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Is China a Model Member State of UNESCO in Implementing the 2003 Convention? Reasons, Benefits, and Criticisms

Abstract: This article argues that despite criticism within and outside China of the country's practices in safeguarding its intangible cultural heritage, China has been truly attempting to execute and enhance the UNESCO instruments and to adopt UNESCO rules and practices. In return, it has enhanced the condition of its traditional culture, legal system, and soft power, thus heading in the direction of becoming a model Member State of UNESCO. In order to support this hypothesis, the article analyses how the 2003 Convention has influenced the manner in which China has sought to restore its

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traditional culture. To do so, I examine an authoritative list of the “Top 10” events in the field of intangible cultural heritage that took place in China during 2016. Moreover, this article suggests that the reason China has become involved in such a high-priced ICH revolution to a model degree is that quite early on the State realized the capacities hidden in traditional culture and the political potential of applying UNESCO’s policies, and has been using the latter ever since as a vehicle to enhance the projection of soft power abroad, as well as a platform to establish a new sense of national pride and multi-ethnic “Chineseness” domestically. In bringing Chinese traditional culture and values back to the public discourse and making it a big part of its national project of reviving its glorious past, it can serve as a foundation for a unifying nationalism, hence serving legitimization purposes as well.

Keywords: China, UNESCO, intangible cultural heritage, cultural policy, ICH social movement, ICH revolution, soft power

Historical Overview

The 20th century brought a chain of history-changing events to China, many of which have, as a consequence:

- undermined the political position of China on the international arena,
- substantially harmed the traditional culture.

Of these events, the most important were invasions from foreign States, which started in the 19th century and continued until the beginning of the 20th century (with the spectacular destruction of one of the greatest and richest manifestations of culture in the world – Old Summer Palace);¹ almost two decades of war starting with the Japanese invasion in 1931 through the entire Second World War and until the end of the civil war in 1949; and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), with its brutal campaign to eradicate the “Four Olds” – customs, culture, habits, and ideas – that destroyed much of what had managed to survive the previous catastrophes.

¹ 圆明园 (*Yuanmingyuan*) – built during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), famous for its treasure collections and gardens, where state affairs were handled by the Emperors. The complex of hundreds of buildings and gardens located in an area of 3.5 square km was looted and burned by British and French soldiers on 18 October 1860. It is currently being reconstructed digitally by a team of 80 scholars at the Tsinghua University in Beijing.

The end of the 1970s saw China engage in economic reform and its “opening-up” (改革开放, *gaige kaifang*). However, the importance of cultural diplomacy² and the role of traditional culture in both everyday life and in foreign relations have not occupied top positions on the priority lists of the People’s Republic of China government, yielding their place to modernization.

The above does not mean that research into cultural traditions was totally neglected in the early 20th century. The late 1910s and early 1920s saw the rise of the New Culture Movement³ in China, which started at Peking University and was aimed at rebuilding “the spirit of the nation” and modernizing the country. One of its many consequences was the collecting of folk songs and other folklore genres by those who did not want an abrupt modernization to result in the destruction of tradition. That work led subsequently to the beginning of Chinese folklore studies.⁴ After the establishment of the People’s Republic, the National Cultural Heritage Survey and Registration was conducted three times, in the 1950s, in the 1980s,⁵ and in the 2000s. However, due to political events⁶ and industrialization and westernization⁷ folklore study was considered a niche field that struggled to find government approval and funding.⁸ After the national

² For more on the beginnings of soft power awareness and research in China, see: Li Mingjiang (ed.), *Soft Power: China’s Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, Lexington Books, Plymouth 2009, especially Deng Xiaogang, Zhang Lening, *China’s Cultural Exports and Its Growing Cultural Power in the World*; idem, *China Debates Soft Power*, “The Chinese Journal of International Politics” 2008, Vol. 2, pp. 287-308; I. D’Hooghe, *China’s Public Diplomacy*, Brill – Nijhoff, Leiden 2015; Yan Xuetong, *The Rise of China and Its Power Status*, “The Chinese Journal of International Politics” 2006, Vol. 1(1), pp. 5-33; or G. Rawnsley, *Approaches to Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in China and Taiwan*, “Journal of International Communication” 2012, Vol. 18(2), pp. 121-135.

³ 新文化运动 (*xin wenhua yundong*).

⁴ E.g. An Deming, *Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding: A Global Campaign and Its Practice in China*, in: H. Schreiber (ed.), *Intangible Cultural Heritage: Safeguarding Experiences in Central and Eastern European Countries and China. 10th Anniversary of the Entry into Force of the 2003 UNESCO Convention through the Prism of Sustainable Development*, National Heritage Board, Warsaw 2017, referring to Zhang Zichen, *Zhongguo misu yu minsuxue* [中国民俗与民俗学, Chinese folk tradition and folk studies], Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, Hangzhou 1985; Gao Youpeng, Meng Fang, *20 shijie Zhongguo wenxue fazhanzhong de minjian wenhua sichao* [20世纪中国文学发展中的民间文化思潮, The folk culture trend in the development of Chinese literature in the 20th century], “Journal of Henan University” 2000, Vol. 4; and Huang Jiaobi, Chang Shuli, *Minjian yu qimeng: lun “wusi” shiqi geyaoxue yundong de yiyi* [民间与启蒙: 论“五四”时期歌谣学运动的意义, Folk and enlightenment: on the significance of the folk song movement during the May 4th Movement], “Journal of Changshu Institute of Technology” 2012, Vol. 3.

⁵ Chen Shen, Hong Chen, *Cultural Heritage Management in China: Current Practices and Problems*, in: P.M. Messenger, G.S. Smith (eds.), *Cultural Heritage Management: A Global Perspective*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville 2010.

⁶ On the Cultural Revolution: Gao Bingzhong, *Zhongguo de feiwuzhi wenhua yichan baohu yu wenhua geming de zhongjie* [中国的非物质文化遗产保护与文化革命的终结, China’s safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and the end of Cultural Revolution], “Kaifang shidai” 2013, Vol. 5.

