

**WHY ARE THE FLOWERS SO “RED”: SCHOLARSHIP AND POLICY CHANGES ON  
HUA’ER (FLOWER SONGS) IN NORTHWEST CHINA**

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*Hua’er*, literally “flowers,” is a folk-song tradition in Northwest China named after the custom of comparing female beauty to flowers in the lyrics with most songs written about love and sex. Shared by people of over nine different ethnic groups in the northwestern region—Han, Hui, Tibetan, Bao’an, Dongxiang, Sala, Tu, Yugu, and Mongol—*hua’er* is recognized by the people that practice or research on it as an important artistic medium of cultural expression and communication. The ups and downs of *hua’er*, influenced by various socio-political climates since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, are directly embodied in the development of the *hua’er* scholarship in the Northwest of China.

This thesis highlights the development of *hua’er* studies and the changing cultural policies on the *hua’er* tradition in the PRC since 1949; more specifically, it investigates how the scholarship on *hua’er* is influenced by social changes and political upheavals in China, and why a musical tradition (which was once forbidden in the 1960s and 1970s) has become a national cultural heritage. The paper focuses on how the State (the Chinese government) acts on behalf of its own interests by instituting policies that serve the government’s sovereignty and well-being.

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## PREFACE

The research for this thesis is entirely based on a literature survey of the books and articles published on the subject (*hua'er*) in Chinese and English languages without conducting actual fieldwork. Publications in any other languages are not considered for this study.

Due to limited access to the official government documents on cultural policy in China, the discussions in Chapter 3 mainly rely on secondary sources (mostly magazine/journal articles).

All the translations from the references in Chinese are by the author unless otherwise clarified. For the benefit of readers who know Chinese, the Chinese characters are provided in the glossary.

All Chinese personal names which apply the *pinyin* system in Mandarin pronunciation are in the original Chinese order: the family name followed by the given name.



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Singing has been an integral part of folk cultures in China. In different regions, people of various ethnic groups use folk-songs (*min'ge*)<sup>1</sup> as a medium of entertainment, story-telling, or as a release of emotions ranging from joy to melancholy. Meanwhile, folk-songs provide rich sources for new music compositions. For example, one of the most famous movie songs in China, “Why Are the Flowers So Red” (*hua'er weishenme zheyang hong*)<sup>2</sup> was based on an ancient Tajik folk-song “Gulibita”; flowers (*hua'er*) are used to symbolize love and friendship in the lyrics. Coincidentally, a popular folk-song genre in Northwest China is actually named as *hua'er*, implying beautiful flower-like females and love. The genre is also called *yequ* (wild tune) or *shanqu* (mountain tune),<sup>3</sup> and designated by scholars as belonging to the category of *shan'ge* (mountain song).<sup>4</sup> The main functions of the *hua'er* singing are entertainment, flirting, and finding sex partners. Transmitted orally with occasional instrumental accompaniment, *hua'er* is an effective blend of musical and linguistic artistry, rich in metaphors, other rhetorical devices and traditional Chinese pentatonic scales. The content of *hua'er* consists of love themes,

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

<sup>2</sup> The song was written by a renowned movie music composer Lei Zhengbang (1916-1997) for a popular 1963 movie “Visitors to the Ice Mountain” (*bingshan shang de laike*) depicting a love story between a soldier and a peasant girl.

<sup>3</sup> A term refers that the genre is usually sung in the mountain wilderness.

<sup>4</sup> Chinese folklorists use several terms based on folk usage to categorize folk-songs. They include *shan'ge* (mountain songs), *xiaodiao* (minor tunes or little ditties), and *haozi* (work songs). *Xiaodiao* are described as lyrical, mellifluous songs in a regular rhythm, often sung indoor in a soft voice and to instrumental accompaniment. *Haozi* is a fairly general word for rhythmic working cries which support repetitive physical movements during work. *Shan'ge* are generally defined as improvised songs in free rhythm, sung loudly outdoors. *Shan'ge* are more explicitly associated with peasant life than the other two genres.

historical stories, and comments and descriptions of social events primarily focusing on the area of “the Great Northwest” (Tuohy 1988: 112).

This thesis examines the ways in which *hua’er* has been researched and adopted as a musical genre, folk-song tradition (of the Northwest), and a national cultural heritage since 1949, and seeks to explain the socio-political contexts and forces that shaped and influenced the development of *hua’er* and its scholarship in the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—Why is *hua’er* so popular (both as a musical tradition and as a research topic) in Northwest China?<sup>5</sup> What is the importance of *hua’er* for Chinese government nowadays? The materials in this thesis were largely based on library and Internet documentary research. The research involves books, articles (mostly from academic journals), as well as magazine and newspaper reports. Using these materials, I reveal the approaches of Chinese scholars in studying *hua’er*, and demonstrate the notable impact of government policies on *hua’er* and its research, aiming to provide an interpretive and contextualized study for understanding the field of Chinese *hua’er* studies.

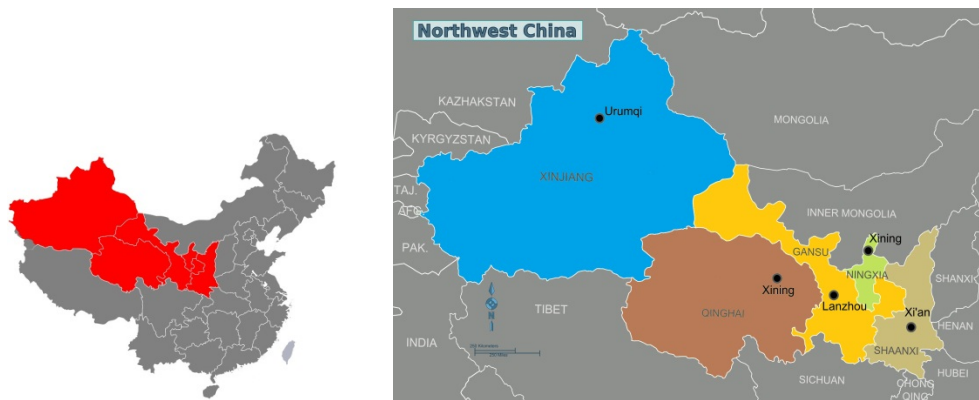
## 1.1 THE NORTHWEST AND THE *HUA’ER* TRADITION

The Northwest is a large region of China made up of Gansu, Qinghai and Shaanxi provinces as well as the Xinjiang-Uyghur and Ningxia-Hui autonomous regions (Figures 1 and 2). Its vast deserts and high mountains, sparse population, and large concentration of minority nationalities are among the factors that distinguish it from China’s dominant regions, the East and the South. In imperial times, most of this area constituted the periphery of Chinese culture due to its

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<sup>5</sup> The word “popular” in Chinese can be read as “*hong*”—the same as the word for “red.” In my thesis title, I adopt the name of the popular song “Why Are the Flowers So Red” while using “red” to refer to the popularity of *hua’er* in Northwest China.

multiethnic diversity. However, nowadays “in terms of national defense, natural resources and territory, the region is vitally important to the Chinese nation” (Tuohy 1988: 9), namely the PRC, and the central government has targeted it in current development plans. The folklore, music, and performing arts of the Northwest—including the genre of *hua’er*—are being brought to national and even international attention through cultural projects in the forms of festivals, performances as well as scholarly research.



**Figures 1 and 2.** The Northwest of China

While in China as a whole the Han people comprise the majority of the population, the Northwest as a multiethnic region is inhabited by, in addition to Han, the Hui, Bao’an, Sala, Tu, Dongxiang, Yugu, Tibetan and Mongolian people,<sup>6</sup> each group having its own distinctive culture. Despite their different cultural backgrounds, all of these non-Han ethnic groups can speak some Han Chinese. All groups share the *hua’er* tradition and primarily sing the songs in

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<sup>6</sup> The people of the Hui, Bao’an, Dongxing, and Sala ethnic groups are traditionally Muslims, and Tibetan Buddhism is popular among the populations of the Tu, Yugu, Tibetan and Mongolian people.

local Han Chinese dialect (though most participants are not Han and use a different language in daily speech),<sup>7</sup> intermingling vocabulary and grammar of the Tu, Sala, Tibetan, and other minority languages (cf. Feng and Stuart 1994: 213, Du 1998: 71), and peoples of different ethnic groups usually participate together in the song gatherings (*hua'er hui*) to communicate their sexual feelings, pursue their desire through singing, and perhaps subsequently to engage in sexual affairs.

It is the local custom that *hua'er* can be sung by any adult (male or female) at any time; but due to the sexually explicit content of many *hua'er* songs and the sensual nature of the *hua'er* singing (primarily for seeking courtship), it is restricted to the fields outside residential areas, usually on pleasant mountain meadows with beautiful scenery that are easily accessible to neighboring residential areas. Singing *hua'er* inside a village or family home would be regarded as offensive and immoral because it might imply asking for sex (cf. Xi 1989: 57). In addition, *hua'er* singing takes place not only in daily life situations, but also in certain mass song gatherings of people specially organized for that purpose on fixed dates and at fixed locations. Most of these *hua'er* gatherings are held around the fifth and sixth months of the Chinese lunar calendar during the agricultural off-season; they may last from one to several days, and the number of participants varies from a couple of thousand to tens of thousands. Events of *hua'er* singing have been traditionally condemned as “immoral” or “crude” by dominant religious and philosophical thoughts (namely Islam and Buddhism) in the Northwest and by the ruling authority in the past (cf. Yang 1994: 109), and were restricted (under the *Yifeng-yisu* policy, see Chapter 3) and even banned (due to socio-political movements) in the early decades of the PRC. However, in the most recent twenty years, *hua'er* has been promoted as a Chinese national

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<sup>7</sup> Certain ethnic groups (such as Dongxiang and Sala) also sing *hua'er* songs in their own languages (cf. Zhu et al. 1997: 62-64).

“cultural heritage” through organized singing competitions, stage-performances, festivals, scholarly research (with publications), and media broadcasting sponsored by the Chinese government for being a shared tradition among several nationalities in the Northwest to display China as a diverse yet harmonious country.

## 1.2 HUA’ER SONGS

*Hua’er* is named after the custom of comparing female beauty to flowers in the lyrics which usually express sexual desire. For example, in this well-known male solo song, “*Shangqu ge gaoshan wang pingchuan*” [Climb the High Mountain and Gaze at the Open County] (see Appendix A), a peony is used to refer a beautiful girl in the lyrics:

上去个高山望平川，	I climb the high mountain and gaze at the open country.
平川里有一朵牡丹。	There is a peony there.
看上去是容易摘去是难。	Looking at it is easy, but picking it is difficult.
摘不到手里是枉然。	I cannot get it and it wastes my energy.
(Wang Pei 2007: 31)	(cf. Du 1998: 74)

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

尕球骨朵悬吊下，	The penis hangs just like a bud,
屌毛是叶叶者落下。	The pubes look like leaves.

尕妹的屁是山丹花，	Little sister's vagina looks like a morning lily flower,
球球安上个把把。	We can use the penis to be a handle for the flower.
(Du 1998: 72)	(Du 1998: 72)

These lyrics reflect the most important functions of the genre—courtship and flirtation. Such song is usually sung by young unmarried men and women in the northwestern region to seek for lovers or partners.<sup>8</sup> *Hua'er* songs focusing on love run the gamut “from tragic loss to joy, from the explicitly sexual to the euphemistic” (Feng and Stuart 1994: 214). In fact, “love” *hua'er* is the most performed and most popular type of the genre, and occupies the largest portion of collected *hua'er* song lyrics.<sup>9</sup> Although *hua'er* texts are mostly associated with love, they may refer to other aspects of life, such as life's hardship, historical events, and folk tales. Song texts record the exploits of heroes from Chinese history and mythologies are few in number, but are also very popular (cf. Xi 1989: 18).

Many Chinese folk-songs consist of only one basic tune to which many different texts are sung. The *hua'er* repertoire, however, consists of numerous tunes (or *ling*, mostly in pentatonic scale),<sup>10</sup> each of which may be sung with varying song texts.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, songs based on the same tune may have different names. For example, the tune in Appendix A can be sung in a different set of lyrics (see Appendix A, Wang Kui 2006: 4); in that case, the song will be given

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<sup>8</sup> Chinese scholars (e.g. Zhao 1989, Ke 2002) have suggested that *hua'er* events also provide an occasion for courtship outside the strictures of arranged marriage.

<sup>9</sup> Since every stanza adheres to certain established patterns of rhyme and meter, many of the lyrics are samples of superb folk poetry (cf. Feng and Stuart 1994: 220). Therefore, Chinese scholars often collect *hua'er* song texts as poems.

<sup>10</sup> According to Zhao (1989: 221-223), the majority of *hua'er* tunes (usually called *ling* in the Northwest) use a pentatonic (five-tone) scale (see the example in Appendix A), which is widely used in China and features in numerous genres of Chinese music.

<sup>11</sup> The people of the Northwest regard some of the *hua'er* song texts as “traditional,” since they have been handed down from earlier generations; other texts are considered “contemporary” for having been composed in recent times by individual singers or composers.

the other name (usually named after the first line of the lyrics). The usual method of composing song texts is improvisation (during singing). Many local people in the Northwest are clever at improvising *hua'er* texts, which are intended to fit the specific singing occasion. These techniques are well-known and offer a malleable structure to encompass various contents for different purposes.<sup>12</sup> Some musicians also created new forms of singing performance such as *hua'er* medley and *hua'er* opera.<sup>13</sup>

Antiphonal singing between two individuals or two groups is the most common format of *hua'er* singing.<sup>14</sup> Either the females or the males may begin singing to become better acquainted.<sup>15</sup> The singers compose or recompose lyrics on the spot, responding to the theme of the previous song. Singers may elaborate on the topic of the preceding song or answer a question that the other singer has posed. As the songs progress, sung antiphonally between male and female singers, a certain relationship is established through singing in the form of “questions and answers” (*wenda*) that might lead one side to conclude that they have no further interest in one another, in which case the songs are terminated.<sup>16</sup> At the other extreme, the songs could lead to singers retiring to a secluded area and having sexual intercourse, or make an appointment for such a later encounter.<sup>17</sup> While the singers learn and transmit the songs orally, cassette tapes and

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<sup>12</sup> Some original song texts have been revised or recomposed to encompass political content such as praise for the Chinese Communist Party and the government. There are also songs featuring more recent social themes, such as family planning or the success of economic reforms.

<sup>13</sup> In 1958, singers and musicians from Linxia-Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu province created *hua'er* medley, a choral genre consisting of various combinations of male and female voices; and *hua'er* opera, a genre constructed by *hua'er* songs as arias, narratives in local dialect and theatrical acting (Guo 2004: 74-75).

<sup>14</sup> There are three forms of *hua'er* singing: solo singing, antiphonal singing between two individuals, and group singing. The antiphonal singing and group singing are always started with a solo voice. Solo singing by individual singer is now mainly performed for events of stage-shows.

<sup>15</sup> The male singers generally begin and are answered by the female singers.

<sup>16</sup> The song exchange may also conclude when either one singer or the other can no longer compose or recreate a verse to answer his/her opponent.

<sup>17</sup> A number of taboos surround these singing activities, such as not singing within range of immediate family members (like mothers or sisters) and not singing to such relatives as paternal cousins.



digital recorders are now widely available in the northwestern region and offer new dimension to transmission and performance (cf. Lowry et al. 2011: 94).

*Hua'er* songs are widely spread in Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia-Hui Autonomous Region, and eastern Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region—an area of over sixty thousand square miles.<sup>18</sup> They are generally divided into two general categories according to geographic distribution (see Figure 3): Taomin (or Lotus Mountain)<sup>19</sup> *hua'er* and Hehuang (or Hezhou, Linxia)<sup>20</sup> *hua'er* (Xi 1989: 26-28, Wu 2008: 86). Along the Taohe River and the Minshan Mountain (an area referred to as Taomin) in the southern part of Gansu province, Taomin *hua'er* are traditionally sung and popular among Han and Hui people in the region (cf. Tuohy: 2003: 165). Hehuang *hua'er* or *shaonian* (youngster)<sup>21</sup> are sung by several ethnic groups and prevail over a large area including Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang, yet the style centered in Hehuang (Huanghe and Huangshui Rivers) area near the border area of Gansu and Qinghai (cf. Feng and Stuart 1994: 212-213, Ke and Xi 1987:178, Wu 2008: 87-93).

