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**THE PROGRESSION OF POLITICAL CENSORSHIP:
HONG KONG CINEMA
FROM COLONIAL RULE TO CHINESE-STYLE SOCIALIST HEGEMONY**

YAU LAI TO HERMAN

PHD

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2014

THE PROGRESSION OF POLITICAL CENSORSHIP:
HONG KONG CINEMA
FROM COLONIAL RULE TO CHINESE-STYLE SOCIALIST HEGEMONY

by

YAU Lai To Herman

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
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ABSTRACT

The Progression of Political Censorship:
Hong Kong Cinema
From Colonial Rule to Chinese-Style Socialist Hegemony

by

YAU Lai To Herman

Doctor of Philosophy

Censorship is an important cultural regulatory instrument for the government of a society, or even a state. In certain socio-political settings, it can become a powerful administrative apparatus (*dispositif*) and technique (*techne*) designed to render society governable. Censorship decisions often embody hegemonic views on social and political issues. No matter how virtuous the original intent may be, the practice of censorship is inevitably geared to the social tensions surrounding issues of human rights and political dissent. The theory behind film censorship may once have been benign but banning or cutting a movie always involves an unnatural set of procedures and actions. This study examines this problem in the context of socio-political changes in Hong Kong. It is an enquiry into the evolution of political film censorship in its more conventional form to its full-fledged integration into other institutions and policies under today's 'one country, two systems' policy. It also analyses the discourse surrounding the changes in film censorship practices from the days of early cinema to Hong Kong in the 21st century. By contextualizing Hong Kong cinema from a historical and political perspective, the study of the Hong Kong experience aims to shed light on censorship's socio-political meanings for, and effects on, filmmakers and film production.

DECLARATION

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original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

 SIGNED

(Yau Lai To Herman)

Date: 28 NOV 2014

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

THE PROGRESSION OF POLITICAL CENSORSHIP:
HONG KONG CINEMA
FROM COLONIAL RULE TO CHINESE-STYLE SOCIALIST HEGEMONY

by

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Introduction

It might be supposed that Mainland-Hong Kong (Mainland-HK) co-produced films, which have become very popular in the past decade, were simply a cultural mix or hybrid of the two regions. However, there is a sound marketing reason for making such movies. They provide a way for Hong Kong cinema to blend into the Chinese Mainland market and enjoy the same potential benefits as those enjoyed by the domestic cinema across the border. It is not the first time that the Hong Kong film industry has been drawn to the economic prosperity of the vast movie-going market and witnessed the popularity of co-productions but, today, its reliance on its northern neighbour is much more significant than it was the first time around in the 1930s.

The current economic boom in the Chinese Mainland is owing to the ‘reform and opening-up’ national policy put forward by Deng Xiaoping in December 1978. The expansion of the Chinese market was particularly notable after the south tour of Deng in 1992, which aimed to reinforce and speed up the policy in the aftermath of the June Fourth Massacre. In addition, in order to attain “(a) stability in external economic relationships; (b) firmer and speedier economic reform; (c) long-term growth based on efficiency and innovation” (Cheng, Leonard K. 1999), the People’s Republic of China (PRC) put in a great deal of effort — and fifteen years’ worth of work — into gaining membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO), finally attaining its goal on 11 December 2001. While it is still questionable whether China has fulfilled its WTO commitments, its domestic market is never free for

products of cultural industries.¹ Extensive censorship is widespread across the Chinese Mainland and, to paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, in the right key, one can get pecuniary benefit, in the wrong key, nothing: the only delicate part of the job is the establishment of the key.²

Even before Mainland-HK co-produced films have become common, film censorship was familiar to Hong Kong filmmakers, although it did not resemble the Chinese style. Censorship can be strict or lenient, but its rationale and the criteria for its implementation in the Chinese Mainland make it no easy game for Hong Kong filmmakers to play. They generally perceive Chinese-style censorship as outmoded, weird, erratic and sometimes ridiculous for it is beyond their empirical experience even though they do know about it at an imperfect common-sense level. Most of the contemporary Hong Kong filmmakers were brought up in a more liberal socio-political culture that enabled a greater degree of economic and political freedom than that in the Chinese Mainland. While government censorship is always part of a judicial system, Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland implement law and order in different ways. Hong Kong citizens are used to the rule of law and judicial independence while law and order in the Chinese Mainland is administered in the arbitrary fashion favoured by the autocratic rule of the Communist Party of China (CPC; also known as the Chinese Communist Party, the CCP). At the Third Plenary Session of the Seventh National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) held in 1990, Jiang Zemin, the former General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and President of the PRC,

¹ For an account of China's WTO commitments, see "Protocol on the Accession of the People's Republic of China" (WTO 23 Nov 2001).

² Bernard Shaw's original: "In the right key, one can say anything, in the wrong key, nothing: the only delicate part of the job is the establishment of the key."

urged those holding the reins of government at all levels, including the NPC, the Government, the Court and the Procuratorate to accept the leadership of the CPC (Jiang 2006: 112). Jiang's public utterance is contrary to the *trias politica* principle of most liberal states, and reveals an ideological characteristic of the PRC; as a single-party State, its judicial system and judicial decisions have to favour the ruling CPC. The NPC, however, gave its approval to an addition to Article 5 of the *Constitution of the PRC* as the first section in 1999: "The People's Republic of China governs the country according to law and makes it a socialist country ruled by law" (The State Council of the PRC).³ This seems to represent the transition of the PRC from a rule-of-man regime to a rule-of-law regime.

Under the rule of man, law is just as the sword in man's hand, whereas, under the rule of law, law is the sword suspending over man's head. Man is restrained under the rule of law, even though man can take advantages of legislature and make bad laws. The man would be punished by laws, too, when he violates the laws. This is the fundamental difference between the rule of law and the rule of man. (Qin, Guoji 2008: 73)⁴

However, Chinese leaders and government spokesmen just pay lip service to the rule of law and the Central Politics and Law Commission under the Central Committee of the CPC is still leading and supervising the judicial system as well as overseeing all political and legal affairs on behalf of the CPC. Thus, the proclaimed "socialist country ruled by law" is a *de facto* country under the rule of man, which can also be tantamount to the arbitrary rule by government. As Chinese law professor Li Shuguang says:

³ It was also officially translated as "The People's Republic of China practices ruling the country in accordance with the law and building a socialist country of law" (People's Daily Online 2004).

⁴ The rule-of-man governance is a Confucian legacy. For more about rule of man, see Qin 2008: 72-4.

‘Chinese leaders want rule by law, not rule of law’ The difference . . . is that under the rule of law, the law is preeminent and can serve as a check against the abuse of power. Under rule by law, the law can serve as a mere tool for a government that suppresses in a legalistic fashion. (Cited in Tamanaha, Brian Z. 2004: 3)

Although Hong Kong is now part of China, there are historical, economic, legal, political and socio-cultural discrepancies between the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong. That is, in part, recognized under the *Basic Law (Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the PRC)*, the constitutional document of Hong Kong, enacted by the NPC on 4 April 1990, which pledges that, at the domestic level, the Hong Kong way of life and capitalist system as well as a high degree of autonomy will be maintained.⁵ As the former Secretary for Justice, Wong Yan Lung, said at the Third ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) Symposium:

The core values on which the governance of Hong Kong is based include the rule of law, an open and free society, an impartial administration, a level playing field, and the maintenance of international links. Hong Kong is fortunate also to possess a tried and tested legal system, which has its roots in the English common law, as this is crucial to the preservation of confidence in the way in which we conduct our affairs. (10 May 2006)

Under the ‘one country, two systems’ constitutional principle secured by the *Basic Law*, Hong Kong, as a special administrative region of centralist China, does not have to be absorbed by or act in accord with the PRC’s legal system, which is mostly a civil law system, and other policies within Chinese-style socialism. Therefore, no matter how film censorship is implemented in the Chinese Mainland, the question for

⁵ At the international level, the constitutional framework for the legal system of Hong Kong after 1 July 1997 is provided by the *Sino-British Joint Declaration* signed in 1984.

Hong Kong filmmakers is, critically, to be or not to be — either to get into the booming Chinese market and abide by its strict and despotically lopsided censorship system or to stay in the local market, which is shrinking but where the censorship system, while it is not absent, is relatively more sensible to Hong Kong filmmakers. However, the system is not the same all the time and it has undergone a number of changes, transformations and developments in the course of history. It is also important to note that conventional censorship enforced by law and administrative order, which is usually explicit and visible, is not the only version. In the contemporary world, for example in Hong Kong, the extension of censorship has evolved and transformed into a less overt mode embedded in other institutions and policies such as the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) that are seemingly not relevant to censorship (see Chapter 5 for a detailed examination and discussion). The past is past, but the present cannot be genuinely comprehended without mapping it.

Undoubtedly, the first film censorship policies followed the emergence of film in every region but the judicial institutionalization of censorship and the formulation of relevant provisions and regulations tended to lag behind cinema activities, particularly during the early years of cinema. However, cinema activities and film censorship are in an interactive relationship once the latter is institutionalized, but that relationship is not self-evident and it is always conditioned and affected by historical and socio-political contexts. Lawrence Grossberg says,

An event or practice (even a text) does not exist apart from the forces of the context that constitute it as what it is. Obviously, context is not merely background but the very conditions of possibility of something. (1997: 255)

Articulation is the methodological face of a radically contextualist theory. It describes a nonlinear expansive practice of drawing lines, of mapping connections.

[C]ontext is always understood as a structure of power. But the very structure of the context is precisely where one must go to locate the power that is operating, since contexts do not exist independently of power.

If a context can be understood as the relationships that have been made by the operation of power, in the interests of certain positions of power, the struggle to change the context involves the struggle to understand those relations, to locate those relations that can be disarticulated and to then struggle to rearticulate them. (1997: 260-1)

Cultural studies believes that politics is contextually specific. The sites, goals, and forms of struggle must be understood contextually. (1997: 264)

In fact, film censorship, as well as the films under it, barely makes sense of its existence unless it is contextualized within a historical trajectory and articulated into a relationship with its contemporary socio-political context, in which a structure of power stemmed from economy and politics matters and censorship also serves as a political watchdog for governments.

By contextualizing various forms of film censorship, relative to which filmmakers, film productions, social economy and political powers are articulated together, this study aims to map the historical trajectory through which political censorship imposed on Hong Kong films has arrived at the form it is today, and to investigate what politics and market mean for Hong Kong filmmakers. Moreover, as I am a current filmmaker in Hong Kong, this work is written from a practitioner's perspective.

In the following chapters, I will firstly, in Chapter 1, attempt to provide an overview of the phenomenon of censorship and theoretical foundation for the type of analysis of censorship the rest of the chapters will undertake. I will also discuss the modern state functions of censorship, the particular intensity of film as a governmental site for the practice of censorship and an account of the ‘work’ of the censor as a textual ‘reader’ who requires texts to have concrete, nameable ‘author’ in quite specific ways. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are enquiries from a historical approach into the emergence and transformations of film censorship in Hong Kong during the British colonial period. As a matter of fact, in the some one hundred years of the history of Hong Kong cinema, the colonial period has occupied more than eighty percent of the time span. The colonial rule has played a significant part in the shaping and formulation of official film censorship system in Hong Kong today. The chapters put emphasis on the political film censorship of the colonial rule and also how Hong Kong cinema was interfered by the PRC led by the CPC and Taiwan led by the Kuomintang. It is worthy to note that the British colonial government suspiciously tried its best to make Hong Kong in line with the political ideology of the West during the last ten years of its rule. Chapter 5 is an account of investigations into the transformations and political significance of Mainland-HK co-produced films. It also discusses how the censorship of the PRC is extended to Hong Kong cinema by means of such co-productions under the ‘one country, two systems’ policy. Chapter 6 is an illustration of, as well as a discussion about, the problematic film censorship of the PRC via an ethnographic study of the making of a Mainland-HK co-produced film. Chapter 7 is the conclusion of the whole study.

Chapter 1

Film Censorship

as Apparatus and Technique of Governmentality

It seems that everyone knows about film censorship, but its meaning and implication vary from person to person and from people to people. Some presume it to be normal and necessary while others see it as, or associate it with, the limitation of freedom of speech, the undermining of expression and a force which regulates, suppresses, controls, silences and dictates the popular mind. In fact, today, censorship has become “a complex matter with psychological as well as political and moral dimensions” (Coetzee, J. M. 1996: 90). Then, what exactly is censorship? What is film? What is film capable of? Why do governments have to censor films? Other than being entrusted by government, what privileges censors to rule whether a certain film should be banned? This chapter is an attempt to examine these questions, and give theoretical foundation and a broad historical setting for the type of analysis of censorship that the following chapters will undertake for the specific circumstances of Hong Kong cinema under the British colonial rule and then the ‘one country, two systems’ policy of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

An Overview of the Phenomenon of Censorship

As a matter of fact, mankind has been practicing censorship since ancient times. A number of scholars, such as Aurelie Hagstrom and Julian Petley, consider

Socrates the earliest and most famous victim of state-sponsored censorship in recorded history.⁶ The teachings and teaching methods of Socrates were censored. The sage was accused of impiety and corrupting the youth of Athens and was put on trial. The Athens court brought in a guilty verdict, and the punishment was the ultimate form of banning — the death penalty. Socrates was executed with a poisonous drink containing hemlock in 399 BCE. Dramatically, one of his students, Plato, advocated censorship of the arts in his famous philosophical treatise *The Republic*.⁷ Although ancient Athens is always appraised as the cradle of democracy, Sue Curry Jansen notes in her work *Censorship - the Knot that Binds Power and Knowledge*:

Careful rereading of the subtext (background comments) of Plato's *Apology for Socrates* indicates that by the time Socrates was brought to trial, Athenian censorship was so extensive that a hierarchy of sanctions ranging from prohibition of public speech (banning) through denial of civil rights, exile, imprisonment, and execution was routinely invoked to suppress dangerous ideas. (Jansen 1991: 36)

In the Eastern hemisphere, when the Qin state conquered and annexed the other warring states in 221 BCE, Qin Shi Huang became the sole ruler of the first imperial dynasty of unified China, the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BCE). He reigned over his empire by using totalitarian measures and the philosophy of Legalism (*Fajia*, a form of absolutism).⁸ In order to secure his empire from perceived danger, Qin Shi

⁶ See Aurelie Hagstrom's "The Catholic Church and Censorship in Literature, Books, Drama, and Film" in *Analytic Teaching, Vol. 23, No. 2* (2003); and Julian Petley's *Censorship: A Beginner's Guide*.

⁷ There is a clear account of censorship, particularly of the arts, in Book II, III and X of Plato's *The Republic*. "[T]he division of *The Republic* into the ten 'books' was not made until centuries after Plato wrote it" (Rouse, W. H. D. 2008: 197).

⁸ *Fajia* is sometimes regarded as a development of Confucianism because two of its leading figures, Han Feizi (281-233 BCE) and Li Si (280-208 BCE), were students of Confucian master Xunzi (313-238 BCE). Li Si was the Prime Minister of the Qin Dynasty.

Huang eradicated the old schools of thought by extensive burning of books except those the Legalists considered productive, such as books on agriculture, medicine and divination. In addition, dissident scholars were banished or executed by being buried alive.

However famous or infamous the above two cases might be, one may reasonably assume that censorship has been shadowing free speech and expression ever since human beings became capable of acquiring and exercising power over others. As various forms of civilisation had advanced to a certain stage that the dissemination of ideas, thoughts, beliefs and opinions became easier and more widespread, censorship became more rigorous and vigorous. This was particularly real after the invention of printing press. In Europe, particularly with the introduction of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (*Index of Prohibited Books*) by the Roman Catholic Church in 1559, the banning and destruction of books persisted for centuries, and many authors were prosecuted, persecuted or executed under the ‘sacred inquisition’. In China, the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) was particularly notorious for the implementation of the ‘literary inquisition’ (*wenziyu*), in which literary works were censored, a large number of books were destroyed, and intellectuals were persecuted.

After centuries of development, censorship, alongside with the furtherance of the notion of government, has been institutionalized and become an apparatus and technique of what Michel Foucault termed ‘governmentality’ (the next section will discuss governmentality in detail). Here, ‘apparatus’ is the English translation of

the French word *dispositif*, and ‘technique’ is that of the Greek word *techné*.⁹

According to Foucault (cited in Bussolini, Jeffrey 2010: 91-2):

[The *dispositif*] is by nature essentially strategic, which indicates that it deals with a certain manipulation of forces, of a rational and concerted intervention in the relations of force, to orient them in a certain direction, to block them, or to fix and utilize them. The [*dispositif*] is always inscribed in a game of power and, at the same time, always tied to the limits of knowledge, which derive from it and, in the same measure, condition it.

[The *dispositif*] is precisely this: an ensemble (set) of strategies of relations of force which condition certain types of knowledge and is conditioned by them.

As for *techné*, Foucault defines it as “a practical rationality governed by a conscious goal” (2000: 364). In the sense of practical rationality, *techné* is “a mode of intervening upon becoming within the context of a social order, a mode of conducting events in order to *determine* precisely those aspects of the future that are not *knowable* in advance” (Altamirano, Marco 2014: 16, emphasis in original). In its actual practice, censorship serves both as an apparatus and a technique of governmentality for governments. Furthermore, the actual realization of censorship has gone beyond the conventional definitions of censorship. With regard to this, Jansen offers another definition of censorship:

Censorship is a form of surveillance: a mechanism for gathering intelligence that the powerful can use to tighten control over people or ideas that threaten to disrupt established systems of order.

⁹ Graham Burchell, translator of many of Foucault’s lecture courses, notes that there “does not seem to be a satisfactory English equivalent for the particular way in which Foucault uses this term [*dispositif*] to designate a configuration or arrangement of elements and forces, practices and discourses, power and knowledge, that is both *strategic* and *technical*” (2008: xxiii). *Dispositif* is also translated as ‘dispositive’ or ‘deployment’ by other translators. For more about *dispositive*, see Bussolini 2010: 85-107.

[T]he term encompasses all socially structured proscriptions or prescriptions which inhibit or prohibit dissemination of ideas, information, images and other messages through a society's channels of communication whether these obstructions are secured by political, economic, religious, or other systems of authority. It includes both overt and covert proscriptions and prescriptions. (1991: 14, 221)

Jansen has redefined the 'censorship' by extending the conventional definitions to reflect the emergence of new problems and a new understanding of censorship. The redefinition, being broader and from a more sociological perspective, seems to encompass everything, but it specifically enunciates the complexity of censorship in today's societies and addresses other forms of censorship outside the realm of the conventional, governmental one. Censorship can be covert, which suggests that, the censorship today can also be in progress and working without the general population knowing it (*cf.* Foucault's discourse on 'government of population' that will be discussed in the next section). Such a redefinition also implies that legislation is not the only way to make censorship legitimate. There are various disciplining institutions in human society, such as the educational and the religious circles which are secured by social structure. They are licensed, not in the lawful sense, but in the cultural and ideological sense. Sometimes, movies that have passed the official censorship are nevertheless regarded as infringing social norms or codes of conduct and are denounced. There can even be calls for a ban. However, above all, censorship is particularly important to governments.

Censorship in Relation to Government

In a broad sense, censorship is a controlling and silencing practice as well as a repressive apparatus. It significantly manifests the hegemonic views on social, ethical and political issues as well as the ruling regime's governance mentality. The most recognized form is the one imposed by the government that acts in a top-down dimension. Official censorship always supports government policies on domestic and international issues. It is an institution that is propagandistic by nature and has the effect of propaganda. It protects the government from foreign and domestic opposition or opposing propaganda, and furthers the government's own propaganda by censoring others. It also helps to shape the minds of the governed population and prevents them from any interference by others, particularly any opposition to the government.