⁷ An Deming, *op. cit.*

⁸ See Chang Jung-a, *From “Folk Culture” to “Great Cultural Heritage of China”*, in: Khun Eng Kuah, Zhaohui Liu (eds.), *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Contemporary China*, Routledge, New York 2017, about the role of Feng Jicai (冯骥才), a writer and a folk expert, who in the last decades criticized the government for a lack of satisfactory measures taken to safeguard Chinese folk culture.

discussion on the concept of soft power,⁹ the Chinese State started to integrate its cultural policy with its international relations.¹⁰ Li Mingjiang also mentions the importance of the country's cooperation with the international institutions, UNESCO being one of them.

China and UNESCO

China is one of the 195 Member States¹¹ of UNESCO, and became a founding member on 4 November 1946. Since 1971, the People's Republic of China has been the only legitimate representative of China at UNESCO.¹²

China has been an active UNESCO member, engaged in many projects. It has also ratified 13 of UNESCO's international conventions, including the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage ("the 2003 Convention").

China has been making its obligatory payments to UNESCO on a regular basis. For years it has participated in UNESCO programmes as a developing country, and also contributed in the form of donations.¹³ The recent largest donation of \$8 million (with the possibility of augmenting it by additional \$4 million if the project proves successful) was pledged in 2012 by then president of China Hu Jintao.¹⁴

As a Member State which ratified the 2003 Convention, China also makes voluntary financial contributions to the ICH Fund.¹⁵ On 27 March 2014, President Xi Jinping visited the Paris Headquarters as the first ever Chinese Head of State, which indicated the State's attention to this international platform of influence.

⁹ Li Mingjiang, *China...*

¹⁰ See, i.e., the development of the Confucius Institutes network in the last decade: F. Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy: The Rise of the Confucius Institute*, Routledge, London 2016.

¹¹ See the list of Member States of UNESCO at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/countries/> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

¹² The history of the relationship between the UN and China was complicated due to the political division between the People's Republic of China led by Mao Zedong and the Republic of China announced in Taiwan by Chiang Kai-shek, who moved there from the mainland after losing the battle over the country to the communists in 1949, and also due the sudden turn in the China-US relationship. A brief summary can be found at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/history/> [accessed: 8.05.2017]. For more information on Resolution 2758, adopted by the United Nations on 25 October 1971, see: <http://www.upi.com/Archives/Audio/Events-of-1971/Red-China-Admitted-to-UN> [accessed: 8.05.2017]. For more on the complicated history of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China at the UN and as a result at UNESCO and other suborganizations, see: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/taiwans-un-dilemma-to-be-or-not-to-be/> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

¹³ For more information on China's foreign aid, including donations to the UN and UNESCO, see: Hong Zhou, Hou Xiong (eds.), *China's Foreign Aid: 60 Years in Retrospect*, Social Science Academic Press, Beijing 2017.

¹⁴ See: <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2017/03/unesco-china-project-advances-ict-teacher-training-10-african-countries/> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

¹⁵ See the ICH Fund: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/ich-fund-00816> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

As regards the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) work at UNESCO, China was elected a member of the first Intergovernmental Committee on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006. And in 2014 the China Folklore Society (中国民俗学会, *Zhongguo Minsu Xuehui*) was appointed to the Evaluation Body. In addition, since 2007 China has hosted the Chengdu International Intangible Cultural Heritage Festival every two years. Also, in March 2017 China was one of nine countries which presented its candidate, Tang Qian (唐虔), for the post of the Director-General of UNESCO.¹⁶

China and the Heritage Conventions

In China, as in many countries, the background for the successful reception of the idea of ICH safeguarding launched by UNESCO was well prepared by the 1972 Convention and the measurable benefits which accompanied its ratification, both domestically and abroad, as well as inscribing the cultural and natural sites to the World Heritage Lists, thus raising awareness of the importance of protecting the sites.

When UNESCO's first Member States were in process of accepting and ratifying the 1972 Convention, China was in the midst of the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution. However, when the opening reforms were initiated after the end of the Cultural Revolution and the country engaged in more intense contacts with the world, the more favourable conditions led to promulgation of the Law on Protection of Cultural Relics¹⁷ in 1982. China eventually ratified the 1972 Convention in 1985. A year later it proposed its first five cultural sites for inscription on the World Heritage List.¹⁸ After a few years of struggling to establish an effective system for protecting the heritage sites in the midst of the rapid urban and industrial modernization of the 1980s, it eventually commenced closer cooperation with UNESCO¹⁹ as well.

China has been criticized to various degrees for the way its sites are poorly protected and/or overexploited.²⁰ The most recent, and until now the most com-

¹⁶ On 13 October the French candidate Audrey Azoulay got the highest number of votes to be submitted to the vote on the General Conference on 10 November, see more at: <https://en.unesco.org/news/audrey-azoulay-nominated-unesco-executive-board-post-director-general> [accessed: 13.10.2017].

¹⁷ 中华人民共和国文物保护法, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Wenwu Baohu Fa*, see: http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/gongbao/2015-08/10/content_1942927.htm [accessed: 8.05.2017].

¹⁸ As of May 2017, China has 50 inscriptions to World Heritage Lists: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

¹⁹ N. Agnew (ed.), *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Conservation of Grotto Sites, Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang, People's Republic of China, June 28-July 3, 2004*, The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles 2010, http://hdl.handle.net/10020/gci_pubs/2nd_silkroad [accessed: 8.05.2017].

²⁰ E.g. Chan Ma-Yin, Ma Shu-Yun, *Heritage Preservation and Sustainability of China's Development*, "Sustainable Development" 2004, Vol. 12(1); H. Du Cros et al., *Cultural Heritage Assets in China as Sustainable*

prehensive publication on the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in China, edited by Khun Eng Kuah and Liu Zhaohui,²¹ focuses on analysis of all sorts of current Chinese problems with respect to the community and provincial level management, and the picture which can be drawn from the research results is definitely far from satisfying. The case studies display various sorts of mismanagement issues, economic exploitation, blind application of the law, and even a dissonance between the authorities' intentions to safeguard the ICH and the communities' longing for "modernization", during which tradition is sometime regarded as a symbol of backwardness.²² Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that along with the spectacular economic change in contemporary China, a change in the status of traditional culture on the state level has become visible as well, especially the status of those cultural practices that have been defined as intangible.

