000s. In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organisation. Culture emerged as another key issue in economic development. New terms, like information society, knowledge-based economy, cultural industry, creative industry, to name a few, arose to indicate promising economic growth points (Keane, 2007, pp. 60-61). At the same time, cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage began to go feverish. It was not simple revitalisation of traditions, but a process of re-organising and re-hierarchizing traditional cultural practices according to China's current economic and social demands. Revitalising cultural heritage is part of the broader picture of industrial upgrade and economic transformation in the recent two decades.

In the reform era, as the central government embraces market-oriented economy and delegates certain power to lower-levelled administrative organs, local governments have played as an essential drive to introduce investment and boost local economic revenue. 'The corporatization of local government' has emerged as a common phenomenon over the country since the 1980s. It means that local governments are more dedicated to the pursuit of economic revenue increase and

become more associated with investors rather than the public (Zhao, 2012). As a top-down cultural campaign, heritage is an administrative process as well as a new approach of economic growth. As with their role in economic development, local governments are still the most active players in constructing the new cultural discourse, for instance, by developing cultural projects and tourism to accelerate economic restructuring or to promote local cultural brands. Based on the heritagisation of *muyuge*, this chapter attempts to delineate the socio-economic picture of the heritage process and particularly examines the local government as an active player amongst economic interests, local cultural resources and the nationalism-oriented heritage discourse. I argue that the intangible heritage campaign is a process of cultural normalisation in relation to the normalisation of local manufacturing industries and economic restructuring.

4.1 Urban regeneration and intangible heritage

The city of Dongguan

Situated in the eastern part of the Pearl River Delta, Dongguan has long been an affluent land in the southern province of Guangdong. Located at the Pearl River estuary, Humen, one of the town district of Dongguan, had been a critical place for maritime transportation and commercial trade since the Qing dynasty⁸². Due to severe opium smuggling of the British traders, the Qing Dynasty envoy Lin Zexu confiscated and burnt a large amount of illegal opium in the town of Humen. Lin's act triggered off the famous Sino-British Opium War. The Qing regime lost the war in 1842 and was forced to open 'the gate of the country' with more areas allowing free

⁸² From 1757 to 1842, the Qing Empire implemented the policy of 'single port commerce system' (一口通商, also known in English as 'the Canton System'), which granted the southern port of Guangzhou as the only port for foreign trade. Humen, strictly guarded by the Qing military, was the only way for foreign merchant ships to reach Guangzhou.

trade with the western powers. The war is considered to be the inception of China's modern history. Now more than one and a half century after the First Opium War, Dongguan, a geographical symbol of China's modernisation process, can readily be recognised as another 'opening-up of the country gate'. Deng Xiaoping switched on the 'Reform and Open-door' policy in December 1978. Guangdong Province, and in particular the Pearl River Delta area, became the first area to be opened to private investment and foreign markets. Dongguan was among the area.

Before the economic reform, Dongguan had not changed much in terms of its economic or social mode of life. Adjacent to the cultural and economic province capital of Guangzhou, Dongguan had been a peripheral county area where agriculture made up the majority of its economic production. The situation did not change until the central government began to loosen economic control in Guangdong Province. Also in the late 1970s, Hong Kong had to transfer the manufacturing industries with ever rising costs of land and labour. Equipped with special economic policy, Pearl River Delta cities became competitive and absorbed most of the Hong Kong manufactures. In collaboration with a Hong Kong producer, Dongguan founded Taiping Handbag Factory (in Humen town), the very first factory in China to process materials imported from abroad. For Dongguan, this symbolised its rebirth as an industrial city. The county government of Dongguan mobilised each town and village to compete for Hong Kong investment resources, and established a specific leading group to cater for related business (Li, 2008). In the following decades, factories mushroomed in Dongguan, mostly of low technical requirements, either in partnership with or under full operation by Hong Kong and Taiwan investors. The advances of low salary, low cost of farmlands, and more than adequate provision of labour population from across the country rapidly

transformed Dongguan from an agriculture-based area to the manufacturing hub of China and even the world. Dongguan became one of the places with the highest GDP (gross domestic product) growth of the country, reaching its peak in the mid-1990s with an over 20 per cent of growth rate (Dongguan Statistics Bureau, 1992-2016). The prosperity brought by the manufacturing industry has also kick-started and benefited other industries, such as real estate development and service industries. With remarkable economic development and urbanization, the status of Dongguan changed as a consequence. Dongguan had been a county district (Dongguan County instead of Dongguan City) successively affiliated to the prefectures of Guangzhou, Foshan and Huiyang since 1949. It was not until September 1985 that Dongguan first gained the status of 'city', though it was a county-level city affiliated to Huiyang Prefecture. Three years later in 1988, Dongguan was escalated in administrative level to a prefectural level city⁸³. Higher administrative level means bigger power in mobilising economic and political resources, and thus, faster development. In May 2017, a media survey suggests that apart from the four widely recognised first-tier cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen), 15 more prefectural cities should be considered as 'emerging new first-tier cities'. Among the group of province capitals and historically prestigious cities, Dongguan was a black horse that surprises many and generated debates (Yicai Global, 2017; Ming, 2017). Rising from an unknown small county to one of the top-20 Chinese cities in only three decades, Dongguan is always pictured by media as a typical epitome of China's reform era. However, the reputation is as much praised as blamed.

⁸³ There are five levels in local administrative divisions of China, the province (including province, autonomous regions, municipality, and special administrative region), prefecture, county, township and village.

The industrial expansion of Dongguan and other Pearl River Delta areas began to encounter crisis in the mid-2000s as the immense advantages of being the first open and developed areas had decreased (Dai, 2004). The 2008 global financial crisis gave an even heavier blow. Dongguan got the hardest hit as its economic growth has been considerably reliant on labour-intensive manufactures and foreign markets. The city's growth entered into an economic bottleneck so that it could hardly continue with its fast-pace development as it had experienced in the past 30 years. Furthermore, Dongguan has had to bear negative reputations as a city. The other side of the pride of being 'the world's manufacturing workshop' is the hub of sweatshops with poor working conditions, violations of workers' rights, fierce labour disputes and conflicts. In terms of social environment, Dongguan is always associated with fake and low-quality products, poor social orders, declining environmental pollution and severe uneven wealth distribution. In recent years, the city is even troubled by the notorious name as 'the sex capital of China' and 'sin city' due to its prosperous underground prostitution industry. Dongguan is eager to look for new development model to reverse its negative social images.

On the one hand, Dongguan actively promotes economic restructuring and encourages the replacement of low-tech manufactures with high technology companies. On the other hand, it makes big efforts to excavate the city's historical and cultural resources to increase the city's cultural capital. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Dongguan was proud of being 'the world's manufactural capital'. In the recent decade, Dongguan has been busy earning city titles with cultural values such as 'National Civilised City', 'China's Most Livable City', and more ambitiously, 'Famous Historic and Cultural City'. Besides, Dongguan invested a huge amount of money and claimed to build up 'the Capital of Musicals' (Jin, 2016). In 2013, the

Dongguan government made a series of short videos to promote the city in the state-owned CCTV station and over thirty local TV stations across the country. In the video featuring culture, urban scenes, intertwining with local operas, folk festivals and historical landmarks, together depict an image of a prosperous modern city with rich cultural heritage. On the surface, the city's proactive cultural promotion is a big effort to wash away its unpleasant images. In regard to the social and economic restructuring, it indicates that Dongguan is changing its image to shift its economic orientation to real estates, high-tech industry, tourism and higher-educated workers. The economic restructuring is hence closely connected to the re-creation of local culture. The rest part of the chapter will analyse in detail how *muyuge* as an intangible cultural heritage was incorporated into such a cultural regeneration process and examine the local-national relationship of tension and reciprocity during this process.

The town of Dongkeng

Dongkeng was originally a village built between the years of 1163 and 1187 in the Southern Song dynasty. It used to be the jurisdictional village of nearby towns of Changping and Hengli. In 1961, it became the independent Dongkeng People's Commune (equivalent to the administrative level of township). It was in 1987 that Dongkeng would officially gain the administrative title of township (Dongguan Museum, 2014, p. 155), and became one of the 32 town districts of Dongguan city⁸⁴.

The development of Dongkeng after the economic reform followed the trajectory of

⁸⁴ The administrative structure of Dongguan is among the most unique cases in China. Generally speaking, a prefectural level city usually has several affiliated county-level cities and counties. However, Dongguan, as a prefectural city, does not have counties or county-level cities affiliated, but only 32 town administrative districts. Each town has their own central areas and distinctive Cantonese accents.

a typical Pearl River Delta town. Before the late 1970s, Dongkeng was an agriculture-based town and the majority of its local residents lived on agricultural production. The first factory for raw material processing was set up in 1979, undertaking business of processing plastic flowers, hardware, shoes and clothes. Many early factories were set up in what used to be village hall, ancestral halls, canteens, and warehouses as workshops for production. Due to industrial restructuring in Hong Kong, almost all early factories in Dongkeng were invested by Hong Kong capital, undertaking the washed out labour-intensive industries. As the market was further opened in the 1990s, Taiwan-funded enterprises began to enter; a large number of farmlands were turned into factory buildings; tens of thousands of migrant workers flooded in. Back in 1979, agricultural output still made up 86 per cent of Dongkeng's gross domestic product. In spite of the rise of agricultural production (from 7.12 million yuan in 1979 to 20.9 million yuan in 2005), the proportion that it made up to the town's gross production had drastically decreased to 3 per cent in 2005. In the same year, the manufacturing industry, with an output of 5.59 billion yuan, comprised of 97 per cent, an absolute majority of the town's production (Dongkeng Annals, 2008).

Despite the skyrocketing growth, Dongkeng is still ranked at the middle-to-bottom level among the 32 town districts of Dongguan in terms of economic scale.

Dongkeng has an area of 27.5 square kilometre, taking up a little more than one per cent of the total area of Dongguan city. Up until 2005, the town government had turned two thirds of its farmland to construction use, nearly reaching the limit of land use (Huang, 2008). In addition to environmental pollution and improper planning, land resources were also running out after nearly thirty years of fast-track overdevelopment. In the early 2000s, as labour-intensive enterprises began to

transfer their manufacturing bases to inner mainland cities and Southeast Asian countries where land and human resources were cheaper, Dongkeng had to look for an alternative development model. Since 2001, the Dongkeng government began to play a stronger role in the town's overall development planning. It aimed to set up management and investment standards, and more importantly, to create a 'pleasant environment' for investment and production. In 2002, the town government began to build four industrial parks to attract bigger enterprises. Another measure taken by the Dongkeng government was that to excavate local culture and transfer it into economic values, through such projects as promoting the local Maishen Festival, registering intangible cultural heritages, and creating featured local tourism and cultural brands.

According to the Dongkeng Annal (2008, p. 359), Maishen Festival is a local folk event originating in the late Ming and early Qing times. *Maishen* means selling one's body as labour. It was originally a labour force market in which hired workers and farmers looked for jobs on the second day of the second lunar month each year. Later it grew into a market day for farm and everyday products combining with ritual celebration. Town folks resumed the festival after the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s. In 2001, the town government realised the economic potential of Maishen Festival and began to strategically integrate it with its economic and cultural development schemes. Besides traditional market, the Dongkeng government also organised exhibitions, performances, parades, job fairs and splashing water events to attract tourists. It labelled 2003 as 'the year of construction and investment'. Since then, the commercial purpose of the festival became more apparent. The series of festival events, as is unabashedly boasted in the Dongkeng Annals (2008, p. 361), 'kept the characteristics of local traditions. In the meantime, it was filled with

rich atmosphere of business and commerciality'. In total, 19 investment projects, with an amount of 35 billion US dollars, were signed in the festival this year. Signed projects and investment amount kept increasing in the following few years. Local and traditional culture became a major selling point and attraction in Maishen Festival. Cantonese opera performance, lion dancing, local snacks, local history exhibitions were frequent events in the festival. After the introduction of intangible cultural heritage, Maishen Festival became an annual stage to showcase local cultural attractions. *Muyuge*, after it was constructed as an intangible heritage, was performed every year on the festival's opening ceremony as a highlight of local attraction.

Dongkeng's discovery of *muyuge*

Intangible cultural heritage is an accessible starting point for local governments to re-organise local cultural resources and construct new cultural attractions. Firstly, it provides comprehensive categories of folk literature, performing arts, traditional crafts, knowledge, rituals and festivals with detailed subdivisions for each. With the authoritative framework, local officials are able to re-examine and rediscover local traditions and practices, and organise them according to the new cultural framework. Secondly, local cultural practices could be authorised through the scalar application system (levels from county, municipal, provincial, national to UNESCO). Lower-levelled governments with few political and economic resources are most likely to make use of this system to 'upscale' their cultural levels. Thirdly, as the central government officially encourages the integration between private capital and the cultural realm (Ministry of Culture, 2012), intangible heritage possesses significant capacity of turning local cultures into economic interests.

Dongkeng began to pay attention to intangible cultural heritage in 2006, shortly

after the State Council issued the first proposal of strengthening the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in December 2005. Due to the small town area and relatively short history, Dongkeng did not have much advantage in cultural and historical resources. Early in 2006, intangible cultural heritage was still a new concept to the public and even many cultural officials. There appeared to be much room for negotiation as to whether or not a particular cultural practice could be counted as intangible heritage. The latest Dongkeng Annals (published in 2008, but most materials were updated until 2005) has only a few lines of general description of *muyuge* (Dongkeng Annals, 2008, p. 317)⁸⁵. *Muyuge* is by no means a distinctive local cultural attraction. In terms of cultural resources, Dongkeng might be the weakest in terms of having *muyuge* as the town's intangible heritage. Instead, the towns of Guancheng and Liaobu seemed more eligible. Guancheng has long been the political and cultural centre of Dongguan City. The most attractive reason there is that Guancheng has a solid traceable history of *muyushu* (*muyuge* booklets) publishing. Guancheng used to be a hub of *muyushu* publishing houses where a good number of existent *muyushu* were originally produced. Liaobu Town is the hometown of Zhong Yingxue, the very first literati who appreciated the value of *muyushu*. Further, blind singer Shi Luguang, in his mid-fifties in the mid-2000s, was still an active *muyuge* performer based in Liaobu. Whether in terms of history or current practice, *muyuge* seemed easier to be justified as an intangible heritage of these two towns. Two questions arise. First, with strong potential competitors, why did Dongkeng, with a relatively weak cultural root, ended up being the authorised preservation unit of *muyuge* as an intangible cultural heritage? Second, with little

⁸⁵ 'In the Qing and Republic periods, older women loved to listen to 'Dongguan song', also named 'muyuge.'

historical and cultural resources of *muyuge*, why would Dongkeng be willing to make considerable efforts to construct *muyuge* as its own tradition?

To answer the first question, it is necessary to have a close examination of the application process of *muyuge* as an intangible heritage. Liu Cheng (2015), the person in charge of Dongkeng's cultural heritage, admitted that *muyuge* application was more about tactics than the 'culture' itself. Dongkeng Cultural and Broadcasting Centre⁸⁶ (abbr. Dongkeng Cultural Centre) discovered 15 preliminary resources for intangible heritage, which was pitifully few considering that the overall number of resources of Dongguan City was over 2000 (Wu, 2014). Liu inquired the Cultural Hall of Dongguan (where the municipal Office of Intangible Cultural Heritage is affiliated to) about the application of other towns. In order to get bigger chance in application, Liu decided to focus on those 'left-out' items by other towns. Surprisingly but not completely unexpectedly, no other towns planned to put *muyuge* on their heritage lists. Liu sensed the opportunity. He speeded up the process of application and finally inscribed *muyuge* on the municipal list in 2007. Dongkeng became the preservation unit of *muyuge*. The result surprised many and aroused dismissive voices. 'But what can they do?' Liu (2015) said, 'We already did it. It's like registering a trademark'⁸⁷. Dongkeng did not stop its pace, but proceeded to push *muyuge* for higher recognition. *Muyuge* became a provincial-levelled intangible cultural heritage

⁸⁶ Cultural and broadcasting centre (文广中心) is also called cultural stations in many places. It is the township level cultural sectors affiliated to the nationwide cultural hall system.

⁸⁷ Liu used 'trademark' as an analogy. According to regulations of intangible cultural heritage in China, the same practice could be applied by different administrative regions only if they demonstrate different regional features. The town of Daojiao applied *muyuge* a municipal intangible cultural heritage and got approved in 2016. I attended the evaluation meeting in Daojiao in August 2016. From the presentation by Daojiao Cultural Station, I did not see significant distinctions from Dongkeng *muyuge*. Therefore, I speculate that the evaluation standards of intangible heritage is comparatively loose especially at lower levels.

of Guangdong in 2009, and later the national intangible cultural heritage in 2011. Liu Cheng's tactics in heritage application oozes out a hint of the mechanism that functions in the heritagisation process in China today. Rather than cultural accumulation in everyday life, the making of intangible heritage is based on a set of administrative procedures. I do not intend to question the authenticity of *muyuge* practice in Dongkeng. Dongkeng did not make up an intangible heritage from nowhere as its town people did practice *muyuge*. However, the official certification makes it more 'authentic' and 'credible' than the *muyuge* in other places.

Also, the making of intangible cultural heritages is a process of weighing between the potential values of cultural practices and local economic interests. Similar traditions and practices can be applied by different regions if they carry in different local characteristics (Yuan & Gu, 2013). *Muyuge* is not a unique intangible cultural heritage of Dongkeng and Dongguan. Several other cities also have similar intangible cultural heritage items. It is noteworthy that these related heritage items are 'packaged' in different ways according to specific local historical resources.

Guangzhou has 'the singing and speaking of *muyushu*' as a municipal intangible cultural heritage. The subtle difference is that 'the singing and speaking of *muyuge*' includes narrative singing forms of *muyuge*, *longzhou* and *nanyin* which are based on the literature form of *muyushu* (Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center in Guangzhou, 2014). Foshan, a Pearl River Delta city to the west of Guangzhou, inscribes *muyushu* in its municipal intangible heritage list possibly due to its advantage in *muyushu* collection (Cui, 2011). Enping, a city in southern Guangdong, integrates *muyuge* with other local folk songs and inscribes the intangible heritage of 'Enping folk song' as a provincial-level heritage in 2012 (Guangzhou Daily, 2012). The application of intangible heritage is tactical. The reason that Dongkeng chose

muyuge instead of *muyushu* as its bet for intangible heritage is that the town does not have solid history of *muyushu* publication or collection. More importantly, by emphasising performance, *muyuge* is more compatible with the whole cultural promotion scheme of the town.

Maishen Festival and *muyuge* are two major cultural projects of Dongkeng town since the mid-2000s. After both projects were inscribed in the provincial list of Guangdong in 2009, Dongkeng Cultural Centre placed more effort in pushing *muyuge* to the national list. Maishen Festival is a unique annual event in Dongkeng. 'No one can take it away from us,' said Liu. He felt confident to keep it as Dongkeng's heritage, but also realised that the provincial list was the highest level Maishen Festival could reach. Liu thought '*maishen*', selling bodies in Chinese, was morally incorrect in terms of 'universal human values'. Heritage experts once suggested that the expression of '*maishen*' should be revised with alternatives like 'Happy Festival', if Dongkeng wanted to aim for a higher recognition of it. Liu and his colleagues decided to be satisfied with the provincial recognition and keep the original name of the festival. Liu's reason was that '*maishen*' was a folk term developed through time. It conveyed 'a strong sense of local characteristic' which could not be altered (Liu, 2015). What Liu did not state, and what was more crucial was that, Maishen Festival has already become a stable yearly event and established its reputation as a 'Dongkeng specialty' since the late 1990s. A provincial-level intangible cultural heritage could well serve its function as a cultural and economic platform. There was no need to spend extra effort for a national recognition. However, he had bigger ambition for *muyuge* even though the town was weak in related cultural resources and reputation. From 2006 to 2011, Dongkeng had done a lot to increase the visibility of *muyuge*. The town intentionally used Maishen Festival as a window of

showcase. In 2006, the staged-performance of 'Maishen Festival in the singing and speaking of *muyu*' was specifically created and performed in Maishen Festival. Since then, *muyuge* become a must show in the opening ceremony of Maishen Festival. It should be noted that there was no necessary relations between Maishen Festival and *muyuge* before the mid-2000s. As is stated by Li Zhongqiu (2015), the official *muyuge* inheritor, 'we push *muyuge* out (to the public) via the platform of Maishen Festival. On the contrary, the brand of Maishen Festival became brighter through the publicity of *muyuge*.' The idea of building up cultural brands weaves the two historical unconnected traditions together. Maishen Festival, with huge visitor flow, magnifies the visibility of *muyuge*, while *muyuge*, an officially recognised intangible heritage, provides Maishen Festival with more local values.

Besides Maishen Festival, the Dongkeng government has done a lot to establish *muyuge* as a local tradition. They invited professional composers, directors and actors to produce new *muyuge* performances, and participated in provincial and national folk arts competitions. Formal and informal performances in cultural events, exhibitions, lectures tour other towns of Dongguan and other Guangdong cities every year. For heritage transmission, Dongkeng government set up a *muyuge* training centre in 2007 and arranged regular *muyuge* courses in a local primary school and high school. Dongkeng Cultural Centre also organised an academic seminar in 2009. Scholars, cultural officials, artists and renowned composers were invited to discuss the preservation and transmission of *muyuge*. Shortly after the seminar, a collection of related articles and newly created works of *muyuge* were published. In spite of Dongkeng's weak history of *muyuge*, the town is now where *muyuge* is mostly practiced and discussed. Its position of a new '*muyuge* centre' is being established and accepted. Local teenagers growing up in Dongkeng during the

2000s could naturally relate *muyuge* to the annual Maishen Festival ceremony (Peng & Ding, 2015). During fieldwork, I was often advised and referred (even by native Dongguan people) to Dongkeng for further information of *muyuge*. The ostentatious revitalisation of *muyuge* practices is realised as a result of the top-down approach, thus without roots in local communities and actual everyday life. The following session will have more detailed analysis, but now I want to discuss why Dongkeng's approach to heritage preservation, even without strong historical and community roots, is possible and even receives recognition.

Dongkeng's prominent efforts in reshaping *muyuge* according to the contemporary society played an important part in winning provincial and national recognitions. UNESCO (2003) specifically emphasises 'safeguarding' instead of 'preserving' or 'conserving' heritage items. By 'safeguarding', UNESCO attempts to stress that intangible heritage is a process of ensuring viability rather than fossilising traditions (2003). To this end, UNESCO especially mentions integrating intangible heritage into education and local economic development. China complies with UNESCO's guiding ideas and emphasises 'transmitting in a living condition'⁸⁸. Rather than maintaining an 'authentic' condition, intangible heritages are encouraged to be kept alive and involved into the contemporary society. It means that envisaging the prospective development of heritage is no less significant than preserving what it used to be in the past. Dongkeng keeps producing new works and performances of *muyuge*, and proactively evolves it into the town's overall scheme of economic and cultural development. To some extent, Dongkeng has played a responsible role as a preservation unit according to the official guidelines and regulations of intangible cultural heritage. That a town with a mediocre history of a certain practice finally

⁸⁸ In Chinese, '活态传承'.

turns out to be the representative of that practice might seem ironic and unreasonable. However, it was not a surprising result. The case indicates a distinctive philosophy that functions in intangible cultural heritage of Dongkeng, which privileges the integration with social and economic development rather than the 'authentic authority' of the past.

The reason why Dongkeng put so much effort to cultivate *muyuge* as its own tradition is worthy discussing. There are many reasons for not doing so though. First, the practice itself is not the strength of the town. Second, the majority of its practitioners are older local people. It is a marginal practice, rarely known to younger generations, not to mention the large population of migrant workers in town. It would be of little use in cohering local identity or building community. Last but not least, unlike traditional crafts or local foodways which have significant potential of turning into commodities and industrial development, *muyuge*, even when turned into an intangible heritage, could hardly generate any direct economic profit. It is only a kind of unsophisticated practice with little stage effect in a modern sense. According to the above analysis, the urgent need of industrial restructuring is the background that could not be ignored. As has been previously argued, *muyuge* was not constructed as an isolated intangible heritage item. Rather, it was part of the town's overall cultural and economic scheme. Except for the mutual utilisation with Maishen Festival, the town government proposed the concept of 'three ancient cultures' in 2014, namely, ancient trees ancient architectures and ancient folk customs, to promote the 'traditional agricultural culture' of Dongkeng (Sun0769, 2015). *Muyuge*, together with other local intangible heritages, is included in the category of 'ancient folk customs'. It indicates that the town government is becoming more conscious in organising local resources and branding local cultures.