The typical targets of censorship are obscenity, pornography, vulgarity, violence, subversion, and so forth, but such terms are always ill-defined customarily and legally, and are subject to individual interpretation in connection with different cultures and contexts. It is, indeed, hard to give these terms a stable and universal definition that can be agreed by all, and, thus, their meanings remain theoretically and practically ambiguous with a wide range of perceptual judgments. However, such ambiguity may enable conservative and autocratic regimes to extend their censoring power by defining these kinds of terms arbitrarily so as to limit the manifestation of reality and conceal the political suppression of human liberty. By censorship, a government exercises its power to prevent, prohibit, restrict, suppress or ban something from production, reproduction, distribution, circulation, access and consumption in the name of the common good of the populace and the state.

Nevertheless, such common good, which is not the same thing at all times and in all types of civilization, is also not a universal constant and is seldom well-defined in hegemonic narratives. What the populace sees as ‘common good’ can be something that the government sees as ‘common bad’. Censorship is the government’s watchdog against the formation of anything that the government sees as bad. It is politically designed to maintain the status quo of the powerful and power relations.

In the contemporary world, official censorship can be found in all countries with functioning governments, with varying objectives and powers of implementation. Even the most liberal governments today would not deny the efficacy of censorship entirely and would always enforce strict censorship during critical times, such as wartime. In totalitarian regimes, however, strict censorship always plays a dominant role in government policy. No matter how virtuous the original intent of a censorship system may be, its implementation is always controversial in regard to universal human and social values and public opinions. Its repressive and prohibiting nature inevitably has an adverse effect on freedom of expression and freedom of speech. Subsequently, censorship creates tension between government and the governed, and one people and another people. It sometimes creates struggle and protest in society too. Then, why does government have to implement censorship? Is it an essential and necessary duty for a government to enforce censorship? What is the relation between government and the governed? To answer these questions, it would be illuminating to deliberate

firstly on the question: What is meant by government (of the state) in relation to what Foucault termed ‘governmentality’ in the contemporary sense?¹⁰

In a lecture on the history of governmentality, Foucault starts with a controversial text “relative to which the whole literature on government established its standpoint” (1991: 88).¹¹ The text is *The Prince* by Machiavelli (1469-1527), a treatise presented as “advice to the prince”, in which the prince is placed “in a relation of singularity and externality, and thus of transcendence, to his principality” (Foucault 1991: 89-90). Its objective was to secure the prince’s principality. With regard to the politics of the prince, Foucault says:

[T]he objective of the exercise of power is to reinforce, strengthen and protect the principality [sovereignty], to identify dangers, . . . to develop the art of manipulating relations of force that will allow the prince [sovereign] to ensure the protection of his principality [sovereignty], understood as the link that binds him to his territory and his subjects. (1991: 90)

The objective of the prince was different from the objective of the government during the late sixteenth century when the idea of government was still a novelty.

¹⁰ In its common usage today, ‘government’ refers to the executive policy-making body of a political unit; the unit can be a state, community or a region. In “Governmentality” (1991: 87-104), Foucault specifically uses ‘government of the state’ when he refers to something as such, so as to distinguish it from other types of government he brings up in his discourse, such as government of oneself, government of souls and lives, government of children, etc.

¹¹ Foucault delivered the lecture at the College de France in February 1978. By ‘governmentality’, Foucault (1991: 102-103) means:

- (i) The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.
- (ii) The tendency which, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc.) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and; on the other, in the development of a whole complex of *savoirs*.
- (iii) The process, or rather the result of the process, through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages, transformed into the administrative state during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gradually becomes ‘governmentalized’.

The difference lies in the fact that “[h]aving the ability to retain one’s principality is not at all the same thing as possessing the art of governing” (ibid). About sovereignty, Foucault says:

[S]overeignty is not exercised on things, but above all on a territory and consequently on the subjects who inhabit it. In this sense we can say that the territory is the fundamental element both in Machiavellian principality and in juridical sovereignty as defined by the theoreticians and philosophers of right. (1991: 93)

However, the notion of the governing body discoursed in Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, that is, the institutions of sovereignty, also differs from the notion of government in the modern and postmodern times that has been developed since the eighteenth century in the West, notwithstanding the fact that some autocratic governments still take sovereignty as their chief objective. In any event, criticism of *The Prince* led to the introduction of the art of government in later anti-Machiavellian literature and significantly inspired the furtherance of that art in the years to come.

The art of government . . . is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce economy — that is to say, the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family (which a good father is expected to do in relation to his wife, children and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper — how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father towards his family into the management of the state.

. . . To govern a state will therefore mean to apply economy, to set up an economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising towards its inhabitants, and the wealth and behaviour of each and all, *a form of surveillance and control* as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and his goods.

. . . [T]he art of government is just the art of exercising power in the form and according to the model of economy. (Foucault 1991: 92; emphasis added)

The art of government in this sense, taking family as a base model, is rooted in patriarchal characteristics, and the idea of censorship is inherent and embedded in the exercise of power described as a form of surveillance and control. When governing a family, the primary concern is the individual members of the family. In contrast, the territory, in spite of its quality, is the very foundation of sovereignty by juridical principle. As mentioned above, the exercise of sovereignty is, above all, on a territory and the subjects who inhabit it are just consequence. Foucault (1991: 95) notes that the purpose of sovereignty, or the common good with respect to the prince in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, “means essentially obedience to the law” and “is in sum nothing other than submission to sovereignty. This means that . . . the end of sovereignty is the exercise of sovereignty.” Hence, sovereignty, or the principality of the prince, achieves its aim by imposing law on people inhabiting it. Nevertheless, one should notice that power is exercised in the form of force and violence to varying degrees in order to realize the law and make people submissive to the sovereignty, and the existence of the law is inseparable from punishment.

While sovereignty has an end to accomplish, a government also has its own goal to meet. Government, as defined by Guillaume de La Perrière in his anti-Machiavellian treatise, *Le Miroir Politique*, is “a right manner of disposing things so as to lead . . . to an end which is ‘convenient’ for each of the things that are to be governed” (ibid); in other words, the objective of a rational and legitimate government. But, what do the ‘things’ refer to? According to Foucault’s interpretation:

What the government has to do with is . . . a sort of complex composed of men and things. The things with which in this sense government is to be concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc.; men in their relation to that other kind of things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, etc.; lastly, men in their relation to that other kind of things, accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc. (1991: 93)

In order to meet its objective, a government has to dispose things by employing tactics and even by using laws themselves as tactics — “to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved,” and that requires the government, or the governor, to possess “the knowledge of things, of the objectives that can and should be attained, and the disposition of things required to reach them” (Foucault 1991: 95, 96). In the ensuing years, the development of the theory of the art of government, in its own proper form of rationality and organized around the theme of national interest, or what Foucault calls ‘reason of state’ (*raison d'être*), leads to the emergence and development of governmental apparatuses (inclusive of the institution of censorship in our times). It also resulted in a set of analyses and forms of knowledge on the state that constituted the discipline of political science. Yet, the propagation of the art of government is not an undisturbed one.

However, the development and spread of the art of government were immobilized in the seventeenth century by a series of great crises such as the Thirty Years War, the peasant and urban rebellions, and the financial crisis (Foucault 1991: 97). Besides, Foucault believes that the preeminence of the problem of the exercise of sovereignty was also a crucial and fundamental factor. He says, “So long as the

institutions of sovereignty were the basic political institutions and the exercise of power was conceived as an exercise of sovereignty, the art of government could not be developed in a specific and autonomous manner” (ibid). It was not until the eighteenth century when the demographic expansion began to be seen as a problem, that the notion of economy was re-centered on different planes of reality larger than family, and “the problem of government finally came to be thought, reflected and calculated outside of the juridical framework of sovereignty” (Foucault 1991: 99). However, as population appears absolutely irreducible to the dimension of the family, the problem of the population makes the family disappear as the model of government. Family begins to become “an element internal to population”. Since “whenever information is required concerning the population (sexual behavior, demography, consumptions, etc.), it has to be obtained through the family,” family also becomes “the privileged instrument for government of the population” (Foucault 1991: 99-100). At the same time, a new sense of the economy, which is irreducible to the old model of the family, is born.

The population now represents more the end of government than the power of the sovereign; the population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is also the object in the hands of the government, aware, *vis-a-vis* the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it. Interest at the level of the consciousness of each individual who goes to make up the population, and interest considered as the interests of the population regardless of what the particular interests and aspirations may be of the individuals who compose it, this is the new target and the fundamental instrument of the government of population: the birth of a new art, or at any rate of a range of absolutely new tactics and techniques.

[T]he transition which takes place in the eighteenth century from an art of a government to a political science, from a regime dominated by structures of sovereignty to one ruled by techniques of government,

turns on the theme of population and hence also on the birth of political economy. (Foucault 1991: 100, 101)

Nevertheless, as the art of government developed in the eighteenth century is no longer derived from the theory of sovereignty, sovereignty that previously characterized a state becomes characterized by the form of legitimacy it gains from the new art which places the population as its end. Along with the furtherance of this new mode of government, the problem of sovereignty (that starts to appear in the seventeenth century but is left in place by great crises until the eighteenth century) in the eighteenth century has been becoming more critical than ever, and collective discipline is crucial in the in-depth and comprehensive management of the population which has become a field of intervention and an object of governmental techniques and tactics. Foucault remarks, “[I]n reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security” (Foucault 1991: 102). Concerns about the public’s demand for welfare, a measure of security and a sense of safety are essential constituents of modern governmentality as well as the aims of the subsequently derived apparatuses of security.

It is pertinent to note that Foucault’s notion of the term ‘apparatuses of security’ is in reference to the security or the feeling of security of the population. However, based on Foucault’s discourse on governmentality, it is illuminating to consider another sense of ‘apparatuses of security’ which is in reference to the protective and preventive mechanisms against the opposing forces directed against the government, that is to say, it is for the safety and security of the governing body. The rationale behind this sense of the phrase is that it recognizes that the public is also a considerable source of power that might impair the legitimacy, authority and

interest of government. In the light of this potential danger, the institution of censorship that serves as a technique of surveillance and control, on the one hand, is, or is claimed to be, for the ‘common good’ of the governed population and, on the other, it is also an apparatus of security for the government’s governance, particularly for the government which still situates a large part of its exercise of power within the juridical framework of sovereignty.

Foucault sketched the historical development of most of the governments in the West today. More precisely, he only focused on the leading states with liberal-democratic governments, such as France, the United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom, which possess the power of discourse in international affairs in the current world. However, Foucault’s discourse on the different forms of government occurring in the history of the West can still be applicable for analyses of other forms of government in the world today, although the developments of these governments have differentiations in time, space, and, as a matter of course, also in culture and historical context. Foucault’s effort to map the transformation of the art of government implies neither a replacement of the old form by the new form, nor a total elimination of the old form. Rather, what one can see from the world today is that the old and the new co-exist. Because of the various ways of foreign intrusion and conquest as well as the advancement of technology in the twentieth century, policies and procedures are transnationally shared across continents and regions. Thoughts that originated or were initiated in one place might become prominent somewhere else, but fade out or diminish in their birthplace, for example, communism and Buddhism. Indeed, many Asian states have adapted or adopted the political modes derived from the West’s art of government and consequent political science to varying extents because of the foreign policy of the US after World War II

and other influences. For instance, the style of governance in India is due to colonization by the British; in Japan, and partly and intricately in China, it is due to the importation and impact of industrialization and Western democratic thought that began more than a century ago (see Ball, Alan R. 1973: 56-72). Foucault reminds us that La Perrière's notion of the art of government (see previous paragraph) was still very crude back in the sixteenth century, but it can be seen that the PRC today is still dominated by the characteristics of this primitive notion of government. The Chinese Government "exercises towards its inhabitants, and the wealth and behavior of each and all, a form of surveillance and control, as attentive as that the head of a family over his household and his goods" (Foucault 1991: 92). This patriarchal notion of government, in a way similar to the pastoral ministry of the Church before the Enlightenment, suppresses the will of individuals and privatizes and monopolizes the state to a large extent. It is widely recognized that the Communist Party of China (CPC; also known as CCP, the Chinese Communist Party) rejects religious beliefs, but its Chinese-style socialist governance today possesses the characteristics of the patriarchal notion of government, and its attention is consciously directed to the behavior more than the welfare of the inhabitants. From another perspective, the CPC regime is still characterized by sovereignty rather than the legitimacy it gained from the population via its governmentality. Censorship, serving as an apparatus and technique of surveillance and control, is particularly essential to the Chinese Government. Politically, the more attentive a government is, the stricter the censorship will be. That in turn indicates an insecure government and a government that is aware of its insecurity and the possibility that the legitimacy of its power to govern will be put into question. Legitimacy, naturally, is not a constant

in the course of history in much the way it is not a constant in different cultures and civilizations.

There are choices of government, but in the PRC, the population cannot choose, and are not given the right to choose or publicly disagree with their government. It is still principally Machiavellian or taking Machiavellianism as their underlying principle of governance, albeit with modification and hybridization with the modern notion of governmentality, sometimes disguised by liberal vocabulary. The ‘common good’ for such a government is the submission to the governing regime, and the exercise of power is an exercise of sovereignty (see Foucault 1991: 95). With government understood as such, the institution and implementation of censorship is an apparatus and technique of security and a tactic for exercising power to secure a regime’s ruling position and ideology. It serves to identify and eliminate danger and functions as a means of manipulating opposition forces that ensures the protection of a regime (see Foucault 1991: 90). This type of protection always means suppression of dissident power among the population and outside the sovereign territory. In short, it is a matter of security, but security of the regime rather than that of the governed population, which is especially valid in the PRC. Censorship can also be a control technique for the government in the context of modern governmentality, such as colonial Hong Kong after the Pacific War (see Chapters 3 and 4). The main difference is that the former upholds the *raison d’etat* while the latter upholds the interest of the population relatively more.

When Foucault interprets the definition of government in accordance with La Perrière’s text, he says, “The things with which . . . government is to be concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those

other things” (Foucault 1991: 93). Here, the idea of ‘men’ and ‘those other things’ undoubtedly include the thoughts, ideas, opinions, beliefs and ideology of the population, which are also the objectives of censorship. Accordingly, speeches, writing and publications, as carriers of such things, are inevitably the concerns of government and thus the targets of censorship, but these only mark the early chief subjects of censorship. From the moment human beings stepped into the age of mechanical reproduction — and during the years to come — censorship has reached out to every new medium of communication resulting from technological development and new form of creative art. And amid the creative art, film is undoubtedly a prevailing new medium and a new form of art for mass consumption. The unique features of film and its relations to and impact on the public have placed film under the scrutiny of censorship ever since its early emergence.

The Political Problematic of Film in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

In his 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, Walter Benjamin examines the social and political implications of mass (re)production of art works in capitalist culture, and also tries to define the tendencies of development of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. He argues from the perspective of world history that technical reproduction around 1900 had reached a standard sufficient to cause the most profound change in the impact of art upon the public. Among the various reproducible forms of art, he maintains that the most powerful agent in constructing the modern perspective is film.

Film has unique significance in popular culture, possesses the characteristics of a commodity since its emergence and is also the first-ever reproducible mass medium as well as an art form designed for mass consumption and simultaneous collective experience. The invention of film has subverted the traditional value of art work and transformed the nature of art a lot, even if not entirely. “Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage” (Benjamin 1988: 221). At one level, the perfect reproduction of art work and the art of film have principally upset the traditional concepts of *authenticity* and *aura* in the art sphere. It is because “[e]ven the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin 1988: 220; see also Benjamin 1988: 220-4). At another level, when mechanical reproduction has made art works more and more tangible to the masses, art works are received and valued on their exhibition values. Furthermore, mechanical reproducibility emancipates art work from its traditional values, such as its symbolic value in early rituals and the cult of beauty developed during the Renaissance.¹²

When art is emancipated, it is no longer only the province of the elite and privileged but has become easily accessible in the mass market and appealing to the

¹² As time goes by, Benjamin’s notions of and discourse on the authenticity and aura of art work are challenged and questioned by postmodernists more and more. I do not think Benjamin was saying that the traditional concepts of authenticity and aura are not valid anymore. He just said that these concepts were not applicable to discourse on new forms of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. Benjamin was in a way questioning and challenging the traditional concepts that prevailed during his time. The phenomenon was that: An old tradition was withering or decaying, and a new practice was flourishing and under development. After more than seven decades, the once-new practice which was under development has matured to overshadow the older one. The concepts of authenticity and aura have been redefined and reinterpreted, which is, indeed, a fluid process in the course of history. Nevertheless, Benjamin’s examination of the phenomenon brought about by the development of the technical reproduction of art work — or the preferred term today, medium — is still insightful and helps to map the historical trajectories of human thoughts.

big crowd of consumers. Under these conditions, the total function of art begins to be based on another practice — *politics* — as Michael W. Jennings remarks, “Reproducibility is thus finally a *political* capacity of the work of art” (Jennings 2008: 15, emphasis in original); it is always an objective of governance and a big concern of government. For film, Benjamin writes,

We do not deny that in some cases today’s films can also promote revolutionary criticism of social conditions, even of the distribution of property. (1988: 231)

The characteristics of the film lie not only in the manner in which man presents himself to mechanical equipment but also in the manner in which, by means of this apparatus, man can represent his environment. (1988: 235)

Benjamin helps people understand the essence of film more, but at the same time, the expertise and knowledge of this new art form, or of this new medium, also helps censorship institutions to flourish; attention and concern is placed on its capabilities and its capacity to express and communicate. Film censorship started with government recognition and awareness of the potential of film and has persisted in order to serve objectives other than restraining obscenity, pornography, vulgar dialogue, violence, crime, and so forth. Such objectives, also always in the name of the common good of the populace and the state, serve to guard against the formation of ideology that would trouble government administration and the hierarchy, and to prevent turmoil and social turbulence. As film censorship presumes certain effects of film on its spectators and film consumption as a process potentially capable of altering the general audiences, it is political and all about the security of government and the discipline of the governed population, which are always weighty concerns for government. All governmental film censorship plays such a role, though there may

be differences in the degree of strictness and how implicit or explicit its deployment and practice.

Film Censorship is as Old as the Film Itself

In its early days, cinema seemed a threatening phenomenon — the critics assailed it, the government kept an eye on it. Literally, ever since the emergence of film, film censorship and the demand for film control have been following the film industry and its art like a shadow. As French and Petley put it:

From its birth in the dying days of the nineteenth century to its hi-tech proliferation today, cinema has been a mote in the eye of the censors. Its popular appeal and widespread dissemination made it an obvious and easy target: it was widely accused of corrupting morals, spreading dangerous ideas and having a particularly malign effect on children and members of the ‘lower orders’. (2007: book sleeve)

The US and France launched the first film industries. The first commercial public exhibition of film took place on Saturday, 14 April 1894, when the first Kinetoscope parlor, the Holland Brothers Kinetoscope Parlor at Broadway (the site of the Broadway Plaza Hotel today), New York City, opened for business.¹³ There were ten Kinetoscopes in the parlor.