The major changing attitude of the officials and the awareness of the Chinese experts began with the predecessor of the 2003 Convention: the resolution adopted by the General Conference at its 29th session in 1997, which led to the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.²³ China was an active participant²⁴ and its first Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity title was given to the Kunqu opera. This success triggered an avalanche of further Chinese nominations, prepared in the soft power race as described by Hanna Schreiber.²⁵ Consequently, China became one of the first 30 Member States of UNESCO to ratify the new convention before or on 20 January 2006; indeed, it did so already in December 2004, only a year after its proclamation.

Tourism Products: Case Studies of the Hutongs and the Huanghua Section of the Great Wall, "Journal of Sustainable Tourism" 2005, Vol. 13(2); S. Gruber, *Protecting China's Cultural Heritage Sites in Times of Rapid Change*, "Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law" 2007, Vol. 10(3-4); H. Silverman, T. Blumenfeld, *Introduction*, in: T. Blumenfeld, H. Silverman (eds.), *Cultural Heritage Politics in China*, Springer, New York 2013; Fan Li, *International Influence and Local Response: Understanding Community Involvement in Urban Heritage Conservation in China*, "International Journal of Heritage Studies" 2014, Vol. 20(6); Zhu Yujie, *Cultural Effects of Authenticity: Contested Heritage Practices in China*, "International Journal of Heritage Studies" 2015, Vol. 21(6).

²¹ *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Contemporary China*, Routledge, New York 2017.

²² T.L.-D. Lu, *The Management of Intangible Cultural Heritage in China*, in: M.L. Stefano, P. Davis (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Routledge, London 2017.

²³ Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (2001-2005): <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/proclamation-of-masterpieces-00103> [accessed: 8.05.2017]. A comprehensive history of the UNESCO efforts which resulted in adopting the 2003 Convention is well known in China due to the 2008 paper by Bamo Qubumo: *Feiwuzhi wenhua yichan: cong gainian dao shijian* [非物质文化遗产: 从概念到实践, Intangible cultural heritage: from concept to practice], "Minzu Yishu" 2008, Vol. 1, pp. 6-17. See also an earlier text by the same author: *Feiwuzhi wenhua yichan de gainianhua guocheng* [非物质文化遗产的概念化过程, The conceptualization process of intangible cultural heritage], "Zhongguo Shihui Kexueyuan Yuanban" 2007, Vol. 6(12).

²⁴ An Deming, op. cit.

²⁵ H. Schreiber, *Niematerialne dziedzictwo kulturowe jako element soft power państw* [Intangible cultural heritage as countries' means of soft power], "e-Politikon" 2016, Vol. 18.

As early as in 2006 the Ministry of Culture announced the first batch of elements inscribed to the national inventory, which totalled 518.²⁶ By 2015 the fourth batch of elements collected by the provincial governments was included in the national inventory, which now totals 1372²⁷ elements and will be augmented by the fifth batch that is currently being collected in all China provinces and autonomous regions. As of 2017, 1986 ICH bearers²⁸ have been identified as Representative Inheritors of ICH at the National Level.

Today, with its 39 elements,²⁹ China ranks first on all the UNESCO ICH Lists among all the 173 countries which have ratified the 2003 Convention.³⁰ The number of inscriptions would be even higher were there not more nomination proposals each year than the UNESCO commission and evaluation body can examine, which means the files need to wait in queue. There are also nomination documents which require correction and clarification. The current number of Chinese backlog nominations stands at 13. While such a number of elements may not clearly indicate the richness of culture manifestations in China, they certainly reflect the State's engagement in the process of implementing the 2003 Convention, as well as the high level of mastering UNESCO's bureaucratic skills by the State's representatives involved in the process, as every inscription requires volumes of documentation and commitments of many people from local communities, from officials and experts through to technical staff. There are countries that are comparable to China in terms of the vastness of their cultural spread and multi-ethnicity, for instance Russia, and whose engagement in ICH Lists inscription process is reflected in the inscription of just two elements. There are also countries which, despite having a significantly smaller territorial and multi-ethnic scope are proud of their rich ICH environment, where a quite vibrant domestic bottom-up ICH safeguarding movement can be observed, for instance in Poland. And yet, the first and currently the only nomination file of Polish ICH element to be inscribed to the UNESCO ICH List was filed as late as in July 2017, when Poland hosted the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee and the preparations to the session embraced

²⁶ For the list of first batch of ICH elements inscribed to the national inventory (第一批国家级非物质文化遗产名录, *Di yi pi guojiaji feiwuzhi wenhua yichan minlv*), see: http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2006-06/02/content_297946.htm [accessed: 8.05.2017].

²⁷ 国务院关于公布第四批国家级非物质文化遗产代表性项目名录的通知 (*Guowuyuan guanyu gongbu di si pi guojiaji feiwuzhi wenhua yichan daibiaoxing xiangmu minglv de tongzhi*, Notice of the State Council announcing the list of representative projects of the fourth batch of state intangible cultural heritage), http://www.ihchina.cn/62/62_1.html [accessed: 8.05.2017].

²⁸ 传承人 (*chuancheng ren*) – individuals and communities who safeguard ICH.

²⁹ The list of inscriptions is available at: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/lists?display=default&text=&inscription=0&country=00045&multinational=3&type=0&domain=0&display1=inscriptionID#tabs> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

³⁰ The list of countries which ratified the 2003 Convention is available at: <http://www.unesco.org/eri/la/convention.asp?KO=17116&language=E> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

the preparation of the documents to the first inscription. The reasons why the 2003 Convention ratifying States do not actively engage in the inscription process on the international, UNESCO level varies, and could be an interesting topic for separate research. This paper focuses on showing the importance that China pays to the UNESCO platform, as well as on analysing its reasons for doing so.

In 2011, China's National People's Congress Standing Committee adopted a much anticipated law on ICH,³¹ officially accepting the legal framework needed for defining and sanctioning the national, regional, and local operations for the safeguarding of China's ICH. The law defines the meaning of ICH as "traditional cultural expressions of the people of all ethnic groups [in China] which have been handed down from generation to generation and are regarded as part of their cultural heritage".