Moreover, local governments do not entirely rely on the official heritage system but are also active to create cultural and touristic narratives of their own.

Nonetheless, higher ranks of heritage recognition add considerable weight to the cultural brand of the small town. That the *muyuge* related intangible heritages in Guangzhou and Foshan stop at the municipal level does not mean that *muyuge* practices are weaker than Dongkeng in these areas. On the contrary, the preservation units in Guangzhou and Foshan come from two of the most culturally prestigious districts of Guangdong Provinces. *Muyushu* is officially preserved by the Chancheng district, a long-time cultural centre of Foshan city. This district alone has nine national and four provincial intangible heritages; *muyushu* is among the 18 municipal items (Foshan Chancheng Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, 2017). Similarly, Liwan District is one of the most time-honoured areas of Guangzhou, the central city of southern China. It has four national heritages, and the singing and speaking of *muyushu* is among the other 23 provincial and municipal items (Zeng, 2017). With such rich cultural resources, these two districts do not need to make extra effort in cultivating the less prominent *muyuge* related heritages. Similarly, it is imaginable that if Guancheng or Daojiao, the more culturally eligible districts in Dongguan, had applied for *muyuge* to be their heritage item, they would not pay equivalent effort as Dongkeng did to the preservation of *muyuge*. Due to shortage in cultural and historical resources, Dongkeng is in more urgent need of cultural recognition as it reaches at the edge of economic restructure. Therefore, the town officials found the potential in *muyuge*.

Based on the analysis of the case of *muyuge* and Dongkeng town, we have found that the prosperous heritagisation process in the economic developed Pearl River Delta area as driven by the demands of industrial restructuring. Almost at the same

time when intangible heritage was promoted nationwide in the mid-2000s, many Guangdong towns and cities saw a declining tendency in labour-intensive and export-oriented manufactures. In response to the declining economic tendency, Guangdong proposed the plan of 'empty the cage and let the right birds in', which means to replace labour-intensive manufactures with higher-tech and greener industries (Lin & Lan, 2014). The provincial economic proposal was later turned into a state policy of supply-side reform in 2015 as China's economy has entered into a critical transitional period. Industrial transformation is one side of the policy, while cultural regeneration is another. As a continuity of their central role in local industrial development, local governments once again become the most active players in the culture-oriented urban regeneration. Intangible heritage provides an accessible cultural system to organise home resources and potentials of upscaling cultural brands. Dongkeng's making of *muyuge* as intangible heritage is an exemplary case. The scalar heritage system renders the town government an approach to transcend the low administrative level, for instance, to reach provincial or national heritage recognition, and upgrade its cultural brand. The upward surge potential (both cultural and economic) is the factor that drives extensive excavation and reconstruction of local cultures and practices, many of which have been everyday practices and has never been prominent traditions at all. Apart from tactics of operation during the administrative process, how do local officials articulate the 'insignificant' local values to a national level? Are there any conflicts in values and profits between the local and national? I will examine these two questions in the next section.

4.2 Local, national, and intangible cultural heritage

The absence of community

The 2003 convention raises significant attention to community (including groups and individuals) as a central role in the production, safeguarding and recreation of intangible heritage (UNESCO, 2003). Although the reference to community is not uncommon in international treaties, the association between community and heritage is prominent in the 2003 Convention (Blake, 2009). As is stated in Chapter 3, the World Heritage Convention heavily stresses the dominant role of nation-states and the involvement of expertise. The advocacy of a community-oriented heritage process poses a challenge to the previous Eurocentric norms of heritage and cultural formation. In the postcolonial context, heritage is an especially important realm for the indigenous and the colonised to reconstruct identity and reclaim autonomous control of one's own tradition and past (Harrison & Hughes, 2010; Blake, 2009). Therefore, driven by most non-western and postcolonial countries and areas (Aikawa-Faure, 2009; Akagawa & Smith, 2009), the 2003 Convention advocates a community-led, rather than state-led, approach to the heritage process in support for the sub-national and indigenous communities. Moreover, the 2003 Convention promises not only to preserve the heritage or prevent it from extinction, it also emphasises sustainable viability and expects the corresponding social environments to provide holding conditions (Blake, 2009). This is another reason that community becomes the essential issue of intangible cultural heritage. However, one cannot ignore the fact that the intangible heritage systems are still mostly state-centred. The 2003 Convention was made and implemented by state parties. Every UNESCO heritage item must be nominated by state parties. It therefore became inevitably a part of the wrestling between state parties, more so than it would be involved in

power struggles between the state and non-state communities. Lixinski (2011) and Smith (2015) also warn that the state-party structure of intangible heritage is, by contrast, normalising and strengthening the power of the state. The inscription of minority cultural heritage could be positively seen as the promotion of cultural diversity. And yet, it could, on the other hand, be implicated in the state attempt to control cultural manifestations and diminish political struggles, especially in minority areas (Lixinski, 2011). Thus, the voices and agency of the community could in fact be marginalised, while the nation is reinforced (Smith, 2015).

On community issues, China tends to keep a silent stance, or more precisely, it does not put community on the agenda of intangible heritage. According to Article 3 of the PRC Law of on Intangible Cultural Heritage (2011), 'the state shall preserve the intangible cultural heritage'. That is to say, the state is legally defined as the subject of intangible heritages. Also in Article 4 (2011), one reads that the purpose of protecting intangible heritage is 'strengthening the recognition of the culture of the Chinese nation, maintaining the unification of the country and the unity of the nation and promoting social harmony and sustainable development'. It indicates that, officially, maintaining the unified national culture and social coherence is the most essential end. The 2005 State Council proposal is the first and fundamental official guideline for the implementation of intangible heritage in China. In this proposal, the leading position of the state is also underscored by the definition of 'government domination and social participation' as one of the working principles of intangible heritage. In the statement of significance, 'the Chinese nation' is also a much-stressed concept. Chinese intangible heritage is 'the foundation of maintaining cultural identity and cultural sovereignty'. It is a cultural entity that Chinese intangible heritage contributes to the diversity of human civilisation (State

Council, 2005b). Cultural diversity within the country is not mentioned, even though China as a country is officially comprised of 56 ethnic minority groups⁸⁹, and ethnic and border conflicts are growing in the recent decade. According to official statements, all regional and ethnic cultures share the common subject of the Chinese nation. Following this logic, the official narrative of intangible heritage does not reserve any place for sub-nation or non-state cultural subjects, which explains why 'community' is rarely mentioned in major official documents concerning intangible heritage. Nor is cultural groups or minorities being discussed. In this regard, it is not difficult to understand that Uyghur *Muqam* of Xinjiang and the Mongolian Long Song (*Urtiin Duu*) are among the first few intangible heritages inscribed by UNESCO after *Kunqu* Opera and the seven-stringed zither *qin*. It also explains why Cantonese Opera (also called *Yueju* Opera) was inscribed on the UNESCO representative list even one year ahead of Peking Opera. Guangdong Province, Hong Kong and Macau jointly applied for Cantonese Opera as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which was approved by UNESCO in 2009. Although Cantonese Opera in these three regions share the same language, it has developed distinctive performing styles since 1949 due to different political and social situations between the mainland and the then colonised Hong Kong and Macau. The joint declaration of intangible heritage indicates the central government's determination and urgency to reinforce a unified national identity and legitimise its cultural legacy in Hong Kong and Macau, the two Special Administrative Regions (Yu,

⁸⁹ *The Law of Intangible Cultural Heritage* does mention ethnic regions and local stakeholders. In Article 6, it states 'the State supports the work concerning the protection and preservation of intangible cultural heritage in ethnic regions, remote regions and poor regions.' Article 26 states 'if it is confirmed that regional overall protection shall be implemented for the intangible cultural heritage, the wishes of the local residents shall be respected'. However, neither local residents nor remote or ethnic regions are defined as an agency in heritage making.

2009).

In terms of implementation, intangible heritage is operated through a strict top-down administrative system. As was stated in previous chapters, the intangible heritage inventory is built upon the division and hierarchy of administrative districts. Local governments and departments in charge of culture, as *the Law of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (China, 2011) defines, are the legal executors of basic heritage works of investigation, inventory making, archiving and transmission. Local governments and relevant cultural departments act as the representatives of the will of the state. Intangible heritage is assigned to local governments in the form of executive orders and as the must-do political tasks. Except for administrative and political requirements, the role that local governments played in economic development is an inevitable and critical factor. Since the financial reform in the early 1980s, local governments at the municipal, county and town levels became more fiscally autonomous, and had relatively bigger rights to create their own revenues. Local governments became more committed to enhancing investment and pursuing economic growth. Expressions like ‘corporatisation of local government’, ‘local governments as industrial firms’, ‘local market socialism’ emerges in both society and the academia to reflect the trend of local governments being operated as commercial corporations (Zhang , 2011; Zhao, 2012). In 1994, the central government implemented the revenue-sharing system reform to reclaim a bigger share of local revenues as well as greater control over local governments. Although fiscal power has been tightened, the economic-oriented operation of local governments has not changed. Instead, they became more reliant on real estate development as property tax is one of the few taxes that runs directly into local revenues. Local governments reduced direct involvement in economic activities, but

were more devoted to constructing convenient conditions and pleasant environments for real estate and industrial investors. In the more economic developed regions, local governments tend to adopt the culture-oriented approach to urban regeneration for enhancing competitiveness and local images as well as for justifying their governance legitimacy (Zhang , 2011). During this process, the interests of local governments are closely bound to big enterprises and investors, and detached from local public. Intangible heritage, as an official cultural campaign, is driven by governments of different levels. According to the relevant law provisions, intangible heritage preservation should be included in the economic and social development plans by governments of corresponding levels (China, 2011). In other words, as local governments are the most important players and promoters, intangible heritage is constructed to suit the interest union of local governments and investors rather than the public and local communities⁹⁰. Inheritors of intangible heritage might be the only local cultural stakeholders concerned in the official heritage narrative. The role of inheritors in heritage transmission is frequently discussed. However, their rights and subjectivity are actually marginalised in the process of heritage making. More discussions of inheritors will be in Chapter 5.

Cantonese, heritage and identity

Community as an agenda is absent in the Chinese discourse of intangible heritage.

⁹⁰ Nonetheless, some scholars, influenced by the 2003 Conventions, propose the approach of 'integrated protection', and advocate to enhance community development through cultural transmission, especially in rural areas (Zhang, 2017). From 2011 onwards, the Ministry of Culture have designated 20 national cultural ecosystem conservation areas. However, most of the conservation areas still remain 'experimental areas' even though seven years have passed. Compared with other heritage policies like 'productive protection' which is more economic efficient, projects based on community development, are generally in slow progress.

However, the production of intangible heritage still involves and affects the interest and identities of local communities. In this section, I examine the use (and disuse) of Cantonese in the heritage construction of *muyuge*, through which I want to discuss the role of intangible heritage in the cultural regeneration of industrial towns at the edge of economic restructuring. As a form of narrative singing based on Cantonese, *muyuge* originated from the local Cantonese dialects. Also, *muyushu*, the written form of *muyuge*, is the earliest found written form of Cantonese. Language is therefore one of the most essential issues in the heritage preservation of *muyuge*. However, under the aggressive Putonghua policy and the influx of non-Cantonese speaking migrants, the use of Cantonese has declined rapidly in the past twenty years. For instance, local students have to observe stricter regulations of speaking Putonghua on campus; Cantonese TV programmes, especially children and youth programmes, significantly decreased; schoolchildren and young people tend to prioritise Putonghua instead of Cantonese as their first language (Chen, 2015). The dilemma of dialect in reconstructing *muyuge* as an intangible heritage reflect the intertwining relations amongst local practitioners, the large population of migrant workers, local governments and the states. How has the protection of *muyuge* as an intangible heritage responded to the declining reality of Cantonese? How has the agenda of intangible heritage negotiate between the identities of the state and local cultural communities? Or is there any negotiation at all?

In the Qin Dynasty (BC 211), Emperor Qin standardised and unified the written system of the Chinese language. Ever since then, the Han Chinese share the same written form of Chinese characters. However, spoken Chinese varies tremendously in different regions, and is divided into seven dialect groups, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Min, Wu, Xiang, and Gan (Zhou & You, 2015). Cantonese is widely

spoken in Guangdong Province (especially in the Pearl River Delta area), Hong Kong, Macau, and some parts of the neighbouring Guangxi Province, and extensively used by a large population of Chinese diaspora all over the world. Among all dialect groups, Cantonese has been a most influential group except for Mandarin.

Guangdong was one of the richest provinces since the late Qing due to its unique location and privileges for foreign trade. Guangdong politicians played an increasingly important role since the late Qing, especially after Xinhai Revolution in 1911 led by Sun Yat-sen who was also born in Guangdong. Calls for 'Guangdong independence' constantly emerged in the early 20th century (Cheng, 2006). It was also said that Cantonese had been an alternative to Mandarin in competing to be the national language in 1913 (Tsao, 1999). In 1956, Putonghua (meaning the common speech), based on the Mandarin spoken in Beijing, officially became the standard modern spoken Chinese and began to be promoted throughout the country (the State Council, 1956). The policy of promoting Putonghua had not been truly strengthened in Guangdong until the late 1990s. With the advantage of being adjacent to Hong Kong and Macau, the Pearl River Delta area was first open to market in the 1980s. Since then, Guangdong's economy grew rapidly and went far ahead of other Chinese provinces. In order to maintain economic and cultural connections with the then colonised Hong Kong and Macau, the language policy was comparatively loose in Guangdong. Although the Putonghua literacy of Guangdong people had been significantly enhanced, Cantonese was still the dominant language for communication in daily life (Chen, 2015). In addition, the neighbouring Hong Kong was into the prime time of Cantonese popular culture. Thereby, with close economic ties and shared cultural origins, Cantonese became a prominent cultural symbol and resource of the Guangdong people, which marked distinction from the Mandarin-speaking areas in the 1980s and 1990s.

The use of Cantonese encountered obvious setback since the late 1990s. There are three reasons. First, since the latest economic reform, a tremendous number of migrants from other provinces flooded into Guangdong, especially the Pearl River Delta area, which inevitably resulted in the increasing use of Putonghua. Second, the central government has tightened up language policy in Guangdong since the late 1990s. After successive sovereignty transfers of the two former colonies in 1997 and 1999, the central government had to reinforce political unification instead (Lin, 1998), and sought to prevent the formation of a strong pan-Cantonese speaking community and identity. Putonghua became more intensively reinforced, and was made compulsory in school education and some television and radio programmes; social events also tend to prefer Putonghua rather than Cantonese. What is more, the social status of Cantonese has also changed. Many native Guangdong people, especially the younger generations, use Putonghua as the major communicative language, and begin to consider Cantonese as less advanced and less privileged in face of Putonghua. Third, as China is becoming a global power, the Chinese government intends to promote Putonghua as an international language, which further marginalises Cantonese as a popular dialect both outside and inside of the country (Gao, 2012). The aggressive language policy triggered widespread controversy and even public protest in Guangzhou around 2010⁹¹. However, the oppositional voice quickly disappeared into the narrative torrent of a strong and unified rising power. In other words, the decline of Cantonese, or more precisely, the decline of regional identities, in the past two decades is just another side of the

⁹¹ In 2010, a member of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Guangzhou Committee proposed to transfer the major Cantonese TV channel from Cantonese to Putonghua in order to better the 'soft environment' for the 2010 Asian Games. The proposal triggered widespread controversy and a mass protest in Guangzhou.

coin of the 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' agenda. Under this context, how does the heritage protection of *muyuge*, a Cantonese-based cultural practice, negotiate between the declining Cantonese culture, the large population of migrant workers and the rising national identity?

In terms of promoting Cantonese-related intangible heritage, the rhetoric is ambiguous. Official statements give more weight of significance to general fields of literature, history, music and folklore studies. No values of community, whether the Cantonese speaking communities or communities of other kind, are mentioned. Heritage values in official statements are more framed in a national and trans-regional rather than a local/regional perspective. For instance, the two classic works of *muyushu*, *Floral Writing Paper* and *the Story of Two Lotuses*, are often mentioned for their high literary values and qualities. However, in terms of Cantonese writing, both works are atypical of the genre of *muyushu* (Snow, 2004). The writings are based on classic Chinese with very limited Cantonese vocabulary. According to my fieldwork research, these two best-known works are not as popular among present *muyuge* practitioners and lovers as described because the classic style of literal expression is not always compatible with the rhymes of reciting in local Cantonese accents⁹².

Besides political concerns, the weakening of Cantonese identity and strengthening of national representation is also a pragmatic consideration of local economic and cultural interests. *Muyuge's* trajectory of growth from a municipal to a national-level

⁹² During fieldwork, I found that most older *muyuge* practitioners did not know about *Floral Writing Paper* and *the Story of Two Lotuses*. The few who knew of these two works, including Li Zhongqiu, Aunt Runzhen and Aunt Fang, all complained the rhymes and expressions were not easy to recite. These findings echo Snow's (2004) view that these two *muyushu* were written for reading rather than reciting and singing.

intangible heritage partly exemplifies the pragmatic consideration behind the newly institutionalized heritage process. In the application of provincial intangible heritage in 2009, Dongkeng adopted the title of 'Dongkeng *muyuge*' (People's Government of Guangdong Province, 2009). However, in 2011 when it intended to seek advancement for the national level recognition, 'Dongkeng' was deleted and the practice thus simply became '*muyuge*' (State Council, 2011b). The weakened sense of locality and localness is also found in the application video for national intangible cultural heritage (Dongkeng Town Government, 2014). The main body of the video in concerned is not so much about the specific practices in Dongkeng, but concentrates on general introduction of *muyuge*, to the effect of foregrounding *muyuge*'s relationship with Chinese classic literature and traditional culture. As I observe, at least two factors are attributed to this shift of emphasis. One has to do with the fact that Dongkeng lacks unique cultural and historical materials to present *muyuge* as its own tradition. Another is that the footage must maintain a balance between local characteristics and the broader national culture. Instead of being constrained within the small town of Dongkeng, I also find that the application video attempts to represent a longer historical origin and a wider geographical influence. This serves as stronger justification for *muyuge* to become a national level intangible heritage.

The conspiracy between dialect and industrial restructure

The case of *muyuge* is complex in terms of dialect and accent. Although Cantonese is the main language in the Pearl River Delta area, accents vary greatly in different regions. Even in Dongguan alone, Cantonese accents vary in different towns; some accents are so distinctive that even people from neighbouring towns could not easily understand. Thus, *muyuge* does not have a standard singing accent. The

accents used in performance varies in different regions. In Dongkeng, people sing in Dongkeng accent, and its re-making into an intangible heritage is also based on the town's local accent. The official reconstruction of *muyuge* carefully avoids political conflicts between Cantonese and Putonghua. Local intangible heritage officials actively merged local accents of *muyuge* into the dominant narrative of Putonghua. In gala shows and TV documentaries, for instance, hosts and narrators always speak in perfect standard Putonghua regardless of whether the audience are Cantonese speakers. In this way, *muyuge* with an 'exotic' local accent is introduced as an 'other' culture, which estranges local audience from identifying with the practice as their own culture. In many *muyuge* performances, the accented Cantonese is mixed with standard Cantonese and Putonghua. Still, in a few new pieces, local Dongkeng accent runs throughout the performance. But local accents were not meant to challenge the dominant narrative of the party-state. Instead, due to the distinction from standard Cantonese, the Dongkeng-accent Cantonese, to some extent, alleviates the tension between Cantonese and Putonghua. Furthermore, as the creation of new *muyuge* performances has been dominated by local governments (more detailed discussion in Chapter 5), the contents are full of uplifting thoughts to express solidarity with dominant ideological values.

However, disaccords to the authority of Putonghua is inevitable on some occasions. *Muyuge* has been included in the courses of a primary and a secondary school in Dongkeng. I visited the secondary school in April 2016, where Putonghua was heard everywhere in the compound. *Muyuge* class might be the only place in the school where teachers and students spoke in Dongkeng-accent Cantonese. Over 40% of the students did not understand Cantonese at all (Huang , 2016), but they have to learn local accents in order to complete the course. It is still too early to see how *muyuge*

as a primary and secondary school curriculum affects students' reception of Cantonese and local accents. But it is a kind of unintended reversal of the mandatory use of Putonghua. Not only was the course taught in the local accent (sometimes mixed with Putonghua), but it also required non-Cantonese speaker students to learn Cantonese and even accentuated Cantonese. This complex relation between Dongkeng accent, standard Cantonese and Putonghua is also observed in the '*muyuge* comedy', '*Three radishes in one pit*' (abbr. *Three Radishes*) (National Digital Cultural Network, 2013).

Three Radishes won the 2010 Star Award, the highest official recognition of folk arts in China. To be precise, it was not a *muyuge* performance, but a theatrical performance with several pieces of *muyuge* singing. The story takes Maishen Festival as the setting in which three women compete for a position of a local restaurant to be the inheritor of the soup of *yincai* and beef shank, a local dish being shaped up for another intangible heritage project of *yincai*, a traditional culinary practice of dried radish.

There are two versions of *Three Radishes*. In both versions, professional director and performers who were non-native Cantonese speakers played leading roles in the production. Most of the singing and dialogues were in Putonghua interwoven with some segments of *muyuge* singing. *Muyuge* inheritor Li Zhongqiu wrote the *muyuge* lines and taught the performers to sing. The first version was performed in the opening ceremony of Maishen Festival. Except for the Putonghua dialogues, the performers sang the *muyuge* parts in Dongkeng-accent Cantonese. Li Zhongqiu (Li, 2015) reminisced that when actors sang the lines in local accent, 'the whole square was heated up'. Later the town government wanted to push it further for higher-level recognition. An official from the Cultural Centre of Dongguan took

charge in the new production, and worked with another performance group. In the second version, the new production team changed the *muyuge* parts into standard Cantonese.

At the beginning of this performance, four performers came onstage to introduce *muyuge*. A woman performer spoke in Cantonese, '*muyuge* sounds amazing, but non-local people might not understand.' The male performer answered in Cantonese, 'Take your time to guess' (*manmangu*). Another woman performer complained, 'What? We need to guess what a performance means?' The third woman performer echoed, 'There are much more non-locals than locals in Dongguan. Such an amazing folk art should also be known to us, the non-locals.' Thus, all performers agreed to sing *muyuge* in standard Cantonese and told the stories in Putonghua. To some extent, the opening dialogue presents the current situation of Dongguan's population. According to the statistics of 2013, the total population of Dongguan residents were 8.31 million with only 1.88 million registered residents, which means nearly 80% of Dongguan residents are mobile population⁹³ (Southern Daily, 2014). Many of them are migrant workers from other parts of the country. *Three radishes* also tells a story about migrant young people looking for opportunities in Dongguan. In the performance, the three candidates have come respectively Guizhou, Wenzhou and Meizhou. The former two are cities outside of Guangdong, while Meizhou is a less developed Guangdong city with Hakka as the major dialect. The story frame tells how a local intangible heritage must select its inheritor from three non-local candidates who do not even speak

⁹³ 'Mobile population' (流动人口) is a specific term to describe the internal migrants in China in relation to the Chinese household registration system. The mobile population are those who leave their household registered areas, mostly the rural areas, to live and work in another administrative region.

Cantonese. As none of them is local people, the voice of local Cantonese is so weak that it almost disappears in the performance. It is self-degrading to ingratiate the national language policy in the show.