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<sup>18</sup> Historically, eastern Qinghai and Ningxia-Hui Autonomous Region were both part of Gansu province, and the modern division of provinces that came after 1949 caused *hua'er* to be divided among these three provinces. Xinjiang is relatively a new home for *hua'er*, which was introduced by immigrants from Qinghai and Gansu provinces as recently as the early twentieth century.

<sup>19</sup> The Lotus Mountain (*lianhua shan*) in Gansu province is regarded as the birthplace of this type of *hua'er* songs.

<sup>20</sup> This area was also called “Hezhou” before 1949, and today the region belongs to Linxia-Hui Autonomous Preference of Gansu province.

<sup>21</sup> Although most scholars agree that both terms refer to the same folk-song form, Du Yangxiong (1998: 73) argues that *shaonian* is a different folk-song form owing to its unique content, musical characteristics, syntax, and content.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of *Hua'er*

The major difference between the two categories is the mode of performance (cf. Wu 2008: 85-86, Du 1998: 73). Taomin *hua'er* are sung by groups of three or four singers under the guidance of a lead singer, who is responsible for the lyrics and dictates to the others. By contrast, Hehuang *hua'er* are always sung by individual soloists (like the example on page 4). In both types, the singing may evoke a response from other singers and lead to musical dialogue. According to Wu (2008: 127), in Taomin *hua'er*, the basic stanza is not fixed and it may consist of two lines, three lines, or more than ten lines. In most cases the lead singer provides most of the text, while the rest of the group joins in each time when the coda (final line) begins. In Hehuang *hua'er*, there are four or six lines in each stanza, sung by one performer only (Ibid. 96). The two genres also differ musically in that Taomin *hua'er* songs usually consist of one-phrase melodies

(repeated many times) while Hehuang *hua'er* have two-phrase melodies (cf. Du 1998: 73).<sup>22</sup> Both genres have been the foci of the published *hua'er* studies in China for decades.

### 1.3 HUA'ER STUDIES AND HUA'ER SCHOLARS

Publications on *hua'er* appeared in the second decade of the twentieth century (Xi 1989: 2). However, scholarly studies on *hua'er* are almost nonexistent before 1949 (Zhang Yaxiong's *Hua'er ji* [Collections of *Hua'er*] is the only exception, see Zhang 1940). In the 1950s and 1960s, some anthologies of *hua'er* songs were published, mostly by Han Chinese academics, professional researchers or musicians. Many songs (mostly lyrics) in these anthologies are improvised texts attached with political themes reflecting various government-led movements (such as the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Great Leap Forward in the 1950s, see Chapter 2). They are said to be collected through fieldwork but many are not given ethnographic details (such as collecting location, collectors, singers and dates). Like most other music publications during that period, the published *hua'er* tunes are notated in the cipher notation, which was introduced into China at the beginning of the twentieth century and has been used extensively. The quantity of the publications is not large. They all provide general introductions (especially

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, *hua'er* is a highly regionalized folk-song genre that has differing styles according to the region and ethnicity in which it is sung. Such differences exist at various levels, including in the use of language or dialect, in text structure, in melodic form, and in cultural references. For instance, certain ethnic communities sing melodies that are uniquely associated with their ethnic backgrounds, and they often make references in their lyrics to distinctive aspects of their religions and cultures. These dimensions of variation also involve regional differences. People from different regions speak different dialects, and in such cases their singing is often unintelligible to each other.

the categorization) to the genre. This early phase of Chinese *hua'er* studies stopped because of the Cultural Revolution<sup>23</sup> in China, which started in 1966 and lasted for ten years.

Research publications on *hua'er* began to appear again in the early 1980s, ushering a new era (of two decades) for research in China. During this modern period, the quantity of publications on *hua'er* is much greater than before, and the scope has been expanded. Among other reasons for this, after the Cultural Revolution, the government has (to a limited degree) fostered the “Reform and Opening” policies for many aspects of life, including academic work. The direct reasons for the surge of research interests are that, first, publications on music (both in books and journals) have become more numerous than before; and second, there were more people concentrating on *hua'er*, and many of them became leading scholars in the field.

From the late 1980s, China started to publish a series of volumes of folk-songs (*Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng* [Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs]) and ballads (*Zhongguo geyao jicheng* [Anthology of Chinese Ballads]), arranged per province. The publications continued through the 1990s and even into the new millennium. *Hua'er* songs are included in all the volumes of the northwestern provinces or autonomous regions. These volumes are compiled by leading scholars in the respective areas (such as folklore and music), and they categorize *hua'er* songs according to different ethnic groups or topics and usually summarize the characteristics of specific regional styles in the accompanied introductory articles in each volume. Generally speaking, the quality of studies published during the 1980s and 1990s is much higher than before, and they are no longer simple collections of *hua'er* lyrics or tunes with

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<sup>23</sup> The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), or the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, was a socio-political movement aiming at eliminating capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society. The movement resulted in widespread struggles and chaos in all walks of life. It not only politically paralyzed the country but also negatively affected the culture and economy in the PRC. During the movement, many historical and cultural sites were destroyed while traditional socio-cultural activities were banned.

preliminary and superficial descriptions like most of those in the earlier period. Many of them are comprehensive studies (of *hua'er* tradition), or more specific researches focusing on an individual category of *hua'er* or an aspect of the genre.

After entering the new millennium, *hua'er* studies are promoted by the government with efforts to expand the popularity of *hua'er* songs for supporting regional economic development, and most importantly, presenting the genre as a shared cultural heritage among different ethnic groups in the light of the state rhetoric to display China as a diverse yet united country. This promotion is further reinforced after the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched its first proclamation of “the Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” in May 2001. Backed by the state-run institutions capable of the mass dissemination of ideas and music (such as mass media, public press, and academic publisher), *hua'er* is presented as a shared local tradition within the nation and as a Chinese national folk music genre and “intangible cultural heritage” internationally. Notably, *hua'er* scholars are encouraged and supported by state-funding to produce works that follow the government rhetoric and cultural policy. As a result, a large number of *hua'er* studies have been published since 2006 to support *hua'er*'s international recognition by UNESCO.

A number of people, full-time or part-time researchers, identify themselves or are identified by others as *hua'er* scholars, yet common denominators among these people such as academic disciplines or affiliations are few. The two common denominators are obvious—first, they all study in some fashion an aspect or several aspects of *hua'er* songs, performance, or gatherings (cf. Tuohy 1988: 272); second, they all work for state-sponsored academic and research institutions or cultural organizations, and some of them are government officials. The majority live in Qinghai, Gansu, or Ningxia, and many were born in the area. They come from

different occupations and disciplines; some of them are *hua'er* singers themselves. Most of these *hua'er* scholars live and work in Gansu province. Ke Yang is an emeritus professor at the Chinese Language Department of the Lanzhou University and has previously headed the department for nine years, and he taught Chinese folk literature and oral traditions (before his retirement in 1996). He also holds the honorable chair position of the Gansu Association for *Hua'er* Studies. Xi Huimin, a professor of Chinese language and folk literature, has taught at the Northwest University of Nationalities in Lanzhou since 1978. He also worked as an editor for the Gansu People's Press (*Gansu renmin chubanshe*) and held a senior research position at the Gansu Association for *Hua'er* Studies. Zhang Junren has headed the Music Department of the Northwest Normal University in Lanzhou since 2004, and he teaches ethnomusicology and folk music at the department. Others include Guo Zhengqing, a historian and a senior official at the Gansu Bureau of Religious Affairs (*Gansu zongjiao shiwu ju*) since 1988, Wang Pei, the chairman of the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (*minzhu minsheng xiehui*) in Linxia-Hui Autonomous Preference, and Wei Quanming, a professor of ethnic language and literature at the Northwest University of Nationalities.

There are a few well-known *hua'er* scholars from Qinghai province and Ningxia-Hui Autonomous Region, such as Zhu Zhonglu, Zhao Zongfu, Qu Wenkun and Wu Yulin. Zhu Zhonglu has been a renowned *hua'er* singer in Qinghai since the 1940s; he worked as a soloist for the Northwest Song and Dance Troupe and served as the chair of the Qinghai Association for *Hua'er* Research until 2007 (his death). Zhao Zongfu is a professor of Chinese literature at the Qinghai Normal University and he also holds a vice chairman position for the Qinghai Branch of the Chinese Folk Artists Association. Qu Wenkun is a poet whom has worked for the Ningxia Writers Association since the late 1980s and now serves as the head of the Ningxia Institute for

Folk Culture Research. Wu Yulin currently works as a professor of modern literature at the Northern University of Nationalities in Ningxia.

Because these *hua'er* scholars work primarily within government-supported institutions, they must follow the government policies or regulations and deal with a variety of restrictions, one of which is to eliminate any custom or expression—such as songs containing sexual innuendo or superstitious elements—does not contribute to the cultural elevation of Chinese society. A number of scholars have simply ignored and avoided talking about *hua'er* songs dealing too openly with sexual activities in their publications. Sometimes song lyrics are even changed and bowdlerized before they are published (cf. Du 1998: 84). On the other hand, *hua'er* scholars from various academic departments in universities as well as different scholarly societies and government offices at a variety of levels have made significant efforts through their numerous research works to successfully promote *hua'er* nationally and internationally. In general, *hua'er* scholars have played an active role in the implementation of government policies on the genre. Therefore, *hua'er* scholarship responds directly to the relevant cultural policy changes.

Notably, most writings on *hua'er* in China have been composed and published by Han scholars (including all the scholars discussed above) who do not have the knowledge of ethnic minorities' languages. Moreover, since the 1980s, many foreign scholars have also participated in *hua'er*-related events and conducted fieldwork in Northwest China. With a small amount of publications in English and other Western languages, they have made unique contributions to the field of *hua'er* studies.

## 1.4 AN OVERVIEW OF *HUA'ER* STUDIES IN ENGLISH

Despite the small quantity of the publications on *hua'er* in English, it is still meaningful to present a brief survey of the primary literature. Most authors of these studies are academics, professional researchers or research students majoring in folklore, Chinese language and literature, music history or ethnomusicology. Publications on *hua'er* in the English language started to appear since the early 1980s with a series of short articles by Chinese scholars (Zhang and Pu: 1981, 1982a and 1982b; Pu and Zhang 1983) contributing to the journal *Chinese Music*. These articles provide an initial introduction to the different styles of *hua'er* songs for the Western readers.

Kathryn Lowry's senior thesis for her bachelor's degree at Princeton University in 1985, "Language, Music, Ritual: Flower Songs (Hua-erh) of Northwest China," focuses on performance format, structure and *hua'er* song texts, particularly analyzing their poetic imagery and literary devices. Lowry later developed her discussion on the performative aspects of *hua'er* songs and published an article in 1990 on the interactions (song exchanges) among singers at the singing contests during Northwest Chinese festivals (Lowry 1990: 64).

In her 1988 doctoral dissertation entitled "Imagining the Chinese Tradition: The Case of Hua'er Songs, Festivals, and Scholarship" at Indiana University, Sue Tuohy takes the *hua'er* songs, gatherings (*hua'er hui*) and scholarship in China as a case study to investigate the processes, symbols, and relationships involved in the imagination and creation of a Chinese tradition. The materials in this work come from the author's two years of fieldwork in China, a wide range of Chinese sources as well as Western scholarship on Chinese arts and society. Tuohy further expanded her idea on "the Chinese tradition" (reflecting notions of nationalism) in the contemporary Chinese folklore scholarship (Tuohy 1991) and musical activities and practices



(Tuohy 2001) for her two journal articles and provides *hua'er* as an example to support her arguments. In addition, Tuohy dedicates one section of her article “The Social Life of Genre: The Dynamics of Folksong in China” to investigate how people assign meaning to *hua'er* songs in different contexts and with different motives through narratives and images by people (Tuohy 1999: 68).

Mi Puyang’s MA thesis entitled “The Sound of Flowers: An Ethnomusicological Study of *Hua'er*, Folksong of Northwest China” in 1989<sup>24</sup> and his article “What, if Anything, is a *Ling?* - Some Aspects of the Study of *Hua'er*” in 1990 are two studies focusing on the melodic patterns and tunes of *hua'er* songs in various styles. Although Mi’s extensive research on the music of *hua'er* (especially his thesis) is significant abroad, a number of similar studies in Chinese had already been conducted and published at the time (see Chapter 2).

Professor Rulan Chao Pian of Harvard University attended the *hua'er* gathering at the Lotus Mountain of Gansu province in 1986. In 1992, Professor Pian first briefly reported her trip and observation as examples to address research issues of ethnomusicology in her paper “Return of the Native Ethnomusicologist”<sup>25</sup>; later she described her own experience as a Chinese American music scholar attending the *hua'er* gathering in great detail (Pian 1992: 342), and the circumstances under which the *hua'er* songs were performed (with a focus on the listeners whom the singers address) in her article “The Flower Song Festival at Lotus Mountain: A Study in Performance Context” (1992).

Feng Linde and Kevin Stuart published an article entitled “‘Sex and the Beauty of Death’: *Hua'er* (Northwest China Folksongs)” in 1994. The paper examines definitions of

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<sup>24</sup> Mi’s thesis was completed at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

<sup>25</sup> This article was published in volume 24 of *Yearbook for Traditional Music* (1992) and has been frequently mentioned by Chinese scholars in their reviews of foreign interests towards *hua'er*.

*hua'er*, areas where *hua'er* is sung, *hua'er* contents, origins, meetings and the structure and rhyme of *hua'er* songs. Notably, the authors provide a brief review of the *hua'er* studies in the 1980s and translate a number of collected and published *hua'er* songs by Chinese scholars into English in this article.

Another notable article published in 1994, by an Australian scholar Yang Mu, “On the *Hua'er* Songs of North-Western China” is a critical account that aimed at showing “how shifting scholarly interests, economic and technological changes and political pressures have shaped the largely Chinese scholarship into an important folk-song genre over seven decades” (Yang 1994: 100). Yang outlines the Chinese and non-Chinese scholarships on *hua'er* between the 1920s and the early 1990s and discusses major research achievements and shortcomings. He particularly emphasizes the importance of *hua'er* singing for courtship among young people in the Northwest and suggests further investigations. In 1998, Yang’s own article entitled “Erotic Musical Activity in Multiethnic China” responds to his own suggestion and demonstrates in a case study on *hua'er* that the erotic musical activities associated with *hua'er* are usually limited to the people of the same ethnic group.

Du Yaxiong’s 1998 article “A Tradition Shared by Many Ethnic Groups: *Shaonian*, Courtship Songs from Northwest China” draws attention to the lyrics and the music of *shaonian* (*hua'er* songs of Hezhou style) and specifies the tunes associated with different ethnic groups.<sup>26</sup> Besides Du’s research works, several journal articles published in the late 1990s and early 2000s, though focusing mainly on other subjects, have used *hua'er* songs or their surrounding activities

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<sup>26</sup> A revised version of the same article is published in *Shaonian: Courtship Songs from Northwest China—The Singers, The Songs and the Music* as a working paper of the Asian Studies Institute at Victoria University of Wellington. The two authors (Du Yaxiong and Jack Body) also provide music transcriptions and translations of 23 *hua'er* songs in the book, accompanied by a CD recording.

as examples (Yang 1995-1996, Zhu et al. 1997, Dai et al. 1999, Ma et al. 1999, Tuohy 2001 and Harris and Dawut 2002).

“The Choices and Challenges of Local Distinction: Regional Attachments and Dialect in Chinese Music,” an article by Sue Tuohy, examines the language choices that people of the Northwest make when they sing, talk, and write about *hua'er* songs. Tuohy argues that “many decisions about language are shaped by the fact that the genre is promoted as a distinctive local musical form and that this local distinction is defined by, and in relation to, the Chinese nation” (Tuohy 2003: 154). Moreover, she discusses both the language choices made within musical performances and those found in the promotion of *hua'er* songs.

In recent years, two relevant theses on *hua'er* were completed in the United States. Wei Xiaoshi's thesis for his MA in Communication at University of Central Missouri takes *hua'er* in the village of Lianlu as a case study to present the impact of modern technology on this folk-song tradition, arguing that *hua'er* is losing its oral communicative nature as it is being confronted by contemporary electronic media technology. And most recently, a DMA thesis written by Li Mo at the Ohio State University examines “poetic compositional techniques and musical styles of representative local traditions of *hua'er*” (Li 2011: ii) and reviews the lyrical and musical structure, content and performance contexts of multi-ethnic *hua'er* songs. This study is based on a number of Chinese studies on the genre, but offers no critical evaluations of these sources.