[They] were arranged in two rows of five, and surrounded by a brass rail for the patrons to lean on as they viewed the films. Each machine showed a different thirty second film [*sic*], and payment of a fee of 25 cents entitled a customer to watch five films. The title of each film

¹³ The Kinetoscope (aka ‘peep-show machine’) is an invention commonly attributed to Thomas Edison (1847-1931), but it was mainly developed by a Scot, William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, (1860-1935) between 1889 and 1892. “The Kinetoscope is an early motion picture exhibition device. Though not a movie projector — it was designed for films to be viewed individually through the window of a cabinet housing its components” (Wikipedia, accessed 10 May 2012).

was displayed on the machine on which it was shown, and an attendant, after receiving a ticket from the patron, who would then peer into the machine's peephole, would start the film (the kinetoscope would later be coin-operated). (MovieMovieSite.Com)

The first films shown were shot at Thomas Edison's Black Maria studios and primarily made for the male audience. As the launch of the Kinetoscope gained success, more film parlors were opened across the US. However, the film parlors at that time, commonly known as 'peep shows', were hardly regarded as upscale entertainment, but lowbrow entertainment for the unwashed commonality. Three months later, the first recorded incident of motion picture censorship sprang up. The Kinetoscope film in question was *Dorolita's Passion Dance*, performed by Carmencita, a well-known Spanish dancer in New York City.¹⁴ The film was prevented from exhibition by the police in New Jersey and was finally withdrawn from circulation. The little clip was regarded as an 'erotic item' because the dancer revealed her undergarment in a serpentine dance. In France, in the evening of 28 December 1895, brothers Auguste (1862-1954) and Louis (1864-1948) Lumière held the first commercial exhibition of their ten short films, principally scenes of real life — *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, *A Gardener with a Watering Hose* (also known as *Sprinkler Sprinkled*), *Cordeliers Square in Lyon*, and so on — by means of their *Cinématographe* projection in the Salon Indien of the Grand Café situated in the basement of the Second Empire Grand Hotel at 14 boulevard des Capucines in Paris.¹⁵ Thirty-three tickets were sold, and a number of guests were

¹⁴ To view *Dorolita's Passion Dance* and for more details:
[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/papr:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(edmp+4019\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/papr:@field(NUMBER+@band(edmp+4019))) or
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-15jwb1ZTMA>

¹⁵ To view the Lumière brothers' first films:
<http://www.institut-lumiere.org/francais/films/1seance/accueil.html> or
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nj0vEO4Q6s>

invited to the occasion. The day is often taken as the birth of film, or ‘the first cinema’ — the projection of moving photographic pictures on a screen for paying audiences.¹⁶ The French illusionist Georges Méliès (1861-1938), who later became a prominent and prolific filmmaker and the first to infuse drama into movies, was among the audience and witnessed the birth of cinema. He later recalled:

The other guests and I found ourselves in front of a small screen, similar to those we use for projections, and after a few minutes, a stationary photograph showing the Place Bellecour in Lyons was projected. A little surprised, I scarcely had time to say to my neighbour: “Have we been brought here to see projections [lantern projection]? I’ve been doing these for ten years.” No sooner had I stopped speaking when a horse pulling a cart started to walk towards us followed by other vehicles, then a passerby. In short, all the hustle and bustle of a street. We sat with our mouths open, without speaking, filled with amazement. (MovieMovieSite.Com)

“The early films of the Lumières, as with most early cinema, were known as *actualities*, films that simply depict regular everyday events as they unfold” (Manley 2011: 7, emphasis added).

The next year, on 23 April, Thomas Edison held the premiere of his Vitascope projection of moving images at the Koster and Bial’s Music Hall in New York City.¹⁷ In June, there was a call to ban a twenty-second Vitascope short film, *The Kiss*, in America. The film recorded the reenactment of the lingering closed-mouthed kiss

¹⁶ *Cinématographe* was a Lumière brothers’ invention which was both a motion picture camera and a film projector. Prior to the Lumières, Woodville Latham and his sons Grey and Otway (with his Eidolscope, co-developed with W. K. L. Dickson who parted from Edison), and brothers Max and Emil Skladanowsky (with their Bioscope) had already shown the moving projected images to a paying audience in the US on 20 May 1895 and Germany on 1 November 1895 respectively. However, both of their images were indistinct, and their equipments were relatively unwieldy, while the Lumières’ *Cinématographe* had clear images, and the equipment was portable (MovieMovieSite.Com; Manley 2011: 6-8).

¹⁷ The Vitascope was also a film projection device. It was developed by Charles Francis Jenkins (1867-1934) and Thomas J. Armat (1866-1948), but usually attributed to Thomas Edison.

between a middle-aged man, John Rice, and a middle-aged woman, May Irwin, in the Broadway stage play, *The Widow Jones*.¹⁸ Critics and the US papers considered the film absolutely disgusting, indecent in its emphasized vulgarity and a threat to morality. Herbert Stone of the Chicago literary magazine *The Chap Book* fumed about the first on-screen kiss in film history and deemed that such things called for police interference. He wrote, “I want to smash the Vitascope. The name of the thing is itself a horror. Its manifestations are worse” (cited in French and Petley 2007: 8).

Broadly speaking, while films like *The Kiss* and *Dorolita's Passion Dance* raised concerns about the issue of sex, others prompted concerns about violence. In 1897, “moral opprobrium focused on screen violence as exemplified in a string of films bringing championship boxing matches to the general public” (French and Petley 2007: 3). The same year in France, on 4 May, a booth housing a cinematograph show in the Paris Charity Bazaar, held at the Rue Jean-Goujon near the Champs-Elysees, caught fire due to the carelessness of the projectionists and a faulty projector lamp fuelled by a combination of oxygen and ether. The fire instantly lit the canvas awnings and the neighboring booths, exploded the lamp and the celluloid film, and engulfed the whole street in flames within minutes. The accident caused the death of one hundred and twenty one people, including a number of the French nobility. Thus, the movie industry was born under such conditions that encouraged governmental control and censorship (see French and Petley 2007: 2-10; Manley 2011: 5-8; Sadoul 1982: 3-39; MovieMovieSite.Com).

¹⁸ To view *The Kiss* and for more details:
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?papr:2:/temp/~ammem_U0mA:: or
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zURTEs8C1lo>

While there was acute competition between the camera and projector technologies in the early years of cinema, no one could fully envision the future of the movie industry. The Lumière brothers declared in 1902, “Cinema was an invention without a future” (Manley 2011: 12). Nevertheless, before cinema grew into an established and extensive entertainment industry, the moving projected images endured to evolve from a novelty and an experiment to a content carrier which helped define the modern life of human beings. Concurrently, cities, states various places of the world developed their own film censorship institutions wherever and whenever films were made or exhibited. The concerns about images of sex and violence were just a start for film censorship, which extended to other concerns in the course of time. French and Petley list seven aspects that caused concern during the early years of cinema:

First, there was the very size of the image and the immediacy, the intimacy of the experience. Second, film opened up life socially, geographically, in time and space, transporting audiences to places unknown, hitherto forbidden, invented. Third, the violence and eroticism were palpable. Fourth, cinema offered an invitation to fantasize, to dream, to revolt, . . . Fifth, the movies rapidly became the most popular leisure activity of the expanding urban working classes, feared by the bourgeoisie as a potential source of revolution and by intellectual devotees of eugenics as a threat to the future of western civilization. Sixth, movie-going was a public activity that took place in the dark, offering terrible temptations to innocent boys and girls. Seventh, there were health and safety fears, some real, some imaginary: fear of fire hazards from unsafe buildings and highly inflammable nitrate film; fear that the flickering images might damage eyesight or induce epilepsy; fear that these hot, fetid auditoriums could spread contagious diseases. (2007: 5, 7)

With the development of sound film during the late 1920s, disturbing and filthy language were added to the above list (see French and Petley 2007: 5). Nonetheless, the list has become longer in the ensuing years, and perhaps will become even longer as time goes by, notwithstanding that it may not be announced officially. All in all, censorship has never deserted cinema and has been institutionalized, perfected and evolved in the more than one hundred years of complex interactions among filmmakers, censors, politicians, scholars and critics.

Theoretical Legitimization of Censorship

According to Foucault (1980: 93), “We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth,” and as Jansen (1991: 7) puts it, “Power secures knowledge, but knowledge also secures power. Systems of power-knowledge contain both emancipatory and repressive elements. They do not just set limits on human freedom, they also make it possible.” We owe a great deal to the scholars who have emancipated human beings from coercion and subjugation by theorizing and rationalizing human liberty, phenomena, behaviors, activities, and so forth. However, history is cunning. We can find in the course of history that some theories aiming to emancipate ideas and thought in the first turned into the theoretical grounds for repression or oppression, and vice versa. Official censors acquire the power to interpret and judge content carriers of their own accord through the ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ produced by the intellectual powers, notwithstanding that it can be an appropriation of such knowledge and truth.

By film censorship, some of the ‘things’ (in La Perrière’s sense as interpreted by Foucault, see Foucault 1991: 93) in a society or in a state — government as the ruling body; audience as consumers, spectators as part of the population; film as content carrier that carries ideas, thought, opinion, criticism and ideology; filmmaker as the professional or artist who produces, creates or injects content into film; official censor who censors on behalf of the government; investor in film production and owner of the movie house whose primary concern is profit — are ‘articulated’ to each other. In such an articulation, the ‘things’ inside are imbricated; they are interactive, both active and passive, and are wrestling and mingling with each other in a competition for power. Taking Hong Kong film industry and the process from the initiation of a commercial film production to the public exhibition of that film as an example, the formation of such articulation can be divided into a few stages. Firstly, someone — typically a film director, a screenwriter, an investor, a film producer or whoever is the driving force — initiates a film project. At this stage, other than making money, the articulated individuals might have other ends to meet or ideals to reach. In order to distribute the subsequently completed work in the market, everyone involved has to consider the problem of censorship. Usually, if there are foreseeable difficulties in passing the official censorship, the project will probably be dropped. For instance, the screenplay of a Chinese-foreign co-produced film has to be censored by the Chinese Mainland authority prior to the start of actual filming (see Chapters 5 and 6 for a detailed examination). The censorship authority may ban or give a green light to the screenplay, but the most likely outcome is that the authority would ‘suggest’ amendments, which are, indeed, requirements. Filmmakers would amend the screenplay accordingly if they are going to proceed to actual filming. In such a case, two forms of censorship are

involved in the early stage of an anticipated film production, namely, the self-censorship of the creators and the official censorship of the authorities. The articulation expands during the second stage, that is, the actual production in which cast and crew members of various departments, sometimes the publicity staff and media personnel as well, would be articulated. When the production enters into the third stage, the post-production, some more departments and staffs would get involved while those who have their works finished would leave and become, perhaps, part of the audience later. The last stage is the public exhibition of the finished film, in the process of which, it must pass the official censorship and sometimes needs to be amended in accordance with the censors' requirements. In this stage, the articulation expands with all its might with the effort of publicity and promotion to absorb as much audience as it can.

Other than a medium in the sphere of communication, a form of art in the sphere of creativity and a form of popular culture under capitalistic logic, film is also a form of text for literary analysis.¹⁹ While some audiences simply watch a film to kill time, other audiences *read* a film, which implies that they watch attentively to absorb meanings.

By the word *reading* we mean not only the capacity to identify and decode a certain number of signs, but also the subjective capacity to put them into a creative relation between themselves and with other signs: a capacity which is, by itself, the condition for a complete awareness of one's total environment. (Terni, as cited in Hall, Stuart 2008: 484; emphasis in original; cf. Benjamin 1988: 231 and 235 discussed previously in this chapter)

¹⁹ It is familiar in cultural studies that “‘text’ in the broad sense . . . includes not only written texts, but film, television, the visual arts, music — in fact, ordered complexes of meaning in any medium or combination of media” (Couldry, Nick 2007: 88).

Although the notion of ‘subjective capacity’ is open to debate, when situating this definition within the scope of film, it implies that to read a film is to decode or interpret, or try to grab meanings in and from a film. As for the official film censors, they are part of the audience, and indeed, the first audience outside film production. In order to fulfill their jobs, the censors become part of the *readership* for they have to read the films being censored and are aware of their signification in relation to the total environment. What they weigh most is the influence and effect of any particular film on the public audience. The director of a film is always considered the ‘author’ of the film, that is, the leading person who created it. People are accustomed to seeking explanation, deep meaning and signification in a work from its author. However, in 1967, Roland Barthes declared, “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (1977: 148). In his essay “The Death of the Author”, Barthes says,

As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins. (1977: 142)

Barthes’ theory extends to film. When a film is done and displayed on-screen, it is the moving images and the sound that act, speak and perform before the audience, not the director. That is to say, a movie is watched and interpreted in such a way that, at all its level, the director is absent. “Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing” (Barthes 1977: 147), which means that, with the death of the author, the ‘writing’ of a text will be continued with the meanings and interpretations given to it by its readers,

inclusive of the censors. According to Barthes (1977: 148), “a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not . . . the author.” Foucault echoes Barthes’ idea in his essay “What Is an Author?” firstly published in 1969:

[T]oday’s writing has freed itself from the theme of expression. Referring only to itself; but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority. This means that it is an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than the very nature of the signifier. Writing unfolds like a game that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits. In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language; it is, rather, a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears.

. . . The work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author’s murderer. (1998: 206)

By disqualifying the privileged position of the author in the sense-making process and the subsequent discourse of a text, the *readers*, and thus the act of *reading*, are emancipated from the constraints and predispositions preset by the author and the attribution to the author. Accordingly, the meanings of and the meanings in any film are not up to its director’s decision and do not rely on his/her intent and biographical attributes. The meanings in accordance with the director are not in any ways more privileged than the meanings the readers interpret and absorb, and directors are not the source of their respective films’ meanings anymore. Therefore, in regard to the film censors, Barthes and Foucault validate their interpretation of any films. In the mindset of the official censors, the film director, being the author of

film, is dead. The censors can interpret a film in whatever way they engage with it regardless of the authorial intent.

However, where Barthes activates the readers by just singling out a generic 'Author' as his subject of criticism, Foucault (1998: 209) complicates the notion of 'authorship' and reconsiders the various notions of 'author' in literature by saying: "[W]e must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings this disappearance uncovers." After illustrating that the author's name is situated between the two poles of description and designation, Foucault reconsiders the relationship between the author (or the author-figure) and the text (or the work) attributed to him/her by introducing the concept of 'author function', which designates the author as a functional agent of discourse itself and is "characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society" (Foucault 1998: 209-211). He lists four different characteristics of the author function that he sees as the most visible and important. These characteristics are also enlightening in respect to the theoretical and practical comprehension of censorship.

Firstly, it is "linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses" (Foucault 1998: 216), and it is about ownership.

[H]istorically, this type of ownership has always been subsequent to what one might call penal appropriation. Texts, books, [films,] and discourses really began to have authors . . . to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive. (Foucault 1998: 211-2)

In the case of film censorship, when the authority deems that penal punishment is necessary for any officially recognized transgression owing to a certain film's discourse, the owner(s) of the discourse, that is, usually the film director, producer, or both would be prosecuted, although Barthes' "The Death of the Author" has provided a theoretical ground for the making sense of the censors' own interpretation on any film. For example:

Dhondup Wancheng [Tibetan filmmaker] was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for 'inciting separatism' for making a documentary, *Leaving Fear Behind*, which features a series of interviews with Tibetans questioning the Chinese authorities' promises of greater freedom in the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. (Amnesty International 22 April 2010)

Secondly, the author function varies in different fields and disciplines and "does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilization" (Foucault 1998: 216). In Europe, scientific texts in the Middle Ages were accepted as 'true' only when marked with the authors' names, but, since the seventeenth or eighteenth century, these texts began to be accepted without attribution to their authors, and the author function faded away. In contrast, there was a period in history when no one questioned the identity behind literary texts but, from the eighteenth century onwards, literary discourses were accepted only when endowed with the 'author function'. "Literary anonymity is not tolerable; we can accept it only in the guise of an enigma" (Foucault 1998: 213). By the same token, anonymity in film is also not tolerable, particularly when a film is submitted to the censorship authority in the Chinese Mainland.

Thirdly, "it does not develop spontaneously as the attribution of a discourse to an individual. It is, rather, the result of a complex operation that constructs a certain

being of reason that we call 'author' ” (ibid). The operation of author-construction varies according to periods and types of discourse, and depends on the manner and rules by which the existing texts and discourses are handled, authenticated and classified. The author, or the constructed figure of the author, is defined as a constant level of value and a field of conceptual or theoretical coherence, and at the same time it is conceived as a stylistic unity and an historical figure at the crossroads of a certain number of events. Furthermore,

[T]he author provides the basis for explaining not only the presence of certain events in a work, but also their transformations, distortions, and diverse modifications (through his biography, the determination of his individual perspective, the analysis of his social position, and the revelation of his basic design). The author is also the principle of a certain unity of writing — all differences having to be resolved, at least in part, by the principles of evolution, maturation, or influence. The author also serves to neutralize the contradictions that may emerge in a series of texts: there must be — at a certain level of his thought or desire, of his consciousness or unconscious — a point where contradictions are resolved, where incompatible elements are at last tied together or organized around a fundamental or originating contradiction. Finally, the author is a particular source of expression that, in more or less completed forms, is manifested equally well, and with similar validity, in works, sketches, letters, fragments, and so on. (Foucault 1998: 214-5)

This characteristic is significant in the practice of censorship, particularly in political censorship. In reality, not all the film directors are the same for they are not bound to the same level of value nor the same field of conceptual or theoretical coherence. Censors are more alert to the works of some particular filmmakers who are seen, ideologically or politically, as potentially seditious and hostile to the governing body, the status quo of the powerful or the political view of some parties in power. For

example, in the 1960s, the leftists considered the prominent Hong Kong auteur Patrick Lung (also known as Lung Kong) a spy working for the British Hong Kong Government. Thus, Patrick Lung's films were under the scrutiny of the leftists. Given Lung's identity, value and stylistic unity, the leftists had no doubt about finding his films reactionary. Although the leftists were in no way the official censors, they had the power to influence and to interfere in the official censorship of the British colonial rule, and would 'censor' their targets by their own means (see Chapter 3).

Fourthly, an 'author' does not refer purely and simply to a real individual and is always constituted of several simultaneous subjects. "In fact, however, all discourses endowed with the author function possess this plurality of self" (Foucault 1998: 215-6). In film, this is particularly true of biopics such as *The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake*, which is about the extraordinary life of the historical figure Qiu Jin. The censors of the Chinese Government always require a film about major historical events and figures to be loyal and faithful to history. Such a requirement means that the specialized censors perceive that there are other people who have participated in making up the story of the film and function as the 'authors' other than the film director. However, such a requirement is always in tension with artistic treatment and subject to how one would interpret the process of 'adaptation' and the meaning of 'artistry' (See Chapter 6 for a further discussion by referencing the making of *The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake* as an example).

Foucault also introduced the term 'transdiscursive' — the position of authors who produced or inspired a literary tradition or a school of thought in which other

books and authors will, in their turn, find a place. In the light of this idea, Foucault (1998: 217-8) classified such rare authors as ‘founders of discursivity’.

They are unique in that they are not just the authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts. [For example, Freud and Marx]: they both have established an endless possibility of discourse. . . . [T]hey made possible not only a certain number of analogies but also (and equally important) a certain number of differences. They have created a possibility for something other than their discourse, yet something belonging to what they founded.