In addition to stating the importance of the traditional culture and establishing the procedures for safeguarding it, the law also establishes its high position in the agenda of all related institutions at the national, provincial, and local levels. The law also fits in well with the cultural security narration launched around the same time in China, as Article 15 of the ICH law says that any foreign organization or individual conducting research on the ICH in China should apply for permission to do so from provincial authorities. And should the provisions of the Article 15 be violated, Article 41 clearly defines the scope of the fines that should be applied to such a foreign organization or individual.³²

Right Time for the 2003 Convention

China welcomed the beginning of the 21st century as a State at a cultural and economic crossroads. The first stages of its rapid economic liberalization and pro-growth strategies were accompanied by a decline of respect and funding for "culture" in all its forms. Even television programmes and newspapers at the time were more full of interviews with successful entrepreneurs than with modern or traditional artists. Many students, hearing in the media that the Chinese economy was likely to surpass that of America by 2020, were choosing to study finance and business instead of pursuing a degree in arts and humanities. Moreover, whilst they may have disliked the American culture, they were still more than

³¹ Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage (中华人民共和国非物质文化遗产法, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Feiwuzhi Wenhua Yichan Fa*), see: http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/xinwen/2011-02/25/content_1625677.htm [accessed: 8.05.2017]. See also Huo Zhengxin, *Legal Protection of Cultural Heritage in China: A Challenge to Keep History Alive*, "International Journal of Cultural Policy" 2016, Vol. 22(4).

³² The practice shows that it does not imply that all the foreign researchers are immediately asked to show their permission when conducting their fieldwork. Rather, the provision leaves the State enough room to stop any foreign activity that the State might find unflattering.

happy to drink Coca-Cola and dream about studying overseas.³³ While that could have been in line with the goals of the first modernizers – the fathers of the New Culture Movement, neither the Maoists nor the Party reformers would have predicted or expected such a result, i.e. of putting the issues of culture so far behind economic development.³⁴

This attitude was reflected in other spheres of the social life as well. The Temple of Confucius (北京孔庙, *Beijing Kongmiao*) in Beijing in 2000 was not only hard to locate on a city map, but also neglected and dust-covered in a way that clearly testified to its patron's position in the political discourse of that time. It was also said that the boldest Chinese dragon print t-shirt that could be spotted in Beijing had been bought in New York's Chinatown.³⁵ Only when America started discussing the concept of soft power did China slowly realize that in order to exploit its culture abroad, it first needed to raise its status at home.

The 2003 Convention was a turning point. It directed the attention of the Chinese lawmakers and officials to the long-neglected issue of culture, and it did so at the very moment when the country could finally afford it. These factors – the right timing and the right resources – allowed China to stand out among the first group of countries which ratified the 2003 Convention and allowed it to change the status of traditional culture in the country. The interest of Japan and South Korea – China's closest neighbours and economic role models – in their own traditional culture and its promotion abroad did not go unnoticed in China and served as a positive stimulus.³⁶

Fundamentally though, the most important factor for the success of the 2003 Convention in China was political necessity. It is possible that in the process of official deliberation over the definition of culture, the condition of the Chinese traditional culture, which was almost officially denied in the reform period,³⁷ caused the Party to realize that the society that had been turning to the West for its life inspirations might one day look there for some political inspiration too,

³³ All the given examples come from the author's own experience of living in China in 2000-2008.

³⁴ In the history of the People's Republic of China the question of culture has been appearing very often, also the idea of reviving the Confucian values (e.g. New Confucianism's Manifesto), it has not received as much attention of the government as at the beginning of the 21st century.

³⁵ Although the author's experience suggests it might have been produced in one of the booming Chinese factories based on the design and order of an American company.

³⁶ There are a lot of similarities in the pattern of culture promotion abroad applied by China to those implemented by Korea and Japan. For instance, the activities of the China International Publishing Group follow the footsteps of the Korea Foundation or the Japanese state grants to foreign literary translators who are willing to translate the Japanese literature into various languages.

³⁷ Tian Qing (田青), culture heritage expert and director of the Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, refers to the modernization as "worse than the Cultural Revolution": <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2012/04/07/worse-cultural-revolution-interview-tian-qing/> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

which could seriously diminish the legitimization of the Party.³⁸ The debate over the role of culture in China has further led to propagation of the concept of China's revival, which subsequently developed into its revival of "the traditional values", of which the ICH happens to be a great manifestation.³⁹

The government, in its pursuit for means of legitimization, has chosen to awaken the concept of "Chinese culturalism" – to use Joseph Levenson's⁴⁰ term; the feeling that no matter the ethnicity everybody is a Chinese and shares the set of those "traditional values". China, as home to 56 ethnicities, has been long struggling to keep them united under the roof of one big State.⁴¹ The infamous and ongoing conflicts between the historical and political visions of the ruling Han majority and Uyghurs or Tibetans are internationally known. For years the cultures of the Chinese minorities have been equally or even more neglected as those of the Han majority. But now, in line with the policies inspired by UNESCO in terms of safeguarding the cultural manifestations of human diversity and versatility, and due to the realization of its great political potential domestically, the cultural manifestations of different ethnic groups seem to be sought after in China, being documented, promoted, inscribed in the domestic repository and the UNESCO Lists, as well as invested into. Included into one big Chinese nation, the ICH bearers that come from the ethnic minorities are to be finally respected, and supported by state instruments through the implementation of the 2003 Convention in the pursuit of a unified nationalism and social harmony. The ethnic minorities of China and those of the Han majority who have been working in the field of traditional culture were not typically equal beneficiaries of development. The 2003 Convention offered a solution to that problem, as it indicates the value of the traditional cultural manifestations. This is a means for increasing its value in the eyes of tourists as well.

An Deming, a well-known anthropologist and researcher in the field of Chinese ICH, distinguishes two main forces behind Chinese achievements in the fields of practice and academic studies of ICH safeguarding: the rising consciousness of national identity, and closer contact with international society, with its active membership in UNESCO as a significant part of the latter.⁴² I would add to this by surmising that the Chinese government's goal has been to establish

³⁸ The student protests on Tiananmen Square in 1989 were partly inspired by the changes happening in Eastern Europe at that time.

³⁹ See Liu Zhuang's text on not only how ICH safeguarding can strengthen the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, but also how important it is not to let the Chinese culture be "infiltrated" by "powerful foreign cultures": *Indigenising Intangible Cultural Heritage: Comparison and Interpretation of the Concept of ICH in China*, "International Journal of Intangible Heritage" 2015, Vol. 10.