With assistances of two Chinese scholars, Kathryn Lowry contributed her article “Flower Songs from Northwestern China” to the newly published *Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk and Popular Literature* (2011). The article provides a well-informed introduction to *hua'er* songs and *hua'er* “festivals” (gatherings) in Gansu, Qinghai provinces and Ningxia-Hui

Autonomous Region, and offers valuable English translations of collected *hua'er* songs during fieldwork. However, Lowry completely neglects the fact that *hua'er* songs are also sung in Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Most recently, Yang Man, a graduate student at University of Hawaii, presented her conference paper entitled “Constructing Heritage: *Hua'er* Songs from Northwestern China” at the annual conference of the Society for Ethnomusicology in November, 2011. Her fieldwork-based research focuses on the criteria and the network of cultural authorities behind the recognition of *hua'er* as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) at the provincial, national and world levels. She argues that the Chinese national system for ICH recognition is designed to reinforce the nation’s ownership of collective heritage and construct national identities according to nationally determined ideologies. Yang Man plans to write her doctoral dissertation on *hua'er* in the forthcoming year.

To date various issues on *hua'er* (including music, lyrics, performance, socio-cultural contexts, and relevant scholarship status etc.) have been addressed and substantial achievements have been reached in the English studies of *hua'er*. As a whole, all these works discussed above represent a progressive development for the *hua'er* studies abroad.

## 1.5 SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

Due to the limited amount and the discontinuity of published *hua'er* studies in the English language, it is inadequate to conduct a *hua'er* literature survey similar to Wu Ben’s 1995 MA thesis on Tibetan music in which sources in English and those in Chinese are categorized and

systematically evaluated and compared. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to concentrate on the major publications of *hua'er* studies in China and to offer evaluations on those works.

This thesis aims to shed highlight on the development of *hua'er* studies in the PRC, more specifically the progressing research status on the subject from 1949 to the present day. It is necessary to point out that, unlike studies in English, the number of published articles, reports and conference papers in Chinese since 1949 is overwhelmingly large and only those published after 1980 are accessible through the University of Pittsburgh Library System. Thus, I limit my research only on the available and accessible Chinese books on *hua'er* in the U.S., and through the Internet. Drawing upon the major works in codex format published in Chinese, in Chapter 2 I investigate the main thesis and propositions of these studies as well as examine and evaluate their scopes, depth of information and original or major contributions to the *hua'er* scholarship in general. This will provide a critical appraisal of the status of the *hua'er* research and identify the rationale and “gaps” for the further work on this topic, especially in the field of ethnomusicology. Meanwhile, I reveal the Chinese scholars’ active role in implementing the government policies corresponding to different socio-political situations or contexts in China.

According to Toby and Yudice, cultural policy of the State always emphasizes “suggested behavior” (Toby and Yudice 2002: 14). The studies of cultural policy for the past few decades have offered illuminating understandings of the many social forces and “the dominating role of the State in the development of art worlds” (Becker 2008: 166). In the light of these perspectives, I examine the changing policy on the *hua'er* tradition in the northwestern China in Chapter 3, and explore how and why a shared, multiethnic musical tradition (which was once forbidden in the 1960s and 1970s) becomes a tool for political propaganda and further becomes a national cultural heritage, even a symbol of “nationalism” and a united Chinese

identity. Particularly I focus on how the State (the Chinese government) acts on behalf of its own interests, taking actions which are crucial or important for its well-being, towards an artistic genre and folk tradition of the people.

## 2.0 HUA'ER STUDIES IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Chinese scholars usually utilize the term “twisting path” to describe the ups and downs in the development of *hua'er* studies (cf. Tuohy 1988: 259). Although research on *hua'er* began in the 1920s, this “twisting path” seems to be particularly obvious since the establishment of the People's Republic China (PRC). According to the chronological order of all the major published books on *hua'er* as well as their general research foci and trend, the present chapter divides the span of *hua'er* studies in the PRC into three periods: from 1949 to the 1980s, between the 1980s and the 1990s, and after the 1990s. This division is based on the Chinese social and political situations, which in turn affect the scholarly direction. New developments and phenomena in the *hua'er* scholarship of each period are delineated in the chapter.

### 2.1 THE BEGINNING OF HUA'ER STUDIES

Before the discussions on *hua'er* studies of three periods in the PRC, it is necessary to trace back to the starting point of scholarly research on *hua'er* in China. In March 1925, a well-known Chinese geographer Yuan Fuli published an article entitled “*Gansu de geyao—hua'er*” [Folk-song of Gansu—*Hua'er*] including thirty collected *hua'er* song lyrics he collected in *Geyao zhoukan* [Folk-song Weekly], the magazine associated with the Folk-songs Research Society in Peking University. Yuan's article briefly introduced the popularity of *hua'er* in Gansu province

(cf. Xu 2006: 3). Due to the misunderstanding of the local dialect, the texts were labeled with the character for speech (话) rather than the character for flower (花). Nevertheless, with this article, Yuan became the first person who wrote about *hua'er*.

The first scholarly study of *hua'er* was carried out in the 1930s and 1940s by the journalist Zhang Yaxiong. In early 1940, Zhang published the book *Hua'er ji* [Collection of *Hua'er*] in Chongqing, Sichuan province.<sup>27</sup> The work was the first substantial collection of *hua'er* song texts and represents an in-depth study of the folk-songs in various contexts (such as culture, society, and folklore). Zhang published 653 *hua'er* song texts and a number of essays dealing with many aspects of *hua'er* such as classification, literary and linguistics features, manners of singing, *hua'er* gatherings, associated customs and history. Zhang's work was the outcome of interviews and correspondence with 365 informants over a period of twenty years. The publication is valuable not only for being the first scholarly study of *hua'er* but also because it is comprehensive and informative (cf. Qiao 2004: 19, Yang 1994: 104). Therefore, Zhang Yaxiong is proclaimed as “the father of *hua'er* research” (Tuohy 1988: 256).

Moving beyond the collection of texts and annotations, *Hua'er ji* contains descriptive, theoretical and methodological sections. Zhang Yaxiong advocates five important points in the study of *hua'er* and folk-songs in general: 1) the collection of folk literature as materials for social history; 2) research on customs for folklore study; 3) studies of dialect and local speech for the popularization of literature and art; 4) materials “reflecting local conditions and suited for local needs” to be utilized in educating the masses; 5) exploration of the “vocabulary of the broad masses” to provide a local nature of propaganda (Zhang 1940: 2, Zhang 1986: 12). The last three points were the author's “motive for publishing folk-songs during this unusual

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<sup>27</sup> An original copy of this 1940 publication is available at the library of University of Wisconsin.



period”—the time of the Anti-Japanese War when many people were forced to leave their native places to go to other parts of China. Zhang believed that folk-songs, especially improvised *hua'er* songs with patriotic themes, could be used for teaching and increasing knowledge of national culture during a period of chaos that resulted in unprecedented migrations of people and culture throughout the country.

Zhang's research contains many valuable descriptions of *hua'er* performance and contexts useful in historical research today such as *hua'er* singing competitions, *hua'er* meeting (gathering) in the mountains, women's singing in the fields, songs of male traders on rafts, and stories of *hua'er* singers and listeners distilled from interviews. Many these ethnographic materials are no longer available today. Sue Tuohy recognizes Zhang Yangxiong as “a symbol of *hua'er* research in the 30s and 40s owing to the comprehensive nature of his work and because it typifies a common situation and ideal of other wartime writers in China.” (Tuohy 1988: 258-259) Zhang's efforts to research and publish *hua'er* and to encourage other people to do the same are credited as the impulse of *hua'er* studies.<sup>28</sup> *Hua'er ji* also became a model for later *hua'er* publications to follow.

## 2.2 HUA'ER STUDIES BETWEEN 1949 AND THE 1980s

The establishment of the PRC in 1949 was an essential event in the development of *hua'er* studies and marked the beginning of several decades of government and Chinese Communist

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<sup>28</sup> In 1948, the second and revised edition of *Hua'er ji* was published in Lanzhou, Gansu province. The number of songs is increased to 677 in this volume and it includes a book review for the initial edition revealing the progress of researching *hua'er*. Unfortunately, this edition is not available. The same edition was also published by Qiu Huiying in Taiwan with an added preface in 1973.

Party (CCP) sponsored research activities and publications. During this period, *hua'er* song text collections accompanied by introductory articles or essays are the most common forms of published *hua'er* studies.

In November 1950, several scholars from Gansu Writers' Association, Tang Jianhong, Qing Suo, An Diguang, Ma Renmin and Sun Wende, published *Xibei huizu mingge ji* [Anthology of Hui Folk-songs in the Northwest] (cited in Xu 2006: 12). Over 60 *hua'er* song texts were selected in this work. A majority of these songs are love-related and cannot be found in Zhang Yaxiong's previous publication, but some are newly composed texts reflecting the theme of embracing Chairman Mao and praising the Communist Party. This book is "the first *hua'er* collection published in the PRC" (Wei 2005: 97).

Tang Jianhong and Zhou Jian collected 505 *hua'er* lyrics through extensive fieldwork, and published the first volume of *Gansu mingge xuan* [Anthology of Gansu Folk-songs] in 1953. Similar to the publication in 1950, this work contains only *hua'er* song lyrics. Notably, Tang Jianhong wrote "An Introduction to *Hua'er*" as the preface of the book, an article that earned several "firsts" in the history of *hua'er* studies: Tang is the first scholar to point out that there are other ethnic groups such as Dongxiang, Sala and Bao'an (besides Han, Hui and Tibetan) singing *hua'er*; the first to identify the two major "systems" (styles) of *hua'er* songs—Hezhou (or Linxia) *hua'er* and Taomin (or Lotus Mountain) *hua'er*; the first to utilize the term of "*hua'er yanchang hui*" (*hua'er* singing gathering); and the first to recognize the literary value of *hua'er* songs (cf. Wei 2005: 99-101). The second volume of *Gansu mingge xuan* with 205 *hua'er* texts was published in December of the following year (1954).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> In 1957, Tang Jianhong and Zhou Jian also published two volumes of *Gansu mingge (hua'er) xuan* [Selections of Gansu Folk-song (*Hua'er*)] which contain three previous collections of *hua'er* songs from 1950, 1953 and 1954.

Zhu Zhonglu is a well-known *hua'er* singer and a professional vocalist from Gansu province. With the assistance of staff from the Northwest Music Scholars Association (*xibei yinyue gongzuozhe xiehui*), Zhu compiled over 700 *hua'er* song texts and 60 *hua'er* tunes in an anthology entitled *Hua'er xuan* [Selections of *Hua'er*] (1954). This book contains a record number of collected *hua'er* songs, and Zhu categorized these songs into four groups according to their themes: love songs, songs of lament, songs of resistance and irony, as well as songs of praise. The book is also the first *hua'er* study providing music examples (in cipher notation) of *hua'er* melodies. In the introduction of the book, Zhu Zhonglu regards *hua'er* as the “artistic creation of the working people,” a comment which clearly influenced by the Maoist theory reflected in the renowned 1942 Yan’an talks on arts and literature.

Da Yuchuan’s *Qinghai hua'er xuan* [Anthology of *Hua'er* in Qinghai] was published during the 1958 *Caifeng* Movement (also called the Movement of Collecting New Folk-songs). The compiler is little-known in the field of *hua'er* studies but the collected songs in three different categories are very typical and reflective for the state affairs and social movement at the time. The subtitles of the song groups in the first category, “*Hua'er* Songs for Praising the New Era,” refer to the Communist Party, Chairman Mao, the Sino-Soviet Union friendship, as well as the Anti-Rightist Movement (*fan youpai yundong*).<sup>30</sup> Newly composed songs such as “*Yongyuan genzhe gongchandang*” [Following the Communist Party Forever], “*Maozhuxi tengai baixing*” [Chairman Mao Loves the Common People], “*Zhong su liang guo shi xiongdi*” [China and the Soviet Union Are Brothers], and “*Youpai fenzi xiang fan renmin*” [The Rightists Want to be Against the People] (see Appendix B) are included and convey obvious political messages of the

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<sup>30</sup> The Anti-Rightist Movement took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The movement consisted a series of campaigns against so-called “rightists,” mostly intellectuals who were in fact critics of the Chinese Communist party and the government policies. Educated people in general, including many who were playing a significant role in managing the economy, came under a very suspicious scrutiny.

time. The second category is entitled “*Hua’er* Songs for Denouncing the Sin of the Past.” All the *hua’er* songs in this category are about the hardship people encountered in the decades before the founding of the “New China.” This category seems to reinforce the previous category to embrace the “new era.” Notably, although the category of “*Hua’er* Songs of Love” has more songs than the other two groups, it was put as the final part of the book.

Heralded at the time as a great socialist enterprise, folk-song collecting occurred simultaneously with the Great Leap Forward (*da yuejin*)<sup>31</sup> and resulted in works with political agenda produced by local propaganda departments. For instance, in August 1959, the propaganda department of the local government of Linxia-Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu province compiled and published *Linxia hua’er* [*Hua’er* in Linxia]. This collection completely excludes *hua’er* love songs. Instead, it presents *hua’er* songs expressing gratitude to the Communist Party and Chairman Mao, support for the Great Leap Forward campaign and the establishment of the people’s communes, as well as songs reflecting the unity of all the ethnic groups in China. Songs about the Great Leap Forward constitute the major part of this collection. With lyrics like “*Gechang da yuejin*” [Ode to the Great Leap Forward] (see Appendix B), the volume of *Linxia hua’er* [*Hua’er* in Linxia] is indeed a representative of the publications plagued by political agenda and exaggeration. Other publications of the same year such as *Gansu xin mingde xuan* [Selection of New Folk-songs in Gansu], *Huizu geyao* [Ballads of Hui People] and *Qinghai minjian gequ baishou* [A Hundred Folk-songs of Qinghai] are published in similar format and fashion.

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<sup>31</sup> The Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) was a social and economic campaign led by the Chinese Communist Party intended to achieve miracles of rapidly transforming the country into a modern communist society by whipping people into a fever of enthusiasm for rapid agricultural collectivization and industrialization. The campaign ended in disaster, resulting a large number of deaths and economic regression.

The most important and valuable scholarly publication on *hua'er* in the early decades of the PRC, *Hua'er pingjie taolun yanjiu zhuanji* [Reviews, Discussions and Research on *Hua'er*] was published and distributed as “internal material” (*neibu ziliao*)<sup>32</sup> by Qinghai Folklore Research Association in September 1961. This book contains a total of seventeen essays and reports by researchers from Qinghai and Gansu provinces, and the topics ranging from *hua'er* gatherings, textual contents, singing styles and techniques, to *hua'er* tunes and *hua'er* opera. Notably, the articles on *hua'er* singing gatherings are all based on fieldwork and collected ethnography which demonstrate Chinese scholars’ focus on ethnographic research—attending and documenting *hua'er*-related activities and events is an essential component of *hua'er* studies. Moreover, selected sections (mainly discussions on various aspects of *hua'er* songs) from Zhang Yaxiong’s *Hua'er ji* [Collection of *Hua'er*] (1940) are contained in this volume. This is, in a way, to acknowledge Zhang’s role in *hua'er* studies; however, discussion revealing sexual activities related to *hua'er* tradition in the original book are purposely omitted—a revision likely influenced by the government policy of “*Yifeng-yisu*” (usually translated as “changing prevailing customs and transform social traditions,” see Chapter 3) which was introduced since the 1950s. Furthermore, articles on new forms of *hua'er* performance, namely the *hua'er* medley and the *hua'er* operas, demonstrate the development of *hua'er* tradition in China.

In January 1966, the state-run press in Gansu province published two collections of *hua'er* texts: *Hao buguo Mao Zedong shidai* [Nothing Is Better than the Era of Mao Zedong] and *Xingfu de dadao gongchandang kai* [The Communist Party Opened a Happy Road] (cited in Xu

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<sup>32</sup> The “internal material” refers to documents or publications that may be read and accessed by the people of certain official/administrative levels in the PRC. Many are restricted due to their sensitive topics or critical issues which are not open for general public debates.