In the light of both Barthes and Foucault’s discourses, a closer inspection of the film censorship practices in the modern world (and the postmodern world as well) reveals that, although the meanings of any film are at the censors’ disposal without passing the author, the author function has played a significant role. The experience of Hong Kong cinema during the Cold War era, a time when there was severe tension in relations across the Taiwan Strait, shows clearly how the author function was engaged in film censorship. The CPC, the Kuomintang and the British Hong Kong Government at that time were attentive to films that would lead to a transdiscursive effect, albeit not to the extent of the effect caused by Foucault’s ‘founders of discursivity’ (see Chapter 3).

Barthes and Foucault’s discourses have shed light on the problem of authors in relation to their respective works which are in the form of text, inclusive of film in the contemporary sense. But what then is the mechanism for reading a text, or attentively watching a film?

Stanley Fish, a major proponent of reader response criticism, also echoes Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” with his dismissal of taking the author’s intent as

the fundamental principle in interpretation. For Fish, reading is an activity which makes meanings and values in a text rather than deriving meaning from a text passively in accord with the author. He stresses the importance of the role of readers in determining the meaning and significance of a text. According to Fish, reading is an interpretive act, by which a reader does not have to read a text in a specific appointed way, but in whatever way he/she chooses in a relatively autonomous manner. Thus, the meaning of a text can vary from reader to reader, from time to time and from place to place. In reality, there may be a number of separate readers who come up with — though they do not have to — the same general meanings or similar understandings on the same text. Fish says that, given this, “both the stability of interpretation among readers and the variety of interpretation in the career of a single reader would seem to argue for the existence of something independent of and prior to interpretive acts” (1980: 167-8), which is what he terms as the ‘interpretive strategy’. A reader reads a text with his/her particular interpretive strategy, a product of the reader’s cumulative experience, which is dependant on the reader’s education, point of view, cultural background, context of environment in which the reader is reading the text, and so forth. The sameness, or similarity, in interpretive strategies situates separate readers in an ‘interpretive community’, a figurative community introduced by Fish, which is “made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions” (Fish 1980: 171). Here, the notion of ‘writing texts’ refers to the making of meanings in the text being read, which recalls Barthes’ idea of removing the Author to let the writing continue. As for religious scriptures, for instance, the Bible, the author is not removed. The Bible seems to bind the reader to one fixed meaning in accord

with the interpretation of the Church; indeed, it is the duty of Christians to seek a way to obtain the same interpretation and understanding as such. By the same token, this kind of fixed meaning aids the comprehension of the CPC's compulsory perspective on history — the CPC, by exercising its sovereignty over the population under its rule, has privatized and monopolized the narrative, interpretation and discourse of history, particularly modern and contemporary Chinese history, and it is the governed population's duty to see and understand history in the same manner as the ruling body. This explains why the films that are categorized as *major revolutionary and historical theme films* under the Chinese Government's administration have to be examined carefully by the appointed and specialized *Leading Group for Major Revolutionary and Historical Theme Film and TV Production – Film* (see Chapters 5 and 6), of which the members are readers in the role of censors who apply their interpretive strategy in determining the meanings and significance of a film.

Unintentionally, Barthes, Foucault and Fish have provided theoretical ground for the censor's interpretation of any texts, inclusive of films. Their theories ground and elucidate the ways in which censors read films, and thus their practice in making censorship decisions. While some films are cut because of explicit images and utterances, others are banned because of their embedded or 'concealed' message, meaning and ideology according to the censors' interpretation. In this sense, censoring film is also an activity of making meanings in a film, and sometimes out of the film, in an active manner — film censorship is also a matter of interpretive acts. By employing their interpretive strategies, the censors determine the meanings in film and thus the censorship result. Those who support the result are within the same interpretive community of the censors. The director is hardly in a privileged

position to defend and explain because his/her intent is out of context in the process of the censors' interpretation. Ironically, when censors consider a film to be violating the law or detrimental to the state to a certain extent, and when the government deems punishment is necessary, the director is the one to be held responsible and punished. With regard to the 'ownership' of any discourse, Foucault's idea of the author function plays a role. By the time responsibility is asked for, the director cannot detach himself/herself from his/her work and is regarded as the one who acts, speaks and performs before the audience. In some cases, for example, the ban on Lou Ye's *Summer Palace* (2006), other related persons such as the producer and the leading cast are punished too (see BBCChinese.Com 4 September 2006 and 15 October 2006), and the banning of the film can be comprehended as a safeguard against any potential transdiscursivity.

The mechanism of *reading* constitutes a significant part of the practice of censorship. Today, successful censorship, and thus its suppression of film, relies on deploying strategy, involving complex operations and transformation, and which are not so apparent as before. The contemporary day-to-day practice of censorship has been implemented in a mode more complex than the past. The primary objective is to make the directly and indirectly governed people willingly and automatically submissive to the censorship standards set by the ruling regime. However, censorship remains as an apparatus and a technique of governmentality for governments, which deals with a certain manipulation of forces, intervenes upon becoming within the context of a social order and determines precisely those aspects of the future that are not knowable in advance.

Chapter 2

Development of Hong Kong Cinema and Colonial Film Censorship *vis-à-vis* Chinese Nation-Building and National Defence

Specifically, Hong Kong cinema is not equivalent to Chinese cinema. The term ‘Chinese cinema’ is, in fact, not definite; it does not denote a single genre. As Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu puts it: “Chinese cinemas cover a broad geographic and historical terrain, including Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and to some extent overseas Chinese communities” (Lu 1997: 1).²⁰ Poshek Fu further remarks:

There has, in fact, never been one monolithic form that can be called Chinese cinema in the singular; rather, a number of different Chinese cinemas have historically made films in different languages (or dialects) and at different geopolitical locations. Chinese cinematic traditions include not only films made in mainland China that cater to audiences that speak the standard Chinese language, Mandarin, but also films made in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other communities of the Chinese diaspora . . . that feature a variety of themes and genres and use local dialects. (Fu 2003: xii)

In a general sense and in its common usage, the attributive determiner ‘Chinese’ in ‘Chinese cinemas’ does not necessarily refer to China or qualify the ‘cinemas’ as something belonging to the country named the People’s Republic of China (PRC). ‘Chinese’, in this instance, is usually taken to mean ethnicity rather than nationality and includes those who do not possess the legal right of belonging to the PRC, and Chinese cinemas are perceived as the cinemas in Chinese languages that include

²⁰ Lu notes: “One must speak of Chinese cinemas in the plural and as transnational in the ongoing process of image-making throughout the twentieth century” (1997: 3).

other Chinese dialects other than Putonghua. Although the political rhetoric of the PRC leadership always includes Hong Kong (also Taiwan and Macau) as part of the PRC, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) is regarded as a foreign region under the Central People's Government of the PRC's administrative provisions for film despite its reunification with China on 1 July 1997. Thus, in a practical sense, to the Chinese government, a Hong Kong film is not equivalent to a Chinese film even though most of the Hong Kong films are in a Chinese language, or more precisely, in the Chinese dialect Cantonese. This problematic situation is leftover from history.

By the time motion picture was invented in the dying days of the nineteenth century, feudal China under the Qing Empire was heading towards its downfall, Hong Kong had been a British colony for more than half a century since the Qing Empire lost the First Opium War (also known as the First Anglo-Chinese War) in 1842, and Taiwan had been ceded to Japan under the terms of the "Treaty of Maguan" (also known as "Treaty of Shimonoseki") after Japan won the First Sino-Japanese War (also known as War of Jiawu) in 1895. As time went by, the three different major streams of Chinese cinemas have had different experiences and trajectories in their developments. There have been times of separation and times of reunion, and they have been fostered in different historical contexts and mobile cultural, economic and socio-political conditions. Despite that a rigorous research on Hong Kong cinema in the past cannot be claimed to be completed, it can still be seen that Hong Kong played a significant role in the Chinese cinemas over the past century.

Before the 1990s, academic studies on Chinese cinemas and their histories were rare in both the Chinese-language and English-language spheres. The most prestigious Chinese-language historical text is Cheng Jihua, Li Shaobai and Xing Zuwen's *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema (Zhongguo Dianying Fazhan Shi)*, first published in Beijing in 1963, which is a magisterial, orthodox and official two-volume narrative work based on the revolutionary historicism of the Communist Party of China (CPC; also known as Chinese Communist Party, abbreviated as CCP). In English, Jay Leyda's work, *Dianying/Electric Shadows: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, published in 1972, is a representative and remarkable one.²¹ Cheng et al.'s work with its heavy pro-CPC and anti-Kuomintang (KMT, also known as *Guomindang* or the Chinese Nationalist Party) tone only has bits and pieces about Hong Kong cinema scattered in the two volumes.²² Moreover, because of the political slant and biased historical views of the editors/authors, many films and filmmakers are omitted from the text. Leyda once asked Cheng Jihua why there was no detailed record of the Shanghai and Northeast China cinemas during the Japanese occupation in *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Cheng replied that he considered the films produced at that time to be the products of the concerted efforts of the Imperial Japanese invaders and a small group of traitors. Since such films transgressed the spirit of the Chinese people's patriotic resistance against Japan, they should be condemned with every endeavour and were not worthy to be included in the history of Chinese cinema(s). This was a matter of principle to Cheng. However, Leyda

²¹ Leyda stayed in China from 1959 to 1963 and took part in the research work of Cheng et al.'s *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema* (Leyda 1972: xiii).

²² Fu remarks, "Hong Kong film has been largely ignored by China scholars. . . . [M]ost authoritative historical texts on Chinese cinema overlook the significant role played by Hong Kong in its development as a pan-Chinese mass culture industry" (2003: 52).

responded that he could accept condemnation, but not silencing (see Leyda 1972: 139). In the light of academic study and genuine communication, one may suppose Cheng et al.'s work is a (self-)censored work; its documentation is far from complete, and its discourse is far from authentic. As for Leyda's work, there is only one chapter (Chapter 11) on Hong Kong cinema.

The first book in English entirely devoted to Hong Kong cinema came out in 1977; it is *Window on Hong Kong: A Sociology Study on the Hong Kong Film Industry and Its Audience* by I. C. Jarvie, a colleague of Jay Leyda at New York University. In addition, starting in 1978, the Hong Kong International Film Festival issues a yearly bilingual (Chinese and English) special edition of essays devoted to Hong Kong cinema retrospectives. Such works have provoked and invigorated the research on Hong Kong cinema among local and overseas scholars. Nevertheless, despite the increasing number of publications on early Hong Kong cinema over the past twenty years or so, there is no conclusive or agreed-upon narrative on a number of historical issues, for example, the claim to be 'the first', and there are even contradictory data among different scholars' works. However, while some factual accounts in older publications were disproved later upon new research findings, other previous mistakes are still being shared (to be discussed specifically in the section below). Those discovered mistakes, and the unknown mistakes as well, are either owing to the scarcity of relevant primary materials or being misled by the errors in formerly acclaimed works. In short, a genuine documentation of Hong Kong cinema is still an on-going project.²³

²³ Unless otherwise stated, the historical materials in this text are deliberately selected and verified with primary sources or based on discursive evidence by the writer or other scholars. However, since many Chinese movies of the early years have no official English titles, there are inconsistent translations in different English-language narratives and documentations. This text uses mainly the

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With the aid of the memoirs and monographs of film veterans, such as Lai Man-wai (also known as Li Minwei), Moon Kwan (also known as Kwan Man-ching), Lo Dun and so forth, film researchers and scholars have basically outlined a concise picture of the early Hong Kong cinema by assembling and analysing the related news reports, column articles and advertisements in the preserved old newspapers such as *The China Mail*, *Hong Kong Daily Press*, *The Hong Kong Telegraph* and so forth.²⁴

An advertisement in the *Hong Kong Telegraph* published on 24 April 1897 declared:

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HONGKONG – ‘THE CINEMATOGRAPH’ (The latest and greatest success of London and Paris) will exhibit for a short season, commencing TUESDAY, the 27TH April, 1897. . . Admission: ONE DOLLAR; Children, half-price. (Capitalizations in original)

Two days later, the earliest recorded cinema activity in Hong Kong took place when Professor Maurice Charvet, coming from Paris as reported by *The China Mail*, presented the *Cinématographe* to the press at the Theatre Royal of City Hall (demolished in 1933). The previewed short actualities, as indicated in the newspaper advertisement, included *The Arrival of the Czar in Paris*, *Loie Fuller’s*

translations available from the Hong Kong Film Archive; such an option also applies to the early Chinese filmmakers who do not have any endorsed English names.

²⁴ (i) Yu Mo-wan, a notable researcher who spent forty years researching into the early cinema of Hong Kong, had a large collection of Chinese-language literature and materials related to the early Hong Kong cinema, including rare copies of old film magazine, newspaper clips, special publications, books, film stills, film posters, etc. He donated all his collections to Hong Kong Film Archive before his death in 2006. Other scholars in this area include Law Kar, Frank Bren, Chung Po Yin, etc.

(ii) The Hong Kong Public Library has eleven issues of Hong Kong newspapers published from 1853 to 1987, with the old English newspapers being more completely preserved. The English newspapers, however, concentrated on the news and activities of westerners, paid little attention to the local Chinese and ignored cinema activities in Cantonese opera houses, tea houses, etc.

Serpentine Dance, Boxing Bet – ‘*Corbett and Mitchell*’ and so forth. Reporters complimented the show as a ‘marriage of photography and electricity’. *Hong Kong Daily Press* (26 April 1897) said that it was a first for Hong Kong; *The China Mail* claimed that all were Lumière brothers’ productions and reported on 28 April 1897:

The mechanism of the Cinematograph is of the simplest description. A long strip of photographic film, containing very minute photographs, is wound from one cylinder to the other, the photographs passing the lenses at the rate of fifty per second.

Nonetheless, an announcement published in *The Hong Kong Telegraph* of 27 April 1897 notified the public that the scheduled opening exhibition was postponed for one day due to a mechanical problem of the projection machine.²⁵ The *Cinématographe* was then opened to the public on 28 April with five sessions a day as indicated in an advertisement published in *The Hong Kong Telegraph*.²⁶ According to Frank Bren (1998), the show lasted until 4 May at least. The hour-long show attracted a large audience every day, and business boomed according to a report in *The North China Herald* published in Shanghai on 14 May 1897 (cited in Law and Bren 2012: 16). However, records and reports of the event can only be found in English newspapers and not in the preserved Chinese newspapers perhaps because the novel entertainment was initially confined to the colony’s dominant class that included westerners and the wealthy and usually British-educated Chinese commercial elite.

²⁵ According to Chung Po Yin (2011: 44), there was a premiere of the *Cinématographe* on 27 April 1897 that the Governor of Hong Kong William Robinson and the Colonial Secretary James H. S. Lockhart also attended. However, Chung did not mention the source of the information.

²⁶ In 1998, an *L’Institut Lumière* spokesman in Lyon replied to film scholar Frank Bren’s queries in a letter; he confirmed: “[The right to use ‘*Cinématographe*’] was definitely the property of Lumiere, but was impossible to protect. We estimate that, starting in 1896, over 600 copycat machines were soon manufactured or patented in France alone. So, unauthorised screenings under the ‘*Cinématographe*’ name could easily have been done a year later in Hong Kong. . . . As for the name Maurice Charvet, we have no record” (as cited in Bren 1998). For more about the *Cinématographe*, see footnote 16.

After the debut of the *Cinématographe*, moving pictures became very popular in Hong Kong and that drew western businessmen to the colony to explore the highly profitable cinema business. As can be seen in the advertisements found in old newspapers, the City Hall was often one of the venues for moving picture exhibitions. However, the projection device was not limited to the *Cinématographe*. For instance, according to an advertisement in *The Hong Kong Telegraph* of 23 April 1900, a special attraction, the Bioscope with a repertoire of two hundred of the latest pictures, had come to town (cited in Law and Bren 2004: 20). Starting at roughly 1900, more and more advertisements appeared in Chinese newspapers, which implied that the entertainment had gradually extended to the commonality. During that time, the moving picture businesses were largely led by western businessmen who rented out projection facilities and imported films from the US and Europe with the help of compradors. In order to lure in bigger audiences, opera houses that initially catered for Cantonese opera performances introduced moving picture exhibitions as an extra attraction, a move which proved to be very helpful to business (Chung 2011: 46-7). Other venues included open areas at night and tea houses and rental premises. Nevertheless, the early venues were either temporary or just had business for short periods due to insufficient film sources. There were no dedicated premises for film shows until movie house business began to flourish after 1910 and feature films gradually replaced the compilations of shorts (Zhou and Li 2005: 17-8; Yu 1996: 26-28).²⁷

Actual filming took place in Hong Kong not long after the first motion picture exhibition. In 1898, an American crew came to the British colony and shot

²⁷ For more on the early exhibitions of motion pictures in Hong Kong, see Law and Bren (2012: 13-7, 24-30, 292-5), Law (2002: 45), Chung (2011: 44-9), Zhou and Li (2005: 12-8), Bren (1998) and Yu (1996: 5-70, 81-107). However, some historical materials in these texts contradict each other.

some short travelogues for the Thomas Edison Company. There were at least seven such shorts according to the documentation in film historian Charles Musser's *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890-1900 – An Annotated Filmography*, published in 1997 (Law and Bren 2001: 13-14). They were all in 35mm film format, including *Government House at Hong Kong, Street Scene in Hong Kong, Hong Kong Regiment No.1, Hong Kong Regiment No.2, Hong Kong Wharf Scene* and some others; all are now preserved in the Library of Congress, the United States of America (US).²⁸

Controversially, a number of unspecialized publications still credit the two-reel, fifteen-minute long *Chuang Tzu Tests His Wife (Zhuangzi Shiqi)*, also known as *Zhuangzi Tests His Wife* or *The Defamation of Choung Chow*), produced in 1914 as the first narrative film ever made by Hong Kong filmmakers in Hong Kong.²⁹ Filming facilities for the film were provided by a Russian-born American Jew, Benjamin Brodsky (who changed his last name to Borden in 1957), who also

²⁸ In his essay "The American Connection in Early Hong Kong Cinema" (2002 [2000]), Law Kar took the shootings led by James Ricalton, a photographer working for Thomas Edison Company, as the first Hong Kong cinema activity. However, in his later book *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-Cultural View* (2004) (a revised Chinese edition was published in 2012), the credit goes evidently to the 'Cinématographe' presentation in 1897. Furthermore, Law only says an American crew shooting for Thomas Edison Company without mentioning James Ricalton because he finds in Musser's work that those short films are credited to James White and Frederick Blechynden (or Bleckynden). Besides, Stephen Teo's *Hong Kong Cinema – The Extra Dimension* (2007 [1997]: 27-8) and Poshek Fu's *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong – The Politics of Chinese Cinema* (2003: 54) also take the 'Ricalton shootings' or the 'shooting for Edison' as the first Hong Kong cinema activity.

²⁹ (i) Zhou and Li (2005, 2007) argue that *Chuang Tzu Tests His Wife* was funded by an American businessman (or company) and thus cannot be claimed as a Hong Kong film.

(ii) Hong Kong celebrated a 100 years of cinema in 2009 with the recognition of *Stealing a Roast Duck*, reputedly made in 1909, as the first Hong Kong film. This was based on a few authoritative works on cinema history, such as Cheng et al.'s *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema* (1978a [1963]: 28-9) and George Sadoul's *Histoire du Cinema Mondial* (1982 [1979]: 545, 746). Recent studies by scholars, such as Law and Bren (2012), have found *Stealing a Roast Duck* was probably made later than *Chuang Tzu Tests His Wife*, and, perhaps, made in Shanghai.