⁴⁰ J. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-chi'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1959.

⁴¹ See, e.g., B.V. Sautman, *Myths of Descent, Racial Nationalism and Ethnic Minorities in the People's Republic of China*, in: F. Dikotter (ed.), *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong 1997, pp. 75-95.

⁴² An Deming, op. cit.

a new sense of a multi-ethnic Chinese identity that could serve as a foundation of a unifying nationalism. Using the set of tools promoted by UNESCO has become a way to attempt to reach this goal domestically. Moreover, by implementing the 2003 Convention as faithfully as the situation and various other state priorities allow, acting as a model Member State of UNESCO has become a suitable means for the Chinese authorities to reach their goals on the international scene too. He Zhipeng describes how China could improve its image in one of the crucial soft power projections, namely in the field of legal diplomacy.⁴³ In this paper I claim that it has already started doing so, at least in the field of ICH and UNESCO, and implementing the 2003 Convention, among others, has been a carefully run project by the government, and is seen as a suitable instrument whereby, through the process of institutionalizing the safeguarding of the ICH domestically and displaying it internationally on the UNESCO scene, it can reach its own goals, to wit:

- the projection of soft power beyond its borders as a multi-ethnic, culturally rich country which respects diversity and engages strongly in the work of international institutions,
- fostering the domestic image of versatile cultural country of traditions that can be united under the roof of one great China.

The ambitions of the government to lead (or “guide” as the Chinese officials continually stress in their national and international speeches) the world undeniably play a crucial role in the way the ICH revival project has been handled in China. China has joined the inscription–nomination race in UNESCO,⁴⁴ as it could not afford to miss it given its then low soft power rankings. As Schreiber shows,⁴⁵ it is still hard to prove that there is measurable evidence that cultural promotion does increase the soft power of a country in a substantial way; however the efforts of China in this field – regardless their still immeasurable effects – cannot remain unnoticed, as China’s soft power is one of the most discussed topics in international relations.⁴⁶ The inscribed ICH elements do garner international publicity and recognition. So do Chinese activities undertaken at UNESCO and due to UNESCO’s influence. There are also countries which want to learn from the Chinese experience of safeguarding ICH on the national, provincial, and local levels.⁴⁷

⁴³ He Zhipeng, *Legal Diplomacy and the Possible Approach of China*, in: N. Chitty et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power*, Routledge, London 2017.

⁴⁴ H. Schreiber, *Niematerialne dziedzictwo...*

⁴⁵ Eadem, *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Soft Power – Exploring the Relationship*, “International Journal of Intangible Heritage” 2017, Vol. 12.

⁴⁶ In the new volume on soft power by Routledge, China is the country most often mentioned and referred to in the research. See: N. Chitty et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power*, Routledge, London 2017.

⁴⁷ The I ICH Forum between China and Eastern and Central Europe, held in Kraków, Poland in 2016, showed the interest of other countries in the Chinese methods of institutionalizing the implementation of the 2003 Convention as well as digitizing its ICH, etc. [see report from this Forum in this SAACLR issue, p. 370].

The ability of China to study, grasp, and implement the changes is yet another factor behind the success of the 2003 Convention there. Culture, like education, is a crucial domain that is firmly controlled by the central government. Once a policy is defined and approved, its implementation runs through all its bureaucratic veins.⁴⁸

The last decades have seen the Chinese government increasingly learn from other States and improve at all levels, starting by mimicking the approaches of others until they were ready to create their own alternatives. UNESCO's initiative of guiding attention towards intangible culture manifestations has mobilized China to use the proposed tools and engage in a project of restoring the condition of its cultural tradition. Its concept of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage could be seen as an inspiration for the China's top officials when working on:

- cultural guidelines,⁴⁹
- the best strategies to boost the State's soft power,
- the latest political strategy to restore the State's greatness.⁵⁰

In addition to promulgating the ICH law, 2011 was a breakthrough year for Chinese culture. The 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) concluded its sixth plenary session with the adoption of a new set of cultural guidelines to improve the nation's cultural soft power in order to boost national identity, creativity, and confidence in Chinese culture. Under the new guidelines, more resources were allocated to foster public cultural services and speed up

⁴⁸ As an ICH example of such a governing totality: At the beginning of the year 2017 the Hubei Provincial Library contacted the National Library of Poland to establish a friendly relationship and consequently to sign a cooperation agreement. During its first visit in Poland the Chinese delegation, offered its potential counterpart the gifts of calligraphy and dough modeling figurines. The Hubei dough modeling has already been inscribed into the national inventory and now the works of one of its bearers, Liu Jie, are proudly offered as a national culture treasure. The cooperation discussed by the Hubei Provincial Library will cover not only a cultural exchange, but also the organization of exhibitions of various Chinese arts and crafts to the Polish public, to enhance the understanding of the Chinese culture among Polish citizens – namely to boost Chinese soft power through the popularization of Chinese ICH. The presence of the Hubei Provincial Library in Poland is the result of two policies undertaken by the CPC's "going global" policy (走出去政策, *zuochuqu zhengce*), which was first pronounced as a strategic policy in 2006 and put into the 15th five-year plan. It encouraged Chinese companies to go and interact with the world, and eventually the state institutions followed. And the second policy is that of Chinese culture going global, as stated in the last 2017 cultural guidelines (see footnote 36).

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that a breakthrough idea of bringing the most widely known Chinese philosopher Confucius back to the domestic narration, as well as setting up a worldwide network of Confucius Institutes, took place around the same time, in 2004. More on Confucius and his current status in China can be found in: S. Billioud, J. Thoraval, *The Sage and the People: The Confucian Revival in China*, Oxford University Press, New York 2015.

⁵⁰ 中华复兴之梦 (*Zhonghua fuxing zhi meng*) – the dream about the revival of the Chinese nation, now shortened to 中国梦 (*Zhongguo meng*, Chinese dream) – the notion which was formed by Xi Jinping and had its beginning in 2012, when Xi said: 实现中华民族的伟大复兴, 就是中华民族近代以来最伟大的梦想 (*Shixian Zhonghua Minzu de weida fuxing, jiushi Zhonghua Minzu jindai yilai zui weida de mengxiang*, The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of the Chinese nation in modern times). For more on this, see: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-05/08/c_124678987.htm [accessed: 8.05.2017].

the reform of the cultural industry.⁵¹ The connection between the promulgation of the ICH law and issuance of the new cultural guidelines is self-evident.