On the other hand, the three candidates justify their requirement by emphasising the representativeness of the large migrant population in Dongkeng and Dongguan. The majority of the migrant population, especially those non-locally registered residents and factory workers, are the most vulnerable groups in Dongguan. As outsiders, they are not eligible to share equal social welfare with the locally registered residents. Most workers of labour-intensive factories do not have sufficient economic and legal guarantee, and are the most vulnerable in the trend of continuing industrial upgrading. The three candidates consider Cantonese as an obstacle to non-Cantonese residents to access the city's cultural resources. Such consideration does reflect the reality of the segregation between the migrants and the local to some extent. However, it is the gap in the economic and social status rather than the dialect or language that has led to the critical segregation. The official publicity tends to conceal the problems of the industrial town. For example, Zheng Xiaoqiong, now a renowned poet and writer, used to be a factory worker in Dongkeng for six years. During that period, she created many poems based on her factory life and as an outsider of the town. However, the official cultural sector has never integrated her literary works in their accounts of local culture, presumably because Zheng's work depicts a more complicated facet of the ever-growing economic index of the town. In the same vein, eliminating all local accents, this revised version of *Three Radishes* was not truly produced for non-Cantonese speakers in Dongguan as the actors claim.

In contrast to the popularity of the first version, the second version is rarely seen in

reportage for further performance after the Star Award. In other words, the language of the play was basically revised to please the Putonghua-speaking judges. The alteration from Dongkeng accent to standard Cantonese is another interesting detail. On the one hand, compared with Putonghua, standard Cantonese is considered indigenous enough to express an exotic sense. On the other hand, standard Cantonese sounds more formal and a higher cultural capital than local dialects. The use of standard Cantonese serves as a compromising solution to demonstrate the sense of indigenosity in a comparatively less 'vulgar' way. The dominance of Putonghua went throughout the performance. Even some Cantonese-written lines are of Putonghua style. The title '*Three radishes in one pit*' is borrowed from a Putonghua idiom 'one radish in one pit' which means one position for one person. The language alteration implies that local people might have limited participation in the process of production. In other words, professional actors and artists who can speak standard Putonghua and Cantonese are more privileged in the set official production. The use of Putonghua and standard Cantonese acts as a threshold in the creating process for local practitioners, especially those of older ages.

In private, Li Zhongqiu, the official inheritor, and Liu Cheng, the person in charge of heritage projects in Dongkeng, stated that they were reluctant to recognise the second version as *muyuge* performance. Without local accent, they stated, the singing lost its 'authentic taste' (Li, 2015). However, they still gave tacit consent to the revision and did not openly clarify. Therefore, most media reportage still highlighted it as a *muyuge* performance. Also, through the award and related news reports, *muyuge* together with Maishen Festival and the local soup which constantly appeared in the performance has significantly raised visibility, and was successfully

constructed as local attractions. The tendency to abandon local accent, to some degree, has elevated the cultural image and, ironically, the cultural capital of *muyuge*, allowing it to be recognised by the dominant discourse. In other words, the revision of dialects in *Three radishes* does not really concern the cultural appeals of local Dongkeng people, especially those who are still truly practicing *muyuge*, or the numerous but socially marginal migrant workers. The decrease of Cantonese and its local accents has been the result of the official's pragmatic consideration of economic and political interests.

The language issue in *muyuge* reflects the situation and choice of an industrial town at the edge of economic restructuring and industrial upgrading. Integrating standard Cantonese and Mandarin into *muyuge* practice demonstrates the town's determination of regenerating a new town image. In '*Three radishes*', the most competitive candidate successfully persuades the heritage inheritor with her ambition in the commercial expansion. She says, 'I will make the Wang's soup opener, brighter and stronger. We'll go out of the country, into the world, opening branch stores and chain stores. Wang's restaurant will blossom everywhere!' *Yincai* and the soup made from it are everyday dishes of local people. The planting, producing and marketing of *yincai* is co-ordinated by the town's supply and marketing cooperative since 2006, and has been determined to develop *yincai* into a local cultural brand. With the promotion of local cultural station, *yincai* became a municipal intangible heritage in 2012, and is now approaching the provincial level (Shen, 2017). The actor's words overtly reveal the ambitions of upgrading industry and scaling up the production and markets of the local products. It is a process of involving small-scale economic activities and local everyday practices into the increasingly normalised market- and profit-oriented economy.

Normalisation is an increasing trend that is spreading all over in China's urban development, industrial restructuring and cultural regeneration in the past twenty years. In analysing the normalisation of a manufacturing and wholesaling based urban village in Beijing, Xiang Biao (2017) points out that as the shabby wholesale markets were replaced by posh shopping malls and informal family workshops by trademarked enterprises, a new economic order is formulated. It is at the same time a de-socialised process. The intricate and interdependent social network is being turned into pure economic relations. It is no longer taken to be the foundation of an enterprise's survival and sustainability, but a functional tool instead. What is more, the power of economy and politics goes into further conspiracy. Entrepreneurs tend to gain authority from the formal institutions rather than the grassroots (Xiang, 2017). In the same vein, heritagisation is a process of normalising everyday practices. Intangible heritage, on the one hand, includes everyday cultural practices into the narrative of state ideology; on the other hand, it re-sets values of cultural practices based on the 'logic' of the capital market. Providing products and the city with cultural legitimacy, intangible heritage is one of the crucial steps of the upgrading process. Unlike *yincai*, *muyuge* does not produce direct economic revenue, but it is still strongly promoted by the local government. The reason is that *muyuge* is also part of the agenda of industrial upgrading. 'Three radishes' again tells the secret. The inheritor interviewer asks the candidates what abilities they have. The first candidate says, 'I can eat'; the second says, 'I can drink'; the third says, 'I can blow'. 'Blow' (*chui*) in Chinese also means to boast. The third candidate then sings in the *muyuge* tune (in standard Cantonese) about the traditional soup. She thus becomes the first candidate to be hired. These three abilities are put in a progressively increase relation. The ability of eating (*neng chi*) is the most basic, sometimes implying honest and simple-minded in colloquial Chinese. To drink (*neng he*) is an

unspoken yet crucial ability in developing commercial or political relations and dealing with tough issues in an informal manner. Boasting is mostly negative, which means talking with exaggerated effects. It is surprising that this story takes boasting as a positive ability and is highlighted with a piece of *muyuge* singing. In other words, an important function of *muyuge* is to boast or talk something 'big' out of the official dream of economic upgrading. The heritage practice of *muyuge* has moved away from the social networks of local everyday life towards serving the interest of those who are more likely to benefit economically from the current trends of upgrading and restructuring. Abandoning local dialects and embracing Putonghua in the national performance contest is a result of this scaling process.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter examines the relationship between *muyuge* as an intangible heritage and Dongkeng, an industrial town at the edge of economic restructuring. The speed of heritage making is no less dramatic than the economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s. In less than ten years, *muyuge* turned from an insignificant and nameless cultural practice to one of the cultural icons and traditions of Dongkeng. *Muyuge* might be a singular case, but it reflects the common motivation and mechanism of heritage making in contemporary China. Under the explicit motivation of reinforcing unified national identity, the urgent need of economic restructuring feeds into the underlying dynamic that has been pushing and speeding up the heritagisation process. Since the mid-2000s, China began to slow down growth as the labour-intensive based economic model went into crisis. Situation was worse in the more economically developed areas such as the Pearl River Delta area. Culture becomes such a new life-saving straw with which local governments head for new scoring points of economic growth and urban regeneration. Intangible cultural

heritage is reinforced through top-down administrative directives, while it also serves as a ready-made cultural category for local governments to re-organise local cultural resources and develop new cultural brands. The whole process is urged by the call for industrial upgrading and the pursuit of economic impacts. Industrial upgrading and economic restructuring constitute the process of re-organising economic and social relations that favours capitalist development rather than local markets and communities. In the name of normalisation, many small and informal businesses are eradicated. So are the social networks where these businesses are embedded in. Heavily relying on local finance and local governments, intangible heritage has become part of the process of ‘cultural upgrading’ and deeply engaged with place competitions facilitated by local corporatist groups. In order to accumulate cultural resources, local cultural departments turn their eyes to the long ignored domains of everyday practices, uplifting and cultivating potential practices into intangible heritages. Borrowing the term from Xiang Biao (2017), the national campaign of intangible heritage is a process of ‘cultural normalisation’. It re-hierarchises cultural practices, especially those from the everyday domains, according to current trend of capital development. During this process, the heritagised practices are pulled away from everyday social networks and pushed into the capital-based economic scheme. Thereby, nationalism, aiming for unified national identity, and the capitalist development, in pursuit of efficient profit production, conspire in the heritage discourse and squeeze out the agenda of local cultural communities. In other words, the successful nomination of a cultural practice as intangible heritage does not necessarily mean that related cultural communities are strengthened or promoted and their cultural rights equally and properly treated. The next chapter will look into the intricate relationship between the heritagisation process, *muyuge* practitioner groups and the official selection of

heritage inheritors.

Chapter Five Reshaping the inheritor

China's official narrative of intangible cultural heritage gives a lot of weight to cultural inheritors, who are considered the creators and embodiments of intangible cultural heritage. Official documents and speeches frequently use 'people-oriented' as a principle of working with inheritors and protecting intangible heritage (Wu, 2005; People.cn, 2016; Ministry of Culture, 2012), which means the implementation of heritage protection should be centred around inheritors. In China, inheritor is a newly constructed cultural identity since the beginning of the new millennium. Synchronously, 'inheritor' is an imported concept from the UNESCO campaigns of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Current studies mostly limit the discussion of the inheritor in the recent intangible heritage context, and fail to examine the concept in a historical perspective. In this chapter, I perceive the emergence of the inheritor as a part of the historical evolution of folk artists in the radical social and political transformation of China in the past century. Based on the case of *muyuge*, this chapter provides a critical examination of intangible cultural heritage inheritor in the perspective of the evolution of folk artists in China's contemporary history. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part contextualises the 'inheritor' in the historical relations between the CCP and folk artists. The variation from 'folk artist', to 'cultural worker' and to the 'inheritor' embodies the CCP's changing attitudes towards folk arts and the changing cultural status of folk artists. In comparison with the socialist reformation of folk artists, the historical perspective is pivotal to understanding the current situation of inheritors in a discourse dominated by the intertwined logics of market and nationalism. The second part closely examines *muyuge* practitioners and inheritors. My fieldwork interviews and textual analyses show that the reconstruction of *muyuge* inheritor tends to abandon the

low-status social image of the original practitioners and construct new images to suit the mainstream cultural discourse. The new construction of *muyuge* inheritors embodies both dilemma and potentials in the interaction between heritage making and everyday practices.

5.1 The inheritor in a historical perspective

Ideas like ‘artists-centred’ or ‘people-centred’ are not unfamiliar in the reconstruction of traditional and folk cultures in the contemporary Chinese history. From the new *yangge* movement of the Yan’an period (1935-1948) and the *xiqu* reform in the early PRC years, drama performers and folk artists had been a central focus of the CCP’s cultural policy and working orientation. Their emphasis on folk artists had a lot to do with the Marxist and Maoist belief that the proletariat (the working class) and peasant classes are the ultimate revolutionary force. Early in the Yan’an period, the CCP recognised the significance of mobilising folk artists. Also, folk performing arts were dominant cultural forms among the underclass, and folk artists mostly came from peasant class. Therefore, mobilising folk artists in revolutionary propaganda⁹⁴ was an important means to legitimise the CCP’s leadership of revolution. After the establishment of the PRC, the reforming of folk artists was further institutionalised under the state system. Due to the dominant role that traditional performing arts played in common people’s cultural life, the field of traditional operas and their subcategories was among top priorities of reformation. During the *xiqu* reform launched in 1951, ‘reforming the people’ was one of the three central guidelines. By strict registration and re-organisation of performing groups, the state strengthened the control and supervision over folk artists (already discussed in Chapter 2). At the same time, the CCP paid considerable

⁹⁴ For further examples, see Hung Chang-tai’s (1993); Mao Qiaohui (2011)

attention to ideological education. Through forms of ‘political studies, *suku* campaigns (‘the movement of speaking the bitterness’), literacy education, etc., the reform movement aimed to raise the class consciousness of folk artists, reinforce their identification with the new socialist state and strengthen their ‘sense of ownership’ of the country. The CCP government specially raised the social status of folk artists. Before 1949, folk artists were among the bottom class of society. Including folk artists into the state system was a kind of political recognition. For some higher ranked artists, being part of the state cultural system meant stable government stipends and opportunities of participating in the state or regional politics (Zhang, 2002; Pan, 2016). The social and political status of folk artists was significantly changed. They were transformed into ‘cultural workers’ of the new China (Zhang, 2002).

From Yan’an period to the early People’s Republic period, the CCP had fundamentally transformed the social status of folk artists by granting them political identities. Folk artists were involved into the revolution and the state establishment at an unprecedentedly broad and deep degree. In the wake of the CCP’s taking power of the country, the party’s relation with the revolutionary classes that it represented was also changing. It gradually departed from its earlier principles of class politics and revolution. As it turned from a revolutionary party to a ruling party, the CCP strove to represent the trans-class interest of ‘the people’ and ‘the mass’ rather than merely the working class and the peasantry (Wang, 2015; He, 2016). At the same time, as it turned into a bureaucratized party, the CCP developed increasingly similar structures and logics with the state. The representative relationship between the party and the people evolved into the relation between the state, who supervised, and society, who were to be supervised (Wang, 2015, pp.

371-388). This transformation was also reflected in the relation between folk artists and the party. In Yan'an before the 1949, folk artists aroused political senses and gained certain cultural and political subjectivity through the mutual education and 'enlightenment' with communist cadres. After the establishment of the PRC, folk artists were granted with legitimate social status, which was unprecedented in previous times. However, as folk artists had been involved in the official institution, they also became those to be supervised and regulated. It means that folk artists, a previously unruly social force, became tamed by state institution (Zhang, 2002). Between responding to the cultural demands and rights of the audience and complying with the political and administrative arrangement of the government, the artists hardly had any choice but to obey the latter (Zhang, 2002).

'Intangible cultural heritage inheritors' are the incarnation of 'folk artists' and 'cultural workers' of the 21st century. 'Cultural worker' was a term with strong indication of class politics. The everyday use of 'cultural worker' has been declining in recent decades since the economic reform. As the embodiments and transmitters of intangible heritage, 'inheritor' stresses the shared culture of the nation. Unlike 'cultural worker', inheritors represent the culture of a nation instead of a certain political class. Therefore, as a new cultural identity, 'inheritor' replaces the connotation of class politics with a nationalistic emphasis of cultural continuity. Further, the trend of marketization since the late 1970s brought forth the marriage between the party-state and capital. The party, nominally representing the interest of the working class and the people, has ever closer connection with the interest of the market and capital. Culture is re-defined as a separate field from politics and economics (Wang, 2015, p. 379). In the wake of the cultural heritage fever, 'politicisation' has been widely accused as the key cause of the destruction of

cultural traditions especially after 1949. Under the domination of neo-liberal ideology, market is considered as a contemporary solution to traditions and cultural heritage. The state promotion of cultural industry and the stress of 'productive protection' of intangible heritage have granted 'culture' a prominent economic position. The campaign of intangible heritage is another attempt of re-ordering of folk artists by the state. Via the identification of inheritors, folk artists are once again absorbed into the state system. However, unlike 'cultural worker' which was an identity full of strong political meanings, the new identity of 'inheritors' eliminates the political agency of folk artists while at the same time involves them into the market economic system.

The 'inheritors' generally refers to practitioners of cultural traditions. The policy of intangible heritage sets up a nationwide system of evaluating and certificating official intangible heritage inheritors. The officially recognised inheritors are entitled 'representative inheritors'. The representative inheritor system authorises representative inheritors with legal and economical status. Similar to the assessment mechanism of intangible heritages, the evaluation of representative inheritors is also hierarchized from levels of the nation, province, municipality and county. The systems of representative inheritors and intangible heritage are separated, which means the level of inheritors does not necessarily synchronise with the heritage item they represent. For instance, *muyuge* is a national intangible heritage item. The two representative inheritors are respectively of the provincial level and the municipal level. This new system of folk artists differs significantly from the institutional reform of folk artists in the 1950s. Back in the early People's Republic years, administrative registration was more like a 'legitimate certificate' for performing troupes and individual artists. Registered artists and their activities were

under comprehensive supervision and regulation. Distinctively, the current inheritor system under intangible heritage is a certification and incentive mechanism rather than a supervisory institution. Representative inheritors enjoy social reputation and government stipends from corresponding levels⁹⁵. Related cultural sectors and individuals have to go through a series of application and evaluation procedures to be entitled as representative inheritors. Those who have been successfully registered as representative inheritors are under regular supervision. If considered ineligible of conducting transmission tasks, inheritors can be possibly removed from the representative lists (Law of Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2011).

The Law of Intangible Cultural Heritage was passed in February 2011. Compared with the 2003 Convention which places 'community' prominently in the second article and frequently refers the concept in subsequent articles, the Chinese law provisions position local practitioners in a much less significant position. There are five chapters in *the Law of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, but it is not until the fourth chapter that issues of representative inheritors are raised. The fourth chapter of the law prescribes the criterion, duties of representative inheritors and supports they could get from local governments and cultural sectors. According to the provisions, inheritors are not the cultural representatives of their own cultural groups, but cultural carriers directly affiliated to corresponding local governments and cultural

⁹⁵ The government stipends representative inheritors receive depend on their corresponding levels and the province and city they base. The state provides an annual stipend of 20,000 *yuan* to inheritors of the national level. The amount for inheritors of the provincial and municipal levels varies. Take inheritors in Dongguan for example. The yearly stipend of a national levelled inheritor is composed of three parts, 20,000 *yuan* from the state, 10,000 *yuan* from Guangdong Province and 9,600 *yuan* from Dongguan. A provincial level inheritor receives 20,000 *yuan* from Guangdong Province and 7,200 *yuan* from Dongguan on an annual basis, while a municipal inheritor only receives an annual stipend of 4,800 *yuan* from the city. The amount of stipend varies in different provinces and cities.

sectors. It is noteworthy that this chapter does not mention anything related to the rights of inheritors⁹⁶. By omitting their rights, the state neglects the possible negotiation with local communities in the heritage process. The state is the ultimate decision maker. By contrast, inheritors are singled out as individuals, and their relationship with the relevant cultural communities is reduced to a minimum level. Accordingly, the inheritors' duties are: 1) to transmit the intangible heritage project and to nurture successors; 2) to preserve related physical materials; 3) to cooperate with relevant cultural departments for heritage investigation; and 4) to participate in officially organised publicity activities (Law of Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2011). Notably, the duties and capacities of inheritors are isolated from the 'intangible' social relations, cultural identity and environment that contextualizes the heritage, and focus on the 'physical' perspective of cultural heritage. Moreover, inheritors are subordinated to governmental sectors in carrying out heritage activities. In the process of urban cultural development, inheritors do not act as a cultural subject, but as the materialised representation of intangible heritage amongst the economic and nationalistic oriented picture of urban regeneration. Rather than mandatory administrative orders, the official attitudes to inheritors are manifested mainly in two aspects: emphasising the marginality of inheritors, and the attempt to promote market-oriented ideas among inheritors.

The policies and official narrative of inheritor are built on the assumption that inheritors are in a precarious situation due to rapid social transformation in the reform era. The State Council has set the tone of urgency as it initiated the

⁹⁶ The absence of rights of inheritors is also noted by some scholars. Tian Yan (2011) and Deng Zhangying (2012) successively published articles in newspaper to propose the rights inheritors should have, including rights of authorship, transmission, adaptation and etc. However, there has been little further response until the thesis was writing.

intangible heritage campaign in 2005:

*A number of cultural heritages based on oral and embodied transmission are disappearing. Many traditional techniques are on the verge of extinction... It is of great urgency to reinforce the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage of our country (State Council, 2005b).*⁹⁷

The narratives of disappearance and the urgent appeal of preservation are effectively two sides of the same coin. Mainstream narratives stress the vulnerability and marginality of traditional practitioners. The media tend to focus on the aging and sometimes impoverished status of traditional cultural practitioners and inheritors. Recent official statistics show that nearly 300 national representative inheritors had passed away by the end of 2015. Those aged over 70 years old make up 56 per cent of current national inheritors (Wang, 2016). ‘Last voices’, ‘lost traditions’, and ‘no successors’, to name a few, are popular media expressions and narratives concerning traditional practices. The essential role that inheritors play in heritage transmission has been widely recognised and stressed. However, for official cultural departments, the way to value inheritors is to ‘protect’ rather than empower them. By unilaterally underlining the risk of precarity and extinction, the official narrative diminishes potential strengths of local practitioners and thus legitimises the external intervention and official domination over heritage production. ‘Rescue’ is a key term of the intangible heritage campaign in China⁹⁸. It expresses a sense of urgency and hence imminent actions. In 2015, the Ministry of Culture launched a nationwide project of ‘documentation for the rescue’⁹⁹. The

⁹⁷ The original text in Chinese, ‘一些依靠口授和行为传承的文化遗产正在不断消失, 许多传统技艺濒临消亡...加强我国非物质文化遗产的保护已经刻不容缓!’

⁹⁸ ‘Focus on preservation; rescue comes the first; properly utilise; transmit and develop’ (‘保护为主, 抢救第一, 合理利用, 传承发展’) is the principal of preservation (State Council, 2005c).

⁹⁹ The original expression in Chinese, ‘抢救性记录’.

project aims to document all national representative inheritors in forms of audio, video and picture. It also provides guidance, trainings and workshops to related cultural officials and volunteers. The protection of inheritors is a state action to systematically re-organise cultural resources as well as a process to construct the image of traditional bearers and folk artists. The state, the officials and the experts are those who conduct the 'rescue', while traditional practitioners are positioned as 'objects' to be documented and rescued. By weakening tradition bearers, a new relation between the government, experts and folk cultural practitioners is constructed.

The intangible heritage policy also attempts to turn some of the inheritors into economic subjects. It becomes an important measure for cultural policies and local governments to support inheritors to get involved in the market. *The Law of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2011) encourages preferential economic policies in relation to intangible heritage, for instance, tax incentives for 'reasonable utilisation of intangible cultural heritage items'. It justifies the market behaviours related to intangible heritage in a legal sense. With the push of positive policies, commercial studios and enterprises mushroom in the name of intangible heritage, which becomes effectively a prospective market in which inheritors are transformed into economic entities. In November 2015, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education jointly launched the programme of training and studies of intangible cultural heritage inheritor groups. The programme is based on the assumption that the conception and production of folk arts fall behind the times and that they need to be reformed in order to conform to the market economy (Ministry of Culture, 2017b; Sun, 2017). The programme aims to train 100 thousand people related to intangible heritage from 2016 to 2020, and plans to assign 50 to 80 domestic

universities and 20 to 30 design enterprises to take up the responsibility for providing training and study opportunities. The training programme for inheritors now becomes a part of the normalised work for related official sectors (Sun, 2017), with far-reaching impact in re-shaping people's perception of folk arts and the production of intangible heritage. The training programme proposes the new term 'the inheritor groups', which includes not only representative inheritors, but also folk artists who are not officially recognised as inheritors, as well as those involved in the preservation and business of intangible heritage. As a training programme oriented for 'the inheritor group', its official aim is to involve extensive social force, in particular those with commercial and capital resources (Chen, 2016). Also, it is noteworthy that the training programme is specifically oriented for artists of traditional handicrafts, in contrast to the emphasis on artists of performance during the 1940s and 1950s. Compared with traditional performing arts, traditional handicrafts are more ready-made for commercial adaptation and utilisation. And in terms of curriculum, universities have the autonomy to design specific courses according to the needs of participants. But course structures are more or less similar, including cultural and aesthetic theories, introduction to modern design, basic knowledge of marketing and intellectual copyrights as well as related fieldtrips and lectures. These curriculums indicate that inheritors should be implanted with ideas of modern aesthetic values and be better equipped with marketing and commercial skills. Under the asymmetric relation of knowledge, folk artists are those to be indoctrinated and transformed. These courses do not only run the risk of 'alienating' folk culture (Chen, 2016; Cui, 2016), but also degrading folk artists to a completely subjugated position.