(iii) Film scholars such as Zhou and Li (2005), Law and Bren (2012), on the basis of new research findings, have indicated that the film was probably produced in early 1914.

For more on the relevant narratives and discussions of the above; see Zhou and Li (2005: 23-39, 44-5, 74; 2007), Law and Bren (2012: 31-57), Feng Qun (2009: 28-38) and Yu (1996: 73-9). For the synopsis of *Chuang Tzu Tests His Wife*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I* (1997: 3).

funded the production.³⁰ Lai Man-wai wrote the script and played the wife of Chuang Tzu (also known as Zhuangzi), his wife Yim Shan-shan (also known as Yan Shanshan) who played the maid of Chuang Tzu's wife became the first Chinese actress on screen, Lai Man-wai's elder brother Lai Buk-hoi (also known as Lai Pak-hoi or Li Beihai) played Chuang Tzu, and R. F. Van Velzer, an employee of Brodsky, was the head cameraman. Since the division of labour in filmmaking was probably not precise at that time and there was no such term literally meaning 'director' in Chinese, who directed the film remains a matter of debate.³¹ For instance, Leyda (1972: 365) and Cheng et al. (1978a [1963]: 521) credit Lai Man-wai as the director while Yu Mo-wan (1996: 76) and Zhou and Li (2005: 37-9) argue that the film was directed by Lai Buk-hoi. Soon after the film was finished, it was shown in Hong Kong with great success. Later, Brodsky brought the film together with some other Chinese films, including *Stealing a Roast Duck* (*Tou Shao Ya*; also known as *The Trip of the Roast Duck*; also financed by Brodsky) to the US and exhibited them to the American public. Veteran film director Moon Kwan confirms the US screening in his memoir (1976: 110).

As documented in *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I (1913-1941)* published by Hong Kong Film Archive in 1997, beginning with the fiction film *Chuang Tzu Tests His Wife*, Hong Kong produced more than six hundred films before the fall of Hong Kong in 1941, among which some four hundred were produced in the 1930s. Also controversially, particularly in the age of globalization, research coordinator Yu Mo-wan defines 'Hong Kong film' in the "Preface":

³⁰ For more about Benjamin Brodsky (1875?/1877?-1960), see Law and Bren (2012: 31-58).

³¹ According Zhou and Li (2005: 38-9), the Chinese term '*daoyan*' (or '*do yin*' in Cantonese) as a translation equivalent to 'director' in English first appeared in 1922.

‘Hong Kong film’ must be made by a company that is established in Hong Kong (even though the company may not have a long history or has only a small office). If its production company is not established in Hong Kong, the film cannot be considered as a ‘Hong Kong film’. (1997b: xiii)

Yu further remarks:

Out of the 600 feature films and documentaries produced in the pre-war years, it is estimated that only four features and one documentary have survived and there are less than 20 synopses and 50 film stills preserved from that period. Since most of the information contained in the filmography came from film advertisements in different newspapers and a very small number of newsletters and reviews, this filmography cannot claim to be complete. (Ibid)

Censorship in Early Hong Kong Cinema

During the early twentieth century, the films shown in Hong Kong were mostly imported from the US, France and England by western businessmen. However, there was no record of official ban or cut of any film. Anti-colonial sentiment might attribute that to the colonial government’s policies which were lenient towards, and in favour of, the benefit and economic domination of westerners. Whatever the reason, the colonial Legislative Council enacted no dedicated censorship law in the nascent years of Hong Kong cinema.

The Legislative Council of Hong Kong was established under the first constitution of British Hong Kong that was in the form of “Queen Victoria’s Letters Patent” entitled the “Charter of the Colony of Hong Kong”.

[The Legislative Council] empowered “the Governor for the time being . . . with the advice of the said Legislative Council . . . to make and enact all such Laws and Ordinances as may from time to time be required for the peace, order and good government . . . of Hong Kong”. The Letters Patent of 1888, which replaced the 1843 Charter, added the significant words “and consent” after the words “with the advice”.

The Legislative Council has undergone great changes over the past one and a half centuries and evolved from being an advisory body to a legislature with powers and functions to render checks and balances on the executive authorities. (Legislative Council of the Hong Kong SAR of the PRC)

At its very beginning in 1843, the members of the Legislative Council were the same as those of the Executive Council which was also established under the “Charter of the Colony of Hong Kong”, and there were only four official members, inclusive of the Governor as president and member.³² Unofficial members were first introduced into the Legislative Council in 1850, and the number of councillors increased gradually in the ensuing years. Ng Choy (also known as Wu Ting-fan) was appointed to be an unofficial member in 1880 and became the first Chinese member of the council. Before 1985, all unofficial members were appointed by the Governor.

The first ever elections to the Council were held [in 1985]. After the elections, there were 11 Official Members (including four ex officio), and 46 Unofficial Members, of whom 22 were appointed by the Governor, 12 elected from functional constituencies, one elected from among members of the Urban Council, one elected from among members of the Regional Council, and 10 elected by an electoral college constituency made up of members of all district boards. (Ibid)

³² For a brief account of the formation of political system in colonial Hong Kong, see Au et al. 2011: 53-65.

In 1995, the last British colonial Legislative Council became a fully elected legislature; there were sixty members, of whom thirty came from functional constituencies, twenty were returned by direct elections in geographical constituencies and ten were elected by the Election Committee constituency. In 2012, the number of members had increased to seventy, with thirty-five returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections and thirty-five returned by functional constituencies (ibid).

According to the records of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong SAR, the earliest ordinance related to Hong Kong cinema was “The Theatres Regulation Ordinance” passed by the Legislative Council on 15 October 1908 (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1908 Session*: 147).³³ The ordinance took charge of:

Theatres and places for public performances to be licensed.
Cinematography displays subject to permit of Registrar General.³⁴
Penalty for presenting cinematography displays without permit.
Regulation of theatres and places of public performance. (As abstracted by the University of Hong Kong Libraries)

The ordinance concerned mainly the order and safety issues of the premises, such as seating accommodation, control and the prevention of fire and overcrowding (University of Hong Kong Libraries). The time this ordinance emerged coincided with a time when movie-going had become a popular entertainment for the general public which drew the attention of the authorities. According to French and Petley, in early cinema: “[T]here were health and safety fears . . . , fear of fire hazards from unsafe buildings and highly inflammable nitrate film . . . ; fear that these hot, fetid

³³ From 1896 to 1929, the colonial Legislative Council was consisted of eight official members and six unofficial members (Legislative Council of the Hong Kong SAR of the PRC).

³⁴ The Registrar General was later renamed the Secretary of Chinese Affairs in 1913.

auditoriums could spread contagious diseases” (2007: 7). *The Chinese Mail* (*Wah Dzi Yat Po*) reported on 18 September 1905 that a moving picture exhibition venue made of bamboo scaffolding in Central District caught fire at night; luckily no one was injured (cited in Yu 1996: 32).³⁵ Concurrently, opera houses and theatres were always overcrowded with enthusiastic moving picture audiences. For instance, *The Chinese Mail* of 17 July 1905 reported that Ko Sing Theatre, situated in the Western District of Hong Kong Island, was fined fifty dollars for admitting three to four hundred people, allowing them to stand and overcrowd the passageways by the auditorium during a period of intense heat (ibid). “The Theatres Regulation Ordinance, 1908” can be understood as the colonial government’s response to such occurrences. However, Article 4 of the ordinance, the only article aimed at film content, simply required a written description of every scene intended to be presented or produced at any cinematograph display of a public nature be first furnished to the Registrar General and that a permit be obtained before any presentation and advertising.³⁶ This meant that the film itself was not required to be censored.

Substantive film censorship came about in 1919. *The Chinese Mail* reported on 2 May 1919 that Henry Pollock, a senior unofficial member of the Legislative Council, delivered a speech about fulfilling an urgent task in Hong Kong:

³⁵ *The Chinese Mail* formerly published Chinese-language special pages named *Chung Oi Sun Man Chat Yat Po* (*Seven-Day Post of Chinese and Foreign News*) attached to the *China Mail*. Starting from 17 April 1872, it was published on its own, at first thrice a week, and was one of the most significant Chinese newspapers before the Japanese occupation. Its publication ceased upon the Japanese occupation on 25 December 1941 and resumed publication twice in 1946; however, it closed down again because of insufficient capital.

See also Chapter 1 for the fire incident caused by a cinematograph show occurred in the Paris Charity Bazaar on 4 May 1897.

³⁶ The Registrar General served as an agent of communication between the government and the people, particularly the local Chinese.

Pollock said that Hong Kong is in dire need of censors. Films coming from England and the US have been censored in their place of origin, but films that are suitable for the Englishmen and the Americans may not be entirely suitable for the local. There are three censors in total in Hong Kong . . . , hearing no whole film but parts of the films were censored out. (Cited in Yu 1996: 92-3; my translation)

The speech indicates that official censors were already in office in 1919 and had carried out their duty albeit no documentation on any official orders of excisions is available thus far. Inasmuch as the news was reported by a Chinese newspaper, it can be presumed that it was thought to be of interest to the general public. On 31 October of the same year, the colonial government replaced “The Theatres Regulation Ordinance, 1908” by the enactment of the “Places of Public Entertainment Regulation Ordinance, 1919” (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1919 Session*: 114-6). According to Article 4 of the ordinance:

- (1) No person shall advertise, present, or carry on any cinematograph display to which the public are invited, or cause any such display to be advertised, presented, or carried on, except under a permit in writing from the Captain Superintendent of Police, who shall have full discretion either to grant or to withhold or to cancel the same, and, in the case of a cinematograph display at a Chinese theatre to which the public are invited, such person must also obtain a permit in writing for such performance from the Secretary for Chinese Affairs.³⁷

³⁷ (i) “In 1930, the English title of the Head of the Force was changed from Captain Superintendent to Inspector General In 1935, the English name . . . was changed yet again to Commissioner of Police [*however, such a title was written in the “Places of Public Entertainment Regulations, 1934”*]. . . . In 1969, in recognition of the Police Force’s outstanding performance during the 1967 riots, Queen Elizabeth II bestowed the prefix ‘Royal’ to the Hong Kong Police Force and the Hong Kong Auxiliary Police Force. . . . At the stroke of midnight on July 1, 1997, the ‘Royal’ prefixes were dropped” (*Offbeat, Issue 779*, 2004; published by the Hong Kong Police Force).

(ii) In 1913, the former Department of Chinese Affairs headed by the Registrar General was renamed Secretariat for Chinese Affairs with the Secretary as its head officer. The department changed its name to Home Affairs Department in 1971 as the colonial government considered its duty not only confined to matters relating to Chinese. The department was renamed Home Affairs Bureau after 1 July 1997.

- (2) No such permit by the Captain Superintendent of Police shall be given until the film or films to be used at such display and the poster or posters in connexion therewith shall have been *censored* and passed in accordance with such regulations as may be made for the purpose under this Ordinance, and any film or poster, when once *censored* and passed as aforesaid, shall not be altered or added to in any way whatsoever without a fresh censoring and passing. (University of Hong Kong Libraries; emphasis added)

This marked the first legislation dedicated to film censorship in Hong Kong.

More precise regulatory provisions for film were implemented with the promulgation of the “Places of Public Entertainment Regulations, 1934”. According to Part VII of it, before any screening and display, all films and their associated posters had to be censored by the ‘board of censors’ composed of the Commissioner of Police, the then Secretary for Chinese Affairs and the then Director of Education.³⁸ Nevertheless, with the sanction of the Governor, the actual censorship work was carried out by one of the board members or other authorized persons. Article 179 under Part VII instituted a judicial ground for appeal; it stated that if the owner of a film were not content with the censorship result, he/she could appeal to the board. Nonetheless, the board would have the final right of decision. There were censorship fees for fresh censoring as well as for appeal in respect to the length of film, and the fee for the latter was very much higher (see *Historical Laws of Hong Kong Online* by the University of Hong Kong Libraries).

³⁸ The Director of Education was the title of the head of the colonial Education Department, who was called the Inspector of Education before April 1909. In 1983, the former Education Department was restructured into the ‘Education and Manpower Branch’ and the Education Department, with the latter reporting to the former. In 2003, the Education Department was replaced by the Education and Manpower Bureau, which was split into the ‘Labour and Welfare Bureau’ and the Education Bureau in 2007; the Education Department has been headed by the Secretary for Education since then up to the present (2014).

Statute Law Not the Only Means of Censorship

Statute law is not the only means of film censorship. Film production can also be regulated by administrative decision and other ways of governmental intervention. Lai Man-wai's experience is an example. There was neither a local film production nor a local film company in Hong Kong until 1923 when the Lai brothers — Lai Hoi-Shan (also known as Li Haishan), Lai Buk-hoi and Lai Man-wai — established the first solely Hong Kong Chinese-owned film company in Hong Kong, the China Sun (*Man Sun*; also known as *Minxin*) Film Production Company. Besides buying new cameras and all the other necessary filming and editing equipment from the US, the company was fully equipped with film development and processing facilities. However, when they applied to the colonial government for a piece of land to build their studio, the application was protracted and was not approved in the end. China Sun, thus, moved to Guangzhou (historically known as Canton) in the winter of 1924 and built their studio there, and, in February 1926, the company moved again to Shanghai and built their studio in the French concession (Cheng et al. 1978a [1963]: 104-5).

The Hong Kong Government's disapproval of the Lai brothers' application was probably due to political considerations. Lai Man-wai was particularly concerned about socio-political issues and had been a member of Sun Yat-sen's *Tungmenghui* (also known as the Chinese United League or the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance), a dedicated underground organization initially formed with the aim to overthrow the Manchurian rule over China. He was also a senior member of the KMT and had made a number of documentaries on Sun Yat-sen and other KMT leaders.

Li Minwei [Lai Man-wai]'s backing for Sun's republican philosophy and political aims is the first instance in Chinese film history of a film-maker using the new medium of film to propagate a political cause. It was Li [Lai] who raised the slogan 'Save the Nation Through Cinema!' (Teo 2007 [1997]: 4)

The 'Nation' that Lai Man-wai referred to was the revolutionary China led by Sun Yat-sen's KMT. However, the British Hong Kong Government of the time did not embrace the political pursuit that Lai Man-wai advocated because Britain recognized the Beiyang Government in Peking (now Beijing), which was also the internationally recognized government of the then Republic of China. Besides, the colonial government was sensitive to the development of new world and regional powers after World War I, particularly those related to Chinese nationalism and communism. The then Governor of Hong Kong, Reginald Edward Stubbs who was in office from September 1919 to October 1925, distrusted the KMT activities highly. When Sun Yat-sen was elected as the Extraordinary President (*Feichang Dazongtong*) of the Republic of China in 1921, Stubbs said, "[N]o one in the colony should have anything to do with the unrecognized government" (*South China Morning Post* 7 May 1921). Stubbs was also agitated by the seamen's strike of 1922, a labour movement influenced by nationalistic ideology and supported by Sun Yat-sen, in which some one hundred and twenty thousand workers joined in and showed their support to the seamen.³⁹

The Lai brothers, on the other hand, were idealists. In setting up China Sun, they believed in cinema as something more than entertainment. They believed films had the power to educate, to criticize, and to

³⁹ "The 1922 strike, which involved in the main Hong Kong's seamen, was called primarily as the result of a dispute on wages. The strike demonstrated the ability of the seamen to bring Hong Kong trade to a standstill, and ended in victory for the strikers" (Faure 1997: 149-150). For more about the seamen's strike of 1922, see Chan (1994: 40-5) and Liu (2009: 143-6).

improve society as a whole – principles broadly stated in the company’s articles of association. (Law 2002: 48-9)

What the Lai brothers wished for and from cinema was not in line with the political stance of the colonial government. Any colonial government prefers purely entertainment films over those that are undesirable to colonial rule; governance turns difficult the more nationalistic and patriotic the colonized become. In short, the colonizer would scarcely welcome any socio-political interference which would impede colonial policies. The Hong Kong government’s refusal to approve China Sun’s application to build a studio can be understood as a form of political censorship, albeit a premature and impulsive form, which can prevent and hinder the possible or foreseeable productions of any ‘troublesome’ films not welcomed by the colonial government.⁴⁰ This sort of determination testifies to Foucault’s theory of ‘author function’, by which Lai Man-wai, though not necessarily the actual maker of the films that would be produced by China Sun, was understood as an author and functional agent of the discourse itself and was “characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society” (see Foucault 1998: 205-222). As a matter of course, the colonial government anticipated that China Sun’s production would probably tend to be undesirable discourses of the colonial governance, particularly when politics was concerned.

Films can also be prohibited from public exhibition for contextual reasons. For example, on 15 May 1925, Chinese workers of a Japanese-owned textile factory in Shanghai went on strike to resist the ill-treatment by Japanese foremen. The workers attempted to break into the factory when the factory’s owner refused to negotiate on their terms. In the struggle, a Japanese foreman shot a labour leader

⁴⁰ For more about Lai Man-wai and the China Sun, see Zhou and Li (2005: 58-72).

dead. The incident stirred up numerous strikes and protests against Japanese-run industries. In the May Thirtieth Movement (also known as May Thirtieth Incident), thousands of students and workers held a rally in the foreign-controlled Shanghai International Settlement. When they were demanding the release of previously arrested demonstrators in the afternoon, a British officer commanded the Sikh police to open fire on the protesting crowd, leading to more than ten dead, some forty wounded and another some forty arrested. The massacre triggered off an outburst of vigorous anti-imperialist and anti-foreign sentiment across the nation.⁴¹ The Communists and the Nationalist Government in Guangzhou immediately conceived an idea of staging a mass strike and a boycott of British goods in the nearby British colony, Hong Kong. Some one hundred and forty primarily separate labour unions in Hong Kong united together to form the Federation of Hong Kong Trade Unions and mobilized a strike. The strike committee announced a number of demands and presented them to the colonial government on 21 June 1925. The demands included an eight-hour working day; the right to vote for a Chinese Legislative Council member; social and political equality between Chinese and Europeans; freedom of speech, press, association and assembly; and so on. On 23 June, one hundred thousand people held a protest march in Shamian (also known as Shameen Island or Shamin Island), Guangzhou, but they were fired on by the garrisons in the French and British concessions, resulting in fifty-two massacred, and more than one hundred and seventy wounded. When the news reached Hong Kong, it further intensified the resentment against the British colonial rule and the westerners' privileged status. Workers responded by expanding the on-going strike to a general strike, which gave rise to the historical Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott (also known as the

⁴¹ For more about the May Thirtieth Movement, see Ku Hung-Ting's "Urban Mass Movement: The May Thirtieth Movement in Shanghai" (1979: 197-216).