On 25 January 2017 the Chinese central government, namely the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, and the General Office of the State Council, issued guidelines⁵² on preserving and developing excellent traditional culture by 2025. The document extensively lists all tasks to be undertaken to register major achievements in research into traditional culture, education, protection, innovation, and exchange and to boost the market of Chinese culture's international influence. ICH is a significant part of the guidelines, as well.

The above-mentioned actions of the highest state bodies are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the actions undertaken by central and local authorities to coordinate implementation of the ICH into the state cultural policy. It is also important to observe that the implementation of the ICH law in China has been kept under the control of the State and, as Lucas Lixinski put it, "it allows the state to exercise near-total control over the meanings and use of heritage",⁵³ making it a useful tool for whatever purpose the State chooses it to serve. The report delivered by the current Vice-Minister of Culture of China, Xiang Zhaolun (项兆伦) in May 2017 on the state of the works on safeguarding China's ICH illustrates the shift from a top-down process of management and safeguarding the ICH to the bottom-up one. Xiang extensively stresses the role of communities and the bearers in the process, yielding them the right to decide on the management of their cultural space.⁵⁴ However, more research is needed to estimate to what degree this has already become a norm.

A Model Member State of UNESCO

In order to build a template of a model Member State of UNESCO in the field of implementing the 2003 Convention, I use here UNESCO's mission statement. It was

⁵¹ See: Cheng Yunjie, Wu Zhi, *Chinese Communist Party Turns to Culture to Sustain Nation's Rise*, "Xinhua News Agency", 22 October 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-10/22/c_131206460.htm and *China Adopts Cultural Development Guideline to Boost Soft Power*, "China Central Television", 19 October 2011, <http://english.cntv.cn/20111019/101966.shtml> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

⁵² See: 关于实施中华优秀传统文化传承发展工程的意见 (*Guanyu shishi Zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua chuancheng fazhan gongcheng de yijian*, Guidelines on preserving and developing excellent traditional culture) http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2017-01/25/content_5163472.htm [accessed: 8.05.2017].

⁵³ L. Lixinski, *Intangible Cultural Heritage in International Law*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, p. 129.

⁵⁴ 项兆伦同志在全国非物质文化遗产保护工作会议上的讲话 (*Xiang Zhaolun tongzhi zai quanguo feiwuzhi wenhua yichan baohu gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua*, Xiang Zhaolun's speech at the National Conference on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage), http://www.mcprc.gov.cn/whzx/whyw/201706/t20170602_494760.html [accessed: 15.09.2017]. See also a paper on the role of the officials in supporting the ICH safeguarding in China: Yuan Li, Gu Jun, *Ganbu bidu feiwuzhi wenhua yichan baohu* [干部必读非物质文化遗产保护, Party cadre must read about safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage], Social Sciences Academic Press, Beijing 2013.

included in the Medium Term Strategy 2014-2021 document,⁵⁵ and contains the objectives which are relevant to culture and the contents of the 2003 Convention.

UNESCO sees its role in the field of culture as an institution which helps protect, promote, and transmit heritage; supports the fostering of intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures; promotes ethical principles and a culture of peace; and aims to share generated ideas, set norms and standards, and strengthen international and regional cooperation and provide advice for policy development and implementation in the field of culture protection – or ICH safeguarding in this case. The 2003 Convention has been designed as an instrument to help Member States understand ICH, institutionalize the ICH safeguarding process, assist in adapting domestic laws, and through the implementation of the ICH to raise awareness about the indispensable principle underlying the safeguarding of ICH, which is respect for ICH and offering assistance to the ICH bearers, communities, groups, and individuals involved.

A model Member State would thus first ratify the 2003 Convention, and then consequently apply its principles, as follows:

- at the international level – by inscribing its elements and practices to the ICH Lists, participating in the 2003 Convention evaluation bodies, and in cooperation, events, projects, and funding, delivering reports, issuing regular payments, and exchanging experiences;
- at the national level – by adopting appropriate laws, creating inventories, researching, publishing, and popularizing ICH;
- at the regional level – by supporting the ICH communities and individuals involved, organizing events, and raising awareness in the society.

The Institute of Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou has compiled a list of the ten most important events which took place in 2016 related to ICH in China, a list which was then published by the “Chinese Culture Journal”,⁵⁶ edited by the Ministry of Culture. The Institute was established in 2004, i.e. the year of ratification of the 2003 Convention by China, and since then has been very active in the field of ICH research. The affiliation of the Institute with the University results from a long tradition of folklore studies in this academic centre, dating back to the first half of the 20th century.

China could boast many events related to ICH in 2016, however as the Institute offers the Chinese perspective in selecting the most important events, it is worthwhile analysing the list against the model in order to examine how well it applies to all the principles listed. The “top 10 ICH events” list collects the most significant legislative decisions, as well as the international and national events that

⁵⁵ See: UNESCO Medium Term Strategy 2014-2021, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002278/227860e.pdf> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

⁵⁶ 中国文化报 (*Zhongguo wenhua bao*, China Culture Daily): http://www.ccdy.cn/xinwen/gongong/xinwen/201701/t20170120_1294289.htm [accessed: 8.05.2017].

China initiated or participated in. The number in parentheses next to the event refers to the number ranking it was assigned on the list.

Internationally, in 2016 China not only continued to prepare the necessary documentation so as to have more ICH items inscribed on the UNESCO ICH Lists (the 39th item – knowledge and practice of 24 Solar Terms – was inscribed in December 2016 (1)⁵⁷), but also cooperated in the field of ICH safeguarding, using the international political framework of the 16-plus-one formula to exchange experience, ideas, and possibilities for cooperation on ICH safeguarding as well as using ICH safeguarding as a way of promoting its soft power (I ICH Forum between China and Eastern and Central Europe held in Kraków, Poland (8)).

Domestically, at the policy level the law has been constantly updated. The government passed the new Traditional Chinese Medicine Law (5),⁵⁸ renamed the “Cultural and Natural Heritage Day”, which was established in 2006 originally as a Cultural Heritage Day (3), as well as established the first ICH Department in China in the Cultural Property Right Exchange Centre in order to address the property rights issues (10).