Market approaches have been taken for granted as a resolution for the declining

traditional cultures. Under this assumption, marketization and commercialisation become a seemingly irresistible way of reforming inheritors. Some scholars (Chen, 2016; Cui, 2016) also notice the problems of the marketization trend in the reconstruction of inheritor. In the current heritage narratives, the social and political position of folk artists is not stressed. I would argue that this is an intentional neglect for the sake of weakening the political dimension of folk culture and strengthening its economic significance. In the present time, class politics have been significantly diminished in the heritage discourse. The transformation from ‘cultural worker’ to ‘inheritor’ reflects the different definition and positioning of folk artists by the state. Although folk artists are still supervised by the governmental cultural system, the administrative affiliation between folk artists and official sectors is much weaker. Instead, the state attempts to mobilise folk artists with market force and aims to incorporate folk culture into the market system. The rest of the chapter will analyse in detail the different situations of the *muyuge* practitioners in the past four decades after the economic reform and how *muyuge* inheritors are selected and reconstructed in the attempt to creating new images of *muyuge* practitioners.

5.2 *Muyuge* practitioners in the market-oriented society

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, due to its periphery position in language and geographical location, *muyuge* performers were not the focus of the *xiqu* reform in the 1950s. Being detached from the state cultural system means further marginalisation of the cultural practice as well as ambiguous political and cultural position of its practitioners. In other words, the undefined identity of *muyuge* performers leaves greater leeway for the intangible heritage reconstruction. However, on the other hand, having been marginalised for more than half a century, *muyuge* practitioners are generally considered and represented as disadvantaged,

peripheral and even ignorant. The result is that, for marginal everyday practices like *muyuge*, heritagisation now functions as an approach of re-integration to the mainstream narratives. The reconstruction of *muyuge* practitioners is a key part of this process. *Muyuge* practitioners include professional performers and *muyuge* enthusiasts. The former, with only a few left today, was a profession which had extinguished for nearly three decades. The latter are mostly older local people who are still in practice albeit on a small and diminishing scale. Who is eligible of becoming the representative inheritor? How do mainstream media represent ordinary practitioners and representative inheritors, and what are their relations in the era of intangible heritage? Based on fieldwork studies and media analyses, this section examines, respectively, the work of professional *muyuge* performers, *muyuge* enthusiasts and the representative inheritors in an attempt to addressing these questions. I argue that the market-oriented discourse tends to diminish the cultural agency of *muyuge* practitioners and reorient the disadvantaged image to cater for the gentrifying demands of economic upgrading via the representative inheritors of intangible heritage.

The humble image of professional *muyuge* performers

Let us start with a publicity video clip (Daojiao, 2015). The video begins with a blind man singing *muyuge*. As the image of an old *muyuge* performer heaves into sight, there comes the male voice-over in standard Putonghua: 'He, eighty years old, cannot see the outside world.' Then the scene switches to another old man riding a bike in the street, with the same voice-over, 'He, eighty-six years old, is an ordinary old man.' The two-minute video tells the story of an old man helping a blind man cross the street everyday for ten years in order to promote core socialist values. The blind man to be helped is Uncle Tang (Liu Gantang). It is noteworthy that he is

represented as a *muyuge* performer, even though *muyuge* performer as a profession had disappeared almost thirty years ago. Why does the video choose to identify Uncle Tang as a *muyuge* performer? What does it mean by using *muyuge* as a cultural and identity element in the political propaganda video?

A manifest reason is that *muyuge* is a good tool for publicity at the local level. This is a publicity advertisement for 'core socialist values'¹⁰⁰. The publicity video is a local representation of 'friendship', one of the core socialist values. *Muyuge*, as an intangible cultural heritage, is used as a local cultural resource (although it officially belongs to Dongkeng town). The song Uncle Tang sings is called *Impression Daojiao*, which was written by local cultural officials to introduce local specialties ranging from foodways, cultural traditions to economic achievements. This is not a video about *muyuge*, but *muyuge* is used as an important cultural resource for local promotion. Another latent yet important reason is that the image of a *muyuge* performer is more efficient in constructing the marginal position of an old blind person. I argue that shaping Uncle Tang as a *muyuge* performer is the interplay between the impact of intangible heritage and the precarious status of this practice.

As far as I know, Uncle Tang lives a more diverse life in reality. He had been a peasant until he got blind due to smallpox in 1984 when he was 48 years old. As he was not able to work as a farmer anymore, he learned *muyuge* and fortune-telling from another blind man in town. His career as a *muyuge* performer only lasted for a few years before the 1990s. From then on, his income mainly comes from fortune telling as well as ritual and religious practices. In order to better maintain contacts with clients, Uncle Tang set up an 'office table' at a local temple, and commuted

¹⁰⁰ In 2012, the 18th national congress of CCP proposed twelve values as core socialist values which cover directions and disciplines of the state, society and individual levels.

between home and the workplace every day. The scene shown in the video is where Uncle Tang used to commute on a daily basis. However, the video conceals the purpose of Uncle Tang's daily routine and his economic capacity. Also, according to people from the neighbourhood, Uncle Tang's son used to ride him to work frequently by motorcycle. The video hides the care Uncle Tang received from his family to shape an image of a lonely elderly person. Together with loneliness, helplessness, aging, blindness, the image of *muyuge* performer is another footnote that adds into the marginality and subalternity of someone in need of help.

The humble status of *muyuge* performers does not reside in their economic income, but in the subordinated social status of the practitioners. Before the 1980s, there had been very little social support for blind people. Performing *muyuge* was the only and last resort which blind people could choose to keep a subsistence. It was a humble and arduous profession. Shi Luguang, a blind man from the town of Liaobu, was a *muyuge* performer from 1976 to 1984. In order to gain business, he used to travel, usually on foot, to nearby villages and towns of Dongguan and Shenzhen. He performed *muyuge* along the way, and received tips from the audience. Sometimes, Shi was invited to do fortune-telling. For this, he usually charged more, from 30 to 50 fen (0.3-0.5 yuan)¹⁰¹. Uncle Tang also admits that the income from performing *muyuge* and fortunetelling was much higher than farming. However, as blind singers did not conduct productive labour, they had often been considered as relying on almsgiving. During interviews, some older women reminded me not to confuse their songbook singing with 'the blind men's song'. 'We sing for daily entertainment, while they beg for life', one woman told me. Furthermore, *muyuge* practice shrunk and

¹⁰¹ According to Shi, blind performers' income was not low, considering that it cost only 2 fen for a local congee and 18 fen for one kilo of meet in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

disappeared rapidly under the market-oriented economic system and the currency of various new ways of cultural consumption. Features such as singing along the street, grievous tones and contents, as well as an aged audience often imply mismatch with the trends and fashions of today's society, and thereby aggravate the marginal and underclass imagination of their practitioners.

In reality, Uncle Tang's true interest and passion resides in Cantonese opera and music. He joined the culture and entertainment group organised by the village in the 1950s, and learned traditional instruments. Today Uncle Tang often volunteers as a musician for the amateur Cantonese opera group of his village. He has not practiced *muyuge* ever since he ceased earning subsistence by singing. He admitted that his skills of *muyuge* have become rusty over the years. Nevertheless, as *muyuge* has been 'upgraded' as an intangible heritage, both the media and the public tend to perceive him as an inheritor of a cultural tradition. Journalists, researchers and students came to interview him and record his singing. The underclass image of *muyuge* performers becomes an effective approach of re-constructing vulnerability, with lingering consequences in media representation.

Re-thinking the disappearance of older practitioners and *muyuge*

In terms of ordinary *muyuge* enthusiast, the story has been frequently told in media reports and articles about *muyuge* (Zhong, 2013; Pinrui, 2014). It originally came from Zhang Tiewen, a collector and folk culture scholar in Dongguan. One day, Zhang was doing fieldwork in a village while he heard someone singing *muyuge*. Following the voice, he came to an ancestral temple and saw an old woman, who singing the popular *muyushu* of *the Golden Silk Butterfly*. The woman's singing was clear, expressive and full of emotions. Zhang was so impressed that he did not dare to interrupt, but stood by and listened for a long time. As it got dark, Zhang went by

and attempted to talk with the old woman, who ignored him and kept singing. Villagers came to tell Zhang that it was useless to ask. The woman had already lost her memories. She did not even remember her own name. Yet still, her singing was so fluent and accurate. Therefore, Zhang was even more touched by the strongly rooted *muyuge* in the woman's heart.

This is a captivated story, but I want to raise attention to the way of the narrative act and the relations between local practitioners and cultural traditions represented in the story. I argue that the story is tactfully tailored, whether intentionally or not, to echo with the official narrative of intangible heritage: personal memories can be lost, but tradition persists. The story, in whichever context it is told, always stops at the revelation of the amnesia status of the old woman. So does the researcher's interest in exploring the woman's further stories with *muyuge*. It is not that the woman's personal story was inaccessible as it should not be difficult to get her basic information from the village neighbourhood. The key of this case is that personal memories of older practitioners were not considered important. How have they been practicing *muyuge*? What did they practice? Why were some older people so attached to singing *muyuge* and sharing *muyushu*? Examination of and answers to these questions remain superficial. Little interest has been raised to study how older people struggle to maintain their cultural practice in the rapidly transforming society and how younger generations could possibly inherit tradition on the groundwork of the existing practice. The emphasis of aging bodies and lost memories justifies and naturalises older people's incapability of maintaining cultural traditions as well as an evacuation of older practitioners from more active engagement with heritage production. Thereby, it is no surprise that the story is often followed by the urgent call for rescuing and preserving *muyuge*.

Zhang's story is a poetic resonation of the official narratives of intangible heritage. The state project of 'documentation for the rescue', the story of local collector encountering the old *muyuge* singer, and the humble image of blind *muyuge* singers are all different demonstrations of the same power relation and narrative. By identifying tradition bearers as old-aged, vulnerable and in need of protection, mainstream narratives deny older people's agency in transmitting cultural traditions, and in the meantime naturalise the contrast between aging bodies and the advancing of modernisation as well as the causal relations between modernisation and the decline of traditions. These narratives ignore, if not deny, the complicated dynamics and interactions between cultural practitioners and the contemporary socio-economic context. It is never understood that only if we break away from the simplified narrative frame and pay closer attention to how older cultural practitioners interact with the contemporary society, can we possibly uncover the more intricate picture of the declining traditions and reach more diverse approaches and imaginaries of what heritage could be today. To the contrary of popular narratives, my research shows that local markets that revived after the economic reform had provided *muyuge* with new opportunities rather than accelerated its decline.

The practice of *muyuge* has been revived since the late 1970s. It was firstly practiced for religious and ritualistic purposes in the 1980s. During the 1990s, many older people retired and thus had free time to resume and develop their hobbies.

Muyushu singing and transcribing became popular in the urban and provincial areas of Dongguan. As was mentioned earlier, I grew up in Dongguan in the 1980s and 1990s, *muyuge* was part of the background sounds of my youth experience as my grandma and other senior female family members sang *muyuge* for entertainment

and ritualistic purposes every now and then. However, compared to other social transformations of the reform era, this resurgence of *muyuge* was so unremarkable that it raised little local attention. Nonetheless, the fact is that *muyuge* did revive (although not to the level of its former popularity) during the hay days of economic reform.

Professional *muyuge* and *muyushu* production had already been extinguished by the 1990s one after another. And the revival of *muyuge* at the end of the 20th century was by no means a repetition of the previous practice. Older *muyuge* fans made use of popular technologies in the 1990s and 2000s to resume the cultural practice. As there was no longer ready-made *muyuge* copies, many older fans set hands to make their own copies. Most *muyushu* circulation then was mimeographed copies.

Mimeograph printing technology was introduced to China in the early 20th century. Due to the convenient operation and low cost, mimeograph had been widely employed by schools, social groups, commercial business, and government offices for small circulation before the prevalence of computer printers in the late 1990s. The mimeographed copies are of similar size to the older version of *muyushu*. Many were copies of *zejin* (excerpts) and other pieces of shorter length. There was little illustration or graphic design. Older people applied the easy technique and duplicated their handwritten transcriptions of *muyushu* for sale. They took the mimeographed booklets to grocery markets and public parks where older people normally passed by and gathered. Aunt Fang, an enthusiastic *muyuge* lover, transcribed the *muyushu* which she inherited from her mother. She did it for fun at the beginning. As an increasing number of people asked her for copies, she made mimeographed copies and set up temporary stalls for sale. One booklet cost from one to two *yuan*, which was an affordable price as personal income in the late 1990s

had substantially increased. To better connect with potential buyers, Aunt Fang left her name and personal beeper number on her transcribed copies. Beeper as a early form of wireless telecommunication device used to be popular in Dongguan and other economically developed cities of China in the 1990s. It indicated that some *muyuge* practitioners started to use the emerging communicative devices to expand their market network. Photocopying was another emerging and commonly used everyday technology in the 1990s, and became the new, alternative choice for older fans to make *muyushu* copies. Photocopying was especially useful for reproducing lengthy *muyushu* scripts. However, photocopying was not inexpensive. In the 1990s and early 2000s, it generally cost one *yuan* for two copied pages. In other words, it cost at least a few hundred to a thousand *yuan* to get a complete work (often in several volumes) photocopied. Photocopied *muyushu* was mostly made for personal use rather than business.

Apart from textual copies, audio recordings became popular too. Before the late 1970s, the only known audio recording of *muyuge* was made in the 1950s when the Cultural Hall of Dongguan attempted to record the performance of *muyuge* singer Blind Ji. However, the audio archive was destroyed during the campaign of ‘destroying the four olds’ (Yang, 2005a). After the end of the Cultural Revolution, some overseas Dongguan natives came back to look for *muyushu* and *muyuge*. They paid blind singers to record *muyuge* singing in cassette tapes at five *yuan* each. It was a rather high price considering that the average salary for a common government officer was around 30 *yuan* in the early 1980s (Zhang, 2015). Cassette recorders became common for domestic use in the 1980s and 1990s. Through cassette recording, blind singers and older fans were able to record their own singings and made multiple copies for sale. Most of the audio copies available today

are estimated to be produced during the 1980s and early 2000s¹⁰². To the contrary of the popular belief, the revived local market, modern culture and technology had enhanced the practice of *muyuge* and brought about new variations and opportunities. Also, if the idea of market had not been deeply recognised and rooted in society since the 1990s, older people could probably not have had the passion of running the business of selling *muyuge* products.

Profits from booklet sales and audio recordings were meagre, and the small business of *muyuge* did not develop into a profit-oriented practice. For the elderly people though, the values of *muyuge* reside more in the social and cultural domains rather than its economic values. As Aunt Fang stresses, she gained joy and pleasure from selling *muyuge* copies. Besides her own town, Aunt Fang was also invited to sell her booklets in nearby towns. She usually displayed the booklets on the ground and sometimes she sang. Her singing captured some passers-by, and became an effective way of sale promotion. Later, in response to the requirement of her friends and customers, she recorded audio cassettes for sale. Aunt Fang felt fulfilled and proud of her *muyushu* business. For her, the business was not only economically rewarding, but also, helped Aunt Fang to develop broader social network in her retired life. Aunt Runzhen was another example. While she did not make copies for sale, she had held informal *muyuge* singing gatherings in her neighbourhood for over ten years. During the early years of the Cultural Revolution, Aunt Runzhen secretly collected a dozen of *muyushu*. As she had her own 'collections' and was talented in singing, Aunt Runzhen became a key figure among her *muyuge* friends

¹⁰² Most audio copies available today are anonymous and without any recording information. I checked with Zhang Tiewen, Aunt Fang and other *muyuge* enthusiasts. They could not provide precise information, but only conjectured from their experiences that those recordings might be produced from the early 1980s to the early 2000s.

after retirement in the 1990s. She taught them line by line and explained the story plots. Their gatherings usually took place in public parks or by street sides. Aunt Yi was one of the most frequent participants of the *muyuge* gathering. Aunt Yi used to be illiterate, thus never read or listened to *muyuge* until she joined Aunt Runzhen. After years of learning and singing, Aunt Yi now is able to read, and especially interested in reading long *muyushu* stories¹⁰³.

Around the end of the first decade of the 2000s (coinciding with the promotion of *muyuge* as intangible heritage), older people's *muyuge* practice showed decline. Admittedly, older people's capacity of practicing *muyuge* does decrease as they age. The number of *muyushu* stalls in local markets decreased in the past decade. The declining health of older practitioners is a direct and pivotal cause. Aunt Fang had an aggravating problem with her leg, and it has become increasingly difficult for her to travel long distance to sell *muyushu* copies. Ten years ago, Aunt Runzhen had planned to transmit *muyuge* singing to young generations. She bought books and volunteered to give weekly lessons to a group of local women aged around fifties. However, as she suffered from severe diabetes, the class was later suspended. These regrettable stories could again lead to the clichéd notion that traditional practices are doomed to die out as practitioners age. But such explanations only describe parts of the truth, while they neglect the active attempt that older people had made to revive their cultural hobbies and skills. For these older local people, *muyuge* is an approach to maintaining cultural habits and get engaged with the rapidly developing market-oriented society. Also, by attributing the disappearance of tradition to the weakening bodies of older people, the mainstream narrative is prone to conceal the

¹⁰³ Studies show that literacy levels in Guangdong region were 'unusually high' even among marginal groups of women, peasants and workers. The widespread of *muyushu* was an important factor (Snow, 2004, pp. 79-80).

asymmetric power relations between the marginal cultural communities and urban expansion.

For urban development has been planned upon the interests and ways of life of the middle and upper classes, with little consideration of the needs of marginal groups such as the elderly people. Uncle Guang was in his early eighties when I visited him in 2014. He gathered with other older villagers in the evening. They liked to sing and listen to *muyuge* recordings every now and then. To my surprise, they did not gather under the big banyan tree or by playground inside the village. Rather, they often sat on the abandoned stone pillars by the side of a four-lane main road near the entrance of the village. It did not seem a safe site for gatherings as cars, trucks and coaches kept speeding by them. Uncle Guang explained that it was the best choice because there was enough light and few mosquitoes. Urban expansion has significantly altered people's habits of *muyuge* practices. Aunt Runzhen disbanded the singing gathering due to the same reason. Aunt Runzhen had lived inside the old town of Guancheng, the former central district of Dongguan city. Most of the places in the old town were within walking distance. It was convenient for older people to gather and communicate. Due to urban expansion, the limited land area in the Guancheng district would not accommodate the ever increasing cultural and economic demands. The function of city centre has been moved away to nearby towns since the early 2000s. In contrast to the thriving newly developed districts, the small old town of Guancheng became stagnant. For better living environment, Aunt Runzhen's family moved out in 2011. The new place was only 15 to 20 minutes by car from the old town. However, for the older folks who usually rely on public transportation, it takes nearly one hour to commute including over 30 minutes of walking along roadsides with little shading. Such commuting route was too much for

older people in their seventies and eighties. The new place was a young and middle class residential community. Compared with the old town, it was environmentally pleasant, orderly and clean. However, most neighbours do not speak Cantonese, never mind know *muyuge*. Aunt Runzhen felt alone and upset as she could not find anyone to share her enthusiasm of *muyuge*. She once planned to take a taxi to meet her *muyuge* friends, but was held back by her family due to safety concerns. Her friend Aunt Yi came to see her once. It was not an easy trip. Aunt Yi kept it a secret from her family to avoid worries. It was not an isolated case. My grandma used to join other *muyuge* gatherings in Guancheng. She also lost contact with her *muyuge* friends for the same reason as she moved out with her family since the early 2000s. Former *muyuge* performer Shi Luguang explained that traffic system became increasing complicated since the 1990s. With few public supporting facilities, it was nearly impossible for a blind person to travel alone to other towns, not to mention performing along the way as he did as a blind performer before.

The disappearance of *muyuge* is part of the bigger story of rampant urbanisation. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the urban districts in Dongguan still maintained the basic scale for people to live in, with comparatively low living cost and frequent community interactions. It was the necessary social setting that sustained people's practice of *muyuge* and other social networks. However, due to urban expansion, the cost of daily commuting becomes high and difficult especially for older people. Moreover, the everyday space is increasingly divided by widening roads, shopping malls, and residential communities managed by real estate companies. It becomes less accessible for and friendly to communal life. How do marginal social groups maintain their basic needs and everyday life and cultural practices? Urban developments of our time do not take such problems into account. Intangible

heritage turns the society's attention to the everyday life and cultural practices of marginal groups. It is necessary to enhance adhesion and durability of related cultural communities and to inherit cultural traditions in a historical and realistic context. If policy makers and executers were able to recognise the complicated relations between the decline of tradition and urban development, it could have been a good opportunity to reflect on the capital-led model of development and to create equal and inclusive social dialogues. However, the current 'rescuing' policy only simplifies the decline of traditions. The focus of documenting inheritors is necessary in terms of restoring cultural memories. Nevertheless, the excessive stress on the vulnerability of older practitioners and inheritors isolates traditional practices from the contemporary practitioners and social contexts.

The representative inheritors of *muyuge*

This section introduces the two representative inheritors of *muyuge* Li Zhongqiu and Huang Peiyi. Through the analysis of inheritors from two generations, I want to discuss what the reconstruction of inheritor signifies in the current heritage discourse and examine the dilemma of identities and creativity of folk culture that *muyuge* inheritors face.

Li Zhongqiu is the official inheritor of *muyuge*, who was named the provincial representative inheritor in September 2012. Born in the town of Dongkeng in 1947, Li knew and learned about *muyuge* from his senior family members. He was brought up by his grandmother who loved reading *muyushu* and singing *muyuge*. According to Li, his grandmother loved *muyuge* so much that she could not even sleep without singing or reading a piece of it. Influenced by his grandmother, Li developed his interest of *muyuge* and gained the basic senses of singing. Informal and unconscious learning from family members was the most common approach that people

acquired *muyuge*. Except for blind people, it was rare for ordinary people to learn *muyuge* specifically. Moreover, with less opportunities for practices, ordinary *muyuge* enthusiasts are hard to compare with professional blind singers in terms of performing qualities and the acquired repertoire. It planted the cause for disputes over Li's qualification of being the representative *muyuge* inheritor. The countering opinions stressed that Li's performing is not skilful or 'authentic' enough, thus not capable of representing the best quality of Dongguan *muyuge*. However, the questioning voices were neither heard by many nor turned into public discussion. The most important reason was that there might not be a more suitable candidate, for very few blind singers are left in Dongguan nowadays. Shi Luguang, the blind singer in the neighbouring town Liaobu, might be a potential candidate of *muyuge* inheritor in terms of his performing skills and age (born in 1957). However, the town of Liaobu did not apply to have *muyuge* as intangible heritage. Despite the administrative barrier, a blind singer is still not likely to be selected as an inheritor. As discussed earlier, blind singers are represented as those who are humble, marginalised and in need of help. Even if former professional performers have more proficient singing skills, their image is not consistent with the town's ambition of economic upgrading.

The image of Li Zhongqiu is special. He is keen in *muyuge*, but not as vulnerable or marginal as other *muyuge* practitioners represented in media. Li has been very active in local cultural activities since he was young. He graduated from secondary school in 1966. As the Cultural Revolution started, he joined a cultural propaganda team to disseminate Maoism and the revolution. During this period, he learned basic music theory and several Chinese instruments. Revolutionary songs and model plays were the main repertoire at that time. Following his interest in *muyuge*, Li also

created a piece of *muyuge* to arouse audience's emphasis to the peasantry (as discussed in Chapter 2). After the Cultural Revolution, Li resumed studies at a normal college and became a physics teacher at a local secondary school in Dongkeng. He also resumed his passion in arts and performance, creating short dramas and directing gala performances for his students and the school. His hobbies of singing *muyuge* also continued. Unlike other older people who are fond of reading existing popular stories of *muyushu*, Li shows more interest in creating new works. He once re-adapted a novella into a 13,000-character long *muyushu*¹⁰⁴. In 2005, the secondary school set up a traditional culture course as extra-curriculum course¹⁰⁵. Well known for his *muyuge* hobby, Li was invited to give a talk on *muyuge*. He had not expected that his unintentional engagement with the traditional culture curriculum would have rendered him to be made the representative inheritor of *muyuge*. As surveys of intangible heritage sources were conducted across the country, Li's teaching became a piece of credible evidence of the vitality of *muyuge* practice in Dongkeng. As *muyuge* was successfully registered as intangible heritage, Li became the representative inheritor.