Canton-Hong Kong Strike). Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong students and workers, including those in the film industry, joined the strike and left for Guangzhou. Strikers soon blockaded the land and sea transportation in and out of Hong Kong, making the colony isolated from both Chinese and foreign accesses. Under the organized strike and economic blockade, the society and economy of Hong Kong were caught in chaos and crises — streets were piled up with garbage, transportation in the city was stagnant, everyday life provisions were in shortage, food price increased sharply and so forth. However, the colonial government kept on ignoring the strike committee's demands. Instead, Governor Stubbs exercised his authority empowered by the “Emergency Regulations Ordinance, 1922” and took emergency measures by imposing a curfew, raiding the strike leaders, restricting Hong Kong citizens from departure and censoring mails, telegrams and Chinese newspapers to block the circulation of pro-strike materials. While some movie houses were shut down as a result of the strike, the government prohibited all film exhibitions to prevent people from assembling. In this regard, the ban was not on any particular films, but on the movie-going activities of the public. At the same time, other than some short newsreels, film productions were also forced to a halt; film companies were either closed or moved to China, mainly to Guangzhou and Shanghai (Law and Bren 2012: 116-7; Zhou and Li 2005:77-78).⁴²

According to the *Great Britain Colonial Office Series 129* (cited in Liu, Shuyung 2009: 149), Governor Stubbs, in order to stop the strike, telegraphed letters to the British Colonial Office from June to September 1925 to advocate military action to overthrow the Nationalist Government of Guangzhou that supported the

⁴² For more about the productions and screenings of the newsreels during the Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott, see Yu 1996: 163-5.

strike. The British Government (Her Majesty's Government, the central government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), however, considered the idea transgressed Britain's China policy, and it was unrealistic to levy a war on China because the British partial interest in Hong Kong should yield to the British interest in China as a whole. Later in October, an expert on China, Cecil Clementi who was well-versed in Cantonese, replaced Stubbs as Governor (see Liu 2009:149-150). The new governor extended a gesture of friendship to the Chinese community by appointing a local Chinese for the first time in the colony to be an unofficial member of the Executive Council, the colony's top policy-making body.⁴³ However, the colonial government's representatives still refused to talk with the striking workers and insisted on negotiating with the Nationalist Government of Guangzhou only. The negotiation took a long time, however, and got caught up in a seesaw battle without a substantive solution (Au et al. 2011:154).

The Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott eventually lasted for sixteen months. The Nationalist Government in Guangzhou called it off in October 1926 because of internal conflict between the left and right wings, and more pressingly, the government had to focus on the Northern Expedition (also known as the Northern March), a military movement led by the KMT to unify the country by eliminating the warlords in northern China. The strike-boycott remains the longest general strike in the history of the world labour movement. Every aspect of everyday life was

⁴³ The Executive Council was a formal body of advisers to the Governor as well as the Hong Kong Government's core policy-making organ (Chan 1994: 51). In 1926, Chow Shouson, a businessman, was the first Chinese, or more precisely the first Hong Kong local, appointed as an unofficial member of the Executive Council. At first, Leo Amery and Austen Chamberlain, the then Colonial Secretary and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs respectively, objected to the appointment because they considered Chinese not trustworthy in maintaining confidentiality. It took Clementi's repeated requests to persuade the British Government to finally agree to it. However, after the appointment, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO; commonly known as Foreign Office) insisted that Executive Councillors were not allowed to read confidential files (Welsh 1997: 400).

affected, and a sizable portion of the Hong Kong economy was crippled, which made Hong Kong both a ‘dead city’ and a ‘dead port’.⁴⁴ Normal feature film production remained dormant until 1928 when Lai Buk-hoi came back to Hong Kong from Guangzhou and collaborated with the tycoon Lee Hysan to establish the Hong Kong Film Company which started on the productions of *The Witty Sorcerer* (*Joh Chi Hei Cho*) and *The Pain of Separation* (*Hak To Chau Han*) in the same year. However, the completion of both films was delayed when Lee was gunned down in an assassination because of his opium business. Finally on 14 March 1930, *The Witty Sorcerer* directed by Lai Buk-hoi was released in Hong Kong and was the first local title on screens since the end of the general strike. The success of *The Witty Sorcerer* symbolized the recovery of Hong Kong cinema as the aftermath of the general strike gradually subsided (Law and Bren 2012: 117; Zhou and Li 2005: 79-81).

Besides causing immense hardship and drastic economic losses to Hong Kong, the Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott dealt British imperialism and colonial rule a severe blow politically and economically. Governor Clementi absorbed the lesson and was impelled to develop good relations with the Chinese population so as to be able to govern effectively (Au et al. 2011:155). “By the 1930s, the Hong Kong government made serious effort in various social reforms, which, in turn, set the course for some of its [social welfare] policies in the 1950s” (Faure, David 1997: 150). However, the strike-boycott had also awakened the government’s awareness of the Communist and Nationalist ‘subversive’ ideology and activities, and led to more distinct and substantive censorship of the media in the

⁴⁴ For more about the Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott, see Liu (2009: 146-153), Anjali Cadambi (26 Sept 2010), Chan Lau Kit-ching (1999: 53-70), Au et al. (2011: 151-9) and Chan Ming Kou (1975: 268-356).

ensuing years. For example, the enactment of “Places of Public Entertainment Regulations, 1934” mentioned earlier enabled the colonial government to implement more precise regulatory provisions for film and the formation of the official board of censors. However, the Chinese national cinema (*minzu dianying*) began to grow at the same time.

Modernity, nation-building, nationalism, anti-imperialism, antifeudalism [*sic*], and new gender identities are among the central themes of such a national cinema. Chinese national cinema necessarily becomes part and parcel of the forging of a new national culture. Amidst the proliferation of “soft” entertainment films (romance, butterfly fiction, martial arts, ghosts, costume drama), the left-wing film workers seized upon the political and revolutionary potential of this new technology of visibility and attempted to make it into a mass art of conscious social criticism. (Lu 1997: 4-5)

However, before the CPC and KMT collaborated to fight against their common enemy, Japan, in early 1937, there were tensions within the so-called ‘national cinema’ as the conflict between the two parties became tenser and tenser, and expanded into civil war in 1927.⁴⁵ The civil war weakened China’s defensive power militarily, and encouraged Japan’s ambition. The Japanese military took control of Manchuria in the September 18 Incident (also known as the Mukden Incident or Manchurian Incident) in 1931 and attacked Shanghai in the January 28 Incident (also known as the Shanghai Incident) in 1932. It was in this context that an aggrandisement of the national cinema — the ‘national defence’ series of patriotic films emphasising the resistance to Imperial Japan — emerged as the Chinese filmmakers’ response. The national defence films persisted and played a significant

⁴⁵ The hostile acts of the two parties endured for decades after the end of the Pacific War and influenced the ecology of Chinese cinemas significantly. For more about the disagreements on and conflicts over ‘national cinema’ between the CPC and KMT camps, see Cheng et al. (1978a [1963]: 171-299), but bear in mind that the discourse is inclined to the CPC.

role in the Chinese cinemas until the Japanese occupations. While the Japanese military had brought down the curtain on national defence films in regions they occupied, Joe Chiu (also known as Chiu Shu-sun, Joseph Sunn or Zhao Shu-sen) and Moon Kwan continued to contribute to the Chinese national cinema in the US.

Grandview (*Daguan*) (US) Film Company was founded in San Francisco in 1933 by Joe Chiu with the aid of Moon Kwan, who were both Cantonese but educated in the US. Grandview's debut *Romance of the Songsters* (*Goh Lui Ching Chiu* or *Gelu Qingchao*), one of the first Cantonese-speaking films in the world, was directed by Joe Chiu and starred by Kwan Tak-hing (also known as Guan Dexing) and Wu Dip-ying (also known as Hu Dieying), with the Chinese community in San Francisco as the story background.⁴⁶ The company moved to Hong Kong in late 1934 and produced some sixty Cantonese films between February 1935 and December 1941. It also produced some twenty films in the US from 1939 to 1945.⁴⁷ In 1935, Grandview (Hong Kong) released one of the first Chinese national defence films, *Lifeline* (*Sang Ming Sin* or *Shengming Xian*), produced by Joe Chiu and directed by Moon Kwan.⁴⁸ When the film was submitted for censorship, the

⁴⁶ According to *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I*, the earliest Cantonese films produced in Hong Kong were *The Idiot's Wedding Night* (*Soh Jai Dung Fong*, 1933) directed by Lai Buk-hoi, *Conscience* (*Leung Sum*, 1933) directed by Chow Wing-loi and Mak Siu-ha, *Nightmare of Fortune* (*Fan Wah Mung*, 1934) and *The Mischief Makers* (*Nau Gai Jo Chung*, 1934) directed by Mak Siu-ha.

⁴⁷ 'Grandview Film Co., Ltd.' was the English name of the company printed in *Business Directory of Hong Kong and Macao 1939* (as cited in Jarvie (1977: 7)). According to the *American Film Institute Catalog: Within Our Gates – Ethnicity in American Feature Films, 1911-1960* (cited in Han: 2009: 11), there were two English names for Grandview (US); they were 'Grandview Film Company' and 'Tai Quon Motion Picture Company'. For more about Grandview, Joe Chiu and Moon Kwan, see Law (2002 [2000]:50-9), Law and Bren (2012: 82-3, 85-92) and Kwok (2001: 213-4). For more about Grandview (US), see Han (2009: 11-5).

⁴⁸ Examples of other Cantonese national defence films before the war include:

- *Return from the Battleground* (*Chin Dei Gwat Loi*, 1934) - directed by Wong Toi, starring Ng Cho-fan and Wong Man-lei, made in Hong Kong;
- *A Patriotic Woman* (*Oi Gok Fa*, 1936) – directed by Runji Shaw, a Tin Yat production.
- *Resist!* (*Dai Kong*, 1936) - produced by Joe Chiu, written and directed by Moon Kwan, a Grandview production.

colonial government banned it. According to film veterans such as Lo Dun (1992: 277) and Moon Kwan (1976: 202), it was because of the film's anti-Japan content; the colonial government dared not to infuriate Japan. Moon Kwan appealed against the ban arguing that, since the film did not clearly identify who the invader or the devil was, the Japanese would hardly identify with evil enemy and, therefore, there was no excuse for them to raise any objection. *Lifeline* was then returned to the censors and was finally permitted for public exhibition without excision. When the World Theatre screened the film in late November 1935, it attracted a large audience and broke the Hong Kong box-office record. Although *Lifeline* passed the censors in the end, it was initially subject to the first recorded official banning order of any film in Hong Kong.

National Unity by Silencing Voices of Ethnic Minorities

Chinese sound film prospered in the 1930s with Hong Kong emerging as pivotal for Cantonese film production while Shanghai became the key city for Mandarin films. Fu notes:

Hong Kong cinema began to acquire its distinct identity with the introduction of talkies. The identity was, indeed, derived from the language spoken on screen — namely, Cantonese. When Hong Kong made only silent films, there was little to distinguish them from those produced in Shanghai. But after the rise of talkies around 1933, the difference became marked. (2003: 55)

• *Heartaches* (*Sum Hun*, 1936) - produced by Esther Ng (aka Esther Eng or Wu Jinxia), photography supervised by Chinese two-time Oscar winner James Wong Howe, made in San Francisco. The film is acclaimed as the 'first Cantonese Singing-Talking Picture made in Hollywood.'

For more about the movies mentioned above, except *Heartaches*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I* (1997: 26, 87, 107); for *Heartaches*, see Law and Bren (2004: 93-4 or 2012: 97-8).

That distinct identity prompted a crisis in Cantonese-speaking cinema. Before Chinese sound film emerged, Hong Kong filmmakers were unaware of how the regime in China would deal with films in Chinese dialects. Besides the previously mentioned *Romance of the Songsters* by Grandview, Tin Yat Motion Picture Company (widely known as Tianyi Studio in English-language texts) produced Tang Xiaodan's *White Gold Dragon* (*Bak Kam Lung* or *Baijin Long*) starring Sit Kok-sin in 1933 in Shanghai.⁴⁹ The film was another one of the earliest Cantonese films. Both *Romance of the Songsters* and *White Gold Dragon* became smash hits at box-offices in many regions such as Hong Kong, Macau, Guangzhou, the Chinatowns in the US and the Nanyang regions (now commonly known as Southeast Asia) that included Singapore, Malaya, Siam (now Thailand), Borneo, Indonesia and Vietnam. The huge success of the two films laid a favourable foundation for Cantonese-speaking films and stimulated an upsurge in investment as well as the establishments of film companies in Hong Kong which, in turn, brought about a quick expansion and boom in the Hong Kong film industry (see Law and Bren 2012: 121-3; Lo Dun 2000: 125).⁵⁰ However, the early development of Cantonese movies was not a smooth one. When *White Gold Dragon* was completed, its public exhibition was delayed for one year because the Nationalist Central Government of the Republic of China in Nanjing (widely known as Nanking before the pinyin

⁴⁹ Although the translation as 'Tianyi' is widely used among film scholars, 'Tin Yat Motion Picture Co.' is the company's English name printed in *Business Directory of Hong Kong and Macao* (cited in Jarvie 1977: 8). The company moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong in 1934. It was renamed 'Nam Yang Motion Picture Co.' (the company's English name printed in *Business Directory of Hong Kong and Macao*, as cited in Jarvie 1977: 7) when it was reorganized in 1937. It was also the predecessor of the Shaw and Sons Limited established in Hong Kong in 1950 and the Shaw Brothers (HK) Studio established in Hong Kong in 1958 (see Chung 2011: 197-201; Law and Bren 2012: 164-166, 188-191). For more about Tin Yat, see Chung (2011: 88-91).

⁵⁰ Lo Dun's monograph was compiled in *Monographs of Hong Kong Film Veterans* (2000), a bilingual (Chinese and English) publication by Hong Kong Film Archive. However, the English translation is just an abridgement of the original Chinese edition, e.g., the part on the Japanese occupation is entirely omitted in the English edition. On this account, page number here refers to the Chinese one.

language reform) banned it on the grounds that Cantonese films would ruin the unification of the national language.⁵¹ According to film veteran Lo Dun (1992: 82-6), the ban was finally lifted after Tin Yat made pleas through someone and spent some money.

When the banning of *White Gold Dragon* is placed in a broader historical context, the fundamental causes can be traced back to the Qing Government's founding of the 'Committee for the Establishment and Research of a National Language' (*Guoyu Biancha Weiyuanhui*) in 1909 and the Vernacular Movement (*Baihuawen Yundong*) that constituted a significant part of the New Culture Movement from the mid-1910s to 1920s. In the 1910s, the Republic of China, led by the KMT, chose the Beijing dialect of Mandarin as the national standard language (*Guoyu*), and set up the 'Preparatory Commission for the Unification of the National Language' (*Guoyu Tongyi Choubi Hui*) in 1919.⁵² After years of research and debate, the commission produced and published a list of 'the standardized national pronunciation of the most important characters' (*Guoyin changyong zihui*) in 1932. The Nationalist Government officially adopted the list, which signified that the time for stipulating what the standard national language should be was ripe, and the timing coincided with the emergence of the Chinese sound film.⁵³

⁵¹ After the warlords had been wiped out in 1928, China became a single-party state led by the KMT; the newly established Nationalist Government of the Republic of China in Nanjing replaced the Beiyang Government in Beijing to become the internationally recognized legitimate Chinese Government, and Beijing was renamed as Peiping until the CPC renamed it Beijing again in 1949.

⁵² During the Ming and Qing Dynasties from 1368 to 1911, Mandarin was called the 'language of the mandarins, the state officials' (*Guanhua*) and served as a common language for oral communication for the state officials coming to Beijing from all parts of the country. The PRC adopted Mandarin as the national language in 1949 and renamed it to *Putonghua* in 1955. Today, the principally identical language is called Mandarin (*Guoyu*) in Taiwan, and 'Chinese (language)' (*Huayu*) in Singapore and Malaysia.

By 1936, armed with an earlier influx of capital as well as talented and skilled filmmakers mainly from Shanghai, Guangzhou and San Francisco, Hong Kong had developed into a base for productions and a significant exporter of Cantonese films which had already become a fad in Nanyang, overseas Chinese communities in North America as well as in Guangdong and Guangxi in Republican China. The Nationalist Government in Nanjing, again, saw the phenomenon as a threat to the unification of the national language and an obstruction to the nation-building struggle.⁵⁴ In order to restrain the popularization of Cantonese and to outlaw Cantonese films, the Nationalist Government promulgated an order to ban all the making, importation and screening of Cantonese films within its jurisdiction, and stipulated Mandarin to be the only standard language in all Chinese films. Cantonese films undergoing production had to be finished within two months and then censored by the authorities. On the one hand, the provision of ‘Mandarin only’ was claimed to be a safeguard for cultural and national unity, on the other, it was also amounted to suppression of other ethnic dialects, a reinforcement of the Nanjing Nationalist Central Government’s control over cultural others and a means to strengthen the reins of government. Fu sums up:

The movement to unify the language aimed to destroy local ties and loyalties believed to impede the modern project of nationhood by standardizing (homogenizing) the immense multiplicity of ‘linguistic others’ constituted by the dialects spoken and identified with by Chinese in everyday life. In this light, Cantonese-speaking films, with their popularity among Cantonese speakers in the pan-Chinese

⁵³ For more about how Mandarin was instituted as the national standard language of China, see Theobald 2011.

⁵⁴ According to *The Chinese Mail* of 21 June 1937, the Central Government in Nanjing, for the sake of the unification of the national language, considered that Cantonese films significantly affected the work on the advancement of the unification of the national language and prohibited them by explicit order (cited in Yu 1997a: 159).

community, became a natural object of concern and suspicion. Especially suspicious in the eyes of the Nanjing leaders was the homeland of Cantonese dialect, Canton, which was the political centre of south China and home base of such powerful rivals to the state as the warlord Chen Jitang and the Guomindang [KMT] elders Hu Hanmin and Sun Fo.

The Nationalist Central Film Review Commission denounced Cantonese cinema as ‘superstitious’ and ‘frivolous’ and accused it of perpetuating the evils of ‘feudalism’ in Chinese life. (2003: 58-9)

Hong Kong is just a small city with a relatively limited population that the local market is always insufficient to support the growth, or even the survival, of the film industry. Except for some low budget productions, Hong Kong cinema relies on overseas markets to make a profit and is greatly affected by the official policies, economics and socio-political conditions of those regions. During the 1930s, the Hong Kong film industry counted heavily on the market in the Chinese Mainland even though the sizeable Nanyang and Chinese communities in North America were also significant markets.⁵⁵ News of the ‘Mandarin only’ provision, which made the Cantonese-speaking film industry culturally and politically illegitimate in the Chinese Mainland, caused an uproar among filmmakers in Hong Kong, as well as those in the South China regions. They were worried not only because the vast Chinese Mainland market was critical to the Cantonese film industry but also because the Cantonese dialect was a selling point to the Chinese communities in other overseas markets. In response to the issue, the first filmmakers’ guild in Hong Kong, the South China Film Association (*Wah Nam Dian Ying Hip Wui*; my translation), was formed in May 1936, and a Cantonese Film Salvation Movement

⁵⁵ ‘A small city with limited population’ is still a crucial predicament for the Hong Kong film industry today. Stepping into the 21st century, with the shrinking of other conventional Southeast Asian markets due to the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the Chinese mainland market has become the largest market for Hong Kong film again, and is a more decisive factor than ever.

was initiated.⁵⁶ The association sent a delegation to Guangzhou to petition the provincial government, and then to Nanjing to petition the Nationalist Central Government for a retraction or deferral of the new provision. Moon Kwan was a member of the delegation; he wrote in his memoir that the petition raised some queries and suggestions:

- (1) Cantonese and other Chinese provincial dialects are a result of thousands of years of Chinese history and not created by cinema. If it is banned without guilt, how can this convince the public?
- (2) The schools in the Guangdong province are still teaching in the local dialect, Cantonese opera is still sung in Cantonese. Now these two are not banned, but only film is banned. This is not fair in principle.
- (3) Cantonese film is created by overseas Chinese who are mostly from Guangdong. In order to communicate with their fellow countrymen and to convey the culture of the motherland, Cantonese film is the best tool. . . . If it is banned now, it virtually denies the homesick among our compatriots and forces them to assimilate into other nations.
- (4) After Cantonese film is banned, if Mandarin film cannot fill the vacancy, foreign film will make use of the opportunity to force its way in.
- (5) The way to put the language unification policy into effect does not seem to be by banning other dialects immediately. Instead, time should be taken to educate the public positively. For instance, schools can have more Mandarin teaching hours and the government can make a large number of educational films with voice-over narration in Mandarin. Furthermore, by making it mandatory for movie houses to screen educational film as an extra programme during their regular screenings, the public can learn subconsciously while they are being entertained. In the long run, Mandarin will spontaneously become a common language, and other dialects will naturally fall out of use without banning them. (1976: 214-5; my translation)

⁵⁶ For more about the South China Film Association, see Yu 1997a: 135 and 163.