On the level of implementation of ICH law, the amount of the government stipend issued annually to ICH bearers was doubled compared to the year 2011 (2). Moreover, a training programme was launched jointly by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, in which 57 higher education institutions held 160 training sessions for more than 10,000 traditional bearers (4).

On the ICH management and awareness level, the ICH Department of the Ministry of Culture organized training classes on the ICH for the administrators in departments of culture in the central government (9). Additionally, the first blue book of the Chinese ICH Development Report was issued (7).

And finally, at the level of cultural promotion domestically, the Grand Collection of the Kunqu Art (6) – the first successfully inscribed Chinese item on the UNESCO ICH List – was published as a result of the successful revival of the popularity of opera.

The actions undertaken by China as the Member State of UNESCO demonstrate its commitment to applying the UNESCO procedures. The influence of the 2003 Convention can be seen in the legislative decisions that have been issued since its ratification.

⁵⁷ See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/the-twenty-four-solar-terms-knowledge-in-china-of-time-and-practices-developed-through-observation-of-the-suns-annual-motion-00647> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

⁵⁸ Traditional Chinese medicine has been listed as one of the Chinese manifestations of intangible cultural heritage in the ICH law of 2011. Interestingly, not only has it been acclaimed an ICH element domestically and internationally, but following the law a project of adding classes of traditional Chinese medicine into the educational curriculum has been launched in Zhejiang schools. This sparked a national debate between the supporters of the so-called Western medicine and modernization, and the supporters of the government's policies to slowly reintroduce traditional Chinese medicine into the daily life of the society, <http://supchina.com/2017/09/12/traditional-chinese-medicine-classes-introduced-elementary-school-children-zhejiang-chinas-latest-society-culture-news/> [accessed: 18.09.2017].

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Gao Bingzhong puts the attitude of the Chinese government towards culture in the revolutionary framework and shows that the constantly changing fate of culture in 20th century China finally reached a peaceful phase with the ICH campaign as a social movement, which was launched using the 2003 Convention.⁵⁹ He even calls it a new Chinese political logic of culture. While observing the same processes and agreeing on the scope of the phenomenon, I would label what Gao calls the end of cultural revolutions in China as yet another revolution – the ICH revolution.

Last but not least, this analysis would not be complete without mentioning the Chinese public's engagement in the national debate on ICH and the country's fierce cultural competition with other countries or ethnic groups.

The process of inscribing ICH elements to the national depository followed by the suitable selection of nominations to the UNESCO ICH Lists usually stirs local, regional, and national discussions amongst experts as well as ordinary citizens, as can be seen in the case of fengshui.⁶⁰ The national discussion often turns into a national cause when other countries consider some cultural practices that are the same, or almost the same, as in China (often indeed having Chinese roots) as a part of their own cultural heritage and decide to inscribe them to the UNESCO

⁵⁹ Gao Bingzhong, *The Social Movement of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and the End of Cultural Revolutions in China*, "Western Folklore" 2017, Vol. 76. See also B. Garner, *The New Cultural Revolution: Chinese Cultural Policy Reform and the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity*, "The Political Economy of Communication" 2015, Vol. 3(1).

⁶⁰ Fengshui (风水) is an ancient metaphysical concept of the Chinese culture. Depending on one's viewpoint, it refers either to the art of harmonizing people with the energy of the environment (Baidu – the Chinese equivalent of Google with a Wikipedia-like function), or to a pile of superstitions, as reflected in the views of some experts and government officials. The nature of this ongoing cultural debate is the reason fengshui has not been inscribed to the national inventory yet. The debate itself shows how much the topic of safeguarding ICH has become an active part of the debate among the Chinese and the authorities. The government, which does not yield any uncontrolled space for commotions related to religion, and whose big social project, i.e. of China rising from poverty, is based on the concept of scientific development (科学发展, *kexue fazhan*), considers fengshui a backward superstition. The respected dictionaries of the Chinese language and culture are more reserved in their definition of the term than Baidu is, and what they state quite resemble the opinions of the officials, as the first sentence in Cihai (Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe 1999) calls it 中国的一种迷信 (*Zhongguo de yizhong mixin*, one of the Chinese superstitions). The heritage scholars continue to research the matter (e.g., E Man, Li Li, *Feiwuzhi wenhua yichan de jiazhi panding* [非物质文化遗产的价值判定, Evaluation of intangible cultural heritage], "Yunnan Shifan Daxue Xuebao" 2012, Vol. 1; Jiao Lei, Li Zhenhua, Yu Lou, 汝州风穴寺的风水文化景观格局及其文化遗产保护研究 [Ruzhou Fengliusi de fengshui wenhua jingguan geju jiqi wenhua yichan baohu yanjiu, Study on the pattern of fengshui cultural landscape and its cultural heritage protection in Ruzhou Fengxue Temple], "Zhongwai Jianzhu" 2014, Vol. 12), and ordinary Chinese continue to have fengshui masters help them in decoration and architectonic choices. And the government has ordered expert research in order to finally settle whether fengshui can be considered a valuable part of traditional culture: <https://www.chinainternetwatch.com/19127/baidu-q3-2016/>, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2010-06/03/c_12173994.html [accessed: 8.05.2017].

Lists before China does so, as in the recent cases of tai chi⁶¹ or Tibetan medicine.⁶² South Korea, Japan, and India have been preparing their own nomination documents for UNESCO simultaneously with China, a process which has been reported on and widely discussed in the Chinese media. This demonstrates the government's approach to implementing the 2003 Convention, and discloses the belief in the potential of the Chinese public in safeguarding and boosting its own culture in order to compete with the world. Most of all, the intention is to stimulate the sense of a well cared for, multi-ethnic, cultural versatility united under the concept of one China, the ultimate goal of the policy-makers.