Li conveys a new image of *muyuge* performer. Compared with the low social status of blind singers, Li is a secondary school teacher, a decent and respected occupation in China. His connection with *muyuge* is not out of survival demands but of interest and passion. He retired in 2007, but was still responsible and even more active in

¹⁰⁴ Li Zhongqiu's work of '跌宕人生' (*Ups and Downs of Life*) is re-adapted from the popular novella '人生' (*Life*) by Lu Yao (1949-1992). Li's re-adapted piece is available at:

<http://dk.sun0769.com/subject/mvg/zpxi/49361.shtml>

¹⁰⁵ The Ministry of Education promulgated a notice to require primary and secondary schools across the country to enhance and strengthen education of traditional culture and national spirits in April 2004. The extra-curriculum course of traditional culture in Dongkeng should be a response to this policy.

the intangible heritage activities related to *muyuge*. Li delivers a positive social image of a 'retired but not tired' person. Also due to his teaching experiences, Li is considered more capable in transmitting *muyuge* to younger generations. Since he became the official inheritor, he taught regular *muyuge* courses in a primary school and a secondary school in Dongkeng. *Muyuge*, based on oral transmission, does not have any explicit performance instructions. However, Li made a change in transmission by systemising the regulations of *muyuge* and developed a corresponding curriculum (more discussion of performance and creation in Chapter 6). Furthermore, compared with most other enthusiasts, Li is keener in creating new works instead of repeating 'old' stories. Local cultural officials required him to create new works and performances to add in the repertoire of *muyuge*. Li (2016) said he was happy to take the challenge as he 'enjoyed trying new things'. Over the past 12 years, Li created a number of *muyuge* works. Some are out of personal interest, while most are official assignments for *Maishen* Festival performances and local propaganda. Li's personal characteristics and experiences satisfy the official imaginary and requirement of *muyuge* performers.

From Li's profile, I want to point out that his educational background and experience in cultural activities during the early PRC years has significant impact in his comprehension of how folk culture should be created and used. His strong motivation to create new works echoes cultural ideas of the 1950s such as 'weeding through the old to bring forth the new', or 'using the past for present purposes'. Since the 1950s, many non-staged performances were transformed into staged performances. Growing up in the 1950s-60s and impacted by cultural ideas of that historical period, Li made a lot effort to put *muyuge* onto the stage. He is also used to the idea of making use of folk culture for political purposes. Despite his

'revolutionary' *muyuge* created during the Cultural Revolution, he now creates *muyuge* for official propaganda.

Li's experience in cultural activities since the 1960s renders him more credit in the post of inheritor. However, his creative work based on socialist creative ideas is not always well received, especially among older *muyuge* practitioners like Yang Baolin who does not even think the 'innovated' *muyuge* is authentic. This is not the only dilemma for Li. Ou Jingqin, a folk artist in the western Guangdong city Wuchuan, attempted to create new *muyuge* repertoire and improve the performance of *muyuge*. His practice also received negative responses due to the 'inauthentic' representation of the traditional singing practice (Yang, 2017). I argue that the dilemma these officially recognised inheritors encounter reflects the awkward position of folk culture and folk artists in today's China. On the one hand, inheritors are supposed to be the embodiment of a revived traditional culture. On the other hand, they are no longer as 'authentic' as people expect them to be. They have embodied the 'socialist tradition' of cultural creativity, but it is not likely to be appreciated in the present time.

Huang Peiyi, born in the late 1980s, is another representative inheritor of *muyuge*. Huang used to be Li's student. Since around 2009, Li and the heritage officials began to look out for younger successors. Pragmatically, Li needed someone to share his teaching and publicity tasks. Strategically, the local cultural sector needed to prove their achievement of heritage transmission over the past few years. A younger successor could be strong evidence. In 2009, a big year for *muyuge* in Dongkeng, the town invited professional teams to produce a *muyuge* performance '*Evening singing at Tinggang Temple*' for the opening ceremony of Maishen Festival. During the festival, the town organised a *muyuge* contest, through which the Cultural and

Broadcasting Centre of Dongkeng aimed to involve younger people. Li thought of Huang Peiyi, the once active participant in his class at the secondary school. Huang studied medical science at a university in Guangzhou at that time, but she had not learned any *muyuge* yet. However, curious to perform on the 'big stage', she agreed to take part in both events. This was the first time that she learned *muyuge*. During the performance, Li discovered Huang's potential of becoming his successor, and persuaded her to take further *muyuge* lessons with him. At first, Huang hesitated, as her tastes were in western and Korean pop music. *Muyuge* was 'too old and too boring' for her. But she was touched by Li's sincerity and 'his determination of passing on the tradition' (Dongguan Radio & TV Station, 2014). Thus, she finally took Li's invitation. After graduation, Huang gave up her medicine major. With Li's recommendation, she worked at the Cultural and Broadcasting Centre. She assisted Li in teaching and started to give lessons independently in 2014. Since she became the municipal representative inheritor in 2016, Huang has been publicised as a positive result of cultural inheritance. She is young and educated, which delivers a completely different image from the older *muyuge* practitioners.

Huang's experience of learning *muyuge* is fundamentally different from the generation of her teacher Li Zhongqiu. Her inheritance is largely motivated by the administrative requirement of intangible heritage and completed via the governmental cultural system. Learning *muyuge* and passing on the practice is part of her routine job now. Nevertheless, her duty as an inheritor is not mechanically separated from her personal life. She loves music, dancing and performing since she was young. The job as a *muyuge* inheritor renders her many stage opportunities through which she gains senses of fulfilment (Huang , 2016). During the interview, she told me that she was reading and learning classic Chinese literature in spare

time to improve her ability in writing and teaching *muyuge*. Huang did find it an enjoyable process. Occasionally, she even attempts to express her personal feelings in the form of *muyuge*. She once showed me a *muyuge* she wrote for her grandma. She was in deep sorrow as her grandma passed away. The way she chose to express her sorrow was to write a *muyuge*. It was a seven-syllable short piece that expresses her sincere and poignant reminiscence of her late grandmother. The literary style is very different from her works written for official publicity. This one was much more pleasant and touching. However, except for her family, she never showed it to anyone including her teacher Li Zhongqiu, not to mention using it in her *muyuge* course. She did not think such personal expression would be appropriated for public exposure or prominent enough to attract scholars' attention. It is not simply a privacy matter. Rather, it reveals the conflicts between *muyuge* as intangible heritage, an officially co-opted cultural form and a form of personal, cultural expression. To some extent, Huang has internalised *muyuge* as a vehicle of personal expression. However, she hesitates from exposing her personal creation in the official discourse. In other words, she is concerned it might conflict with her public identity as an inheritor. *Muyuge* as a heritage practice has been centred on outer demands, such as policy publicity, economic pursuit and nationalistic promotions. Personal expression becomes awkward if not inappropriate in such contexts.

This is a complicated but important moment. It reveals two dimensions of the process of heritage transmission. One is the asymmetric relation between heritage inheritors and the official heritage sectors. In most heritage practices, inheritors do not have enough autonomy in expression and creation, but have to comply with official requirements. The other takes place at a relatively undetected dimension. The process of transmission is not merely administrative or nominal. It entangles

with people's everyday experiences and emotions, but manifests in a subtle and obscure way. I would like to raise more attention to the latter finding here. Although it seems obscure and uncertain, it reveals the potential connection between everyday experience and the heritage practice. It also opens up the possibilities for ordinary practitioners to reverse the established official heritage discourse and transform it to cultural practices connected to one's own experiences and emotions. It could be an empowering process as well as a possible resolution to the asymmetric position of inheritors in heritage making.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter offers a detailed analysis of intangible heritage inheritor as an official constructed cultural identity with a historical perspective. 'People-oriented' is proposed as a key principle of working on the inheritors. On the one hand, the 'people-oriented' principle poses a distinction to the preservationist approach to historical sites and cultural relics, which focuses on tangible objects. By contrast, intangible heritage is considered to be embodied in human beings. Therefore, the protection of inheritor heritage, to some extent, is equivalent with protecting the inheritors. On the other hand, the 'people-oriented' principle conveys another latent distinction from the policies of folk arts and performances during the socialist period, which stressed conformity with the collective, the state, and ideologies. By contrast, the intangible heritage campaign adopts a de-politicised approach by emphasising the economic potential and cultural functions of intangible heritage. Under the promotion of cultural industry and productive protection of intangible heritage, current policies aim to endue inheritors with stronger market attributes, and involve them in the market process. The 'people' perspective in the context of intangible heritage no longer stands for 'the people', a political community with

cultural agency constructed in the early People's Republic period. Instead, the 'people' are now reduced to the individual inheritors in a society dominated by the logic of market and capital. However, the socialist ideas of cultural creativity still have impacts on inheritors, especially those of the older generations. In the socialist period, folk artists were expected to transform older artistic forms to suit the socialist ideology, while in today's heritage process, they are projected with the imagination of authenticity and a sense of cultural continuity. This dilemma inheritors encounter in heritage transmission reflects the conflicting imaginaries of folk artists in the two different historical periods.

The transition from folk artists to inheritors should not be taken as a naturalised process. In line with many other towns and areas in China, Dongkeng is experiencing an economic transition which strongly features capital development rather than local markets. With little advantage in the capital development, the spontaneous *muyuge* practices and the potential agency of the practitioners are undermined. The marginality of *muyuge* practitioners in mainstream narratives justifies the significant reconstruction of the practice and its practitioners through the heritage process.

The selection of two inheritors delivers the intention of integrating *muyuge* into the mainstream cultural practice. However, the inheritors' practice is more closely integrated into the process of place competition and local administrative operation. To what extent does it still relate to the everyday in our contemporary times? I argue that it does, but in a subtle and obscure manner. The real sense of inheritance depends on whether the practice can truly relate to people's daily emotions and embed in the nuanced texture of everyday experiences. This is a dimension worthy of further scholarly exploration to reverse the dominated heritage discourse.

Chapter Six Creativity and changes in performing practices

The perception of creativity has changed drastically as intangible heritage is introduced into the field of traditional performing arts. On the one hand, the importance of innovation of traditional culture has been exalted to an unprecedented height. There is a common anxiety that traditional performance should keep up with the pace and taste of the market-oriented society. On the other hand, there is another prevailing concern of risking the authenticity of traditional culture prevails if innovation dominates. The contradiction between innovation and authenticity is a clichéd but continuous debate in both the public and academic domains. Debaters on both sides seem to naturalise both concepts and tend to take innovation and authenticity as an inevitable contradiction that traditional performing arts encounter during the modernisation process. It seems like a choice with only two options. The contemporary creation and development of traditional performing arts is deeply shaped by the struggles between the contradictory pair. However, if we trace back to the recent history of cultural heritage in China, both innovation and authenticity are new concepts that have gradually developed since the mid-1980s when China joined the World Heritage Convention (Zhu, 2017).

Authenticity stems from the Europe-centric conservation ideas of architecture and historical sites. Early heritage scholarship focused on authenticity as an objectively original status (Wang, 1999; Silverman, 2015), which was also taken as a crucial criteria for heritage conservation (ICOMOS, 1964). The idea has received constant challenge especially from non-western countries whose architectural traditions differ greatly. It finally led to *The 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity*, which acknowledges diversities in culture and heritage, and calls for flexible criteria for authenticity and heritage values in relation to local cultural contexts (ICOMOS,

1994). The introduction of intangible heritage is another critical interrogation of authenticity. 'Living, repeating yet evolving, intergenerational transferred' and community-based (Silverman, 2015), the characteristics recognised by the 2003 Convention underscore the paradox of seeking authenticity in intangible heritage and renders the concept elusive and even illusive (Skounti, 2009). Accordingly, studies in the recent two decades shift to perceive authenticity as social construction, imaginary (Liu, 2008), discourse (Smith, 2006) and an embodied, experiential process (Zhu, 2012; Wang, 1999) under the multilateral global and local framework. However, in actual heritage practices, authenticity in the objective sense is still taken as a crucial standard in mainland China. Paradoxically and ironically, despite the emphasis of authenticity, traditional performing arts are experiencing an unprecedented change under the framework of intangible cultural heritage. This chapter perceives the narrative of authenticity and innovation as approaches to conceptualise creativity and seeks to investigate how both concepts are employed in the process of heritage making and reshape the performance forms of *muyuge* and other traditional performing arts. For better discussion, the chapter starts with an introduction of *muyuge* performance, and then traces the concept of creativity of Chinese traditional performing arts. The momentum of reforming traditional performing arts started as early as the late Qing period. However, the fundamental change in creative concepts and cultural production took place as the CCP exercised their power to push forth cultural thoughts for socialist revolution and construction in the 1940s and 1950s. During this period, many local cultural forms were redefined, reformed and stabilised. The present stress of authenticity in heritage preservation is largely a reverse of the previous socialist cultural policies. However, based on the analysis of two textbooks on Cantonese narrative singing respectively published in 1978 and 2016, I argue that the present ideas of authenticity and

innovation in heritage making demonstrates inner coherence with previous socialist cultural thoughts.

6.1 The performance of *muyuge*

The performance of *muyuge* was best known for its free styles. ‘There’s no rule. Just sing in the way you like!’ This was the most frequent answer I got when I asked professional *muyuge* singers and enthusiasts. The earliest account of the performance of *muyuge* is from the early Qing writer Qu Dajun’s ‘*A New Account of Guangdong*’. Qu’s account was general, descriptive, and not accurate in terms of the operation of tones, rhythms, music and the like. Since the latter half of the 20th century, scholars began to summarise the forms of *muyuge* and other Cantonese narrative singing genres¹⁰⁶ in modern Chinese with accuracy. The brief outline below is mainly based on those writers’ introduction and instruction and partly on my fieldwork research. Despite running the risk of authenticating or simplifying the actual *muyuge* performance, this outline account would be necessary and useful for understanding better the rest of the chapter. Like many other traditional *quyi* performance, Cantonese narrative singing (including *muyuge*, *nanyin*, *longzhou* and *yue’ou*) is mostly performed by a single singer who accompanies himself or herself with string or percussion instruments. In performances of *nanyin* and *yue’ou*, it is also normal to have extra musicians. Performance settings are simple with little stage makeup, costumes or movement. For better discussion, at certain points of the following introduction, I will compare *muyuge* with other forms of Cantonese narrative singing, especially *nanyin*, a similar yet more refined genre.

¹⁰⁶ See the list of studies of Chapter 1.

Tunes and accents

There are no fixed tunes for these genres. Performers sing and accompany on *sanxian* or other instruments according to the tonal nature of the syllables of the lyrics. As Cantonese has different dialects, the tunes sung in different Cantonese dialects vary a lot. *Muyuge* and *longzhou* are practiced in most Cantonese-speaking areas, including cities, towns and villages. As Cantonese accents vary a lot, the same pieces of *muyuge* or *longzhou* performed by people with different accents render in distinctive tunes. *Nanyin* and *yue'ou* are originated from the development of urban culture in Guangzhou during the late Qing. They were then spread to other major Cantonese-speaking cities like Hong Kong and Macau. Therefore, *nanyin* and *yue'ou* are performed in standard Cantonese. These two genres were not popular in Dongguan where people spoke various local accents.

The rhymes and tones

Both *muyuge* and *nanyin* follow a formulaic musical pattern, which helps the audience to focus on the lyrics and follow the development of stories (Yu, 2005, p. 262). In terms of verse structure, *nanyin* observes stricter regulations than *muyuge*. A complete *nanyin* passage basically contains an opening couplet, a main body of one or two quatrains and a closing quatrain (Yung, 1989). In general, each verse contains seven syllables. It is also common that there are more than seven syllables in a single verse. The extra syllables are called 'supplementary syllables' (*chenzi* or *xiezi*), which do not make up the main rhythm of the verse. Most often, the supplementary syllables are improvised by the performer. The opening couplet and the closing quatrain are usually more flexible with lines of three or four syllables. *Nanyin* verses should observe a certain pattern of rhymes. The ending syllable of

each verse follows the same rhyme. Besides, the linguistic tonal regulation is also strict. The ending syllables of the first and third lines should be of oblique tones while the second and the fourth lines should respectively end with a lower level tone and an upper level tone. *Muyuge* is less sophisticated than *nanyin*. It observes similar tonal patterns, but not as rigorously. The ending syllables of quatrains do not always follow the model of oblique - lower level - oblique - upper level. It is common that several couplets end with lower even or upper even tones without any variation. *Muyuge* also has opening couplets, while the verse structure of the closing quatrains are usually identical with the main body and is not as clear as that in *nanyin*.

Singing styles

Based on the identities of practitioners, the singing styles of *muyuge* are generally divided into 'the women style' and 'the blind men style'. The women style is also called 'reading songs'. People sing in a relatively fast speed, which is near to reciting and chanting, but still follow certain tunes. People usually sit together, reciting and talking about the *muyuge* pieces in an informal way. No musical instrument is involved. Women are often seen singing *muyuge* in public and private homes, so people name such style as 'the women style'. Actually, according to my fieldwork and interview, *muyuge* was also popular among men audience and practitioners. The songs people sing in ritual contexts are in similar styles. The blind men style, as is indicated in the term itself, is performed by the blind professional singers. The difference is that blind singers use more ornamentation in singing, and that they accompany with *sanxian*.

Yang Baolin (2005a; 2015), the local scholar and *muyuge* enthusiast, divides the singing styles into 'classic singing' and 'popular singing' based on the singing per

se¹⁰⁷. According to Yang, ‘classic singing’ was popular among a small circle of literati. Blind singers before the 1950s were mostly able to sing in the classic way. Local literati played an important role in refining the aesthetics of the singing. Classic singing takes on very slow tempo, and emphasises a lot in the nuances of vocal representation according to the tones of characters as well as the meanings and moods of the texts. The repertoire for classic singing usually comes from *zejin*, the selected excerpts, which are more refined and sophisticated in literary expression. Classic singing could be accompanied by *sanxian* if performed by blind singers, or unaccompanied if performed by ordinary people. However, even the remaining blind singers today know little about this singing style. Yang is now the only one who is able to sing in the classic style in Dongguan¹⁰⁸. ‘Popular singing’, as is defined by Yang, is the rest of *muyuge* singing, which is in a faster tempo and freer styles of tonal expressions. In other words, ‘popular singing’ includes both the women and blind men styles mentioned above. As classic singing has already disappeared with little available archive, the discussion of *muyuge*’s performance in this chapter is mainly based on ‘popular singing’, or the women and blind men styles.

6.2 The concept of creativity in Chinese traditional performance

The concept of creativity in traditional Chinese music and opera is different from that of the Eurocentric idea of creativity which emphasises originality. Under the European influence, the composer usually plays a central part, creating musical

¹⁰⁷ Some introductions of *muyuge* also use the categorisation of ‘classic singing’ and ‘popular singing’, but refer to ‘the blind men style’ and the ‘the women style’ respectively. To avoid confusion, the styles of classic and popular singing mentioned in this thesis particularly apply Yang Baolin’s definition.

¹⁰⁸ According to Yang Baolin’s letter (2015), he volunteered to teach the classic singing of *muyuge* in a series of semi-public lectures from 2008 to 2012. There were around 30 students. However, none of them managed the skills of classic singing.

pieces with 'unique' melodies, rhythms, harmonies and the like (Chan, 1991, p. 89; Yu, 2005, p. 246; Yung, 1989, p. 5). However, in the production of traditional Chinese music, there is not even an equivalent position of the 'composer'. The term *zuoqu*, or *zhuanqu*, literally means composing music or songs, which in Chinese usually refers to writing lyrics for existing tunes. To a certain degree, the authors of traditional Chinese opera are closer to 'scriptwriters' than 'composers'. Instead of creating original music, Chinese scriptwriters for traditional music and operas mostly work on pre-existent tunes, which the scriptwriter selects to re-arrange by filling in new lyrics and conversing singing pieces into instrumental accompaniment, or changing a solo performance into an ensemble (Yu, 2005, p. 245). Occasionally, new tunes might be needed for dramatic purposes. However, the scriptwriter does not necessarily create the tune himself, but possibly assign the task to others (Chan, 1991, p. 89). In other words, the 'composition' of traditional Chinese music focuses on re-working pre-existent musical materials and pays more attention to script and lyrics writing. It is common that one operatic tune is modified and utilised in different musical works. This is also the common approach in the creation of most traditional Chinese operas, speaking and singing performances (*quyi*), and instrumental performances (Yu, 2005, p. 77).

Performers play a critical role in the creative process of Chinese traditional music and opera. Traditional Chinese music notations (*pu*) are rarely designed as a complete or detailed instruction for performance. Rather, they are 'briefly prescriptive and referential', more like a framework (Yu, 2005, p. 249). Therefore, the details of the performance have to be realised during the creative process of individual musicians and performers. The function of traditional opera scripts is similar. Scripts rarely provide musical notations. Scriptwriters write the texts and

specify names of the pre-existent tunes. Actors and musicians then elaborate on the performance on the basis of their repertory knowledge, acting styles and understanding of the performance. Both actors and musicians are supposed to improvise and add extensive ornaments during the process of performance (Yu, 2005, p. 246). Hence, it is not unusual that the same script ends up to be very different if performed by different opera companies or by the same company in different times (Chan, 1991, p. 81). As is stated by Yu Siu Wah (2005, p. 246), 'the creativity in traditional Chinese music lies in the hands of performers'. Improvisation is a key part of the creativity process. To improvise does not mean that the performer can perform 'freely' as they want to do. Instead, improvisation, as is stated by Yu (2001; 2005) and Chan (1991), is based on the performers' deep understanding and high proficiency of the music and opera genres. Chinese traditional opera as well as narrative singing performances are highly stylised. With prescriptive patterns and regulations, performers would be able to organise their performances by adding ornaments, adding or subtracting certain passages. In operatic settings, actors and accompaniment musicians also share a certain set of gestic hints, such as hand shadows, so as to facilitate the signals and communication in improvisation between actors and musicians (Chan, 1991, pp. 82-84). Similarly, with the common patterns and regulations, audience are more likely to follow the story and focus on the lyrics while performers improvise. Chan mentions that actors usually associate the improvisation in operatic performances with cooking. 'An actor was like a cook. The instructions written in the script were the main ingredients of the dish, yet the actor had to add improvisation to enrich the performance, just as the addition of spices and sauce would enrich the taste of the dish' (Chan, 1991, pp. 82-84). The analogy vividly depicts the relationship amongst the original script, performers' improvisation and the final representation of the performance.

The practice of 'performance as creative process' (Yung, 1989) also applies to most *quyi* performances. As studies on the creative process of *muyuge* are rare to find, I will employ two studies of *nanyin* as an analogy to illustrate the general process of creating a performance of Cantonese narrative singing. One is Yu Siu Wah's engagement with a studio recording of *nanyin* in 1996 (Yu, 2001, pp. 246-268); the other is Bell Yung's influential recording of *nanyin* singer Dou Wun's performance in 1975 (Yung, 1997). Both studies are based in Hong Kong. Due to the city's colonial history, *quyi* and opera performance in Hong Kong had not undergone radical reform as they did in mainland China. Hence, the performance and creative process still maintain the relatively traditional mode. An *erhu* player and professor in ethnomusicology, Yu was invited as one of the musicians for a studio recording of three newly created *nanyin* pieces in Hong Kong. After the recording, he documented and analysed the process in detail, which provides a clear picture of the creative process of narrative singing in modern settings. The *nanyin* writer provided the same version of song scripts to both the singer and the musicians. The song script only contained lyrics with no musical notations of pitches or rhythms. The singer and musicians got a general idea of the framework from the song script. They had to complete the details in rehearsals and the final recording. The process from the original script to the finalisation of performance was a highly unpredictable one. Improvisation played a crucial part. In the performance, the singer took the lead in deciding the rhythm and the specific interchange between aria types (with general instructions from the song script). Based on the consensus amongst other performers and proficiency in the musical language of *nanyin*, musicians followed and responded in accordance. Therefore, from a musicological perspective, Yu argues that under the patternised structure, the creativity of *nanyin* reflects in the singer's particular singing styles, ways of adding ornaments and using different

modes of styles. Different singers and musicians will render in distinctive representation of the same song script. Yu's experience happened in the mid-1990s. By that time, the performance of *nanyin* had already diminished from its original contexts of the streets, teahouses and brothels in Hong Kong. Their performance was recorded at a professional studio. Hence, it was not possible to examine how the audience might influence the creative process. Ethnomusicologist Bell Yung raised concerns with the performer-audience relationship in *nanyin* performance early in the 1970s. Yung also noted that *nanyin* singers have significant potentials to create variations based on the prescriptive musical and lyrical patterns. He hypothesised that *nanyin* performance largely depends on the specific context of performance. Therefore, in 1975, he reconstructed a traditional performance setting by inviting Dou Wun, the renowned blind *nanyin* singer, to perform in one of the very few existing old-fashioned teahouses in Hong Kong three times per week over a three months period¹⁰⁹. During this process, Yung observed and found out that Dou would interact with the audience by speaking auspicious words according to particular situations. Both of Yu and Yung's studies indicate that performers play a significant role in completing the performance of *nanyin* under a set of musical regulations and patterns, and that this process is largely realised through improvisation.