The press such as the movie magazine, *Artland (Yilin)*, and *Kung Sheung Daily News* also expressed their negative view of the ‘Mandarin only’ provision with similar arguments and published positive views on Cantonese cinema (see Yu: 1997a: 159-161).⁵⁷ However, in early 1937, the Central Film Review Commission of the Nationalist Government in Nanjing still maintained the provision and announced that the decree on the prohibition of Cantonese films would be put in force from 15 April onward, but the deadline was later deferred until 1 July (see *Artland, Issue No. 3*, 1 April 1937; *Issue No. 7*, 1 June 1937).⁵⁸ Meanwhile, an article in *Artland (Issue No. 7, 1 June 1937)* mentioned a rumour that the sudden decision to prohibit Cantonese films was actually due to pressure by film businessmen in Shanghai.⁵⁹ *The Chinese Mail* (26 June 1937; cited in Yu 1997a: 162) also reported that when the representatives of the South China Film Association went to Nanjing to petition, their counterparts in Shanghai also sent representatives to Nanjing to ask that prohibitory edict be maintained. Soon, the rumour was proved to be true. *Stardom (Ling Sing, Issue No. 197)* revealed a hidden telegram sent to the Central Government from five managers of six film companies (one of them was the manager of two companies) based in Shanghai.⁶⁰ The telegram said that the status of Mandarin film in South

⁵⁷ *Artland (Yilin)* was a Nationalist émigré semimonthly movie magazine published in Hong Kong from the late 1930s to early 1940s. It was first published in February 1937, with a picture of Sit Kok-sin on the cover. Its official English name can be found inside the magazine; however, it is sometimes as ‘*Art Land*’ in some issues. Most of its issues are preserved in Hong Kong Film Archive.

⁵⁸ See “*Kwan yu gam ying Yuet Yue ying pin ji min min koon*” (literally “*The Views from Different Aspects of the Prohibition of Cantonese-language Films*”) by Jik San (Jackson) and “*Yuet Yue pin si fau goi gam*” (literally “*Should Cantonese Sound Film Be Banned*”) in *Artland, Issue No. 3*, (1 April 1937) and *Issue No. 7* (1 June 1937) respectively.

⁵⁹ The article was titled “*Yuet Yue pin si fau goi gam*” (literally “*Should Cantonese Film Be Banned*”).

⁶⁰ *Stardom (Ling Sing, my translation; ‘Ling’* literally refers to the performers of Cantonese opera, and ‘*Sing*’ literally refers to movie stars) was a publication founded in Guangzhou in 1932 and moved to Hong Kong later. It began as a weekly magazine and changed to a daily later. Its publication stopped during the Japanese occupation and resumed after the war, and finally ceased in 1954 (see Yu 2000: 57).

China was declining owing to the encroachment of Cantonese film, and further urged the officials to enforce the provision as scheduled without delay (cited in Zhou and Li 2005: 213). The disclosure of the biased commercial considerations behind the ‘Mandarin only’ provision together with the united opposition of the pan-Cantonese community, the negative views of the public expressed in the Chinese press and several more petitions by the South China filmmakers, finally led the Nationalist Central Government to defer the provision in June 1937 for three years — but there was a proviso, “adding that studios had to insert Mandarin-language segments into their films and pay for the setting up of a Film Review Bureau in Canton to review dialect film during the transition period” (Fu 2003: 59).

However, the war against Hong Kong films. On 3 August 1938, the *South China Morning Post* reported that the Nationalist Government, which required the film industry to reflect the spirit of resisting foreign invaders, would now seek to ban those Hong Kong and Macau films that were artistically poor or which would demoralise the Chinese (cited in Law and Bren 2012: 126). Other than preventing the dispersal and popularization of Cantonese, what the Nationalist Government wanted to prohibit were, indeed, all films except those with a social educational purpose and those that facilitated the rule of the KMT. It was a form of censorship, albeit censorship as part of the KMT’s nation-building project during chaotic times, and it can be understood as a continuation and modification of the earlier advocacy of a national cinema. As Lu (1997: 3) says:

[A]ny project of national cinema is bound to suppress and surmount, for the sake of defending the country against real or perceived dangers of imperialism or in order to uphold national unity by silencing the voices of ethnic and national minorities.

Although one cannot ignore the fact that building a national cinema at a particular historical conjuncture could have originated from a genuine will and intent, it can become an abuse of human liberty in a fundamentalist way when it was taken too far. However, history is cunning; it did not correspond with the Nationalist scenario. After the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (also known as the Incident of 7 July or Logou Bridge Incident) ignited the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Nationalist Government, being occupied by the war which was, indeed, a more pressing matter, loosened its control over Cantonese films.

Hong Kong Cinema on the Periphery of the Second Sino-Japanese War

During the turbulent years from the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War till the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, the Chinese cinemas consisted of three main production centres situated in Chongqing (historically known as Chungking), occupied Shanghai and Hong Kong.

In that period, Hong Kong became the largest production centre of Chinese-language films catering to Chinese communities abroad.

While Chongqing under the Nationalist government mainly produced propaganda films to aid resistance against the Japanese, and Shanghai, in the 'orphan island' period (1937-1941), made films that were socially irrelevant to the immediate reality, Hong Kong produced both pure entertainment and socially/politically relevant films that supported the anti-Japanese struggle. . . . Even in wartime, entertainment and patriotic cinema appeared side by side in a Hong Kong cinema that was more pluralistic, more adventurous, and more open to different ideologies than the other two production centres. Hong Kong cinema was not just an extension of mainland Chinese cinema nor was it a pre-war wasteland made prosperous by the influx of

Shanghai filmmakers at around the time of Liberation. It evidently reached a peak in 1938 and 1939 and began the formation of an identity that imbibed Chinese elements from Shanghai as well as Western elements from Hollywood in an interplay with strong local elements such as Cantonese opera. This interplay can be traced to the very beginnings of Hong Kong cinema, and it is still going on today. This is the ever-changing identity of Hong Kong cinema — open-minded, eager to experiment in various topics and genres, never in a fixed pattern, never stopping. (Law 2002 [2000]: 69)

In this description, Law Kar has concisely and clearly traced back and outlined the formation of Hong Kong cinema's identity by contextualizing its development from a historical perspective. It did not consciously strive for its identity as it was moulded by the socio-political context of times. That is also to say, a turn of destiny for the Hong Kong cinema, and thus the censorship it encountered, was rendered by historical conjunctures. During the period from the January 28 Incident in 1932 up to the beginning of the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong in December 1941, a considerable number of filmmakers from Shanghai and Guangzhou came to the British colony to continue their careers in addition to those from San Francisco. They included wealthy businessmen with capital as well as those with technical and creative talents and the necessary knowledge, skills, techniques, artistry and experience in different aspects of film production. According to Teo:

The anti-Japanese war stimulated Hong Kong's film industry as filmmakers rushed to put out national defence movies. As the mainstream film industries in China fell under the control of the Japanese, Hong Kong was the only place where patriotic national defence movies could be made freely (even though the Japanese exerted pressure on the British authorities to ban or censor them). Historians have usually pointed to the outbreak of war on the Mainland as a turning point in Hong Kong's film history. It led to the growth of the local film industry as Hong Kong absorbed migrants fleeing

Shanghai. In fact, the migration flow had started earlier, and the historical intercourse between Hong Kong and Shanghai went much deeper than is suggested by the consequence of migration due to the cataclysm of war (although political uncertainties caused by the incursions of the Japanese army into China from 1931 onwards would have played their part). (2007 [1997]: 7)

By the same token, Fu also asserts:

Starting at least as early as the 1910s, the film industries of Shanghai and Hong Kong were intimately connected by extensive movement of capital, people and ideas across the border. . . . These border crossing activities reached their peak in the years between 1937 and 1950, a period marked by unceasing violence and turmoil: the War of National Resistance against Japan and the Civil War between the Nationalists and Communists.⁶¹ (2003: xii)

Moreover, government regulations also played an important part.

Throughout the 1930s, film censorship increasingly became the concern of the Nationalist Central Government, particularly after the setting up of the National Educational Cinematographic Society in 1932, which functioned as an ideological guidance apparatus that instituted a set of criteria for filmmaking. With regard to the political struggle, the initial task of the Nationalist Government's film censorship was to extol the KMT leadership and to repress Communist propaganda, but it also impacted on the film industry as a whole.⁶² In addition to the 'Mandarin only' provision, Chiang Kai-shek launched the New Life Movement in 1934, which aimed to counter Communism ideology with a blend of Confucianism, nationalism and

⁶¹ For more about how Hong Kong cinema 'benefited' from the unrest of China during the 1930s, see Law and Bren (2012: 118-27), Zhou and Li (2005: 132-94, 214-55) and Teo (2007 [1997]: 3-11).

⁶² For more about the Nationalist Government's reinforcement of censorship on media and more on the National Educational Cinematographic Society, see Cheng et al. 1978a [1963]: 174-5, 199 and 294-6.

authoritarianism that shared some characteristics of German fascism. The movement put an emphasis on civil education which encouraged people to reject all things foreign and return to Confucianism and traditional Chinese morality. Under the movement, all entertainment films considered not to be contributing to nation-building were condemned.⁶³ For instance, Tin Yat, which had already set up their subsidiary distribution company in Hong Kong in 1932 (Law and Bren 2012: 119), moved their productions from Shanghai to Hong Kong in 1934 to avoid the threat of an official ban on purely entertainment movies such as the martial arts and fantasy genres, of which Tin Yat was exquisite leading exponent. This was just one example of film companies in the first wave of southward migration which occurred between 1933 and 1935 when Cantonese-speaking film attained great market success and the Nationalist Government implemented censorship against entertainment cinema and ethnic dialects. Most significantly, the incident sowed the seed which enabled the martial arts genre of film to flourish in Hong Kong and which would later make Hong Kong cinema internationally famous.⁶⁴

The second wave of migration took place when China started a full-scale war against Imperial Japan in July 1937, particularly after the fall of Guangzhou in 1938. After that, huge crowds of refugees, including filmmakers, fled to Hong Kong and increased the colony's population drastically from some nine hundred thousand to 1.64 million by 1941.⁶⁵ The third wave in 1946 was due to the acute political unrest

⁶³ For more about the KMT's New Life Movement, see Liu, Chi-hui Joyce 2000: 95-150.

⁶⁴ According to Law and Bren (2012: 113), the Nationalist Government proclaimed a total ban on martial arts films in 1931, which led to an influx of many Shanghai filmmakers who were skilled in such films into Hong Kong, resulting in a new genre in Hong Kong cinema that emerged in the late 1930s. After decades of development, the martial arts genre has become a signature genre of Hong Kong cinema. Hong Kong has virtually transformed something 'decadent' in Shanghai into something 'miraculous'.

and civil war in China, and the fourth wave between 1948 and 1949 was driven by aspirations about fleeing from either the oppression and ‘white terror’ of the KMT, or the gloominess of Communist governance after the victory of the CPC in the civil war. In short, the causes of the filmmakers’ migration from China to Hong Kong in the 1930s and 1940s were: Firstly, the business opportunities of Cantonese cinema; secondly, escape from political unrest, turmoil of war and political persecution in their homeland; and thirdly, the pursuit of more creative freedom.

As a matter of fact, for most of the time during the last century, colonial Hong Kong was politically more stable, its society was more tranquil, and film censorship policy and its criteria were relatively more lenient and liberal than that in China. Film productions were thus under less arbitrary governmental control and manipulation, which potentially meant greater creative and career freedom. All this made Hong Kong a more steady, convenient and favourable place for filmmaking. Whenever the filmmakers in Shanghai encountered political unrest, social turmoil or the outbreak of war, they would flee to Hong Kong as a safe haven to continue their careers in spite of the fact that they saw the colony as a place of inferior, slavish and un-Chinese culture, or simply a ‘cultural desert’. This prejudiced ‘elitist’ view was prompted by what Fu (2003: 52, 68) describes as the ‘Central Plains syndrome’.

[A] China-centred nationalism that has been embedded in the centralizing, anti-colonial state-building discourse underlying twentieth-century representations of Chinese culture.

⁶⁵ According to Endacott (1964 [1958]: 289): “In 1930, the population was 838,800, and in 1937 the estimate was 1,006,982, of whom 984,000 were Chinese. Japanese hostilities against China in 1937 and the fall of Canton in the following year led to a great migration. About 100,000 refugees entered the colony in 1937, 500,000 in 1938 and 150,000 in 1939, and the estimate of the 1941 population was 1,639,000, of whom 1,615,000 were Chinese.” As written in the dust jacket flap of the book, “The book is based largely on Colonial and other government sources.”

By valorising China's Northern Plains as the primordial place of origin of Chineseness within a hierarchy of cultural differentiation, it held in contempt and saw as alien all ethnic cultures that had developed on the periphery of the mainland. . . . Hong Kong was on the mainland's margin and its colonization by the British accentuated its marginality in the modern Chinese geopolitical imagination.

For example, renowned writer Mu Shiyong said, "Hong Kong is a city of colonial culture, everything is grotesque, in a foul mess. Don't expect to find art here at all" (cited in Fu 2003: 69). Criticising Hong Kong cinema, Shanghai-born Cantonese film director Cai Chusheng (also known as Tsai Chu-sang) expressed his view in this manner:

The backwardness of Hong Kong culture as a whole inevitably has a proportional effect on its cinema. Thus, although Hong Kong has produced many, many movies and although so-called artists here claim that since Shanghai's fall to Japan, Hong Kong has replaced it as the centre of Chinese cinema, this is nonsense. All the movies made here are frivolous, vulgar commodities catering to the low taste of the uneducated. It is impossible . . . to find any title that has a national defence theme that would justify Hong Kong's claim to be a cinematic centre.⁶⁶ (Cited in Fu 2003: 70)

Although such views were popular among the cultural elite of Shanghai, when the Japanese military took control over Shanghai (except the foreign concessions) four months after the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out, a considerable number from

⁶⁶ Fu argues: "A reconstruction of the historical situation in which Hong Kong cinema operated before the World War II Japanese occupation demonstrates, however, that it had developed a distinct local popular tradition since the introduction of Cantonese 'talkies' in the 1920s. Cantonese-language films were enormously popular among local moviegoers, as well as in Chinese communities elsewhere in Southeast Asia and in the Americas, audiences marked by cultural marginality, economic disadvantage, and in aesthetic orientation shaped by the vernacular tradition of local opera and folk literature (contrary to the May Fourth culture of modernity). From this perspective, the stereotype of Hong Kong as a 'cultural desert', which was created and circulated by mainland intellectuals exiled in the colony in the 1930s, reflected only the elitist, anxiety-ridden views of those who brought with them in their displacement the sinocentric sense of cultural superiority that I call the Central Plains syndrome. They . . . sought to transform [the local popular culture] in accordance with their mainland-centered worldview. As a response to this marginalization, Cantonese-language films of pre-occupation Hong Kong began to develop a local identity that was markedly hybridized and ambivalent" (2003: xiv).

Shanghai's elite class fled to Hong Kong, including filmmakers. Filmmakers such as Cai Chusheng, Situ Huimin and Xia Yan (also known as Hsia Yen) were among the émigrés who would later bring about unprecedented prosperity to the Hong Kong film industry and contribute to the golden age of Hong Kong cinema before the Fall of Hong Kong in 1941. Together with the local filmmakers, they made a number of notable patriotic and national defence films with box-office successes.⁶⁷ According to *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I*, the films released in Hong Kong in 1937 almost doubled those in 1936 from forty-nine to eighty-five. In 1939, the number reached a record high of one hundred and twenty-five. The boom was due both to the considerable expansion of the audience numbers fed by the huge crowd of southward migration and the improvement in film quality.

Chinese National Cinema *vis-à-vis* Colonial Censorship

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, in order to safeguard British interests in China that had been established since the Opium Wars, and to avoid going to war on two fronts at the same time — as it seemed inevitable that Britain would go to war with Nazi Germany in Europe — Britain adopted an appeasement policy towards

⁶⁷ As amended by Teo: “Although the standard line in cinema history books published in China states that Hong Kong cinema only produced ‘national defence movies’ as a result of the infusion of Shanghai émigrés . . . , the fact was that many local Hong Kong film-makers were just as keen as their émigré colleagues to contribute their talents to making anti-Japanese war propaganda films, as is borne out by the Grandview productions directed by Chiu Shu-sun and Kwan Man-ching. . . . *At This Crucial Juncture/Zuihou Guantou* (1937) [was] a voluntary effort by the territory’s major stars and directors to raise funds for the Hong Kong Film Industry Aid Relief Association (founded by film celebrities after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident . . .). None of these national defence films by Hong Kong’s own film personalities has survived. Critical writings have thus tended to focus on those [films] . . . made by prominent Shanghai expatriates” (2007 [1997]: 9).

Japan.⁶⁸ Accordingly, the colonial government of Hong Kong proclaimed a neutral position in the Sino-Japanese hostilities but placed films with anti-Japan contents under scrutiny. In 1938, an anti-Japan propaganda film *March of the Guerrillas* (*Youji Jinxing Qu*; also known as *March of the Partisans*), which was written by Cai Chusheng and co-written and directed by Situ Huimin, was caught in censorship trouble. Censors ordered that some two thousand feet of the total footage of the film had to be cut before public exhibition. The owner of the film refused the cuts; the government banned the film. Three years later, the government lifted the ban on an abridged version of the same film which was re-titled to *Song of Retribution* (*Ching Hei Goh*) when it was released in Hong Kong in June 1941 (Yu 1997a: 169-170, 1998: 31-2). As mentioned earlier, filmmakers at that time usually reckoned such bans or cuts were due to the Japanese consul's strong remonstrations.

In 1938, national defence was one of the main genres side by side with the purely entertainment genres in Hong Kong cinema. According to the documentation in *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I*, at least eighteen released films can be categorized as such in that year alone.⁶⁹ Notable ones include the voluntary,

⁶⁸ As Yue Qianhou (2004: 41) says, "Various historical and practical factors determined that China, Britain and Japan had a complex relationship during the war. . . . The overall trend of Sino-British relations during the war was marked mainly by conflicts and contradictions and less significantly by cooperation." Furthermore, according to Yue (2004: 41-2), after the September 18 Incident and the Incident of 7 July, Japan had replaced Britain as the chief enemy of China. The domination reshuffle among foreign powers challenged British interests in China. The parallel existence and continuation of contradictions between Britain and Japan as well as between China and Japan gave rise to a common strategic interest between China and Britain. While China theoretically saw Britain as a potential ally, Britain, in order to avoid the Japanese infringement of the British interest in China, was absolutely unwilling to see Japan subjugating China. However, because of the limitation of its national power, being restricted by the situation in Europe and the consideration of the degree of harm to its interest, Britain decided not to be antagonistic to Japan immediately; an appeasement policy became possible.