2006: 36). Political *hua'er* songs dominated these two books. After that, no more *hua'er*-related publications appeared in Gansu until the end of the Cultural Revolution (*wenhua da geming*).

Research on *hua'er* came to a halt for ten years of the Cultural Revolution, beginning in 1966. The *hua'er* songs and singing activities were banned by the government. However, it is important to note that collecting revolutionary *hua'er* songs was once permitted during the Cultural Revolution, and there was one *hua'er* song collection entitled *Shou da liangpeng wang Beijing* [Building Up the Arbor by Hands While Looking Towards Beijing] published in Qinghai in October 1974. A total of 233 so-called “new revolutionary” *hua'er* texts are compiled in this work. In the foreword of this collection, the compilers from the Revolutionary Folk-song Survey Group of Department of Arts at Gansu Normal University quote Chairman Mao’s well-known phrase from the 1942 Yan’an Talk and indicate the functions of “new revolutionary” *hua'er* songs as “to unite people, to educate people, to attack the enemies, to perish enemies” (Gansu shida yishuxi geming mingge diaochazhu 1974: 2). New songs with strong political agenda, represented by “*Hao buguo wenhua da geming*” [Nothing Is Better than the Cultural Revolution] (see Appendix B), dominate the whole collection. The so-called “*hua'er* song survey” (Ibid.) has been replaced by politically oriented compositions with a strong ideological bent.<sup>33</sup>

In sum, scholarly studies on *hua'er* have been attached with socio-political meanings since the very beginning. As a folk-song genre and tradition with a characteristic of free improvisation, *hua'er* has been generally utilized as a political propaganda tool coinciding with various government-led movements and events (as shown in the publications discussed above) during the initial decades of the PRC. The quantity of published *hua'er* studies in this period is not large, but they all demonstrate one characteristic in common: the original love themes of

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<sup>33</sup> In the following decade, scholars strongly denounced the negative impact of the Cultural Revolution on the perceptions, research and collection of *hua'er* songs.

*hua'er* have been overshadowed by heavy politicization. Moreover, the major defect of those early publications on *hua'er* is that no source or ethnographic details (such as collectors, locations, and singers) of the collected songs are given. However, it is important to acknowledge some achievements in this period, such as the categorization of *hua'er* songs (into Hehuang *hua'er* and Taomin *hua'er*) and the emphasis on conducting fieldwork research in the 1950s.

### 2.3 HUA'ER STUDIES IN THE 1980s AND 1990s

The revival of *hua'er* studies began in the late 1970s<sup>34</sup> when the Reform and Opening (*gaige kaifang*)<sup>35</sup> took place in the PRC. The government lifted the ban on *hua'er* and started to pursue a moderate policy on the genre and its related activities. Since the 1980s, Western theory and scholarship in music have been introduced into China, which has started influencing the music research there. In a more open academic environment, more people became *hua'er* scholars and many of them have accepted the idea that the ultimate aim of music research is to know the people and society. So the purpose of study of *hua'er* is to know more about people and their societies in the Northwest—a notion that serves the government's growing interest in that region.

The first *hua'er* publication after the Cultural Revolution was *Hua'er xuanji* [Anthology of *Hua'er*] (1980), compiled by Xue Li and Ke Yang and published by Gansu People's Press. This book contains 680 *hua'er* song texts and 15 *hua'er* tunes. The *hua'er* texts are divided into two series: "New *Hua'er*" and "Traditional *Hua'er*." Newly composed *hua'er* songs celebrating

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<sup>34</sup> Several internally printed studies on *hua'er* were distributed in Qinghai province during 1978 and 1979 (cf. Wei 2005: 156-158) but were not accessible to general readers.

<sup>35</sup> The Reform and Opening refers to a series of social and economic reforms led and carried out by the CCP since 1978. The focus of this reform program is set on the economic development in the PRC.

the end of the Cultural Revolution and denouncing the Gang of Four (*si ren bang*)<sup>36</sup> are intentionally put upfront in the collection. Notably, under the title “Traditional *Hua’er*,” songs with love themes are presented again (after being rejected for over a decade) and take the majority of the section.

*Tianshan xia de “hua’er”* [“Flowers” (*Hua’er*) at the Foot of Tianshan Mountain] (1982) is not only the very first publication of *hua’er* in Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region, but also the first collection of *hua’er* songs of the Hui people in Xinjiang. It categorizes 206 *hua’er* texts into two groups as “newly composed” and “traditional.” The quantities of texts in these two categories are roughly the same. Love songs again dominate the traditional category and even comprise one-third of the newly composed songs. Since most collected song texts in this volume reflect the daily life and ethnic traditions in the area, this book is a valuable contribution to the study of the Hui people in the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region.

The first *hua’er* symposium was held in November 1981 by the Qinghai Folklore Research Association and Qinghai Association for *Hua’er* Research, *Qinghai minzu minjian wenxue ziliao: “Shaonian” (hua’er) lunji* [Qinghai Folklore Data: Essays on “Shaonian” (*Hua’er*)] was released as internal material in October 1982 and soon became a popular item among all the *hua’er* researchers and scholars at the time.<sup>37</sup> The book consists of over 140 essays on *hua’er* and the whole volume is divided into three sections according to time: “Essays Written between 1950 and 1965,” “Articles after 1976,” and “Essays from the 1981 ‘*Hua’er*’ Symposium” (cited in Xu 2006: 69). Different sections of the book present introductory overviews, the possible origin of the *hua’er* tradition, innovations in compositions, musical

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<sup>36</sup> The Gang of Four was a political faction composed of four CCP officials who controlled the Communist Party during the later stages of the Cultural Revolution. They were subsequently charged with a series of crimes for creating social chaos during the movement.

<sup>37</sup> The books were out of print soon after the publication and there was no reprint.



features, and fieldwork reports on *hua'er* gatherings. Many articles in the first two sections have already been previously published on various periodicals locally or nationally. Essays from the symposium (the third section), written by several senior scholars in Qinghai as well as many emerging young scholars, demonstrate the fact that a solid group of *hua'er* researchers have been cultivated in Qinghai since the 1950s. However, most of these articles are descriptive without any theoretical framework or depth in the discussions. Nevertheless, this essay collection is a well-informed summary of “all the research works on *hua'er* in Qinghai province within 32 years” (Wei 2005: 197-198).

Similarly to that volume, the publication of *Hua'er lunji* [Essays on *Hua'er*] in April 1983<sup>38</sup> was the direct result of the establishment of the Gansu *Hua'er* Research Association and its first symposium in the summer of 1981. The editors select 17 papers from those presented during the symposium and the topics cover a wide range in *hua'er* studies: the origin of the tradition, history and methodology of *hua'er* research, singing styles, musical structure, related folklore, *hua'er* gatherings and *hua'er* singers. Notably, almost all the authors are from universities in the Northwest and their articles usually have clear agendas and strong analysis or arguments on the subjects. For example, in “Strive to Clime a New Peak of *Hua'er* Research,” an article focuses on shortcomings in the current state of *hua'er* research, Professor Ke Yang of Lanzhou University suggests that *hua'er* studies should be interdisciplinary and provides examples and relevant theories from folklore studies, sociology, linguistics and historiography to demonstrate their advantages. Ke also recommends several technical methods (such as comparative approach, statistics and short-term fieldwork) to enrich the research methodology.

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<sup>38</sup> Two months after the publication of *Hua'er lunji*, the second volume was released.

Many of those methods are based on translated Western theories in art and literature. Overall, this book provides a brief yet valuable review of *hua'er* research in Gansu province since 1949.

With nearly 700 entries, the 1987 publication by Xue Li and Ke Yang, *Xibei hua'er jingxuan* [Selections of *Hua'er* in the Northwest], is one of the earliest collections of annotated *hua'er* texts. The majority of the selected *hua'er* lyrics are traditional love songs. Besides song lyrics, the two authors offer a short annotation for every song, drawing attention to the relevant history, indigenous folklore, and special terminology from local dialects. Those annotations provide useful information for understanding the culture of the Northwest. According to styles and geographic distribution, the book is divided into two parts: Taomin *hua'er* and Hehuang *hua'er*. Each part consists of several categories according to different formats of singing such as "Opening Songs" (similar to a prelude), "Songs for Antiphonal Singing," "Short Songs," and "Narrative Songs." However, the book does not identify the original sources for any of the song texts, although many of them had been published previously in other *hua'er* collections.

In April 1989, Zhao Zongfu published his first book *Hua'er tonglun* [A General Discussion of *Hua'er*]. The author starts the book with a preface emphasizing the importance of *hua'er* in the life of people in the Northwest while recognizing the study of *hua'er* as a way of exploring and understanding the culture and people of the Northwest. After a review the earlier depictions of *hua'er* songs and singing by several folklorists, Zhao proposes a definition of *hua'er* in his first chapter:

*Hua'er* is a kind of mountain song mainly with love themes, originated and popular in parts of Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang regions. It is an artistic form of oral literature sung by Han, Hui, Tu, Sala, Dongxiang, Bao'an, Yugu and Tibetan people in Han dialect. It is also called "*shaonian*" in Qinghai. It has unique melodies and singing styles. Improvisation is common in *hua'er* singing. Two major themes of textual contents are on love and narrative with the short love songs being the most common ones. According to forms and tonal patterns,

*hua'er* can be categorized into two groups: Hehuang *hua'er* and Taomin *hua'er*.  
(Zhao 1989: 24)

Zhao's definition is, in fact, the first comprehensive definition on *hua'er* given by a Chinese scholar in the PRC. The origin of *hua'er* is one of the foci in this book since it is the most controversial topic in the *hua'er* studies. Instead of arguing against other scholars in the field, Zhao provides some evidence from historical documents (such as poems by a local official of over 400 years ago) to suggest that *hua'er* could have first emerged during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). He recommends that the exploration of the origin of *hua'er* should continue and be supported by the government. One entire chapter is dedicated to *hua'er hui* (*hua'er* song gatherings) and the author pays attention to the singing styles and organizations at the song gathering. Moreover, Zhao provides some well-known singers' profiles, the first time that case studies of *hua'er* singers has published in a scholarly work. As a "general discussion," Zhao Zongfu's book does cover a broad range of topics presenting *hua'er* as an epitome of the northwestern culture; but the depth of analysis remains insufficient and lacking theoretical support.

Qu Wenkun is a famous scholar and poet from Ningxia-Hui Autonomous Region. His 1989 publication *Hua'er meilun* [On the Aesthetics of *Hua'er*] is the first book on *hua'er* by a Ningxia scholar and eventually put Ningxia on the map of *hua'er* studies. In addition, this book is the first publication on *hua'er* from an aesthetics perspective. Drawing methodology from linguistics and literature studies, in different chapters Qu Wenkun compares the formats, sentence structures, rhythms, rhymes, and rhetoric of *hua'er* songs with those of ancient Chinese poems. In two separate chapters, he also discusses the tragic and love themes reflected in *hua'er* songs as a comparison of aesthetics in *hua'er*. Generally speaking, the author's exclusive

research with innovative approach on *hua'er* in Ningxia has indeed filled a gap in the field of *hua'er* studies.

Xi Huimin's *Xibei hua'er xue* [A Study of *Hua'er* in the Northwest] (1989) is among the earliest comprehensive studies on *hua'er* in China. Sixteen chapters in the book focus on different aspects of *hua'er* including definition, categories, distribution, major contents, artistic conceptions, tonal patterns, rhyme scheme, melodic arrangements, text-setting, rhetoric, and discussions on the origin of *hua'er* song. In the section on *hua'er*'s definition (Chapter 1), Xi raises the questions regarding the alternative name of *hua'er*—*shaonian*. He refers to several other scholars' works: some view *hua'er* as the same genre as *shaonian* with minor differences in their themes, others suggest *shaonian* may be a “misinterpretation” of *hua'er* and should be read as *shaolian* (literally “burn-face”)<sup>39</sup> according to oral expression of the local dialect. Thus, the author proposes further investigations on the relationship between *hua'er* and *shaonian*. A large portion of this book, under different subtitles in ten chapters, discusses the two main styles of *hua'er*—Hezhou *hua'er* and Taomin *hua'er*. As a professor of Chinese language and a native scholar from the Northwest, Xi makes good use of his knowledge of the local Han dialects, which is virtually incomprehensible to those knowing only the standard Mandarin (*putonghua*). This is particularly true in the case of *hua'er*, where many local colloquialisms are used. In Chapter 8 and Chapter 9, the author adopts literary theory and methodology from linguistics studies with detailed examples and illustrations (tables and diagrams) to examine the emic terminology, tonal patterns, and rhyme scheme in *hua'er* texts. Moreover, one chapter (Chapter 15) is dedicated to the *hua'er* gatherings (locations, activities, etc.); another (Chapter 16) to famous individual *hua'er* singers; and two chapters (Chapters 10 and 11) in this book are

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<sup>39</sup> Singing openly about love is considered as “face-burning” (a shame) in traditional Chinese concept.

engaged in the debate over the origins of *hua'er*—a highly controversial issue in the field. Xi argues for the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) as the time of *hua'er* origin and supports this by describing *hua'er* in various cultures and geographical regions and as related to different immigration patterns. He argues that most ethnic groups who sing *hua'er*—Bao'an, Dongxiang, Hui, Sala, Tu, Yugu, and Han (except the Tibetans)—migrated to the Qinghai-Gansu-Ningxia region during the mid-fourteenth centuries (cf. Xi 1989: 238-239), creating a pattern of multiethnic settlement that still exists today. Overall, this book is a well-informed, in-depth work with very systematic organization. It summarizes the author's research on *hua'er* for over twenty years, and it should remain a major reference for anyone conducting research on *hua'er*.

The Chinese central government-funded nationwide project, *Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng* [Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs],<sup>40</sup> has its first volume on the Northwest: *Ningxia juan* [Ningxia volume] published in 1992. Notably, in the general preface of the whole folk-song series,<sup>41</sup> the chief editor Lü Ji particularly points out that the *hua'er* gatherings in the Northwest are “festivals of social gatherings” (ZGMJGQ-Ningxia 1992: 4) for the young people of different ethnic groups in the region. This book contains a total of 769 selected folk-songs from the Ningxia area and among these are 94 *hua'er* songs in the group of “Folk-songs of the Hui People.” *Hua'er* songs are further divided into two types: “Hehuang *hua'er*” and “Shan *hua'er*” [Mountain *hua'er*]; the latter type (which has never before been mentioned in any studies) is indicated as a unique kind influenced by the style of Islamic religious music in the region.<sup>42</sup> More than a half of the *hua'er* songs are love songs, yet newly composed songs that praise the

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<sup>40</sup> *Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng* [Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs] (hereafter referred as ZGMJGQ) is a part of a big national anthology of Chinese folk music, which is funded by the Chinese Ministry of Culture. The chief editor of the series, Lü Ji, was the honorable chairman of the Chinese Musicians' Association. The general editor of each volume is usually the head of the musicians' association in every province or region.

<sup>41</sup> The general preface is an introductory essay on folk-songs in China as a whole. It is included in every volume of the whole series of *Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng* [Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs].

<sup>42</sup> The chief editor Liu Tongsheng emphasizes the speciality of *shan hua'er* which is only found in Ningxia.

CCP and its policy towards minorities can be easily found. All the songs are printed in cipher notation accompanied by lyric lines. Similar to the 1987 *hua'er* anthology by Ke Yang and Xue Li, this book provides ethnographic details such as locations of collection, singers and collectors as well as annotations for uncommon terms used in local dialects. Maps illustrating the distributions of various local dialects, cultural heritage sites and folk-song genres in Ningxia-Hui Autonomous Region are also attached in this book. However, by only recognizing *hua'er* as a folk-song genre of the Hui people, the editors neglect the fact that *hua'er* is a shared musical tradition of several nationalities (as Lü Ji has already mentioned in the general preface).