Most *muyuge* practitioners, not counting those working for the intangible heritage project, have little professional music knowledge. None of my interviewees learned

¹⁰⁹ Yung's recordings are collected by the Centre of Asian Studies of the University of Hong Kong (now merged into Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences), and become valuable archive for the studies of *nanyin* and *quyi*. Dou's original singing of *Blind Men Dou Wun Recollecting the Past* even becomes a unique archive for the studies of Hong Kong history and society in the 20th century.

singing from any kind of notations; nor did they have the ability of reading musical notations. Rather, *muyuge* enthusiasts gained their singing ability largely from listening experiences in everyday settings, blind singers' performance, *muyushu*/songbook reciting, daily entertainment, religious and ritual practices, to name a few. Professional singers learned performing skills from other senior singers, whom they officially acknowledged as mentors (*shifu*). They listened to mentors sing and memorised the lyrics by heart. Few explicit instructions of tone or rhymes were provided (Shi, 2016; Liu, 2016). People internalised the performing regulations and turned them into instinctive abilities. Hence, lyrics and decorative tunes vary among different performers. Shi Luguang, the blind singer in his sixties, showed me one of his recent performing recordings during interview. It was *Guobuge (Song of Travelling Overseas)*. Despite the popularity of the song among older enthusiasts, it was a new song for Shi. His mentor did not teach him this song. He learned and memorised it from an officially produced *muyuge* CD by the Dongguan Cultural Hall. He was not satisfied with every verse, and thus revised those which he thought were imperfect in rhymes and tones while recording. Shi has little official knowledge of tonal and rhyming regulation, his judgement of the lyrics is largely based on his instinct and experiences. Practitioners' creativity is also manifested in their personal understanding of the stories and the interpretation of it in the performing process. Regarding one of her favourite *muyushu* titles *Chen Shimei Aunt Fang* (2015) suggests that a good performance of the piece should express the joys and griefs of life. To further explain, she would usually add a deep sigh ('*ai--'*) between the verses when the protagonist Qin Xianglian sobbed out her husband's immoral deeds of abandoning the family after he rose to fame. The same unwritten yet instinct-reliant method of singing *muyuge* also applies to Aunt Runzhen. She invests her emotions in singing according to story plots. 'If it relates to young ladies, I'll sing in a tender

voice. If the plot makes me angry, I'll perform in a louder and ruder manner (Runzhen, 2015).’ Aunt Runzhen also enjoys the literary aesthetics of *muyuge* (which is to the very contrary of some scholar’s view that older women tend to prioritise story plots over literary aesthetics of *muyushu*). She adds personal emotions and inserts decorative notes between syllables accordingly. Her performance was usually more likely to be livened if surrounded by audience. *Muyuge* sung for religious and ritual purposes are mostly improvisational. Singers usually have a common phrase pool in mind for improvisational singing. Based on a general ‘oblique-even-oblique-even’ tonal inflection of seven-syllable quatrains, *muyuge* performers are able to improvise lyrics and tunes as a creative process.

Both the *nanyin* practices in Hong Kong and the unofficial *muyuge* practices in Dongguan, to a certain extent, maintained the basic way of creativity in performances. They are relatively intact either from the cultural reforms since the 1950s’ mainland China or the recent discourse of intangible cultural heritage in China. Except for Yung’s experiment of re-constructing an earlier performance context, ‘the original’ and ‘the authentic’ are not the focuses or the agenda of these practices. Therefore, they provide a comparison to the following cases which I am going to elaborate and show the impact of the earlier cultural policy during the socialist period to the perception of creativity and its relation to the conceptualisation of authenticity in today’s heritage practice.

6.3 Two textbooks and the changing notion of creativity

In this section, I will analyse two textbooks concerning the writing and performing of *muyuge*, *the Writing of Nanyin, Longzhou and Muyu* written by Cai Yanfen (1978), and *Mo-yu, the Teaching of Muyuge Writing and Performing* (Dongkeng, 2016)¹¹⁰.

¹¹⁰This textbook is edited based on the teaching experiences of Li Zhongqiu, the representative

They are two of the very few books that specialise on the writing and performing of Cantonese narrative singing¹¹¹. It is interesting that both textbooks have foregrounded ‘writing’ in book titles. According to the definition of oral epic by Albert B. Lord, an oral poem is composed and performed at the same time, without any gap of time in-between. In terms of literary poem, the actions of composing, reading and performing are separated in time (Lord, 1971). In this sense, *muyuge* performed in some ritual and religious settings, or improvised without referencing to an existing lyrics can be counted as a part of the oral tradition. In these cases, no prior writing is involved. On the contrary, the popularity of *muyushu* provided the audience and performers with pre-existing texts, and these make up a large proportion of the *muyuge* performance, including both professional and amateurs’ private performances. It is noteworthy that the existence of *muyushu* writers was ambiguous. As is stated in Chapter 1, *muyushu* were published with anonymous writers even if there was a mention of authorship. However, a number of skilful and popular professional singers were well known to the local communities and even beyond. Therefore, the coincidental emphasis of writing in these two textbooks, separated by nearly 38 years, indicates a fundamental shift in *muyuge* production as well as the perception of its creativity. The comparative analysis of the two textbooks will extend the analytic scope of performances as intangible heritage, and historicise the discussion of the ‘innovation vs. authenticity’ dichotomy in the new cultural traditions after 1949 in China.

The narrative singing textbook in 1978

inheritor of *muyuge*.

¹¹¹ More books and writers concern *muyuge*, *nanyin* and *longzhou* as the performing styles of Cantonese opera rather than as independent genres. Please refer to Bell Yung (1989) and Chen Zhuoying (Chen, 2010).

The Writing of Nanyin, Longzhou and Muyu (abbr. the 1978 textbook) was written in the late 1970s and published in August 1978. Historically this was the time when the Cultural Revolution had just ended two years before, with a relatively relaxed cultural atmosphere. The singing and speaking literature including ballads and narrative singing re-appeared after suppression during the Cultural Revolution period. However, the economic reform had yet to unfold. Socialist and revolutionary ideologies still dominated the production of mainstream culture. The 1978 textbook was written specifically for cultural workers and amateurs in rural areas of Guangdong Province, aiming to provide the basic knowledge of creating and performing the three narrative singing genres. In this book, Cai cites, for multiple times, Mao Zedong's Yan'an talk in 1942 (1978, p. 96) and the cultural policy

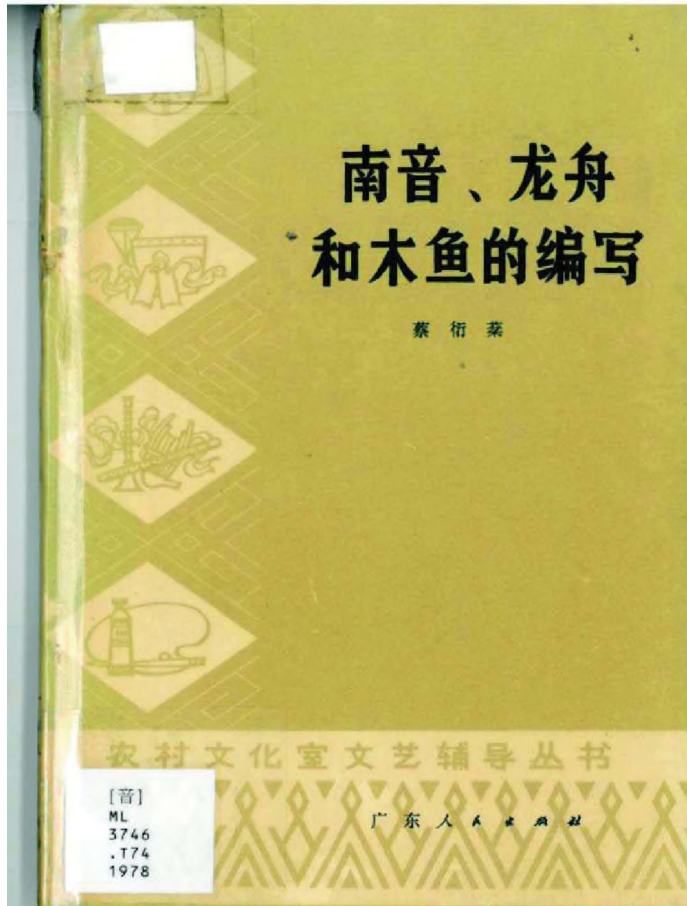


Figure 4 Cai Yanfen, 1978, *The Writing and Composition of Nanyin, Longzhou and Muyu* promulgated by the CCP in the 1950s (1978, pp. 5, 96), and stresses to fill in 'old forms' with new contents so as to transform them into revolutionary weapons. It is also the guiding ideology throughout the textbook. Admitting the decline of Cantonese narrative singing after the 1940s, Cai (1978, p. 5) advocates that *xiqu* workers should reform and popularise these narrative singing genres, and turn them into cultural forms that people love to see and hear and that express the struggle life of socialism.

In the 1978 textbook, there is a tension between maintaining the basic cultural forms and reforming them with new political appeals. Author Cai Yanfen, as an experienced lyrics writer and composer for Cantonese opera and Cantonese operatic music, provides comprehensive guidance and detailed analysis on the

writing and performing of the three genres. He argues that formal regulations are key elements to identify a specific cultural genre and suggests that writers and performers should be familiarised with basic structures and regulations of these genres. It seems like some clichéd indication of the necessity and significance of the textbook. However, considering the priority of contents and the disregard of forms in the early CCP's cultural thoughts and the degrading of local culture during the Cultural Revolution, the textbook's advocacy of promoting a local cultural practice and emphasis of its unique forms should be taken as a prominent changing sign of cultural and artistic ideas in the late 1970s. It indicates that political control over cultural and artistic expression was loosened especially after the Cultural Revolution, which provided certain leeway for the revival of local cultural practices. Nonetheless, the textbook was still cautious in expression. It clarifies its disagreement with the idea that 'form comes first' and that 'forms are unchangeable', and its opposition is against radical distortion of forms for the sake of contents. Nevertheless, a limited degree of 'form breaking' should be acceptable (Cai, 1978, pp. 24-25,55). The tension between form and content manifests in many descriptions and statements of the book. The significance of re-examining the 1978 textbook is that the textbook reflects the creative thinking of Cantonese narrative singing in the historical juncture in the late 1970s, and provides a historical perspective to understand how people perceive the creativity of *muyuge* today. The 1978 textbook provides detailed introduction of the three genres of Cantonese narrative singing. In comparison with traditional forms, the following section will focus on the variation of forms suggested in the textbook.

1) Rhymes

The textbook (1978, pp. 5-6) believes the musical style and mode should be

reformed. In order to express energetic and life-affirming revolutionary spirits, the downhearted and melancholic style should be diminished, especially that of *nanyin* and some *muyuge* pieces. For instance, the textbook author suggests more frequent use of ‘open-mouth’ rhymes (*zhangkouyun*) other than ‘close-mouth’ rhymes (*hekouyun*). While the former rhymes are more capable in expressing the grandeur revolutionary passion and atmosphere (Cai, 1978, pp. 57-58), including, for instance, the vowel of ‘a’, or compound vowels of ‘ang’, ‘eng’, the latter might contain vowels of ‘u’, ‘i’, which are less resounding and less sonorous. Similarly, Cai prioritises the mode of *zhengxian* over *yifan*. *Zhengxian* and *yifan* are the two major modes of *nanyin* performance. *Yifan* is also called *kuhou*, the bitter voice, which is often used to express tragic and down-hearted feelings, while *zhengxian* expresses in a relatively neutral and bright way. The subdued use of *yifan* tends to orient *nanyin* to a more energetic and robust performance style. Furthermore, the textbook (1978, pp. 14-15) specifically stresses that rhymes and tones should be based on the Guangzhou dialect. Despite the marginalisation of other Cantonese accents, the argument should be understood as a counteraction against the cultural suppression during the Cultural Revolution. As stated in the textbook (Cai, 1978, p. 15), during the decade long Cultural Revolution, rhymes of regional operas were supposed to accord with those of the Peking Opera, which ended in frequent confusion of rhyme in regional operas and narrative singing. The emphasis of using Cantonese-based rhymes should be understood a resolution to restore local cultural practices.

2) Contents

The 1978 textbook still complies with the socialist cultural ideology of ‘weeding through the old to bring forth the new’ and ‘using the past for present purposes’ (Cai, 1978, pp. 5,96). As the book title indicates, the ‘writing’ of *nanyin*, *longzhou*

and *muyu* indicates the encouragement of creating new repertoire, which particularly responds to the claimed appeals and cultural demands of workers, peasants and soldiers. Throughout the book, not a single classic popular piece of *muyuge*, *nanyin* or *longzhou* is mentioned. All examples used are newly created pieces for revolutionary propaganda and political eulogization.

3) Performance forms

The textbook suggests remodelling the performing forms to a certain extent, which potentially make the three genres of narrative singing more capable for stage performance. It suggests that lyrics should be kept to shorter length and that prolonged pieces of narrative are prone to bore the audience and result in ineffective propaganda. This suggestion indicates that the promoted performance of narrative singing is a modern style of stage performance which keeps a particular length and attracts the audience in a relatively short timespan. By the same token, the textbook (1978, p. 6) proposes to enrich the performance forms. Take the detailed analysis of *nanyin* performance for example. It (Cai, 1978, pp. 81-91) divides the new *nanyin* performances into three categories, 'nanyin plain singing' (*qingchang*), 'the speaking and singing of *nanyin*', and 'plucking and singing of *nanyin*' (*tanchang*). Plain singing is similar to what traditional *nanyin* performance used to be, which is performed by a singular performer with little stage setting. 'The speaking and singing of *nanyin*' contains relatively plain and rhymed speeches, while 'the plucking and singing of *nanyin*' involves musical accompaniment. What is in common in the three new forms is that the performance forms become 'richer'. First, instead of a single singer, more performers are involved. Regarding collective singing, the atmosphere is supposed to become stronger and more robust for revolutionary expressions. Also, performers are expected to play different roles so as to dramatize

the singing and make the show more lively. Second, the new *nanyin* forms absorb plain speech, rhymed speech, and even mix with forms of *muyuge* and *longzhou*. In addition to the homogenous revolutionary contents, the distinction between different narrative singing genres also dissolves in terms of both performing styles and forms.

There is not enough evidence to show whether and to what degree the idea of performance in the textbook have been realised. Nevertheless, the 1978 textbook reflects important changes of the mainstream perspectives of *quyi* performance after the 1940s. Cantonese narrative singing used to be performed in everyday settings. With the guidelines set by the 1950s cultural policy, it was transformed into modern staged performance with shortened length, collective singing, integrated forms and the tendency to dramatize. On the one hand, the changes have increased the performability of narrative singing in terms of the standards of the modern stage. On the other hand, the relatively complicated process of stage production emphasises the overall organisation of the performance. The uncertainties of improvisation in traditional *quyi* performances are not encouraged. Stage production decreased the dominant role played by the performers, and strengthened the part of songwriters and directors. In other words, the production model of traditional *quyi* has changed from performer-oriented to writer and director-oriented. These changes still play a part in conceptualising the ideas of 'creativity', 'innovation' and 'authenticity' during the intangible heritage fever in the early 2000s.

The Dongkeng textbook and the creative process of *muyuge* as intangible heritage

Mo-yu, the Teaching of Muyuge Writing and Performing (abbr. the Dongkeng textbook) is designed as a textbook for the *muyuge* courses in schools in Dongkeng

town. With the support of local government, *muyuge* is absorbed into the syllabus of music courses of Grade 3 and 4 in a primary school and Grade 7 in a secondary school respectively. Despite regular classes, there are extra curriculum courses and summer courses for students who are considered to have interest or potential of performing and creating *muyuge*. The course aims to equip students with the basic ability of writing and performing *muyuge*. The structure of the textbook is generally based on the school curriculum, with four chapters, 1) what is *muyuge*; 2) how to sing *muyuge*; 3) how to create a *muyuge*; and 4) the appreciation of *muyuge*. In the school curriculum, there is a separate part of the singing accompanied with *sanxian*, but this is not included in the textbook. Overall, *muyuge* performance and writing constitutes a strong focus of the textbook.

Both textbooks are written to popularise Cantonese narrative singing or *muyuge* among non-professional people. Therefore, both are written in a straightforward and easy-to-understand manner. However, compared with the 1978 textbook, the Dongkeng textbook has put more effort to make *muyuge* accessible to its readers. In the late 1970s, most local Cantonese-speaking people were assumed to have some experience of listening or performing narrative singing, while in the mid-2010s, *muyuge* is next to disappearance in the soundscape of the younger generations of Dongkeng. In other words, the Dongkeng textbook is written for those who know little or even nothing about *muyuge* or *quyi* performance.



Figure 5 the Teaching and Learning Centre of Muyuge, 2016, *Moyu, the Teaching of Muyuge Writing and Performing*

The textbook is authored in the name of the Dongkeng Training Centre of *Muyuge*, but it is mostly based on the teaching and performing experiences of the representative inheritor Li Zhongqiu. Unlike Cai Yanfen who is a professional scriptwriter of Cantonese opera, Li has received little professional music education. Hence, there are few musical or *xiqu* jargons in the textbook. Based on personal comprehension and teaching capability, Li manages to illustrate the regulation and structure of *muyuge* in a simple, straightforward, but not always rigorous, manner. Li develops an approach to translate the Cantonese pronunciation of each Chinese character into the musical notes of 'do, re, mi, fa, so'. The syllables that sound 'do' and 're' are respectively of the lower and upper level tones, while the rest are of

oblique tones¹¹². This word-to-note transferral method is set down in the textbook as a basic way to identify tones. As in the 1978 textbook, the translated tones are marked with cipher notation, which was introduced to China from Europe in the late Qing and early Republican period. It has been widely used and has since largely replaced traditional Chinese musical notation since 1949 (Yu, 2005). Therefore, the translation of lyrics into cipher notation also reflects the re-configuration of narrative singing in the modern musical context. In order to familiarise readers with the musicality of the pronunciation of Chinese characters, the textbook author starts from exercises of translating every single Chinese character into a musical note. It is interesting that the author does not start with *muyuge* but use the Tang poem ‘*Missing my Shandong brothers on the double nines*’, a household poem in China, as a warm-up example (Dongkeng, 2016, pp. 12-15). Based on word-to-note translation, the textbook exemplifies how to perform the poem as *muyuge*. For example, decorative tones and tempos are added to the the end of each verse and then in-between syllables to turn the reciting into a procedure close to singing. According to my listening experiences, the variation in *muyuge* singing is richer even for the more accessible ‘female style’ of singing. In spite of the simplified and standardised definition, the Dongkeng textbook provides an easy access to getting a preliminary impression of what a *muyuge* might sound like and how its tones operate during

¹¹² In Putonghua, the general method of identifying the level and oblique tones is based on the four tones in the Putonghua pronunciation. The first tone is the upper level tone, the second is the oblique tone, while the third and fourth tones are the oblique tones. Cantonese has a more complicated tonal system. There is no explicit written regulation to identify the level and oblique tones in Cantonese. Cai Yanfen (1978) suggests that substantial practice is the only way to develop one’s acute instinct in identifying tones. Li (2016) learned about his ‘exclusive’ method from a local cultural official in the 1960s when he took class in the cultural propaganda team. Yet, this is a personal method, and has never been explicitly written elsewhere.

performance. Also, as the method is largely based on the Dongkeng accent, it does not apply to standard Cantonese or even other Cantonese accents in Dongguan. The author, however, has not clarified but takes it as a general pattern. Though the author might not have intended to ‘universalise’ the Dongkeng accent, the lapse concerned indicates the author’s limitation of basic knowledge and perspective to conceptualise the practice in a rigorous and inclusive manner.

As mentioned, *muyuge*’s tonal structure is comparatively loose, though the Dongkeng textbook suggests a strict regulation. According to the textbook (Dongkeng, 2016, pp. 31-32, 66), the last syllables of the verses of a quatrain passage should follow the tonal pattern of ‘oblique - upper level – oblique - lower level’, which is similar to that of *nanyin*. As explained by Li Zhongqiu (2016), setting up a stricter tonal pattern for *muyuge* is an attempt to refine the musical expression of *muyuge* by enriching tonal inflections. The attempt has encountered contests from other enthusiasts, especially local scholars, as it alters the traditional loose model of *muyuge*. The revised tonal pattern comprises the fundamental regulation of *muyuge* writing and performance in the textbook. Li Zhongqiu’s works of *muyuge* strictly follow the pattern, and he requires students to do the same. In terms of singing, Li develops a method of adding decorative notes based on the level and oblique tones. For example, in a quatrain passage, the second verse usually ends with an upper level tone, which, according to Li’s method, is translated as 2 (re) in cipher notation. With ornaments, it can be sung as $\overline{2\ 2\ 1\ 6}$. The fourth verse ends with a lower level tone, which is 1 (do) in cipher notation. But in order to keep coherent inflection in tunes, it is usually sung in the lower note 6 (la) (Dongkeng, 2016, p. 16). For the first and third verses which end with oblique tones with the musical note of 3 (mi), simple decoration is added and sung as $\overset{3}{3}$ 3-, $\overset{2}{3}$ 3-, and the like.

The impact of this new tonal pattern is twofold. On the one hand, the ornament pattern stabilises the regulations which people had implicitly learned and acquired in daily life. It is easier for young students with little or no empirical experiences of *muyuge* to learn and follow the method of transferral. On the other hand, textbook regulations substitute the everyday transmission environment and turn the imperceptible learning process into an explicit and reasonable knowledge input. Also, the free performing styles of *muyuge* singing are stabilised, and likely to convey less variation, thus restricting the possibilities of improvisation. Take the new *muyuge* 'Evening singing at Tinggang Temple' (abbr. 'Evening singing') for example. The song is originally performed in the opening ceremony of the Maishen Festival in 2009. It is also documented with cipher notation in the Dongkeng textbook as an example of *muyuge* performing and writing. Notwithstanding its remodelling tactics with pop music, modern stage settings, costumes and plots, 'Evening singing' is considered to be a piece which maintains the most 'authentic' *muyuge* elements. The 'authenticity' here resides in the neat seven-syllable verse with orderly tonal patterns. Comparing the musical notation with the performing versions of an online video and a studio recording (Li & Xie, unknown), one would find that the singing of the two versions, including ornament tunes, is highly identical and in strict accordance with the musical notation. This indicates that musical notation, rather than oral transmission, has become a central part in the teaching and learning of *muyuge* as well as the production process.