It is worth recalling here a particular event which sparked such debates about the manifestations of cultural national unity with regards to the 2003 Convention in China. The Korean Gangneung Danoje Festival, which has its roots in the Chinese Duanwujie (端午节, known in the West as the Dragon Boat Festival) was designated a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2005.⁶³ China learned the lesson, and soon submitted documents for inscriptions of Manas – the traditional epic poem of the Kyrgyz, Tibetan opera, Mongolian Khoomei deep throat singing, or Uygur Meshrep celebration, to name only a few Chinese ICH inscriptions to the UNESCO ICH Lists that border on cultural appropriation in their pursuit of China's soft power ambition and national unity. The officials who triggered the works on such inscriptions might possibly have believed that naming the Kyrgyz Manas an element of the Chinese traditional culture would strengthen the sense of pride of the ethnic minority of Kyrgyz origin living in China in belonging to the Chinese nation. As might be imagined, naming the Tibetan opera a part of the Chinese ICH does not make the Tibetans feel Chinese, nor does it make an international community believe so. But what it indeed does is it shows that the international community represented by the UNESCO agrees to such categorizing. In addition, as the system is also designed to eventually direct more funds to the community in order to facilitate the safeguarding of the acclaimed ICH element, it does deliver certain positive outcome.

Interestingly, out of 39 Chinese inscriptions to the UNESCO ICH Lists, only one has been multinational, i.e. prepared together with another country. It is *urtin du*, a traditional folk long song of Mongols, prepared together with Mongolia.⁶⁴

⁶¹ The fact that Korea and Japan have been preparing the nomination documents on tai chi sparked a debate in China over who has prime rights to tai chi. The media have been nourishing the national debate, citing both experts and practitioners: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-03/27/content_28688617.htm [accessed: 8.05.2017].

⁶² China and India submitted the nomination documents separately at the beginning of this year. See: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/both-india-and-china-nominate-tibetan-medicine-system-for-unesco-honour-4609698/> [accessed: 8.05.2017].

⁶³ Chang Jung-a, op. cit.

⁶⁴ Thalea Stokes (*Whose Throat-Singing? UNESCO Awarding Khoomei as a Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage*, MIDSEM Annual Meeting 2015, Urbana, IL, 18 April 2015, <https://www.academia.edu/13964707/>

It could be interesting to closely examine to what degree the other solely Chinese inscriptions to UNESCO ICH Lists that clearly refer to the customs and cultural manifestations of the non-Han majority could have been done in cooperation with other countries, and whether it was the soft power race the only reason not to have done so.

Conclusions

The analysis of the “Top 10” events in the field of ICH which took place in China in 2016, together with the presented background of China’s involvement in UNESCO and implementation of the 2003 Convention, serve as an illustration for the hypothesis that China can be called, for its legislative and administrative efforts, a model Member State of UNESCO. The analysis has not attempted to estimate to what degree the factual conditions of ICH safeguarding processes can be called model in the sense of the 2003 Convention.

The project of safeguarding ICH, as proposed by the 2003 Convention, has been treated very seriously on both the international and domestic levels by the Chinese government and its related institutions. This has triggered a wider movement in society towards saving endangered manifestations of traditional culture. It has also resonated well with the government’s priorities of projecting a culturally-strong country internationally and nourishing an united nationalism by promising its citizens that it can revive its culture(s) and its past greatness, domestically.

China’s extensive and model-like application of the UNESCO standards in terms of ICH safeguarding proves that the shift in the cultural narrative in China, as described by Alessandra Cappelletti,⁶⁵ has been taking place in the recent decade, but it has not been crystallized yet. Hence the future might bring a more defined image of China, one which the State decides to communicate both domestically and abroad.

This paper has not focused on the problems the Chinese local authorities and communities have encountered while implementing the government policies. Nor has it concentrated on the local and regional conflicts caused by the inscription race, even in the pre-UNESCO stage of the documentation (a very interesting issue

Whose_Throat-Singing_UNESCO_Awarding_Khoomei_as_a_Chinese_Intangible_Cultural_Heritage [accessed: 18.08.2017]) gives an interesting insight into the Chinese-Mongolian relationship in terms of ICH and the UNESCO inscription race, as well as the diplomatic narration after a Mongolian ICH element – deep throat singing – was inscribed into UNESCO Lists as a Chinese element, despite the possibility of applying for the multinational inscription together with Mongolia.

⁶⁵ A. Cappelletti, *The “Construction” of Chinese Culture in a Globalized World and Its Importance for Beijing’s Smart Power: Notes and Concepts on a Narrative Shift* (Working Papers on East Asian Studies, Green Series No. 115), Institute of East Asian Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg 2017, https://www.uni-due.de/imperia/md/content/in-east/about/publications_green_series/paper115-2017.pdf [accessed: 8.08.2017].

carefully studied by You Ziyang⁶⁶). Moreover, the paper only briefly indicated some consequences of China's engagement in the international inscription race. However, none of the matters noted above break any UNESCO model Member State rules. Technically, they can be viewed as side effects of "the political" that is an inherent part of the notion "cultural heritage".⁶⁷ Therefore none of them diminish the Chinese State's commitment to extensively use the tools available in the UNESCO's 2003 Convention, fulfilling the tasks assigned by the organization, and most of all the country's own goals.⁶⁸

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⁶⁶ You Ziyang, *Shifting Actors and Power Relations: Contentious Local Responses to the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Contemporary China*, "Journal of Folklore Research" 2015, Vol. 52(2-3).

⁶⁷ E.g. L. Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, Routledge, New York 2006; E. Klekot, *Polityczny wymiar dziedzictwa kultury* [The political dimension of cultural heritage], in: G. Michałowska, J. Nakonieczna, H. Schreiber (eds.), *Kultura w stosunkach międzynarodowych*, Vol. II: *Pałapki kultury*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2014.

⁶⁸ In their recent publication, Zhang Juwen and Zhou Xing (*The Essentials of Intangible Cultural Heritage Practices in China: The Inherent Logic and Transmission Mechanism of Chinese Tradition*, "Western Folklore" 2017, Vol. 76) have even stated that in the process of implementation of the 2003 Convention China has exceeded the UNESCO goals in terms of its social and political agenda. The list of actions undertaken by the State and listed by Zhou Heping (周和平), the Vice-Minister of Culture (2001-2010), in a report to the Party magazine *Qiushi* (求是) is a long one, and should they all be successful they could really impress most of other 2003 Convention ratifying members with their scope: http://english.qstheory.cn/magazine/201003/201109/t20110920_111439.htm [accessed: 8.05.2017].

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