In February 1992, *Taozhou hua'er sanlun* [Essays on Taozhou *Hua'er*] was published in Gansu province. The author, Ning Wenhuan, a pioneer in *hua'er* studies, proposes to separate Taozhou *hua'er* from Taomin *hua'er*, the style that traditionally comprises both Taozhou *hua'er* and Minzhou *hua'er*. By illustrating unique melodic patterns, rhymes and singing styles of Taozhou *hua'er*, the author concludes that Taozhou *hua'er* is not only different from Hezhou *hua'er* and Minzhou *hua'er*, but also a style with very long history in the region. Ning Wenhuan's research is supported by rich references from many historical documents tracing the origin and development of *hua'er* singing in Taozhou-style. Moreover, among over 750 collected *hua'er* texts, most of them have never been published before and are on the verge of being lost. Ning also provides melodic tunes of Taozhou *hua'er* (in cipher notation), details of famous Taozhou *hua'er* singers and *hua'er* gatherings as well as a map of Taozhou County. Ning's book is the first and only book written on the topic of Taozhou *hua'er* so far and remains as a unique contribution to the field of *hua'er* studies today.

After six years of research, Wang Pei published his book *Hezhou hua'er yanjiu* [A Study of Hezhou *Hua'er*] in July 1992. Since Hezhou *hua'er* is the major style of *hua'er*, Wang

provides a comprehensive study on various aspects of Hezhou *hua'er*. Ten chapters are organized around five main topics: the origin and historical development of *hua'er* (Chapter 1), *hua'er* as a literary genre (Chapter 2, 3 and 4 on contents, literal expressions, and linguistic features), *hua'er* as a musical genre (Chapter 5, 6 and 7 on rhymes, various melodies/melodic patterns, and other internal musical characteristics such as mode and rhythms), *hua'er* as a cultural medium (Chapter 8 and 9 on singing, *hua'er* gatherings and singers), as well as *hua'er* studies (Chapter 10 on *hua'er* collecting, research and compositions). Notably, the author also joins in the discussion on the origin of *hua'er* and suggests that *hua'er* should have emerged during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) as the result of cultural integration of various ethnic groups under the Mongolian rule. He emphasizes that Hezhou was the center of the cultural integration in the Yuan dynasty and the residents (especially business travelers) from Hezhou played an essential role in the process of cultural formation of the Northwest. As such a well-informed study on a specific genre of *hua'er*, Wang's book is widely regarded as the milestone work of *hua'er* studies in the 1990s.

In 1994, another volume of the national folk-song collecting project, *Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng: Gansu juan* [Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs: Gansu Volume], was released by People's Music Press (*renmin yinyue chubanshe*). A total of 129 *hua'er* songs are compiled in this work including 51 songs of Han people, 42 songs sung by Hui people, 12 songs from the Bao'an ethnic group, and songs of people belonging to Dongxiang, Tu, Yugu and Sala ethnic minorities. The songs are printed in the same layout as those in the Ningxia volume which was published two years earlier. Detailed maps illustrating the distributions of different ethnic groups, local dialects, and folk-song genres in Gansu province are also attached in this publication. The introductory article "An Outline of Folk-songs in Gansu," written by a well-

known local music scholar and musician Zhuang Zhuang, gives a brief overview of the themes, genres and characteristics of various folk-song traditions from ten different ethnic groups settling in Gansu province. In addition, this volume also includes an article entitled “Introduction to *Hua’er* in Gansu” by local *hua’er* researcher Yang Mingjian to introduce the specific *hua’er* traditions in Gansu province. According to Yang, there are actually three styles of *hua’er* in Gansu: Hehuang *hua’er*, Taomin *hua’er* and Jingwei *hua’er*. For the third style Jingwei *hua’er*, the author particularly points out that it is a regional style reflecting the hybrid of both Hehuang *hua’er* and Taomin *hua’er* as a result of multiple cultural exchanges in the area. Yang also introduces four famous *hua’er* gatherings in Gansu and provides a list of *hua’er* gatherings that are popular (or used to be popular) in the region.

*Zhongguo geyao jicheng: Ningxia juan* [Anthology of Chinese Ballads: Ningxia Volume], published in 1996, is the largest collection of *hua’er* song texts in the 1990s. It contains 30 texts of “opening ballads,” 670 *hua’er* lyrics of Hui minorities and 46 *hua’er* songs of Han people. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the same *hua’er* tune can be sung with many different texts, there are always more lyrics than tunes, and newly composed texts from time to time. Therefore, with a focus on the literature value of the Chinese ballads,<sup>43</sup> this volume (and the whole series) can be seen a necessary supplement to the *Zhongguo minjian gequ jichen* [Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs] which contains a number of exactly the same texts. The texts of this volume are presented in the form of poems, and all identify names of singers and collectors, even the collecting dates and collecting locations. The commentaries and annotations on specific terminology are provided to the texts accordingly. Similar to the volume of Ningxia

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<sup>43</sup> In China, *geyao* (ballad) refers to orally transmitted or written texts that are similar to the format of poetry, but are not set to specific musical melodies to become songs.



folk-songs published in 1992, this volume also includes useful maps illustrating the distribution of indigenous cultural heritage sites, local dialects and various ballads.

The only *hua'er* song collection in the late 1990s is included in the second part of *Zhongguo minjian gequ jichen: Xinjiang juan* [Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs: Xinjiang Volume] which was published in August 1999. Since Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region is the largest region in China, the Xinjiang volume is divided into two parts and consists of 1,898 folk-songs from twelve different ethnic groups (such as Uyghur, Kazakh, Han, Hui, Kyrgyz, and Mongol) living in the region. A total of 50 *hua'er* songs popular among the Hui people in the Xinjiang region are selected and presented in cipher notation with lyrics in the volume. Collecting information and brief annotations are attached as well. According to the editors, *hua'er* songs are spread to Xinjiang from Qinghai and Gansu provinces. Thus, they maintain the basic characteristic of Hehuang *hua'er*: each song usually has four sentences/lines. The majority of *hua'er* songs in this volume denote the unique custom and culture of the Hui people living in Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region.<sup>44</sup>

Generally speaking, the quantity of published *hua'er* studies during the 1980s and 1990s is much larger than the previous decades, and the quality of studies is also higher than before. *Hua'er* song collections gradually formulated a specific format with increasing attention paid to the ethnographic details and annotations (even map or picture illustrations)—all provide essential information about people and various aspects of the multiethnic societies in the Northwest. The return of “love” *hua'er* songs (which were totally rejected in the 1960s and 1970s) is the most common denominator among all the *hua'er* collections discussed above. Many collections (e.g. Xue and Ke 1980, 1987; ZGMJGQ-Ningxia, 1992) treat them as a priority, and even call *hua'er*

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<sup>44</sup> Many songs in this volume overlap with those collected in *Tianshan xia de “hua'er”* (1982).

“a reflection of the cooperative spirit of the Northwest peoples and a good way to find sexual partners or spouses” (Tuohy 1999: 68).

Besides song collections, comprehensive studies on *hua'er* (e.g. Xi 1989, Zhao 1989) or on a specific style (e.g. Wang Pei 1992) or aspect of *hua'er* (e.g. Ning 1989) as well as anthologies of *hua'er*-related essays began to make frequent appearances in the discourse and play an essential role in the development of the scholarship. Notably, scholars from Xinjiang-Uyghur and Ningxia-Hui autonomous regions started to contribute their research works to *hua'er* studies. Several publications in this period were likely influenced by Western artistic theory and treated *hua'er* as a medium of understanding the northwestern culture, people and societies. Consistent publications on *hua'er* reflect the government's moderate (and relatively supportive) policy on the genre and general support for academic research on folk music in the early decades of the Reform and Opening in the PRC.

## 2.4 HUA'ER STUDIES IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed the rise of Chinese economic power and also marked the “golden age” of the development of *hua'er* studies in China. The number of scholarly publications on *hua'er* increased rapidly due to both the financial supports and cultural policies of the Chinese government for promoting *hua'er* as a shared local tradition in China and as a Chinese cultural heritage internationally.

*Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng: Qinghai juan* [Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs: Qinghai Volume] (2000) is the last volume on the Northwest from the government-funded Chinese folk-song series. This book collects various kinds of folk-songs from six different ethnic

groups (Han, Tibetan, Hui, Tu, Sala and Mongol) in Qinghai province. In the “General Outline of Folk-songs in Qinghai,” the general editor Huang Rong’en pays particular attention to *hua’er* and provides an introductory essay on *hua’er* in Qinghai. Huang introduced *hua’er* as a type of mountain song which is created by Han, Hui, Tu, Tibetan, Sala and several other ethnic groups and sung in Han Chinese dialects (ZGMJGQ-Qinghai 2000: 3). Furthermore, he focuses on the linguistics aspects and musical characteristics of *hua’er* songs and argues that *hua’er* embodies both common features and individual characteristics of various cultural traditions in the region. A total of 199 *hua’er* songs are included in this volume; among those are 100 pieces collected from Han and Hui people, 57 songs from Tu people, as well as 42 *hua’er* songs commonly sung by Sala people. The formats of the printed songs (all in Han Chinese) remain the same as in the previous published folk-song anthologies. The editors also add a few maps indicating the distribution of ethnic groups and folk-song genres in Qinghai province as well as an important list of all the *hua’er* gatherings (shown dates, titles, locations and activities) in Qinghai. There are some weaknesses to this anthology: the editors fail to separate the *hua’er* songs of Han people and Hui people and provide no explanation to this arrangement; Tibetans are recognized as an ethnic group sharing the *hua’er* tradition in the “General Outline,” but no *hua’er* songs in this volume are collected from Tibetan people.

In *Zhongguo geyao jicheng: Gansu juan* [Anthology of Chinese Ballads: Gansu Volume] (2000) *hua’er* songs are treated as an independent category entitled “Multiethnic ‘Hua’er’.” The general editor of this volume, Professor Xi Huimin, writes an introduction emphasizing *hua’er* as a “multiethnic” tradition and folk-song genre that is shared by several ethnic groups of the Northwest. The introduction also addresses the differences between the two styles of *hua’er* songs—Hezhou *hua’er* and Taomin *hua’er*. Collected *hua’er* song lyrics in this volume are also

divided into two groups under the titles of these two styles. Instead of categorizing song texts according to nationalities, *hua'er* songs of both Hezhou and Taomin styles are grouped according to various themes, such as “Labor Ballads,” “Political Ballads,” and “Love Ballads.” The print layout of these song lyrics is similar to that of printed poems—the same as in the Ningxia ballad anthology of 1996. Names of singers and collectors, the collecting dates and locations, as well as relevant text annotations are all given. Detailed maps illustrating the distribution of various ethnic groups and different types of ballads are also attached in the work.

Ke Yang had another publication on *hua'er* under his name in 2002. The book entitled *Shi yu ge de kuanghuan jie: “Hua'er” yu “hua'er hui” zhi minsuxue yanjiu* [Carnival of Poetry and Song: A Folklore Study of “Hua'er” and “Hua'er Gatherings”] is a collection of Ke’s articles on *hua'er* written since the 1950s. Among these thirteen articles, more than a half of them focus on Taomin *hua'er*. The author specifically discusses Taomin *hua'er* songs in the context of similar agricultural practices and ritual ceremonies among people from various ethnic groups (especially Han, Hui and Tibetan), and emphasizes the importance of contextualization and application of folkloric strategy during *hua'er* research.

*Lianhua shan yu lianhua shan “hua'er”* [Lotus Mountain and Lotus Mountain “Hua'er”] (2002), a book written by two retired college teachers Wang Hongming and Ding Zuoshu, and funded by the local government of Gansu, is a comprehensive and systematic study of the *hua'er* tradition in the Lotus Mountain area (namely Taomin *hua'er*). Its fourteen chapters cover a wide range of topics: a detailed introduction of the Lotus Mountain (Chapter 1), the origin of the Lotus Mountain *hua'er* (Chapter 2), the melodies and tunes (Chapter 3), the forms and structures (Chapter 4), the artistic characteristics (Chapter 5), the singing styles and techniques (Chapter 6), the rise and development of *hua'er* in Lotus Mountain (Chapter 7), the folk custom and activities

among different ethnic groups in the Lotus Mountain area (Chapter 8), the differences between Taozhou *hua'er* and Minzhou *hua'er* (Chapter 9), the arguments on “*hua'er*” and “*shaonian*” (Chapter 10), the research on the Lotus Mountain *hua'er* (Chapter 11), and well-known *hua'er* singers (Chapter 12). The book concludes with two chapters dedicated to the collected *hua'er* song texts in the region. Several of the chapters are new scholarly research or reflect the up-to-date development of certain issues raised by previous scholars in the field. For example, in Chapter 9 the author continues the discussion on the issue of a further division of Taomin *hua'er* raised by Ning Wenhuan in 1992, and focuses on the characteristics of Minzhou *hua'er* to emphasize the major distinctions between Taozhou and Minzhou *hua'er* songs—melodic patterns, folk customs, and usages of lining syllables. Moreover, in Chapter 10 the authors offer detailed comparisons to distinguish *hua'er* and *shaonian*, arguing that the Taomin *hua'er* is the authentic *hua'er* usually sung in narrative style by groups of people while Hezhou *hua'er*, which is characterized by high pitch and solo singing, should be named as *shaonian*. Generally speaking, this book is the most comprehensive study on Taomin *hua'er* since 1949.

Zhang Junren is a music professor at Northwest Normal University and wrote his doctoral dissertation on the well-known *hua'er* singer Zhu Zhonglu in 2003. His first book (which is based on his dissertation) *Hua'er wang Zhu Zhonglu: renleixue qingjing zhong de minjian geshou* [The King of *Hua'er* Zhou Zhonglu: A Folk Singer in the Anthropological Context] (2004) is regarded as “the first study adopting Western anthropological theory and strategies in the history of *hua'er* studies in China” (Xu 2006: 134). The whole book is divided into three parts. The first part is dedicated to a detailed biography of Zhu Zhonglu with a focus on his function and his contribution to the cultural phenomenon of *hua'er* in several decades. The second section is full of theoretical discussions which help the author to establish his

theoretical framework and research methodology with support from the field of anthropology, ethnomusicology and cultural studies. The third part of the book includes 159 *hua'er* melodies collected from Zhu Zhonglu. All the tunes are presented in staff notation with lyrics, a format very rare in published *hua'er* studies. Zhang's exclusive interviews with Zhu Zhonglu play a crucial role in this book and demonstrate the author's strength in ethnographic work. The ups and downs in the personal life experience of Zhu Zhonglu—from making a debut on the national stage in the early years of “New China” to enduring the torment and insult during the Cultural Revolution, from a little-known local singer in the past to a nationally renowned *hua'er* artist and researcher nowadays— also reflect the “twisting path” of the development of *hua'er* studies in China. Zhang's book is the first comprehensive and systematic study of one specific individual (*hua'er* singer) and his role in the development of *hua'er* in the PRC.

The publication of *Zhongguo hua'er xinlun* [New Discussions on *Hua'er* in China] is the direct outcome of the first international conference on *hua'er* and two regional *hua'er* symposiums in Gansu province during the summer and autumn of 2004. The work contains a total of 27 selected papers from these events. New articles by some well-known *hua'er* scholars (such as Xi Huimin, Ke Yang, and Wang Pei) are the highlights of this book. For instance, Professor Xi Huimin discusses the status of “Research on ‘*Hua'er*’ and *Hua'er* Studies” and suggests that *hua'er* studies should go beyond the examination and collection of songs and explore other aspects of *hua'er* as a “cultural phenomenon” (*wenhua xianxiang*) to make the field truly “interdisciplinary.” Ke Yang is in agreement with Xi and proposes various innovations regarding research subjects, angle and methodology in his article entitled “Research Should Seek for Innovations, Development Should Seek for Changes”; Ke also recommends strategic plans of commercialization for *hua'er* singing and related activities to promote and preserve this ancient

tradition. Wang Pei's article introduces *hua'er* as a "precious oral and intangible heritage of humanity" and the article is also the foundation of Wang's later publication in 2006. Moreover, several young *hua'er* scholars also contribute to the richness of this essay collection. For example, Ma Wenhui discusses the decline of Taomin *hua'er* under the popularity of Hehuang *hua'er*; and Liu Qingsu investigates the artistic value and development of *hua'er* opera. Overall, most papers in this book demonstrate the new achievement and development of *hua'er* studies since the beginning of the new millennium in China. However, a few articles seem merely to repeat the information or descriptions which have been previously offered by other scholars by applying different wording. This reflects, as has been criticized by Xi Huimin in his paper, the major problem and tendency of lacking originality and innovation in *hua'er* studies.