Despite the efficiency in cultural transmission, the stress on accuracy also restricts the possibility of improvisation. Improvisation, as a typical act in the narrative singing tradition, is marginalised in the newly created *muyuge* works. Reasons are attributed to 1) the singular case of Dongkeng; and 2) the common conceptual

transformation of creativity in traditional opera and musical production. As the representative inheritor Li Zhongqiu is not a professionally trained *muyuge* performer, his improvisational ability is limited. He performed *muyuge* on gala stages, which is stage-directed with incentives to collaborate with other performers, leaving little room for improvisation. Even in non-staged performances like public lectures and exhibition events, Li is used to perform by referring to lyrics. Consequently, he is not likely, and not able to, include improvisation into his curriculum. It should be noted that improvisation in traditional opera and *quyi* performances is never officially taught. According to Chan's (1991, p. 86) fieldwork interviews, many opera actors gained the improvisational ability through observing senior actors and their own practice by trial and error. The loss of improvisation in *muyuge* singing is a result of the disappearance of daily performances by professional singers. Practitioners and students miss the opportunities of absorbing performing techniques in an informal but autonomous approach. Also, without sufficient acknowledgement of professional singers' performing and creative skills, the current school education excludes the engagement of professional singers. In other words, improvisation is not included as an indispensable part of the creative process of *muyuge*. Moreover, school curriculum formalises the transmitting process and further restricts informal learning, which consequently degrades the traditional values of creativity.

It is noteworthy that both the 1978 textbook and the Dongkeng textbook carry the traces from earlier socialist cultural thoughts. The Dongkeng textbook does not explicitly mention those phrases, but Li uses the socialist cultural slogan 'pouring new wine in old bottles' to explain his ideas of creating new *muyuge* in my interview. The local scholar Yang Baolin, though critical of Li's new *muyuge* creation, also

mentions 'new wine in old bottles' when he talks about possible solutions to develop *muyuge* in the present time (Pinrui, 2014). Although the slogan is not officially proposed in the reconstruction of *muyuge* or other intangible heritage projects, its frequent occurrences on different occasions reveals it as a latent idea with major impacts on the ongoing heritage process. 'New wine in old bottles' as a socialist cultural strategy appeared during the anti-Japanese war in the 1930s, when Communist intellectuals wanted to fill in folk cultural forms with new contents to communicate with the illiterate populace, and propagated nationalist consciousness through anti-Japanese thoughts (Hung, 1994, p. 189). The progressive cultural action was developed in the communist party's political practices in Yan'an, and became one of the most significant strategies in the development of 'national form'. Later in 1942, Mao further proposed the thought of 'weeding through the old to bring forth the new'. The slogan contains the same character 'new', which indicates its alignment with the 'new wine in old bottles'. Both emphasised the importance of innovating and bringing out new socialist cultures from older cultural forms. However, as is already literarily indicated, the meanings of the 'new' in two slogans differ (Tang & Zhou, 2014). 'New wine' refers to new contents; the old forms are still kept as 'old bottles'. On the contrary, the premise of 'bringing forth the new' is to 'weed through the old'. The latter's 'newness' refers not only to new contents, but also to the reformed cultural forms. In comparison, 'weeding through the old to bring forth the new' is an advanced and more radical cultural strategy on the folk cultural forms. It was later developed into one of the key national cultural policies of the 1950s.

The 1978 textbook explicitly employs 'weeding through the old to bring forth the new' as its guiding ideology (Cai, 1978, pp. 5, 95), while the Dongkeng textbook

maintains an ambiguous attitude. Indeed the latter reflects the ambiguous and contentious cultural policies regarding the innovation and authenticity of heritage issues. The textbook intends to keep the introduction of *muyuge* at a 'technical' level to avoid any ideological association, which is why 'new wine in old bottles' is not explicitly written down despite the instructions and examples of the textbook. The fourth chapter '*Muyuge* appreciation' serves as a good example. Divided into two parts, the chapter discusses respectively the newly created *muyuge* by Li Zhongqiu and his students. The main contents deal with local festival, customs, foodways and sceneries. The lyrics fit well in accordance with the rhyming and tonal regulations mentioned in previous chapters. These exemplary works of *muyuge* reflect the objective of the textbook, which is to equip students with the ability of using the 'old form' of *muyuge* to produce new contents. Its major difference from the 1978 textbook is that the Dongkeng textbook is cautious about indicating the alteration of *muyuge* forms and regulations, even though it does make significant changes to the tonal regulations. It is not that the textbook author has not noted the issue, but that the intention to avoid amplifying this change. It specifically claims in the afterwards that '(the change) does not mean to innovate or reform', but aims to 'provide a clearer pattern for teachers and students to follow' (Dongkeng, 2016, p. 66). The paradox between the actual instructions and its reluctance of claiming 'innovation' and 'reform' reveals the shift of official attitudes towards the creativity of folk culture. Although it has never been officially overthrown, 'weeding through the old' is no longer a recognised cultural policy. A literally conservative concept, 'authenticity' becomes a fundamental condition for cultural projects to be recognised as intangible cultural heritage. However, the actual preservation of *muyuge* as a heritage project resonates significantly latently with the cultural ideas of 'new wine in old bottles' and to some extent those of 'weeding through the old

and bringing forth the new'. In the 1930s and 1940s, the application of folk cultural forms-'old bottle'- was an essential way to connect with the populace. However, the re-use of 'old bottles' is an attempt to re-plant folk cultural forms into the present cultural landscape where such cultures are disappearing. Therefore, metrical forms and regulations are accentuated so as to re-assert the 'authenticity' of *muyuge* as a heritage project, and to provide the basis of further innovation of the practice in order to enter into the mainstream cultural spectrum.

6.4 Towards Stage performance, a different kind of creativity

The mainstream professional musicians' attitudes towards traditional folk singing are well manifested in the following remarks:

It might be that the cultural tradition (of Dongguan) is not deep-rooted enough or local music is not mature enough. Last year, I worked with the Dongguan Cultural Hall to register xianshuige as intangible heritage. All singers were old men of seventy or eighty years old. All sang in accents and colloquial languages. Many lyrics are difficult to understand. We dithered for more than half a year. Most songs are sung directly out from everyday life, even without tempo. They just sang what they wanted, very freely. Some melodies sounded pleasant, but not mature. It is very difficult to re-package (dazao) music like this. (Cao, 2009)

Xianshuige (literally, the salted water song), a kind of traditional folk singing by boat people, is another intangible heritage project of Dongguan and several other Pearl River Delta cities. Similar to *muyuge*, its artistic expression is relatively unsophisticated by the standard of modern pop music. The comment above is not unfamiliar when music and heritage experts express their views over *muyuge*. The musician repeats the term 'not mature' to describe the musicality of *xianshuige* and local music. Close connection with everyday life, accents, colloquial language and the improvisational nature of the music, according to the musician, all seem immature, if not negative, elements of local traditional music. Furthermore, the musician, who is a mandarin-speaker, assumes that a city like Dongguan does not

have a rich cultural tradition to nurture refined musical forms due to its cultural, political and geographical periphery. The musician's opinion might be contested with more details, but I want to point out here that his comment reveals the strong propensity to evaluate traditional cultural and artistic practices through the angle of modern staged performance, which deviates farther away from the traditional way of creativity, comprehension and appreciation. Inevitably, the official cultural sectors embark on reconstructing traditional cultural practices as a pivotal part of heritage making.

The propensity of turning traditional folk performances into modern staged performance has an inherent connection with the earlier cultural policy of 'weeding through the old and bringing forth the new', and even push the idea to another extreme. As is indicated in the 1978 textbook, *nanyin* and other Cantonese narrative singing genres are already prone to be reformed as modern staged performance. They are not single cases. Many kinds of non-staged folk performances, such as Hakka mountain songs (Liu, 2008), Chaozhou music (Pan, 2016), Wuchuan *muyuge* (Yang, 2017), began to be reformed and put onstage since the 1950s. All such stage reforms follow similar trajectories. For instance, shortening the length, turning monologues into multiple singing forms, enriching musical accompaniment, dramatizing, are a few of these reforms. *Muyuge* as an intangible heritage project is generally presented in two different settings. One is the informal performance through events such as exhibitions and public lectures. It is often presented by the representative inheritors, sometimes accompanied by students from *muyuge* classes. Few stage movements are involved. Such performances are always accompanied with *sanxian*, in the form of solo, duet or chorus. The other is festive shows and folk art competitions. These performances are more deliberately

designed and produced, involving dancing and theatre. The latter deviates too much from the traditional performance forms that it could hardly claim itself as *muyuge* performance. Therefore, the official adopts relatively slippery terms of 'large-scale *muyuge* singing and dancing performance' and '*muyuge* comedy' (Sun0769, 2014). The strengths of both 'weeding through the old' and 'bringing forth the new' have been amplified. I will take *Sweet Rice Ball* as an example to examine how the official reconstruction has adapted *muyuge* into the modern stage context, and how they justify its authenticity as *muyuge*.

Sweet Rice Ball is recorded in a CD collection of *muyuge* and other performances in Maishen Festival. The album was published by a formal audio-visual publishing company with ISBN (International Standard of Book Number) for the whole collection and ISRC (International Standard of Recording Code) for each individual song. The collection contains two CDs, CD1 is *muyuge* singing pieces and CD2 is festive performances, most of which are associated with *muyuge*. The authorship of the songs is noteworthy. Each song is authored jointly by a lyricist, a composer and performer(s). All songs in both CDs follow the same format. Take the first CD that concentrates on *muyuge* for example. Most of the lyrics are written or re-adapted by Li Zhongqiu, while the compositions are conducted by professional composers. In CD1, three out of seven songs are performed in a relatively traditional manner, which is singing with *sanxian* accompaniment. The rest are accompanied with complicated sound effects in a popular style, and even mixed with other performance skills like rhymed speeches; but the pieces of *muyuge* singing are still based on traditional *muyuge* tunes. For the latter group of songs, the role of professional composer might be closer to music arranger who adds variations of the tempo, key, instrumentation and other musical elements to original songs. However,

for the three traditionally performed pieces, the role of composer is not clear. For instance, *the Floral Writing Paper* is the only piece selected from the traditional *muyuge* repertoire. The recording is authored as: 'the excerpt from songbook *the Floral Writing Paper*; composer: Li Zhongqiu; performer: Li Zhongqiu. Li performs in the regular tunes of *muyuge*. There is no extra composition involved. The awkward position of composer here, according to my conjecture, might be the need to comply with the format of an officially released CD. Nevertheless, the untraditional representation of authorship reflects a fundamental shift in people's perception of the creativity of *muyuge*. Composition is considered as a necessary procedure of *muyuge* production, despite that *muyuge* is highly stylised in tunes and melodies. The authorship format and the application of ISBN and ISRC codes also indicates the copyright awareness and demand of the album producer. Although the album might not make a good sale in the market, it is involved in the professional and commercial music production process.

Except for the three traditionally performed *muyuge*, other *muyuge* selected in the album have correlated staged versions. All of them are produced by professional composers in music and professional directors for staged performance. *Sweet Rice Ball* was produced for the Maishen Festival in 2010. Sweet rice ball is a popular dessert in Dongguan. It is registered as a municipal intangible heritage by Dongkeng, and therefore often employed by local government as a cultural resource for artistic creation and publicity. There are two versions in the album, one is collected in CD1, called *Singing the Sweet Rice Ball*; the other is in CD2, called *Sweet Sweet Rice Ball*. According to this arrangement, the former is considered as *muyuge* performance by the producer, while the latter is a festive performance in general, involving several extra pieces of pop singing. The former audio recording is interwoven with *muyuge*

singing and *shubailan*, a kind of rhymed and rhythmical speech in traditional storytelling and operatic performance. The kind of combination is common in a number of new *muyuge* pieces, which resonates with the 1978 textbook's suggestion of enriching performing forms. In terms of structure, *Singing the Sweet Rice Ball*¹¹³ is composed with an opening couplet, three quatrains and a closing couplet. Four quatrains of *shubailan* interspersed among the *muyuge* couplets and quatrains. Three singers are involved. Li Zhongqiu and a child singer are in charge of the *muyuge* pieces; one young male voice takes up *shubailan* pieces in standard Cantonese. Three singers take turns to sing before they go confluent for the closing couplet. Therefore, the audience are kept switched between different acoustic experiences: 1) the relatively slow and lyrical *muyuge* and rhymed speeches with faster tempo; 2) Dongkeng accent and standard Cantonese; 3) voices of different generations, the old, the young and the child. The purpose of the arrangement is evident, that is, to dilute the possible repetitive and monotonous feeling that traditional *muyuge* performing might bring to the contemporary audience, and show the possibility of 'enlivening' an almost outmoded performing art. The music accompaniment is presented in a pop music style. The music starts with a short piece of orchestra prelude, followed by the opening couplet sung by Li and highlighted by traditional Chinese drumbeats, which grandly brings out the subject 'the sweet and delicious rice ball'. The song in general is presented and heightened by pop-style accompanying drumbeats and music. The accompaniment slightly differs at the interchange of *muyuge* and *shubailan*. *Muyuge* singing paragraphs sung by Li and the child singer are specifically remixed with *sanxian* among the pop drumbeats, representing the folk characteristics. *Shubailan* in the young male voice

¹¹³ See the structure of lyrics in appendix *Singing the Sweet Rice Ball*.

is accompanied in a more contemporary pop style, indicating the connection with modern life.

In these newly created *muyuge* pieces, the role of *muyuge* is marginalised. As the majority of *muyuge* creation is led and supported by official cultural sectors, new works are supposed to express mainstream values with lively and energetic spirits. However, such expectation is not coherent with the musical characteristics of *muyuge*. Returning to the case of *Sweet Rice Ball*, one would recognise that the song has a tendency of sublimating the local everyday food to general and grander meanings. Rice ball is a popular food for local wedding ceremonies due to its sweet taste and the sticky syrup covering the rice ball which indicates the sweet relationship of the newly-weds. Therefore, the lyrics follow the gradually ascendant metaphor trajectory from the taste of rice ball, to happy marriage, a harmonious family and finally a harmonious society. Onstage, it is choreographed as a big-scale festive performance with several dancing teams, dragon and lion dancing and a group of costumed local women making rice balls onstage (Dongkeng Cultural and Broadcast Centre)¹¹⁴. The quotidian nature of rice ball and the grandeur of the performance make a weird contrast. It reflects a purposeful and eager attempt to relate the everyday practice to the national and state narrative. This attempt is likewise seen in many other new *muyuge* pieces created by the official heritage sector. The new contents usually concern political policies¹¹⁵, social spirits and life styles¹¹⁶, which greatly coincide with those of the central government. Consequently, the correlative performance forms should be those that express the senses of

¹¹⁴ The video recording, provided by Dongkeng Cultural and Broadcast Centre, is a selection of onstage performances related to *muyuge*. The production time is unknown.

¹¹⁵ 非遗保护谱新篇，木鱼歌唱黄祥发，同献爱心渡难关，木鱼声声骂贪官

¹¹⁶ 文明东坑三有序、齐清垃圾建新城，美德東坑代代傳

liveliness and grandeur. Heightened by pop-style musical accompaniment, the traditional tune of *muyuge*, which is adept in conveying the sentimental, sorrowful feelings, is marginalised. In order to change the style of narrative singing, the 1978 textbook proposes to privilege certain rhymes and singing modes. However, in the process of heritage making, the reform of the performance per se is not enough. *Muyuge* is blended with various modern performance forms. In these new innovative attempts, pop music, dance and dramatic performances always set the basic tunes and structures of the whole performance. *Muyuge* becomes a decorative ingredient. It is marginalised and dissolved into the noisy and bustling singing and dancing shows. Creativity is no longer a negotiation process within the general framework of the performance form; rather, it is framed and evaluated by the degree of involvement with the modern and popular art forms¹¹⁷. Consequently, the significance of *muyuge* writer and performers decreases. As the performance is not merely about *muyuge*, they have to collaborate with other performing members and thus lose their dominance over the show.

6.5 Conclusion

The conflicting emphasis of authenticity and innovation in the present practices of

¹¹⁷ *Muyuge* is only one of the numerous innovation cases of traditional performing arts. Another typical and more widely discussed case would be the performance project of *the Red Boat* (‘船说’), launched in 2015 to promote Cantonese opera, a UNESCO inscribed intangible cultural heritage. The performance is situated in a vessel on Pearl River in Guangzhou. The whole performance transforms the watching experience of traditional opera by turning the show into an immersive performance where audience can walk around and find the actors performing nearby. Cantonese Opera only makes up around 10 minutes out of the 35-minute show. The show combines forms of musical, theatre, dancing, and acrobatics and even involves a dancing mechanical arm (Chuan Shuo, 2015; Lau, 2016). The skills and choreography is sophisticated compared with the *muyuge*-related singing and dancing performances. However, both cases share the common view in creating traditional performing arts for heritage promotion, that is, to modernise traditional performances by integrating them into modern performing forms, but not vice versa.

heritage making significantly reconstructs the concept of creativity in traditional performing arts in China. The high attention paid to authenticity demonstrates a major change to the previous cultural policy of 'weeding through the old and bringing forth the new'. However, the comparative analysis of the 1978 textbook of Cantonese narrative singing and the Dongkeng textbook of *muyuge* indicates the conceptual inheritance of creativity in traditional performing arts, that is, traditional forms should be reformed either to serve political demands or to keep up with the pace of market. The 1978 textbook shows the intention of stabilising the performance forms of narrative singing with modern western musical structures and introducing stage choreography of combining multiple performance forms. It shifts the creative focus to stage direction and organisation, and thus weakens the role of performers in the creative process. Such changes laid the foundation for further transformation in the current set of heritage practices. On the one hand, the necessity of innovation in traditional performance, especially peripheral genres, leads to a consensus among cultural officials and scholars. Many do acknowledge the common problems of the newly created works, like lacking diversity in contents, losing the vitality of everyday life, etc. However, it is still considered as an inevitable process of trial and error of adjusting traditional performance to a contemporary context (Zhao, 2010; Huang, 2015; He, 2016; Yang, 2017). With comparison to the creative process of *nanyin* in Hong Kong, the thought of 'bringing forth the new' demonstrates a much deeper root in the heritagisation process of mainland China. It also explains why the urge to innovate always remains unquestioned, as is a contemporary narrative of 'bringing forth the new'. On the other hand, the official stress of authenticity tends to focus on the objective status of traditional performances. In heritage scholars Yuan and Gu's (2013, pp. 144-146) suggestion to cultural officials, heritage preservation should guarantee the authentic contents,

forms and materials, while other innovative attempts, as long as they do not offend 'the bottom line of authenticity', should also be given the green light. By identifying authenticity as contents, forms and materials (for handicraft), the focus of creativity is shifted to the accuracy of performances. The concept of 'performance as a creative process' is therefore neglected. It is noteworthy that the seemingly contradiction between authenticity and innovation actually do not go against each other. In the case of *muyuge*, the official cultural sector establishes authority and redefines authenticity in the heritage process by including relevant curriculum in local schools, cultural lectures and exhibitions. In the meantime, radically reconstructed performances are constantly put onstage with the innovative attempt of adapting the traditional forms to contemporary contexts. The newly created practices deviates a lot from traditional *muyuge* practices. However, they manage to legitimise the radical reconstruction by including the 'authentic' forms as part of the performances. *Sweet Rice Ball* is a typical example. In terms of performance form, it is radically different from traditional *muyuge*. However, its *muyuge* paragraphs are used in classes and lectures as teaching examples for its neat tonal and rhyming composition, which, in turn, legitimised the 'innovation' of stage version of performance as a kind of heritage transmission for it contains 'the authentic' forms of *muyuge*. The traditional sense of creativity in performing arts is neglected, and is replaced by the urge to innovate and adjust to modern popular cultural forms. Interacting with the global heritage discourse and the historical socialist cultural policies, the dichotomous narrative of authenticity and innovation now plays an essential role in reconceptualising the creativity in traditional performing arts in China.

Conclusion

This thesis examines the relations between everyday life and the making of intangible heritage in today's China. I have argued that, as a critical part of the agenda of the 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation', the heritagisation process mobilises the engagement of various social forces and articulates the once unruly everyday practices – which constituted the essence of what *muyuge* was – to the dominant discourse. The swift and top-down domination of intangible heritage has taken shape in terms of the major discursive shift studied in this thesis, thus organising a significant shift of emphasis from an ideology-based to a civilisation-based identity. The discourse of 'great rejuvenation', replacing the 'realisation of communist society', has now played a pivotal role in the CCP's narrative of the statist vision since the late 1990s (Wang, 2012). The contemporary discursive shift from the old-school socialist ideology to a new form of Chinese nationalism reflects the CCP's attempt to re-legitimise its regime and power in the post-Cold War era. Before Deng's economic reform, the folk traditions and people's everyday practices had been highly politicised and often thoroughly institutionalised according to the prevailing logic of socialist ideology and proletariat class struggles. The first two decades of Deng's economic reform rendered a relatively autonomous yet marginal social environment for the development of everyday traditions. The nationwide interest of traditional culture since the late 1990s and the craze of intangible heritage since the early 2000s have brought folk traditions to the spotlight and envisaged another re-organisation of everyday knowledge and practices. Notwithstanding that the forms of folk practices has re-entered the mainstream narrative, most local practitioners and communities of folk traditions are still marginalised under the prevailing logic of capital market and nationalistic

discourse. Adopting a historical perspective, this thesis examines how everyday practices are incorporated to this new cultural and political agenda and questions how the everyday still remains in the latest process of cultural reconstruction in the name of protection and rejuvenation.

Heritage making in a historical perspective

It is impossible to comprehend today's intangible heritage without considering its historical development in the past century. After the 1940s especially the establishment of PRC, the CCP's stances and reformation of folk culture have significantly changed both the official and the academia realms. However, in the current narrative of heritage, the official attitudes towards this history are rather ambiguous. To some extent, this wave of ambiguity is the symptom of what in the official realm attempts have been made to bypass the entangled historical relations with the practices of folk traditions based on socialist ideology in current heritage making. In this thesis, I have situated the examination of intangible heritage in the historical contexts of folk cultural traditions in China's modernisation in order to re-think the social and cultural values of heritage in today's China.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part pays attention to the historical formation of *muyuge* with particular concerns about the formalisation of *muyuge* as a term and the peripheral status of the practice. Following the historical awareness, the second part analyses the making of *muyuge* into an intangible heritage from the aspects of Chinese heritage policy, economic restructuring, the reshaping of *muyuge* practitioners and performing practices. The first part traces the research scope to the folklore movement, which emerged in the New Cultural Movement in the early 20th century. The movement brought folk culture to the issue of national identity for the first time in China's modern history. Folklore studies established during this

period provided the basic cultural and academic sources for the subsequent emergence and currency of intangible heritage. After the late 1930s, especially Mao's 1942 Yan'an talk, the CCP extensively used folk culture to construct class consciousness of peasants and mobilise them for revolution. The CCP believed that folk culture should be reformed to weed out the 'feudal dross'. In the early PRC years, the CCP further institutionalised folk culture, including traditional performing arts, a domain covering various traditional performing contents and forms, their operational models as well as the political education of artists. Folk culture had undergone fundamental transformation from people's involvement in 'unruled' daily practices to the latter being organized into a part of the cultural institution of the state. Positioning it as a peripheral everyday practice, I have focused my research on the formation of *muyuge* as an academic subject as well as a performing art genre since the early 20th century. Besides, based on fieldwork interviews and historical archive, I have attempted to reconstruct *muyuge* as an everyday practice particularly under the influence of the CCP's cultural policy after the 1940s. I have suggested that social turbulences and changes of regimes had brought significant impact to *muyuge* practices. However, it is noteworthy that due to the periphery in culture and geography, the changes of *muyuge* had been a process of *muyuge* practitioners actively approaching the dominant discourse. The process reveals the complex ways in which folk culture was institutionalised in the early PRC years, which cannot be seen simply as one-way or top-down imposition from the authorities. As Zhang Lianhong points out, the relationship between everyday life and the dominant discourse is as much the binary struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor as it is institutionally interdependent. In order to survive and sustain in new institutionalised environment, *muyuge* practitioners adapted their practices to suit the dominant discourse. For example, Li Zhongqiu and blind singers

created 'revolutionary' *muyuge* during the Cultural Revolution; also, in the intangible heritage era, local singing practitioners attempted to renew definition of *muyuge* to include their own practices into the map of intangible heritage. However, these tactical moves in practice cannot be equated with docile compliance with the dominant. As common people made use of the dominant discourse to sustain their everyday practices, they retained a certain degree of autonomy even during the strictest political control.

