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**Engineering the Minorities: Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation and Transformations of Folk Music in 21st Century Mainland China**

Based on ethnographic research conducted with minority musicians from 24 ethnic groups of mainland China, this presentation will give a short overview of traditions and changes and of underlying structures and driving forces in 21st century Chinese folk music. To facilitate understanding of social and political realities of Chinese minorities, special attention will be given to the centralized control mechanism that covers every region of mainland China and all aspects of China's aboveground musical life. It will reveal how schools, publishers, libraries and archives, performance venues and organizers, print and broadcast media, and research institutions have been operating, as parts of the control system and in the name of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection, to shape the musical traditions of the ethnic minorities into components of a cultural unity-in-diversity. The shaped heritage influences the formation of collective memories and cultural identities, the officially authenticated cultural representations have resulted in widely shared misunderstandings of the minorities, and the promotion of invented traditions is generating minorities within the minorities. Through this case study, the presentation will call for reflection on common-sense knowledge and conception about China's minority and disadvantaged groups and some established methodological approaches and it aims to bring new theoretical perspectives to the study of minorities.

**Bio**

**Kai Tang** is a postdoc research associate at the Music and Minorities Research Center, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. Kai received her Ph.D. degree from Harvard University and her articles appeared in journals *Ethnomusicology* and *Ethnomusicology Forum*. She received the Society for Ethnomusicology's Deborah Wong Research and Publication Award in 2022.