In September 2005, Wei Quanming's book entitled *Zhongguo "hua'er" xue shi gang* [The Outline of History for "*Hua'er*" Studies in China] was published by Gansu People's Press after ten years of expectation.<sup>45</sup> This long-awaited volume summarizes the history and development of *hua'er*-related documentation and research from the Ming dynasty to 1992. First of all, Wei reviews the definitions of *hua'er* and defines the general range of the historical research on *hua'er* studies: the history of collecting *hua'er* songs, the history of *hua'er* singing and compositions, the history of documenting and studying *hua'er* in any format, the history of research organizations, and the history of periodicals that contain articles on *hua'er*. In chronological order, the author organizes the main body of this work into six parts to cover six periods of *hua'er* studies: Ming dynasty to September 1949, October 1949 to June 1966, June 1966 to September 1976, October 1976 to February 1981, March 1981 to July 1985, August 1985 to July 1992. The final three periods are considered as "the flourishing days" of *hua'er*

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<sup>45</sup> According to Wei, the final draft of this book is completed in 1995, but due to the lack of financial support, the publication of the book was delayed.

studies. Each period is signified by certain important scholarly works, *hua'er*-related events or socio-political movements that influenced *hua'er*. Putting aside the question of how scientific this division is, Wei has indeed set a model for researching the history of *hua'er* studies. The author particularly evaluates major books and journal articles that are published during the six periods; although there are neglected items (especially books), Wei's efforts of gathering materials to compile such an informative work should be recognized. The author also provides the biographies of 65 *hua'er* scholars and artists; among them are many famous names such as Zhang Yaxiong, Ke Yang, Zhu Zhonglu, and Sue Tuohy. However, in the introductory section of the book, Wei only vaguely defines *hua'er* studies as a specific academic discipline, and since the work does not have a conclusion, he fails to demonstrate and clarify the broad scope of *hua'er* studies. Aside from the minor criticism, all in all this study is a valuable historical survey of *hua'er* studies and a terrific model for systematic researches on *hua'er*.

The year of 2006 is particularly significant for *hua'er* studies. Since the Ministry of Culture of the PRC proclaimed *hua'er* a "National Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage," more publications on *hua'er* emerged with openly financial supports from the Chinese government. One of the best examples is Wang Pei's book *Da xibei zhi hun: Zhongguo hua'er* [The Soul of the Great Northwest: *Hua'er* in China] (2006). Funded by the Chinese Folk Artists Association, Wang's book is published in a handbook format as part of the "Chinese Folk Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage Series" (*Zhongguo minjian koutou yu fei wuzhi wenhua yichan congshu*).<sup>46</sup> It contains seven chapters of different types of reports on *hua'er* as a "cultural form" (*wenhua xingshi*) and cultural heritage pertaining to the Northwest China. The book opens with a detailed introduction of *hua'er* tradition, including its history, distribution, embodied metaphors,

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<sup>46</sup> This series is dedicated to the introduction and review of all the recognized intangible cultural heritages at national level.



functions, and associated ethnic groups. Like many previous publications on *hua'er*, Hezhou *hua'er* and Taomin *hua'er* are treated comparatively and separately (in different sections of the chapter) with focus on their most characteristic texts and tunes. In-depth analysis of representative *hua'er* songs supported by music scores and glossary can be found throughout the chapter. Chapters 2 and 3 are dedicated to the biographical study of *hua'er* inheritors and the appraisals of the domestic achievement in *hua'er* studies. According to these two chapters, *hua'er* has become one of the most popular subjects for academic study and research in mainland China in the fields of literature and music in oral traditions. Chapter 4 discusses the crisis that *hua'er* is facing at present, such as the rapid decline in the numbers of *hua'er* singers, competition with modern forms of entertainment, and negative influence from other popular culture; and Chapter 5 indicates some official plans and strategies issued by the Chinese government for the preservation and development of *hua'er* culture. As a special section of this book, Chapter 6 offers a collection of selective appraisals and comments on *hua'er* from the major works by twenty-four domestic and international *hua'er* scholars or experts such as Ke Yang, Xi Huimin, Yang Mu, and Sue Tuohy. The book is well illustrated with over 170 color images and many music examples in both cipher and staff notations. However, as a promotional material to support *hua'er* for entering the “UNESCO Representative List of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,” its academic value has been more or less overshadowed by the political agenda.

With the support of the local government in Gansu province, Li Lin published his own essay anthology *Xiangyin: Taomin “hua'er” san lun* [The Sound of Home: Essays on Taomin “Hua'er”] in October 2006. This volume consists of sixteen up-to-date essays written within 2006 specifically on Taomin *hua'er* and Li’s eleven articles which are previously published in

different newspapers, magazines and journals at the regional or national level over the past twenty years. Notably, Li Lin (2006: 3) defines *hua'er* as “a representative of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity” at the very beginning to start his further discussions on the genre. From the structures of Taomin *hua'er* songs to the singing and gathering locations, from the origin of the Taomin style to the issues of inheritance and variations, from the cultural functions of Taomin *hua'er* tradition to the proposed protective strategies, Li Lin not only demonstrates his expertise on Taomin *hua'er*, but also offers a personal review of the continuous development of *hua'er* scholarship in the light of promoting on cultural heritage with the official support.

In November 2006, a collection of selected papers from the Second Linxia *Hua'er* Conference (held in July)—*Zhongguo hua'er zonglun* [Free Discussions on *Hua'er* in China] was published in Lanzhou. A total of 35 conference papers written by scholars from Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, Xinjiang and Shaanxi are compiled in this book. The papers are organized under four different subtitles: “The History of *Hua'er*,” “The Contents of *Hua'er*,” “The Music of *Hua'er*” and “The Protection of *Hua'er*.” Distinguished scholars such as Wei Quanming and Li Lin, all contribute their research outcomes and relatively new discoveries to various sections of the volume. Besides the usual topics of *hua'er* studies, the preservation and inheritance of *hua'er* tradition and its related activities, as well as the promotion of *hua'er* as an “intangible cultural heritage,” have become essential concerns and focuses among many *hua'er* researchers.

Xu Zhihe's *Zhongguo hua'er wenhua bianninan shi lue* [A Brief Chronicle of *Hua'er* Culture in China] (2006), a book funded by the Linxia-Hui Autonomous Preference government, is another milestone in the history of *hua'er* studies. Similar to the layout of Wei Quanming's book in 2005, Xu's book is divided into five parts according to five specified periods of *hua'er* studies: 1470 to September 1949, October 1949 to December 1956, January 1957 to April 1966,

May 1966 to September 1976, and October 1976 to 2006. As a special chronicle and a pioneering work, this informative work sequentially records all the *hua'er*-related historical documentations, activities, publications, and events in brief words within a total of 537 years. The scope and coverage of this volume has exceeded beyond that of any previous publications on the history of *hua'er*. In the appendixes, the author also provides some documents (mostly official statements or reports) that are relevant to the promotion of *hua'er* as a “cultural heritage” and published by the Chinese Folk Artists Association and Gansu Folk Artists Association since 2004. In sum, Xu’s book provides an excellent reference for anyone interested in the history of *hua'er*. It demonstrates the enduring presence of *hua'er* culture which has developed for centuries in Northwest China.

As part of the “Gansu Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Series” (*Gansu fei wuzhi wenhua yichan baohu congshu*), Guo Zhengqing’s book *Hezhou hua'er* [*Hua'er* in Hezhou] (2007) is divided into three parts. It first deals with the definition, origin, text structures, musical characteristics, artistic value, famous gatherings and representative singers of Hezhou *hua'er*. Notably, Guo joins the heated discussion of *hua'er* origin, and regards the Tang dynasty (618-907) as the time when *hua'er* emerged. Moreover, the author elaborates on the recognition of *hua'er* as a Chinese cultural heritage and incorporates that with a sense of national identity and pride (cf. Guo 2007: 2). The second and the third parts treat selections of typical Hezhou *hua'er* lyrics and tunes separately. Every entry of text or music example is presented with an explanatory note indicating the original source, collector (even original singer), and meanings of specific words in local dialects. The book also includes an index for all the *hua'er* entries—725 text illustrations and 166 music examples (in cipher notations). The attention to ethnographic detail has rendered it something of an event in the world of *hua'er* publications. As an extremely

well-informed publication focusing on one specific type of *hua'er*, the book is an invaluable reference for scholars and researchers and it probably stands for the best study to date on Hezhou *hua'er*.

In July 2007, *Zhongguo hua'er quling quan ji* [Collected Works of *Hua'er* Tunes in China] edited by Wang Pei was released by Gansu People's Press. In the introduction, Wang (2007: 5-9) reviews the history of collecting *hua'er* songs and lists a number of published *hua'er* song collections in the past; most importantly, he clearly states the primary purpose of this publication is to support *hua'er* to be recognized as the intangible cultural heritage of humanity by the UNESCO (Ibid: 26). A total of 340 Hezhou *hua'er* songs and 20 Taomin *hua'er* songs are selected in this book. The sources of these songs are the various printed *hua'er* song anthologies since 1949. Each song is presented in cipher notation with the original source and other details (such collectors, singers). In many ways, this book can be recognized as a summary of *hua'er* song collections since the founding of the PRC.

The final volume of collected folk ballads of the Northwest *Zhongguo geyao jicheng: Qinghai juan* [Anthology of Chinese Ballads: Qinghai Volume] was published in June 2008. The general organization of this work is similar to the folk-song anthology of Qinghai: all the ballads are categorized according to different ethnic groups in Qinghai—Han, Tibetan, Hui, Tu, Sala and Mongol. However, the editors follow the previous model of the Gansu volume (2000) in the same series and designs an independent category entitled “Multiethnic ‘*Hua'er*’” to emphasize *hua'er* is a “shared” local folk-song tradition (2008: 769) among eight ethnic groups in northwestern China. The collected *hua'er* song texts (of Hezhou style exclusively) are further divided into “Traditional ‘*Hua'er*’” and “New ‘*Hua'er*’” Love-related ballads dominate the traditional repertoires while texts praising the leadership of the CCP form the main collections of

“New ‘*Hua’er*’.” A map showing the distribution of *hua’er* songs and other forms of folk ballads is included. However, the major shortcoming of this volume is that details regarding the collecting sources and personnel for the collected ballads are omitted.

Based on the author’s doctoral dissertation for the University of Hiroshima (Japan), Wu Yulin’s *Zhongguo hua’er tonglun* [A General Discussion of *Hua’er* in China] (2008) is the most recent comprehensive and systematic academic account of *hua’er* studies published in Ningxia. Wu first provides information on earlier study of the history, naming, and styles of *hua’er*, and argues that the first appearance of *hua’er* should trace back to the early Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). She then pays attention to the ethnic characteristics and folklore culture which in her view are central to the understanding of the significance of *hua’er* songs in the Northwest. Her writing focuses on the *hua’er* traditions among different ethnic groups (excluding Han): Hui, Tibetan, Sala, Tu, Bao’an, Dongxiang, Mongolian, and Yugu. For the first time, the Mongolian nationality is recognized for sharing *hua’er* tradition; and Wu proves that by demonstrating Mongolian cultural elements in *hua’er* songs. Furthermore, the author not only investigates the *hua’er* songs, *hua’er* festivals, indigenous *hua’er* experts in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang, but also explores the *hua’er* culture in Kyrgyzstan—a country neighboring China in central Asia that is home to many Chinese Muslim immigrants (related to the Hui people). The author’s pioneering research on “foreign” *hua’er* (though still sung in Han dialects) is a significant contribution to the field. At the end of this book, Wu (2008: 474) also expresses her support for the international (UNESCO) recognition of *hua’er* as the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. In-depth analyses of over 700 text examples throughout the book indicate the author’s strong academic background in literature studies. A major defect of the book is the

absence of music scores. Nevertheless, it still should be placed among the most progressive and smartly laid-out textualization projects on Chinese folk-songs since 1949.

The book entitled *Xibei chuantong yinyue yanjiu* [Researches on Traditional Music in the Northwest] (2010) is the most recent publication containing *hua'er* studies. This volume includes three *hua'er*-centered studies based on three master's theses from the Music Department (headed by Zhang Junren) of the Northwest Normal University. Among the contributors to this book, two authors concentrate on two different *hua'er* gatherings in Gansu province, and one investigates the presentations of gender in *hua'er* culture. Kang Hongying's study on *hua'er* in Erlang Mountain (near Lotus Mountain) continues her adviser Zhang Junren's existing interest in Taomin *hua'er* and expands the scope of research from songs and singing gatherings to individual singers and their roles in the inheritance of the tradition. Besides exploring the musical characteristics, Sheng Hongbin relates *hua'er* songs and *hua'er* gatherings to the local folk customs and discusses the crucial social function of *hua'er* in the Northwest. Cheng Qin's interest in women studies is fully embodied in her exclusive study on female symbols in *hua'er* songs, songs of women and female *hua'er* singers. All the authors have applied various methodologies from relevant disciplines and paid specific attention to ethnographic research involving fieldwork. Their studies demonstrate the consistent interest on *hua'er* within the academic institutions in China.

In general, with the financial support from the government, *hua'er* studies experienced a "harvest season" in the new millennium. Topic-wise, while various *hua'er* gatherings and individuals associated with *hua'er* (e.g. singers and scholars) became the foci of many works, scholars continued their specific investigations on Hehuang *hua'er* (e.g. Guo 2007) and Taomin *hua'er* (e.g. Wang and Ding 2002, Li Lin 2006). Many Chinese scholars are engaged in and

encouraged to continue the heated debates over questions of origins, names, and even classifications of *hua'er*. Since *hua'er* has become a popular topic in academic study and research at government-sponsored institutions, it is certain that this kind of debate on controversial research issues will remain as the core of many forthcoming publications. Meanwhile, publications on the histories of *hua'er* culture (Xu 2006) and *hua'er* studies (Wei 2005) are significant for summarizing the research achievements up to recent decades.

In recognizing *hua'er* studies as a complex discipline, many comprehensive studies associated with academic institutions and personnel (e.g. Ke 2002, Zhang 2004 and 2010) are able to demonstrate certain theoretical frameworks, cultural contexts or interdisciplinary methodology. In the published anthologies and collections of *hua'er* songs, much attention is paid to providing ethnographic details and revealing the notion (emphasized by the State) that *hua'er* is a shared local tradition among different ethnic groups in the northwestern region. However, those *hua'er* collections are not accompanied with any music example recording. Perhaps the fact that most editors of those volumes are not music scholars is the reason for this major shortcoming. Some studies suggest *hua'er* songs as “markers of ethnic identity” (e.g. Ke 2002, Wu 2008). This issue is mainly treated in the pattern of whether individual songs can be ethnically identified through investigating ethnic cultural elements in the lyrics. The discussion has yet to expand into an in-depth socio-cultural study of issues such as cultural identity. Notably, among most of the publications in 2006 and thereafter, the term of “cultural heritage” is commonly used (yet not usually defined) by *hua'er* scholars to denote a clear implementation and emphasis of the government policy on promoting *hua'er* both nationally and internationally to display a united China.

### 3.0 THE CHANGING POLICY ON *HUA'ER* IN NORTHWEST CHINA

The development of *hua'er* studies in the People's Republic of China (PRC) reflects the changing cultural policy on *hua'er* and on the Chinese folk-songs in general. This chapter investigates how and why *hua'er* as a musical tradition, once forbidden in the 1960s and 1970s, became a medium or a "cultural brand" (Wang Pei 2006: 120, Xu 2006:1) for regional economic development and, further, a symbol of national unity in China.

"Cultural policy refers to the institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life. ... [It] is embodied in systematic, regulatory guides to action that are adopted by organizations to achieve their goals." (Miller and Yudice 2002: 1). In short, cultural policy is clearly bureaucratic. In a study on the cultural policy in the PRC, Liu Bai (1983: 16) denotes that, "Socialist China's principles and policies are formulated to help fulfill the specific tasks of a certain period of historical development." Therefore, cultural policies in the PRC are subject to change according to the needs of the country, or more specifically, the needs of the State or the government.

In China and in many other nations, the State often influences the development of arts according to its own interests and needs. "Politicians world-wide ... use music and musicians to help them achieve certain goals ... or, at least, try to control music and musicians to avoid their potentially negative impact" (Pettan 1996: 252). State intervention is evident in the development of Chinese folk-songs, including *hua'er*, through changes of cultural policies either directly or



indirectly, since “[c]ultural policy always implies the management of populations through suggested behavior” (Miller and Yudice 2002: 14).