The second part investigates the process of turning *muyuge* – an everyday practice – into intangible heritage under the marketisation of folk tradition and the discourse of 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'. The adoption of 'rejuvenation' is a noteworthy choice of wording. Wang Zheng (2012) traces the 'rejuvenation' discourse back to the late 19th century when Sun Yat-Sen proposed the slogan of 'invigorating China'. After the Cultural Revolution, 'invigorating China' once again became a major state vision. It was until the late 1990s, the expression of 'invigoration' was replaced with 'rejuvenation'. Today, 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' became a pivotal cultural strategy and national mission. The subtle yet significant change of expression is an attempt to emphasise the continuity of Chinese tradition and civilisation as well as the recovery of the once 'lost glory' of the nation (Wang, 2012; He, 2014). From the perspective of the state, the narrative of 'rejuvenation' is prone to connect the nation's 'glorious past' with the glory that is coming into being by obscuring the struggles, setbacks and frustrations during the modernisation process in the 20th century. According to the former general secretary of the CCP Hu Jintao, the great rejuvenation can only be realised through the reform and the associated opening up policies, and 'will definitely be accompanied by the thriving of Chinese culture' (Hu, 2007, cited from Wang, 2012).

Hu's statement reveals that the discourse of 'the great rejuvenation' and the progress of China's reform are mutually shaped and influenced. They are both significant components of 'the new dominant ideology' (Wang, 2010).

In the same vein, the examination of intangible heritage upsurge in the second part centres around two aspects, the market factor and the 'socialist' legacies. These two aspects run through the four chapters of this part. Chapter 3 examines the upsurge of intangible cultural heritage in China with historical reference to the changing connotations of 'cultural heritage' as a term in China's modernisation history. Thereby, this chapter reveals the intricate entanglement of the historical and contemporary factors in the current heritage discourse. The following chapters investigate the making of *muyuge* from three aspects, 1) the promotion of *muyuge* as intangible heritage under an industrial town's scheme of economic restructuring, 2) *muyuge* practitioners within and beyond the heritage discourse, and 3) the reconstruction of *muyuge* performing practices in relation to the debate of 'authenticity vs. innovation' in the reconstruction of heritage.

The struggles with the market factors in heritage making are one major concern of the thesis. Chapter 3 points out that China's proactive involvement with the international heritage regime and the cultivation of domestic heritage fever is indispensable from the country's opening up to the international capital system and further development of market economy since the late 1990s. China adopts the idea of intangible heritage from the UNESCO and re-defines the term as a significant approach to strengthen state recognition and national identity. In the meantime, market is a non-negligible factor that is shaping today's narratives and practices of heritage. It is widely believed that the best way to sustain an intangible heritage is to integrate it into the market and make it profitable. Market becomes an important

standard to evaluate a heritage project (Sha, 2017, pp. 135-136). As argued in Chapter 4, even *muyuge*, an everyday practice that is difficult to be commercialised, is inevitably involved into a town's economic scheme of industrial upgrade. The town government of Dongkeng attempted to show stronger national characters in *muyuge* and extend non-local audience by changing the local Cantonese accent into Putonghua and standard Cantonese, but it was doomed to be an unwelcome trial. *Muyuge* is often criticised for its incompatibility with the market and consumerism. However, the repeated awkward attempts under the current dominant discourse remind us of the necessity of an alternative perspective to comprehend the relationship between everyday traditions and heritage making.

The second focus is the historical legacies from the 'socialist' period in today's making of intangible heritage. The current preservation-oriented heritage policy is often represented as a subversion of the previous socialist ideas towards cultural traditions. However, it is inextricably linked with cultural legacies from the past century. Chapter 3 points out that the administrative system of intangible heritage is based on the cultural system of cultural halls and cultural stations, which had been an important approach for the CCP to organise and supervise cultural activities on the ground. Chapter 6 analyses in detail how the 'innovative' performance practices in the intangible heritage era has inherited from the 'socialist' creative ideas, like 'pouring new wine in old bottles' and 'weeding through the old to bring forth the new'. However, these newly created *muyuge* works are not accepted by either older *muyuge* enthusiasts or musical professionals of younger generations. I argue that the core problem is not about whether traditions should retain 'authentic' or be innovated; rather, it reflects the awkward position of folk traditions and folk artists in today's China. On the one hand, they are expected to be the embodiment of a

revived traditional culture. On the other hand, they are no longer as 'authentic' as expected. Their embodiment of the 'socialist tradition' in creativity is not appreciated in the present market-oriented cultural production and consumption.

Everyday life, cultural inheritance and heritage studies

In May 2016, one of my interviewees Aunt Runzhen was in critical condition. She began to leave her last words. To my surprise, she wanted me to inherit her songbooks if she passed away. Aunt Runzhen has collected four boxes of songbooks over the years including dozens of original Republican copies printed by Ng Gwai Tong, mimeographed and photocopied booklets in the 1990s and early 2000s as well as the recently published *muyushu* collections by the Dongguan Cultural Hall. In previous interviews, Aunt Runzhen already expressed concerns and worries about handling her songbooks. She wants to leave her songbooks to those who truly sing and love *muyuge*, or at least someone who studies *muyuge* and knows how to use it properly. However, she has never met a suitable candidate. Aunt Runzhen had made several attempts. She had called a popular local TV programme in the hope that they could help publicise her wish. She also contacted a distant relative who worked in a local library hoping that her songbooks could be used for valuable purposes. Later, she met me and placed her trust on me¹¹⁸.

Aunt Runzhen's frustration in looking for a songbook inheritor makes an ironic contrast to the ongoing heritage preservation. Similar to the cases of other older practitioners I mentioned in previous chapters, Aunt Runzhen's story also reflects the disjuncture between the official heritage campaign and ordinary people's

¹¹⁸ Fortunately, Aunt Runzhen finally got out of critical condition. However, she has been in unstable health condition in the past two years. Her eyesight became poor due to cataract. It thus became difficult for her to read songbooks. She still keeps the songbooks with her.

practice. The heritage campaign fails to respond to the actual everyday practice of heritage on the ground. However, on the other hand, ordinary practitioners have absorbed the heritage discourse. Aunt Runzhen's strong motivation to transmit *muyuge* is also largely influenced by the heritage campaign. In recent years, researchers and university students have come to interview her about *muyuge* from time to time. During this process, Aunt Runzhen consolidated her identification with *muyuge*, and associated her personal practice with a wider cultural context. The official heritage campaign has brought about a number of inconspicuous changes at the everyday level. Relying for my sources on Li Zhongqiu and Huang Peiyi, the two representative inheritors of *muyuge*, Chapter 5 uncovers the inheritance in relation to everyday experiences. I argue that the official process of heritage making has triggered new relations between the folk practice and its practitioners; however, this everyday dimension is shielded from the mainstream heritage narrative. Li's active engagement with *muyuge* mainly grew out of his personal interest in performing, creating and teaching, and with these he achieves senses of fulfilment in the heritage process. For Huang, Li's successor, learning and teaching *muyuge* is largely associated with her duty as a representative inheritor and local government official. Nonetheless, she still finds personal connection and satisfaction with *muyuge*. However, Li and Huang's personal affection to *muyuge* is not included in the official heritage discourse. The mainstream evaluation of heritage has left no room for registering such nuanced associations amongst the heritage work, personal feelings and everyday experiences. Therefore, the meanings of heritage as such can only be manifested in subtle, even obscure ways, which are sometimes not readily detected by the practitioners themselves. These hidden everyday impacts are minor in terms of the visibility and scale of actual effects. However, I raise awareness to the neglected dimension as it demonstrates alternative potentials of heritage, and

prompts us to re-think cultural inheritance under the heritage discourse dominated by the state and the market.

In her study of the transformation of folk traditions in Yan'an area in the late socialist period, Wu Ka-Ming (2015, p. 5) points out that having been embedded in tourism, commodities and consumption experiences, today's folk traditions become 'ever more well-integrated to the party-state campaigns and propaganda'. My study partly echoes Wu's work. Heavily influenced by nationalism and the market-oriented culture, *muyuge* practices under the framework of intangible heritage have been unprecedentedly integrated into the mainstream cultural discourse than ever. At the same time, *muyuge* tends to be constructed as a new form of folk practice in the name of intangible heritage regardless of the ordinary practitioners and their historical practices. Does it mean that everydayness disappears in the dominant heritage discourse? The answer is no.

For it is true that *muyuge* and other similar folk performing forms have been taking on more 'modern' and popular expressions and contents under the push of the intangible heritage discourse. However, as has been analysed in previous chapters, the everyday experiences and emotions adhered to this advancing dominant discourse are also growing even though it operates in a camouflaged and even unconscious manner. Moreover, the awkward, sometimes *tactical* incorporation of *muyuge* into contemporary cultural production reflects the unyielding tenacity of the everyday from another aspect. When the dominant discourse, or strategies in de Certeau's term, attempt to make use of folk cultures and everyday practices, they only grasp the materials and alters the contents, but never the form. The form is where the way of use and operating resides, which is and can only be singular (de Certeau, 1988; 1998). The tactics of singularity therefore determines that everyday

forms could not be reduced to or tamed to docilely serve the dominant. Underscoring the intricate conversion between the folk society and the state ideology, Zhang Lianhong (2002) argues that, due to its general lack of ulterior aims and purposes, folk traditions can be easily incorporated by the dominant ideology. On the other hand, they manage to accumulate strengths and potentials under the 'protection' of dominant ideologies. The tenacity nurtures strong vitality of folk traditions under 'the structure of interdependence' (Zhang, 2012). Along this line of argument, this thesis uncovers the subtle articulations and hidden struggles between everyday experience and the dominant heritage making. Even though these subtle details do not have visible effects in current heritage making, I argue that it is necessary to raise scholarly and public attention to them and bring these alternative narratives into the heritage discourse.

'Giving inordinate attention to the ordinary' (Lefebvre, 1991) is a pedagogical act (Highmore, 2011). From the perspective of everyday aesthetics, Highmore draws from Jacques Ranciere who believes that activities of art, as those of politics, participate in 'the distribution of the sensible'. It is a process of re-orchestrating 'what is seen or felt as notable, perceivable, valuable, noticeable and so on' (Highmore, 2011, p. 23). According to Highmore, everyday aesthetics is not a representation, but the experience per se which engages with a 'sensual pedagogy' that shapes perceptions, sentiments, and discernment of our sociality (Highmore, 2011, p. 53). The large-scale incorporation of everyday practices by intangible heritage can be seen, from another perspective, as an official move to push everyday practices to the foreground. The huge quantities of heritagised practices embody lurking energy and potential that could bring significant changes to culture, economy and society. At this juncture, everyday theory converges with the

critical shift in heritage studies which emphasise that heritage should be taken as a process engaging with different socio-economical forces (Harvey, 2001; Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013; Wu, 2015). Harrison (2013, p. 227) points out that heritage is ‘a form of creative engagement’ that aims to bring forth the active role of heritage participants and encourage local communities to create their own future through heritage. The conceptual change of heritage also kindles potentials in changing the dominant heritage discourse. In this thesis, I have argued that everyday life is an important component in the heritage process, not as passive materials to be tailored or sublimated, but as a critical site to absorb and transform the dominant heritage discourse. Only in this way will heritage be truly rooted in people’s everyday practices and experiences, and become the common resource for knowledge transmission and identity building. The most pertinent contribution of the thesis for critical heritage studies in contemporary China is that it introduces the conceptual and methodological angle of everyday life into the field of study concerned, and analyses how heritage – intangible heritage in particular – embodies the irreducible agency of resistance and change. The sole case of *muyuge* might not be enough to provide further arguments or suggestions for how to re-situate the dominant heritage making process into the soils of everyday life and nurture the field for the growth of an alternative heritage discourse. It is the limitation of this study, but I want to propose this as the starting point for future research. That is, building on the findings of ‘heritagising the everyday’, the ‘everyday’ formation of heritage should become a definite direction for critical heritage studies.

APPENDIX 1 SINGING THE SWEET RICE BALL

糖不甩小唱 (Singing the Sweet Rice Ball)

作词：李仲球； 作曲：解承强； 演唱：李仲球、刘清儿等

糖不甩，鸭鬃丝，甘甜爽滑好清奇。 - The opening couplet

糖不甩，糖不甩，圆圆滑滑一粒粒，
香甜爽滑齿留香，甜甜蜜蜜糖不甩。 } *Shubailan*

糖不甩，味清奇，食完健步快如飞，
锄地耕田好力气，健康长寿确神奇。 } *Muyuge sung by Li*

糖不甩，糖不甩，食咗体强健筋骨，
生生猛猛似条龙，甜甜蜜蜜糖不甩。 } *Shubailan*

糖不甩，好神奇，食完姑嫂笑微微，
海誓山盟需谨记，一生白发共齐眉。 } *Muyuge sung by the child performer*

糖不甩，糖不甩，粘粉糯粉二合一，
公痴馐来馐痴公，甜甜蜜蜜糖不甩。 } *Shubailan*

糖不甩，好传奇，和谐社会遍生机，
子孝孙贤多福气，和风习习旺门楣。 } *Muyuge sung by Li and the child performer*

糖不甩，糖不甩，团团圆圆图大吉，
大地和谐金风来，甜甜蜜蜜糖不甩。 } *Shubailan*

糖不甩，鸭鬃丝，甘甜爽滑好清奇…… - The closing couplet

Reference

Li, Z. & Xie, C., 2015. *Nonggeng yun, Dongkeng qing*; [The Agrarian Melodies, the Dongkeng Sensation]. [Sound Recording] (Southern Publishing and Media).

APPENDIX 2 MAIN INTERVIEWEES

	Name	Occupation	Place and date
1	Chen Canguang	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast	In Chen's house in Wanjiang Town, on 3rd October 2014
2	Aunt Zhen	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast	Qifeng Park on 19th October 2014, 10th July 2015 and 23rd August 2015
3	Aunt Chan	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast	Qifeng Park on 19th October 2014, 10th July 2015 and 23rd August 2015
4	Aunt Fang	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast	Zhongshan Park in Shilong Town on 8th July 2015 and 26th April 2016
5	Fang Runzhen (Aunt Runzhen)	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast	Fang's house on 19th, 22nd August, 2015; 29th April 2016 and 28th January, 2017
6	Zhang Lihe (Aunt Yi)	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast	Zhang's house in Guancheng District, on 21st August, 2015
7	Huang Yaohong (Uncle Huang)	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast	Huang's house in Daojiao Town on 17th January 2016
8	Chen Jinwan	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast (my grandma)	Chen's house in Dongcheng District on 23rd February 2015 and 13th July 2015; Chinese Medicine Hospital of Dongguan on 19th July 2015
9	Aunt Di	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast	Yangong Temple in Daojiao Town, on 8th August, 2016
10	Uncle Chen	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast	Cultural Square in Guancheng District on 12th July 2015
11	Li Zhongqiu	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast, representative inheritor of Guangdong Province	<i>Muyuge</i> Training Centre in Dongkeng on 14th July 2015 and Dongkeng Secondary School on 29th April 2016
12	Shi Luguang	Blind singer, fortune teller	Shi's house on 14th July, 2016

13	Liu Gantang	Blind singer, fortune teller	Liu's house in Daojiao Town on 8th August 2016
14	Yang Baolin	<i>Muyuge</i> enthusiast, scholar	28th July 2015, via posted letters
15	Zhang Tiewen	<i>Muyushu</i> collector	Guancheng Library on 26th July 2015; Zhang's studio on 19th August 2015
16	Liu Cheng	Cultural official in Dongkeng Town	<i>Muyuge</i> Training Centre in Dongkeng Town on 14th July 2015
17	Huang Peiyi	Representative inheritor of Dongguan City, cultural official in Dongkeng Town	Office of Dongkeng Cultural and Broadcast Centre on 29th April 2016 and 4th August 2016
18	Heyi	High school student, <i>muyuge</i> learner	In a coffee house in Dongkeng Town on 14th July 2015
19	Darong	High school student, <i>muyuge</i> learner	In a coffee house in Dongkeng Town on 14th July 2015
20	Wang Yaowen	Participant of <i>muyuge</i> public lecture	7th May 2016 via telephone

APPENDIX 3 EVENTS I PARTICIPATED DURING FIELDWORK

	Activities	Dates	Place	Organiser
1	Yang Baolin's talks on <i>Muyushu</i>	5 th May, 19 th May, 2 nd June, 16 th June, 2012	Guancheng Library, Dongguan	Guancheng Library
2	Exhibition of Dongguan Intangible Cultural Heritage -- <i>muyuge</i> performances by <i>muyuge</i> inheritors and students)	11 th July, 2015	The People's Park (Guancheng)	The Intangible Heritage Office of Dongguan (Dongguan Cultural Centre)
3	Intangible Heritage Classroom – Li Zhongqiu's talk on <i>muyuge</i>	7 th May, 2016	Dongguan Cultural Centre	Dongguan Cultural Centre
4	Book Displaying Event (晒书大会) – <i>Muyuge</i> performance by Li Zhongqiu and related talk by Zhang Tiewen	26 th July, 2016	Guancheng Library, Dongguan	Guancheng Library
5	Maishen Festival	10 th March, 2016	The Century Square, Dongkeng, Dongguan	Town government of Dongkeng
6	Regular <i>muyuge</i> class for local high school students	29 th April, 2016	Dongkeng High School	Dongkeng High School and Dongkeng Culture and Broadcasting Centre
7	Experiencing Dongguan's Intangible Heritage Summer Camp, to Be a Little Guide	25 th -29 th July, 2016	Dongguan Cultural Centre and fieldworks in Dongguan area	Dongguan Cultural Centre

8	Children's Summer Camp of Dongkeng – Huang Peiyi's talk on <i>muyuge</i>	4 th August, 2016	Dongkeng Library, Dongguan	Dongkeng Culture and Broadcasting Centre
9	Celebration of Qixi Festival	8 th August, 2016	Yangong Temple in Daojiao Town	A group of local women
10	Evaluation of Intangible Heritage of Municipal Level – <i>Muyuge</i> in the town of Daojiao	15 th August, 2016	Daojiao Culture and Broadcasting Centre	Dongguan Cultural Centre; Dongkeng Culture and Broadcasting Centre

GLOSSARY

A Hired Worker Speaking His Bitterness 《雇工诉苦》

A New Account of Guangdong 《广东新语》

A Sad Traveller 《客途秋恨》

A strong state of socialist culture 社会主义文化强国

Amateur Cantonese opera group 私伙局

Baishenge/ worship song 拜神歌

Bianwen 变文

Big character poster 大字报

Cantonese Opera 粤剧

Changge 唱歌

Chen Shimei 《陈世美》

Chinese learning as essence and Western learning as application 中学为体, 西学为用

Class struggle 阶级斗争

Commercial folk literature 商俗文学

Crying wedding song 哭嫁歌

Cuiying Lou 萃英楼

Cultural and broadcasting centre 文广中心

Cultural Hall 文化馆

Cultural heritage 文化遗产

Cultural revolution ‘文化革命’

Cultural Station 文化站

Cultural worker 文艺工作者

Culture and entertainment group 文娱组

Daojiao 道滘

Destroy the Four Olds and Cultivate the Four News 破旧立新

Dongguan 东莞

Dongkeng 东坑
Duanwu Festival/ the dragon boat festival 端午节
Evening singing at Tinggang Temple 《亭岗唱晚》
Folk artist 民间艺人
Folk literature 俗文学
Folklore Weekly 《民俗周刊》
Four olds 四旧
Fudan Shizhong Quarterly 《复旦实中季刊》
Geyao/Folksong 《歌谣》
Girls' house 女仔屋, 女间
Gonghe Bao/ the Republic Paper 《共和报》
Guancheng 莞城
Guobuge/ Song of Travelling Overseas 《过埠歌》
Han tongnian 喊童年
History of Chinese Folk Literature 《中国俗文学史》
Hu Opera / huju 沪剧
Impression Daojiao 《印象道滢》
Inheritor groups 传承人群
Inheritor 传承人
Intangible cultural heritage/intangible heritage 非物质文化遗产/非遗
Investigation 调查
Invigorating China 振兴中华
Jingjing Zhai 静净斋
Kunqu 昆曲
Laoreng/ song of the aged (sung in funeral) 老人歌
Lecture Room 百家讲坛 (a TV programme of China Central Television)
Level tones 平声
Liaobu 寮步
Living world 生活世界

Long live the mountains and rivers of Communism 《共产山河万万年》

Longzhou 龙舟

Lower level tones 阳平

Ludang huozhong/ Rippling sparks in the reeds 《芦荡火种》

Maishen Festival 卖身节

Manglaoge/ the blind men's song 盲佬歌

Mass culture 群众文化

Miaohuige/ temple song 庙会歌

Min Ziqian Yuche 《闵子骞御车》

Minjian/ the folk society 民间

Moyuge 摸鱼歌

Muyu 木鱼

Muyuge 木鱼歌

Muyuge 沐浴歌

Muyushu 木鱼书

Nanyin 南音

National form 民族形式

National Preparatory Committee of the Improvement of *Quyí* 中华全国曲艺改进会筹备委员会

National studies fever 国学热

Ng Gwai Tong 五桂堂

Oblique tone 仄声

Official language of the stage 舞台官话

Old society 旧社会

Peking Opera 京剧

Peking University Daily 《北京大学日刊》

People's commune 人民公社

People's culture hall 群众艺术馆

People's education hall 民众教育馆

People-oriented 以人为本
Pouring new wine in old bottles 旧瓶装新酒
Privileging the present over the past 厚古薄今
Productive preservation 生产性保护
Pu 谱
Puchuangge/ bed-making song (sung in wedding ceremonies) 铺床歌
Qingming Festival 清明节
Qixi Festival 七夕
Quy 曲艺
Records of the Grand Historian 《史记》
Reform the repertoire, reform the artists and reform the institution 改戏, 改人, 改制
Representative inheritor 代表性传承人
Rescue preservation 抢救性保护
Retired but not tired 退而不休
Romance of the Three Kingdoms 《三国演义》
Sanxian 三弦
Scientific development perspective 科学发展观
Shajiabang 《沙家浜》
Shengshi xiudian / re-organising classics and traditions in the flourishing era 盛世修典
Shifu/mentor 师傅
Shuochang 说唱
Singing man 歌伯
Socialist harmonious society 社会主义和谐社会
Socialist spiritual civilisation 社会主义精神文明
Song collecting 采风
Songbook 歌书
Speaking and singing literature 讲唱文学

Speaking the bitterness 诉苦

Star award 群星奖

Stories of Two Lotuses 《二荷花史》

Story of the Western Wing 《西厢记》

Structure of oppression/interdependence 压迫/共命结构

Subtle Revolution 细腻革命

Suku/speaking out the bitterness 诉苦

Taking Tiger Mountain with Strategy 《智取威虎山》

Tanci 弹词

Tears Wetting the Clothes of a Frustrated Official 《泪湿青衫》

The Broken Jade and Sinking Jewelry 《玉碎珠沉》

The Eighth Scholar's Book 《第八才子书》

The Floral Writing Paper/ Hua Jian Ji 《花笺记》

The Golden Silk Butterfly 金丝蝴蝶

The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation 中华民族的伟大复兴

The invisible structure of *minjian* 民间的隐形结构

The people 民众/人民

The three representative 三个代表

Three ancient cultures 三古文化

Three radishes in one pit 《三个萝卜一个坑》

Turn-over 翻身

Upper level tones 阴平

Using the past for present purposes 古为今用

Visiting a Friend in Baisha 《白沙访友》

Water Margin 《水浒传》

Weeding through the old to bring forth the new 推陈出新

wenhua daguo/a great nation of culture 文化大国

wenhua guguo/an ancient nation of culture 文化古国

Workers, peasantry and soldiers 工农兵

Xianshuige/ the salty water song 咸水歌

Xinniange/ new year song 新年歌

Xiqu reform 戏曲改革/戏改

Xiqu 戏曲

Yan'an 延安

Yiku sitian movement 忆苦思甜

Yincai 阴菜

Zejin/zhaijin 择锦/摘锦

Zhongzhouyin 中州音

Zhuanggua muyu ying 撞卦木鱼赢

Zhuangzi 《庄子》

Zhuanqu 撰曲

Zuoqu 作曲

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