### **3.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE FOLK-SONG SINCE 1949**

The Chinese Communists, especially the CCP leaders, were quick in recognizing the possibilities of music as a political and educational tool (cf. Mackerras 1984: 194, Schimmelpenninck 1997: 6). Already in the late 1930s, Chinese folk-songs were purposefully used for Communist propaganda. Years before the communist assumption of power and the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the party leader Mao Zedong stated in his 1942 Yan’an talks that all the arts should become a component part of “the revolutionary machinery” and that they should serve as “a powerful weapon in uniting and educating the people while attacking and annihilating the enemy” (McDougall 1980: 58). As a consequence of Mao’s call for a “cultural army,” Chinese musicians in Yan’an began to visit rural areas and started taking an interest in the folk-songs. The first substantial collection of Chinese folk melodies took place in the early 1940s, and it was primarily for political purposes; many local folk tunes were collected to set propaganda texts and then distributed among the peasants in the area occupied by the Communist Party. During this period, the main features of Chinese folk-songs were reformulated as “resistance to oppression” in the past and “optimism of the people” for a new communist society (Schimmelpenninck 1997: 6).

In the first year of the PRC, 1949, the Chinese Musicians’ Association (*zhongguo yinyuejia xiehui*) was founded, soon put under the supervision of the newly established Ministry

of Culture. In the following years, local bureaus of culture were established throughout the country to spread and promote politically adapted folk-songs in both urban areas and countryside. Meanwhile, local musicians and folk-song singers in different parts of China were recruited to form “propaganda teams” (*xuanchuan dui*). Many of the old style ballads, dealing with love and romance, gods and goddesses, emperors and their favorites, were rejected and replaced by songs about the Party’s policy, model workers or Chinese Red Army heroes (cf. Yang 1994: 305, Schimmelpenninck 1997: 7). Furthermore, through local competitions and festivals organized by the bureaus of culture, the artists and singers were encouraged to create “revolutionary folk-songs” (Yang 1994: 305) or “red folk-songs” (*geming mingge*)<sup>47</sup> in the new political idioms.

In the late 1950s, two political movements significantly influenced the development of Chinese folk-songs and related studies: the Anti-Rightist Campaign emphasized “the common interest of the people” and denounced “the separation of academic studies on folklore from its use as socialist propaganda” (Schimmelpenninck 1997: 8); and the Great Leap Forward gave a new impetus to the mass-production of “new” revolutionary folk-songs about tractors, agricultural heroes, steel factories and the graces and virtues of Chairman Mao (e.g. *Linxia hua’er* in 1959). At the same time, large-scale folk-song collecting was encouraged by the Chinese government.<sup>48</sup>

As Schimmelpenninck (1997: 7) points out, “the drastic reorganization of cultural life in communist China had a nationwide effect on Chinese folklore and folklore research.” On the

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<sup>47</sup> The term has been widely used in the PRC to refer to folk-songs that praise socialism, communism, the government and its policies, the CPP and its leaders, and so on.

<sup>48</sup> On April 14, 1958, a report entitled “*Da guimo de souji quanguo mingge*” [Collecting Folk-songs Nationwide in Large Scale] published in *People’s Daily (Renmin ribao)* evoked the nationwide enthusiasm for collecting Chinese folk-song (Xu 2006: 19).

surface it led to a renewed interest in folklore, but essentially it implied the suppression or downright loss of many old folk texts, folk customs and forms of folk art that were considered either backward or politically unfit. For example, the folk-songs that were gathered were extensively edited by the collectors, and then sent to a provincial bureau, where they were carefully selected for publication (cf. Jones 2003: 304). Love songs and erotic songs were often expurgated while songs about the oppression of people were always included as examples of the difficult life in pre-liberation China (cf. Yang 1994: 312) even though quite a few of them were actually composed after 1949.

Folk-song collecting became a dangerous activity during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). During a campaign against religious practices (eventually against anything that was considered “traditional”), many previously accepted elements of folklore came under attack (cf. Schimmelpenninck 1997: 9). Officials of the bureaus of culture who engaged in folklore research were questioned and severely maltreated (cf. Wei 2005: 145). Not only folk-song collectors, but also many folk singers (e.g. *hua'er* singer Zhu Zhonglu) were caught up in the violence, the conflicts and political complexities of the time (cf. Wei 2005: 145; Zhang Junren 2004: 183).

After the Cultural Revolution, the activities of the bureaus of culture were gradually resumed. Already in 1979, the work of collecting and editing folk-songs was continued without the influences of political movements of earlier decades. Notably, in July 1979 the Ministry of Culture (newly reformed after the Cultural Revolution) issued a statement that comprehensive collections of folk-songs in all provinces of China were to be published (cf. Schimmelpenninck 1997: 10, Jones 2003: 291). The final aim was to publish a series of volumes of folk-songs, arranged per province, as part of a big national anthology of Chinese folk music. This folk-song

series is called *Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng* [Anthology of Chinese Folk-songs];<sup>49</sup> and a number of volumes on folk-songs have been published since the 1980s. The four volumes I examined in the previous chapter (ZGMJGQ-Gansu 1994, ZGMJGQ-Qinghai 2000, ZGMJGQ-Ningxia 1992, and ZGMJGQ-Xinjiang 1999) are examples of the final products of these collections.<sup>50</sup>

Since the 1990s, there has been a renewed interest in folk-songs in China. Many performers and composers take a derogatory view of Chinese folk-song traditions (cf. Du 1998: 83, Tuohy 1999: 69). They look upon the songs as “unsophisticated” and have often felt a need to adopt artistic elements or change and rearrange them (cf. Du 1998: 83). Over the past two decades, contemporary songs with folk-song elements and folk-song arrangements have become popular on public media. At the same time, major progress in folk-song research has taken place in the wake of political relaxation and economic growth. Notably, scholarly studies on folk-songs often focus on detailed questions about specific regional genres or repertoires. As one of the most popular folk-song traditions in China, *hua'er* once again becomes the major interest of many scholars and researchers.

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<sup>49</sup> Early in the 1980s there was a pre-publication for this project: the folk-songs, narrative music, local theater and opera music, instrumental pieces, dance songs and religious music of China were brought together in a series of bulky volumes (cf. Jones 2003: 291). These collections (arranged per province) served as “rough” materials for the anthology, and were sent to Beijing, to the central editing office to be examined in detail and re-edited. The work for the big anthology of folk music continues into the twenty-first century; it is one of the biggest projects ever undertaken in the field of Chinese musicology and folklore studies, and tens of thousands of folk music collectors are involved in.

<sup>50</sup> The general editorial board often regarded the written accounts and transcriptions of those selected and published songs as being the “final” and “definitive” versions of the songs (Schimmelpenninck 1997: 12).

### 3.2 POLICY CHANGES ON *HUA'ER*

The survival and development of folk-song traditions largely depend on the social circumstances. From the 1950s onwards, many political and historical events that have taken place in China have deeply influenced folk-song culture; the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and the economic reforms have all made an impact on changes of cultural policies regarding *hua'er*.

For more than five decades the Chinese government has implemented a cultural policy of eliminating or changing customs and traditions that they consider contrary to communist and socialist ideology. Following the governmental guidelines, customs have been divided into “good customs” (*liangsu*) and “bad customs” (*lousu*). Since the early 1950s every household in China has become aware of the government policy of “*Yifeng-yisu*” (changing prevailing customs and transforming social traditions), which implies eliminating “bad customs” or transforming them into “good” ones (Yang 1994: 112). This “*Yifeng-yisu*” policy was carried to its extreme during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). According to Chinese communist ideology, the sexual practices associated with the *hua'er* singing<sup>51</sup> are decidedly “bad customs,” and were to be eliminated for the well-being of a socialist society. The *hua'er* gatherings and all *hua'er* singing activities were completely banned for ten years (cf. Qiao 1987: 59). Some famous *hua'er* singers, such as Zhu Zhonglu, Wang Shaoming and Su Ping, were detained for participating in *hua'er* gatherings and sent to the labor camp (cf. Wei 2005: 145). In some areas the ban continued even into the late 1970s, after the Cultural Revolution was over.<sup>52</sup> How did

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<sup>51</sup> The party officials generally recognized that the main purpose of the *hua'er* singing is to attract the opposite sex for courtship, and not good for the cultural elevation of Chinese society.

<sup>52</sup> However, bans were later recognized to be unsuccessful. Local people (especially those of ethnic groups) secretly participated in singing gatherings in spite of them and according to reports (Guo 2007), such disobedience frequently resulted in bloody clashes between singers and armed government cadres sent in to break up the gatherings.

*hua'er* obtain the state endorsement after suppression? Why has *hua'er* survived while so many other folk-song traditions in China have disappeared? This is a question which begs for substantial research. Quite possibly, the multiple (economic and political) values of *hua'er* recognized by the Chinese government have contributed to its survival and development.

### 3.2.1 *Hua'er* as a Medium for Regional Economic Development

Since the Reforms and Opening (*gaige kaifang*) carried out in the late 1970s, economic development is set to be the priority by the Chinese government. In the meantime, government officials have realized the potential value of *hua'er* and have pursued a moderate and (to some extent) supportive cultural policy on *hua'er*. For example, the traditional *hua'er* gatherings were allowed to take place, while the government made great efforts to guide them in an ideologically “correct” direction to “contribute to the economic development of the region and the general development of the Chinese society” (Wang Pei 2006: v). These efforts include: sending representatives from the government to attend and monitor the *hua'er* gatherings;<sup>53</sup> organizing professional writers and musicians to compose new *hua'er* songs in praise of the government and the CCP; and sending professional singers and organizing local amateur singers to perform new songs at the *hua'er* song gatherings (cf. Yang 1994: 112, Guo 2004: 74).

Meanwhile, the government also plays an active role in coordinating concerts and competitions for *hua'er* singing; broadcasting *hua'er* songs and singing contests (on TV and radio etc.) and producing special commercial recordings<sup>54</sup> with selected traditional and

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<sup>53</sup> Beginning in 1949, representatives from the national government attended, or attended to, the *hua'er* gatherings in increasing numbers until the breakout of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

<sup>54</sup> According to Tuohy (2003: 176), the commercial recordings of *hua'er* songs have limited geographic distribution, and most are sold to regular *hua'er* audiences in the Northwest.

contemporary repertoires for sale (cf. Tuohy 1999: 67, 2003: 176; Ma Yingcai 2010: 103); and organizing trading companies or groups to set up stalls at various *hua'er* events sites (cf. Yang 1994: 112). All these efforts are recognized as having been quite successful. As a result, many *hua'er* song gatherings have become more like “multi-functional” country fairs for political propaganda, commercial trading, as well as general entertainment; the organized *hua'er* performances and commercial recordings of *hua'er* songs not only obtain popularity among tourists, spectators, and researchers, but also provide an important venue for producing new *hua'er* star-singers and integrating *hua'er* with merchandise opportunities, all part of marketing of *hua'er* culture (cf. Xue 2009: 122-123).

Since organized singing competitions and professional performances are often forcibly held inside residential areas for attracting broader audiences, the local people have become resigned hearing *hua'er* inside villages and urban cities (cf. Yang 1994: 111, Tuohy 1999: 64-65).<sup>55</sup> However, such events contradict the traditional practices of *hua'er*. In the context of such staged *hua'er* singing, the motivation for the singers has changed from winning lovers to winning fame and material prizes.

Besides traditional *hua'er* gatherings, many multi-day “*hua'er* festivals” (*hua'er yishujie*) are organized jointly by the local government, local music and arts societies, educational institutions, and the provincial bureau of culture (see Figure 4)<sup>56</sup> in the Northwest (cf. Tuohy 1999: 65). Those festivals are usually created and announced to the public to mark political events, such as the funding of autonomous counties in the region. (cf. Lowry 2011: 94). From newspaper announcements to the tourist brochures, the widely advertised festivals become popular tourism attractions in the northwestern region and bring considerable financial profit to

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<sup>55</sup> In daily life, however, people in the region still only sing it outdoors and distant from where they live.

<sup>56</sup> Figure 4 shows a *hua'er* festival held on 17 July 2010 in Qinghai province.

the local economy (cf. Xue 2009: 123). A brief translation of a Qinghai *hua'er* festival program printed in Chinese can well articulate the purpose of such event:

Following ... [the] theory of constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics and the guiding principle of the CCP's fundamental line, the purpose of this *hua'er* festival is to help achieve the healthy development of enterprises aimed at promoting ... Qinghai province. It is meant to introduce enterprises, invigorate the market, and boost the economy and culture through activities such as cultural entertainment, cooperation between organizations, ... [and] the exchange of commodities. (cited in Tuohy 2003: 172)

Obviously the priority is given to “enterprises” and “economy.” Here, the case of *hua'er* demonstrates how the State’s intervention on a musical tradition and its practices is driven by a specific interest in regional economic development.



**Figure 4.** A Report on *Hua'er* Festival (Xie 2010: 45)



In 2004, two places in Gansu province—Min County (or Minzhou) and Linxia-Hui Autonomous Prefecture—were named “the Hometown of Chinese *Hua’er*” by the Chinese Folk Artists Association (cf. Wang Pei 2006: 116, Xu 2006: 10).<sup>57</sup> While celebrating the special occasion, the government leaders of Gansu expressed hopes to establish *hua’er* as a “cultural brand of the Northwest” (*xibei de wenhua pinpai*) (Wang Pei 2006: 120, Xu 2006: 1) to attract investments nationally and internationally for large-scale regional development. What would an age-old folk-song tradition like *hua’er* bring to the people of the Northwest in the future? This question remains to be answered as the genre may evolve into more enhanced or developed forms to fit the developing tastes and needs of society.

### **3.2.2 *Hua’er* as a Symbol of National Unity**

As a large nation, the situation of China is much like that of the United States, where cultural diversity is couched in terms of the American people, a nation historically formed by many different ethnic groups who are encouraged, selectively, to maintain parts of their cultural traditions. “The notion of traditions is used to help explain the overall unity of the apparent diversity” (Tuohy 1991: 199). Different traditions in a nation are woven together to form a civilization.

The Chinese political leaders often see that music has a special efficacy in promoting a sense of nationalism and unity among people as they consistently emphasize that “Chinese history and culture are remarkable for the unity between [the ethnic groups]. In this big community, the cultures of various nationalities interact and help to promote each other” (Liu:

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<sup>57</sup> Chen Zongli also reported the event on the national newspaper *Guangming Daily*, November 5th, 2008.

1981: 15). Through organized performances, *hua'er* songs have been presented to a national audience. “The efforts to introduce local forms to the nation and to encourage the nation to become attached to its local manifestations are part of a large government agenda of strengthening national unity” (Tuohy 2003: 154-155). The *hua'er* songs are promoted in part because of their reflection of the unity and integration of different nationalities in the PRC.

Chinese scholars have described *hua'er* as “an encyclopedia of the Northwest” (*xibei de baike quanshu*) and “the soul of the great Northwest” (*da xibei zhi hun*) since *hua'er* embodies so many aspects of the northwestern culture (Wang Pei 2006: 2). However, Sue Tuohy’s depiction of the function of *hua'er* seems to be the most accurate:

As symbols of the people of the Northwest, *hua'er* songs can communicate and strengthen their depiction as courageous and bold developers of the untapped riches of the frontier region, many nationalities working together for common goals. What they are working for—development, prosperity, stability, and modernization—are also the goals of the Chinese nation. And as symbols of the nation they can communicate the diversity and richness of the Chinese nation and further strengthen a perception of the “Chineseness” of the nation’s far off and strategic borders (Tuohy 1988: 12).

Since the 1980s, the local authorities in the northwest region often encourage the participations of ethnic minorities at the organized *hua'er* competitions, gatherings or festivals, with an avowed emphasis on “protecting and preserving folk arts and expressive culture of the people.” Within the concept of “the people,” national minorities play a preeminent role, and despite the cultural diversity, the Chinese government calls upon the fact that several nationalities sing *hua'er* songs; in the political-cultural discourse about the unity of the Chinese nation, as a tradition shared by several different ethnic groups, *hua'er* exemplifies what is called “the interaction of China’s [different] nationalities in their mutual development of the Chinese national heritage” (Tuohy 1999: 61). Thus, *hua'er* becomes a symbol of “cultural integration,” “nationalism,” and “unity”;

through singing *hua'er* all ethnic groups identify themselves as members of a big, united Chinese family.

The mass media also plays an important role in promoting *hua'er* as a symbol of national unity. State-controlled TV stations frequently broadcast *hua'er* singing competitions as well as “staged” *hua'er* performances (cf. Ma Yingcai 2010: 103); the scenes of *hua'er* singers in traditional ethnic costumes taking part in the competitions altogether (see Figure 5) and even singing the same *hua'er* song as a group are attached with symbolic meaning of harmony and unity among Chinese people. In addition, images showing people of different ethnic groups participating in various *hua'er* events (performance, gathering, competition or festival) together can be found in newspapers, magazines, tourist guidebooks, propaganda posters (see Figure 6) and journals at both regional and national levels. The implication of those images is clear and meaningful: *hua'er* culture embodies the unity of Chinese civilization—the Chineseness overrides China’s diversity.



**Figure 5.** A *Hua'er* Singing Competition (Wang Pei 2006: 120)



Figure 6. A Hua'er Poster in Qinghai (Liu Xiaoqiang 2010: 1)

On May 26th 2006, the Ministry of Culture of the PRC recognized *hua'er* as a “National Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage” (Guo 2007: 5).<sup>58</sup> In October 2009, after several years of promotion with enormous efforts from the Chinese government and related individuals (especially *hua'er* scholars), *hua'er* successfully entered the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. After UNESCO established the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, member states (including China<sup>59</sup>) around the world have shown increasing interests in such international high-profile pronouncements and proclamations about specific musical genres (cf. Yung 2009: 160-161). As Yung (2009: 161) points out, “the nation-states nominate their own choice of artistic genres as

<sup>58</sup> Guo also reports that a number of academic conferences were held to accompany the event.

<sup>59</sup> The PRC established a system in 2005 for recognizing Chinese National Intangible Cultural Heritage.

candidates; the nominations are very likely affected by internal political and cultural considerations.” In the official nomination form submitted to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee, *hua’er* was described and emphasized as “created and shared” by several ethnic groups of China, “an important artistic form of cultural exchange, emotional communication among [different Chinese] nationalities,” and “[the] only folk song of its kind created and performed by multi-nationalities in China.”<sup>60</sup> In the light of the government’s rhetoric of promoting “national cultural heritage” and presenting China as a diverse yet united nation-state, the Chineseness of *hua’er* has been reinforced for international recognition. UNESCO became an important stage for Chinese government to demonstrate the symbolism of *hua’er*.

From censorship and suppression to open support and promotion, the changing cultural policies on the *hua’er* tradition have demonstrated the interactive relationship between the arts and the State (with the State playing a dominant role) as well as the bureaucratic nature of cultural policies. On the one hand, *hua’er*-related cultural policies have a lot to do with the preservation of public order and with the development of a national culture (which promotes national unity) (Becker 2008: 180). On the other hand, particularly in recent times, economic factors have also played a significant role in the policy-making regarding *hua’er*. The marketing of *hua’er* culture for tourism and economic growth has been set as the priority. All these facts indicate that arts-related cultural policies are always concerned with the interests of the State.

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00211>, accessed on June 31, 2010.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

This thesis documents the development of *hua'er* scholarship and policy changes on *hua'er* in the PRC from early years to the present day. Like other traditions in China, *hua'er* and its scholarship have been closely associated with the socio-political situations or contexts of the Chinese society. And the State (the Chinese government) always plays a dominant role in creating and leading the changes and upheavals that influence many aspects of people's life, including academic discourse and publication.

The ups and downs of *hua'er*—from suppression to open promotion—are influenced by various socio-political climates since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, and embodied in the development of *hua'er* studies in Northwest China. From simplistic description to systematic and comprehensive research, from merely text collecting to conducting regular and exclusive fieldwork, studies on *hua'er* made significant progress (as shown in Chapter 2) incorporating cultural policy changes (from censorship to promotion) operated by the State.

As articulated in Chapter 3, the State often influences the arts according to its own needs and interests. The frequent use of *hua'er* songs as the basis for political propaganda (especially during the early decades of the PRC) is a good example of such influence, and it led to a large number of political (or “new”) *hua'er* songs in many *hua'er* song or text collections reviewed in this thesis, especially those nationally coordinated collection projects of folk-songs and ballads.

Moreover, the increasing published works calling for preserving and promoting the *hua'er* tradition as well as marketing the *hua'er* culture not only demonstrate the new trend in the development of the scholarship, but also the government's primary interest in boosting regional economy and the solidarity of the people in Northwest China.

Chinese studies on *hua'er* discussed in this thesis all offer certain forms of analyses of *hua'er* songs especially on the linguistic aspect and the literary features, including structure, rhyme, metrical patterns, and rhetoric. The basic forms of *hua'er* melodies and tunes are also frequently discussed; so are the application of Chinese modes and scales (pentatonic) in songs, rhythm and singing techniques of the songs. These topics are commonly regarded as "safe issues" at an academic level rather than sensitive issues revealing sexual customs (or practices) of *hua'er* and government interference in cultural development. As Yang Mu points out:

Every Chinese scholar knows that when such [sensitive] issues are discussed, the authorities concerned expect the academic conclusions to be favourable to government policies. Scholars who draw conclusions that happen to conflict with government opinion [would] put their academic careers at risk, thus leading to the avoidance of such issues. (Yang 1994: 113)

Scholars in China have less academic freedom than scholars in the West. Since Chinese scholars are all employees of the government at different state-run institutions or organizations, they have to obey some unified ideological principles<sup>61</sup> (such as *Yifeng-yisu*). Although many Chinese scholars have come to accept the fact that their studies and research activities should always follow political guidelines, a few Western-trained scholars, represented by Du Yaxiong, have managed to successfully express different voices against authoritative suppression through publications in English language abroad. Du holds a PhD in ethnomusicology from the

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<sup>61</sup> Chinese scholars of the humanities need to follow the authoritative doctrines. Although political control has loosened and more academic freedom has been given to researchers since the end of the 1970s, those doctrines are still at least theoretically active.

University of British Columbia and now works as a professor at the Chinese Conservatory of Music. He has published an article (see Du 1998) with specific sections investigating the sexual contents of *hua'er* songs and addressing the taboo in Chinese *hua'er* studies. Future contributions as such are expected since promising contacts (through international conferences and projects) in the field between scholars in the West and China have been established in recent years.

For many scholars in China, their main task is “to preserve and develop distinguished cultural heritages of [the] motherland” (Wu 1995: 49). According to the official Chinese ideas, the ethnic minorities’ cultures in China are equal components of the nation’s culture (cf. Liu Bai 1983: 19, 75-76). Anthologies of *hua'er* songs and comprehensive studies on *hua'er* since the 1990s have emphasized the “multiethnic” and “shared” nature of *hua'er* as a local tradition and cultural heritage reflecting the avowed rhetoric of the Chinese government to present China as a multiethnic yet united country. However, one should not neglect the fact that most writings on *hua'er* in China are composed by Han scholars who do not understand the language of non-Han peoples. During my survey of all the publications on *hua'er* (in Chapter 2), I discovered two songs entirely sung in ethnic minorities’ languages (one in Sala language, the other one in Dongxiang language) and they are written in the Mandarin pronunciation (*pinyin*) format (see Wang Pei 2007: 164-165, 182-183). Obviously there should be more *hua'er* songs just like those two which are not sung in Han dialects, but why only two were found? The avoidance and neglect of *hua'er* songs in non-Han languages contradict the official claim that all the ethnic minorities’ cultures are equally treated in China. It is thus not surprising that research on *hua'er* songs in minorities’ languages is almost non-existent.



Although the issues raised in this thesis may be interpreted as indicating the shortcomings and problem in *hua'er* studies in China, they certainly should not cause us to neglect the significant achievements made by Chinese researchers of different disciplines over the past few decades. Since *hua'er* studies are not limited to any one particular academic discipline in China, scholars in the field seem to be eager to explore new methods from other academic disciplines, especially in recent years. Most recently published studies on *hua'er* often demonstrate a wide range of methodology from anthropology and sociology to folklore, from history and linguistics to literature studies. Through conducting and transcribing interviews, designing questionnaires, quoting historical documents, and applying comparative linguistic analysis (with statistics from various song collections), issues and questions regarding *hua'er* inheritance, authenticities of *hua'er* songs, origin of *hua'er* tradition, as well as regional and ethnic identities in *hua'er* practices have been addressed and raised. Those research methods and raised questions certainly provide variety of possibilities and options for ethnomusicologists (who are relatively less active in the field) to study *hua'er* interpretively in various contexts and contribute to the development of *hua'er* scholarship. As interdisciplinary research has been promoted in many academic fields, the issue of contextualized *hua'er* studies will undoubtedly continue to be worked out in the future contributions to the field. This will certainly benefit not only the study of *hua'er* and Chinese folk-song, but the study of Chinese culture and society as a whole.

Indeed, contradictions and discrepancies are embedded in the practices and studies of *hua'er*, in cultural policies and their enactments in different periods, and in what *hua'er* songs actually mean. However, these apparent differences always support the State's view of the arts as "a positive force in national life, a force which supports social order, mobilizes the population for desirable national goals, and diverts people from socially undesirable activities" (Becker

2008: 181). Within the plans of the Chinese central government, the Northwest is an economic, cultural and strategic priority, and *hua'er*, as a representative of the multiethnic culture of the Northwest as well as a symbol of “national unity,” can indeed claim a portion of this interest.

## APPENDIX A

### HUA'ER SONG EXAMPLE

The transcription is based on the cipher notation provided by Wang Pei (2007: 31), and transcribed by the author.



上 去 (个) 高 (呀) 山 (者 哟 呀)  
(I) climb the high mountain



看 上 去 容 (呀) 易 (者 哟 呀)  
Looking at it is easy



望 (呀 哎) 望 平 (了) 川 (呀)  
(and) gaze at the open county



摘 (呀 哎) 摘 去 (是) 难 (呀)  
(but) picking it is difficult



望 平 (了) 川 (呀) 平 川 里 (哎)  
gaze at the open county. [In the open county]

摘 去 (是) 难 (呀) 摘 不 到 (哎)  
picking it is difficult. (I) cannot get it



有 一 朵 (呀) 牡 丹 (哪)  
there is a peony there.

手 里 是 (呀) 枉 (哪)  
[in my hand] and it wastes my time.

Alternative lyrics for the same tune (Wang Kui 2006: 4):

上去高山有高山，  
松柏树长在了青山；  
孀妹站在了山中间，  
好像才开的牡丹。

I climb the high mountain, there are more high mountains,  
Pine and fir trees grow in the green mountains;  
Young sister stands in the mountains,  
Just like a blooming peony.

## APPENDIX B

### EXAMPLES OF *HUA'ER* LYRICS

“永远跟着共产党”

扁豆儿开花虎张口，  
金丝莲好像个绣球；  
永远跟着共产党，  
好日子还在个后头。

(Da 1958: 2)

“毛主席疼爱百姓”

清水要浇园子哩，  
菜苗儿绿绿的长哩；  
毛主席疼爱百姓哩，  
往后的光阴儿好哩。

(Da 1958: 6)

“Following the Communist Party Forever”

Hyacinth-bean flowers are blooming like tigers' open mouths,  
Golden lotus looks like a silk-ball;  
Following the Communist Party forever,  
Good life has just begun.

“Chairman Mao Loves the Common People”

Clean water is for watering the garden,  
Vegetable shoots are growing greenly;  
Chairman Mao loves the common people,  
There will be good life from now on.

“中苏两国是兄弟”

中苏两国是兄弟  
心连心，  
保持着深厚的友情；  
和平事业上齐捍卫，  
不松劲，  
人类才有幸福的远景。

(Da 1958: 7-8)

“右派分子想反人民”

党和人民心连心，  
血肉的关系难分；  
右派分子想反人民，  
那是夜里的梦想。

(Da 1958: 12)

“歌唱大跃进”

社会主义建设的欢，  
一天等于二十年；  
坐上毛主席的跃进船，  
跟上友邦苏联。

(Zhonggong linxia huizu  
zizhizhou bianweihui 1959: 14)

“China and the Soviet Union Are Brothers”

China and the Soviet Union are brothers,  
Heart to heart,  
We maintain close friendship;  
We defend the peace together,  
Never sit back,  
Human beings would have a future of happiness.

“The Rightists Want to be Against the People”

The Party and the people are heart to heart,  
Like blood and flesh that are hard to separate,  
The rightists want to be against the people,  
Just like dreams during the night.

“Ode to the Great Leap Forward”

We are happily building up socialism,  
One day is equal as twenty years,  
Let's get on Chairman Mao's "Great Leap Forward" boat,  
And catch up with our friendly neighbor the Soviet Union.

“好不过文化大革命”

俊不过高山的松柏树，  
枝叶儿四季(是)常青；  
好不过文化大革命，  
人民的江山(哈)更红。

(Gansu shida yishuxi geming  
minge diaochazhu 1974: 63)

“Nothing Is Better than the Cultural Revolution”

Nothing is prettier than the pine trees,  
Because their leaves are green in all four seasons;  
Nothing is better than the Cultural Revolution,  
People's country is much redder.

## APPENDIX C

### GLOSSARY OF CHINESE TERMS

#### ROMANIZED READING

#### SIMPLIFIED CHINESE

Bao'an	保安
Beijing	北京
bingshan shang de laike	冰山上的来客
caifeng	采风
da xibei zhi hun	大西北之魂
Da Yuchuan	达玉川
da yuejin	大跃进
Ding Zuoshu	丁作枢
Dongxiang	东乡
Du Yaxiong	杜亚雄
fan youpai yundong	反右派运动
gaige kaifang	改革开放
Gansu	甘肃
Gansu fei wuzhi wenhua yichan baohu congshu	甘肃非物质文化遗产保护丛书
Gansu renmin chubanshe	甘肃人民出版社
Gansu zongjiao shiwu ju	甘肃宗教事务局
geming mingge	革命民歌
Guo Zhengqing	郭正清
Han	汉
haozi	号子
Hehuang	河湟
Hezhou	河州
hua'er	花儿
hua'er hui	花儿会
hua'er weishenme zheyang hong	花儿为什么这样红



hua'er xue	花儿学
Huanghe	黄河
Huangshui	湟水
Huizu	回族
Ke Yang	柯杨
Lanzhou	兰州
Lei Zhenbang	雷振邦
Li Lin	李璘
lianhuashan	莲花山
Linxia	临夏
ling	令
Lü Ji	吕骥
minge	民歌
Minzhou	岷州
minzu mingsheng xiehui	民族民生协会
neibu ziliao	内部资料
Ning Wenhuan	宁文焕
Ningxia	宁夏
putonghua	普通话
Qinghai	青海
Qu Wenkun	屈文焜
renmin yinyue chubanshe	人民音乐出版社
Sala	撒拉
shan'ge	山歌
shanqu	山曲
shaonian	少年
si ren bang	四人帮
Tang Jianhong	唐剑虹
Taomin	洮岷
Taozhou	洮州
Tu	土
Wang Hongming	汪鸿明
Wang Kui	王魁
Wang Pei	王沛
Wei Quanming	魏泉鸣
wenda	问答
wenhua xianxiang	文化现象
wenhua xingshi	文化形式
wuchanjieji wenhua dageming	无产阶级文化大革命
Wu Yulin	武宇林
Xi Huimin	郝慧民

xiaodiao	小调
Xibei	西北
xibei yinyue gongzuozhe xiehui	西北音乐工作者协会
xibei de baike quanshu	西北的百科全书
xibei de wenhua pinpai	西北的文化品牌
Xining	西宁
Xinjiang	新疆
Xu Zhihe	徐治河
Xuanchuan dui	宣传队
Xue Li	雪梨
Yang Mingjian	杨鸣健
Yang Mu	杨沐
yequ	野曲
yifeng-yisu	移风易俗
Yinchuan	银川
Yugu	裕固
Yuan Fuli	袁复礼
Zhang Junren	张君仁
Zhang Yaxiong	张亚雄
Zhao Zongfu	赵宗福
zhongguo minjian koutou yu fei wuzhi wenhua yichan congshu	中国民间口头与非物质文化遗产丛书
zhongguo yinyuejia xiehui	中国音乐家协会
Zhou Mengshi	周梦诗
Zhu Zhonglu	朱仲禄
Zhuang Zhuang	庄壮

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