⁶⁹ The number of national defence films genre varies among scholars, e.g., Law and Bren reckoned that there were 22 in 1938 and Zhou and Li regarded only 18 as such. Categorization, after all, is always subjective; it depends on how one reads and interprets the films. Moreover, these numbers are largely an estimation based on available synopses and related materials because only a few out of some 600 pre-war films have survived. The editor of *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I*, May

collective effort of Hong Kong filmmakers *At This Crucial Juncture* (*Jui Hau Gwaan Tau*), Situ Huimin's *The Blood-stained Baoshan Fortress* (*Huet Chin Bo Saan Shing*) and Moon Kwan's *Public Enemy* (*Gung Dik*).⁷⁰ Anti-Japan consciousness, sentiment and propaganda were the most common elements in national defence films, yet the only banned film on record was *March of the Guerrillas* although there might be some more unknown and unrecorded bans and cuts. If the ban on this film and the previously mentioned initial ban on *Lifeline* were because of the anti-Japan elements as expounded by film veterans and scholars, how and why could other films with such elements escape from the censors? While banning might rest on to what extent a film was regarded as 'offensive' to Japan (which was bound to be a subjective and arbitrary decision), no guideline for the colonial censors during the pre-war and war periods have been discovered thus far. This is illustrated by *Lifeline*. Director Moon Kwan (1976: 202) briefly recalls in his memoir that the point of argument in his appeal against the initial ban was the consideration of whether the film identified the invader, the imperialist, the 'devil' or the subject of resistance in an explicit manner. Furthermore, one can also easily observe from the Chinese-language press in Hong Kong during the anti-Japanese war period that offensive words like devil, imperialist as well as the descriptive phrases referring to Japan or the Japanese were substituted with 'XX' or left blank. For instance, all the Chinese character 'yat's that referred to 'Japan' in all the issues of *Artland* were left

Wong, reminds readers, "To define a certain film's genre, one needs to understand how a story is told apart from what the story is about, and how the story inherits the conventions of a genre while having its own adaptation. In the process of editing, we had to rely on our literary materials to classify the genres since there was no way we could see the pre-war films" (1997: xv).

⁷⁰ Teo (2007 [1997]: 9) and Yu (1997a:139) identify *At This Crucial Juncture* as a film of 1937. However, according to *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I*, the film had its public release on 2 March 1938; according to Zhao and Li (2005: 227) and Yu (1997a:139), the actual filming of the film started on 4 August 1937, and wrapped on 22 September 1937, and was premiered on 29 December 1937.

For more about *At This Crucial Juncture*, see Yu (1997a: 139-142) and also footnote 67; for more about *The Blood-stained Baoshan Fortress*, see Yu (1997a: 168-9); for more about *Public Enemy*, see Yu (1997a: 143, 175).

with empty squares (□). In another instance, in *The Tien Kwong Po* published on 24 July 1937, eleven words were censored resulting in blank spaces in an advertisement of an anti-Japan movie titled *Vanguards of the Times* (*Si Doi Sin Fung*, 1937). In another advertisement of the same movie published on 26 July, twenty-eight words were censored and, again, there were blank spaces (cited in Yu 1997a: 149-50). The colonial government was much concerned about its fiercely warlike ex-ally Japan.⁷¹ In addition, the British Government, especially since the Japanese troop took control of South China and occupied Guangzhou in 1938, saw Hong Kong as militarily indefensible (see Liu 2009: 268) and deemed it unwise for the colonial government to infuriate Japan.

As for the case of *March of the Guerrillas*, an article in *Artland* (*Issue No. 54*, 15 May 1939) reported it was because of the film's depiction of intense resistance against Japan that the colonial government, which was subjected to strong objections from the Japanese consul, ordered a total of two thousand feet of the footage, which was about one-fifth the whole length of the film, to be cut. Since the cuts would affect the integrity of the film, the owner of the film deferred its release.⁷² Besides, there was footage showing Chinese people resisting and fighting directly against the Japanese troops. It can be inferentially supposed that the tacit guideline for film censors included the consideration of the explicitness of the evil deeds of Japan and the extent of anti-Japan sentiment. In fact, deliberation about the degree of prejudice to 'good' relations with territories outside Hong Kong was a censorship

⁷¹ The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland signed the *Anglo-Japanese Alliance* with Japan in 1902. It was officially terminated in 1923.

⁷² The article was "*Yau Gik Jun Hang Kuk bei gim hui yi chin yu chek*" (literally "Two Thousand Feet of *March of the Guerrillas* were Censored Out") in *Artland*, No. 54 (15 May 1939).

criterion that persisted throughout the colonial period even after the war (see Chapters 3 and 4).

In 1939 and 1940, there was a decline in the number of national defence films released in Hong Kong — nine in 1939 and only four in 1940 according to an estimate in the *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I* (see footnote 69). Other than being driven by the filmmakers' patriotic and nationalistic sentiment, the substantial quantity of national defence film productions in 1938 was also prompted by the box-office successes of the earlier films of the same genre. Film scholars, such as Zhou and Li (2005: 234-5), generally attribute the decline of the national defence genre in 1939 and 1940 to the previously excessive releases, the drop in quality and the commercial consideration of investors since the later national defence films could not attain satisfactory box-office takings. *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I* reveals that there was also a general recession in the Hong Kong film industry as reflected in the total number of films released in 1940 and 1941, with the record high of one hundred and twenty-five in 1939 dropping to eighty-nine in 1940 and eighty in 1941. The recession may have been caused by the successive rises of entertainment tax, which made film production a harder business in which to make profit. However, Law and Bren (2012: 137) further remark that since Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, Hong Kong people had been feeling that war was approaching. There was also a significant increase in the price of film stock due to a shortage of resources and so film companies in Hong Kong reduced their productions or shifted to low-budget and speculative productions (see also Yu 1997a: 211-3, 1998: 51-2). Furthermore, on account of the British appeasement policy towards Japan, official suppression in response to the strong objection of the

Japanese consul could also be a cause for the decline in national defence film productions.

Near the end of 1938, an article in *Artland* (Issue No. 44, 15 December) reads:

Because of the invasion and harassment of the Japanese troop in South China now, war is still growing strongly. The Hong Kong Government, for the sake of the strict observance of neutrality, does not want excessive exaggerations in our war-of-resistance propaganda, and neither does film art. The Secretary of Chinese Affairs has convened a meeting with film production companies to discuss the productions thereafter so as to avoid too palpable a depiction of the resistance against Japan. In this case, everybody has to change style slightly, to carry through the advocacy of the war of resistance by satiric or insinuating ways. Direct national defence film and drama can only be laid aside and neglected.⁷³ (My translation)

About the same time, another magazine *Movie* (*Dian Ying*, Issue No. 15, December 1938) also reported that the Secretary of Chinese Affairs warned the film production companies that, from then on, whenever they made any national defence film, neither words nor costumes were allowed to identify the enemy otherwise the film would be subjected to cuts or a ban (cited in Zhou and Li 2005: 235 and Yu: 1997a: 189-190).

A few months later, *Artland* (Issue No. 74, 15 May 1940) reported that the colonial government suddenly banned the widely popular *The Battle of Changsha* (*Changsha Huizhan*), a documentary about the defeat of the Japanese troop in Changsha, before its public exhibition.⁷⁴ Although the report did not mention the reason for the ban, it was enough to let the filmmakers know the government officials meant what they

⁷³ See “*Gum hau dik Wah Nam dian ying sai kai*” (literally “The Hereafter of the Film World in South China”) written by Sung Man-lei in *Artland*, Issue No. 44 (15 December 1938).

⁷⁴ See “*Changsha Huizhan dat jo kam ying*” (literally “*The Battle of Changsha Was Suddenly Banned*”) in *Artland*, Issue No. No. 74 (16 May 1940); many words were left with empty squares.

said. The new censorship criteria inevitably increased difficulties in making national defence films to a great degree; it also explained the drop in national defence film productions afterwards. In order to escape from bans and cuts, persistent filmmakers such as Cai Chusheng, did not expose the enemy directly but shifted to unfold the story of the positive patriots when he made *Orphan Island Paradise* (*Gudao Tiantang*, 1939; a Grandland Motion Picture Corporation production) or, like Ko Lei-hen and Yeung Tin-lok, made a metaphor of national defence as in their period film, *The Luminescent Cup* (*Ye Gwong Booi*, 1939).⁷⁵ According to Yu (1997a: 199-200), none of the films released in 1939 that can be categorized as in the national defence genre directly depicted the patriotic struggle against Japan, but shifted mainly to the eradication of traitors (*hanjian*).

Although the Hong Kong film industry was declining, there was a revival of the national defence genre before the Japanese occupation. According to an estimation by Yu (1998: 28-38), including the Cantonese film *The Little Tiger* (*Siu Lo Fu*) which topped the box-office of the year and the Mandarin film *Ten Thousand Li Ahead* (*Qiancheng Wanli*), there were thirteen national defence films released in 1941 against only four in 1940, but no official bans or cuts were known thus far.⁷⁶ As discussed earlier, the colonial government's censorship of anti-Japan films depended on contemporary Anglo-Japanese relations. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (UK) signed the "Anglo-Japanese Alliance" with Japan in

⁷⁵ *Orphan Island Paradise* is the first Mandarin film made in Hong Kong (Yu 1997a: 200; Liu 2009: 254). Yet, Grandland Motion Picture Corporation was subordinate to the China Movie Studio in Chongqing, which was supported and funded by the Nationalist Government. 'Grandland' is an English translation of *Dai Dei* (or *Dadi*) and is used by Hong Kong Film Archive, but some other English works have the translation as 'Great Earth'. For more about Grandland, see Law and Bren 2012: 131. For more about *Orphan Island Paradise* and *The Luminescent Cup*, see Yu 1997a: 200-1.

⁷⁶ For more about *The Little Tiger* (1941), see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I* (1997: 468); for more about *Ten Thousand Li Ahead* (1941), see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I* (1997: 513) and Cheng *et al.* (1978b [1963]): 84-5).

1902, and were allied with Japan in the fight against Germany under the terms of the alliance during World War I. After the alliance was officially terminated in 1923, Britain's policy towards Japan became ambiguous. In the 1930s, Britain, on the one hand, seemingly pursued neutrality in the Sino-Japanese conflict and endeavoured to soothe Japan, but, on the other, placed no restriction on exports of war materials to China. According to British historian Frank Welsh:

Once full-scale, although still undeclared, war with China had begun, Japan endeavoured to cut off supplies to the mainland by a blockade of the whole of the Chinese coastline, excluding only the foreign ports, of which Hong Kong was incomparably the most important. Enormous quantities of arms — estimated at sixty thousand tons per month — poured from the colony into China, in spite of Japanese demands . . . to prohibit military goods crossing the border. (1997: 407-8)

The cession of Hong Kong to Britain as a result of the First Opium War was a very real disgrace to China. But history is cunning and overturns expectations. Many years later, during the years of turmoil, Hong Kong was to play a significant role in aiding China which had reached a historical juncture when pragmatism superseded political niceties.

Hong Kong, being a free port with advantageous geographical position, has all along been a vital doorway that connects China to the outside world. To the Nationalist Government, Hong Kong during the War of Resistance was an entrepot for importing firearms and exporting strategic commodities, a 'hidden war field' of intelligence gathering and secretive Sino-Japanese diplomatic manoeuvres, an important stronghold for trade, finance and air traffic, as well as a 'refuge' for party and political figures of different political views and their families.

Hong Kong contributed tremendously to the Nationalist Government's resistance efforts.⁷⁷ (Lo, Koon-cheung 2004: 88)

When the Japanese troops moved southward and occupied Guangzhou on 21 October 1938, the military threat of Japan came close to Hong Kong. The British Government refused to open Hong Kong to Imperial Japan to supply its military needs in warring China, but agreed to suspend all arms shipments across the colony's border. However, arms supplies to aid China were sent by another route through Burma which was also a British colony bordering China (Welsh 1997: 409). Japan raised strong objections again and again; on 18 July 1940, Britain set up a blockade (Yue 2004: 49). But, before the second blockade, Anglo-Japanese relations were already exceedingly edgy after the Tientsin Incident (also known as the Tianjin Incident) in June 1939, which nearly triggered off an Anglo-Japanese war. In September 1939, the Hong Kong Government adopted the UK's National Service (Armed Forces) Act which stipulated that all British male citizens in the colony aged from eighteen to forty-one had to enlist for military service (Ko 1995: 52). The following year Imperial Japan allied with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy to form the Axis powers upon the signing of the *Tripartite Pact* while the UK formed an alliance with the US and the Dutch to impose an embargo on raw materials to Japan so as to restrain Japanese militarism. The two pacts were indicative of the increasingly hostile relations between Britain and Japan, particularly in the context of the wars in Europe and the tense international relations in Asia.⁷⁸ In the summer of 1940, the Hong Kong Government began a massive programme of building air-raid tunnels and shelters (Endacott 1978: 50-1), held repeated air-raid, strengthened the Gin

⁷⁷ For more about how Hong Kong (and Britain) assisted China in the resistance against Japan, see Lo (2004: 88-123) and Liu (2009: 153-6).

⁷⁸ For more about the Anglo-Japanese relations after the September 18 Incident in 1931 and before the Pacific war, particularly the aftermath of the Tientsin Incident, see Yue 2004: 41-54.

Drinkers Line (a British military defensive line in Hong Kong) and evacuated about three thousand European women and children to Australia (see Ko 1995: 52, 56; Endacott 1978: 50-1). As 1941 approached, it seemed only a matter of time before Britain and Japan were at war. On 7 January 1941, the British Prime Minister at that time, Winston Churchill, wrote to the British Commander-in-Chief, Far East, who had been urging Britain to send reinforcement to Hong Kong:

If Japan goes to war with us there is not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it. It is most unwise to increase the loss we shall suffer there. Instead of increasing the garrison it ought to be reduced to a symbolical scale. Any trouble arising there must be dealt with at the Peace Conference after the war. We must avoid frittering away our resources on untenable positions . . . I wish we had fewer troops there, but to move any would be noticeable and dangerous. (Cited in Welsh 1997: 411)

Nevertheless, in November, the Canadian Government sent two battalions, about two thousand personnel altogether, to reinforce the Hong Kong garrison (see Endacott 1978: 59-60). Finally, after Japan launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour and invaded British Malaya, the UK together with the US declared war on Japan on 8 December 1941.

It can be seen from the above outline that Anglo-Japanese relations had been deteriorating to the point of a complete breakdown since 1939. That could be the reason why the colonial government gradually appeared to turn a blind eye to the anti-Japan elements in films. In spite of the 'tricks' by which filmmakers avoided bans and cuts resulting from censorship, no official bans or cuts on the national defence films released in 1941 are known, which is probably because the colonial government placed no such orders.

The Disobedience of Hong Kong Cinema during the Fall of Hong Kong

After its surprise bombing on the US naval base at Pearl Harbour sparked off the Pacific War on 7 December 1941 (Honolulu time), Imperial Japan assaulted Hong Kong less than eight hours later on the morning of 8 December (Hong Kong time). After eighteen days of fierce fighting, Hong Kong fell to Japan on Christmas day and surrendered unconditionally. After Governor Mark Young surrendered in person at the Japanese headquarters in the Peninsula Hong Kong Hotel, Hong Kong was absorbed into the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, renamed as the Captured Territory of Hong Kong. It was subject to martial law for three years and eight months, during which Hong Kong people suffered from hunger and fear and the brutality and humiliation of the Japanese Imperial Army. Because of the shortage of food and other essential items of everyday life, the Japanese military administration enforced a food-rationing policy and continuously repatriated Hong Kong people, mainly the jobless and the homeless, to China. During the occupation, the population dropped from one and a half million to about six hundred thousand.⁷⁹ Unlike occupied Shanghai where film productions were kept going, the filmmakers who were still in Hong Kong, inclusive of the local and expatriates, made no films at

⁷⁹ According to Endacott (1978: 142), “The reduction of the population was a Japanese war measure In December 1941 the population was estimated at 1.5 millions, some 200,000 less than what it had been six months earlier. A quarter of a million were said to have left in the first month, that is February 1942, and a census in February 1943 gave a figure of 968,524. By August 1945 the population was estimated at between 500,000 and 600,000, indicating a reduction of some 23,000 per month throughout the whole occupation, or rather under the target of one thousand a day which the Japanese had set.” According to the record by Percy Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke, the Director of Medical Services in Hong Kong from 1937 to 1943, 48,474 people were born in Hong Kong from 1942 to August 1945, wherein 170,586 died (see Liu 2009: 282).

For more about the repatriation policy in occupied Hong Kong, see Endacott (1978: 139-142), Tse (1995: 23-32), Au et al. (2011: 165-170); for more about Hong Kong and the miseries and sufferings of the Hong Kong people under the Japanese rule, see Endacott (1978: 139-164) and Liu (2009: 265-284); for more about the cultural activities during the occupation, see Faure (1997: 225-7).

all.⁸⁰ In fact, only one feature film, *The Battle of Hong Kong*, was produced in occupied Hong Kong; it was, of course, a Japanese production.

On 11 April 1942, the Chinese edition of the Japanese authority's mouthpiece *Hong Kong News* reported:⁸¹

Movie undertaking has come to halt after the war. Other than the bosses and those film stars with hoards of money, the rest have been whirled into the eddy of poverty and have close combat with their livelihood. Those who can playact on stage are, of course, better off; those who cannot would run small businesses as their vocation. In order to earn their livings, cameramen have started to run stalls of sundry goods, sound recordists have become merchandisers of old stuffs, screenwriters have switched to contributors for publications or running small businesses, workers have mostly shifted to coolies or other hard toils, directors have become agents or stage supervisors at theatrical troupes and assistants to transport businessmen. However, they can only maintain their individual livings; their family members have to watch out for themselves. (Cited in Yu 1998: 55-6; my translation)

The reality was rather different. About three hundred members of the expatriate cultural elite, including filmmakers such as Cai Chusheng, Situ Huimin and Xia Yan, were rescued by the Communist East River Column and escaped to the unoccupied regions in the Mainland while some local filmmakers such as Lo Dun and Lee Ching

⁸⁰ According to Fu (2003: 93), nearly 200 films were made in occupied Shanghai. "The occupation cinema of Shanghai . . . has been represented in nationalist discourse as a site of 'cultural treason' and marginalized and demonized in official narratives of Chinese film and urban popular culture. . . . [A]ll the artists and filmmakers affiliated with the cinematic apparatus in occupied Shanghai became 'traitors' to the Chinese nation-race (*hanjian*)" (ibid). However, Fu argues, "[T]he occupation cinema, rather than being a treasonable cultural apparatus in opposition to the Nationalist controlled cinema in Free China, constructed a public space in which the occupied could participate in a popular cultural discourse that placed them outside of the hegemonic 'Greater East Asia' culture of the Japanese Army and its control and manipulation" (2003: 94).

⁸¹ *Hong Kong News* was a newspaper founded, funded and run by Japanese. Its publication began in 1941 and ceased in 1945. It was published in Chinese, Japanese and English. According to the Government Record Service of the Hong Kong SAR Government, its English edition was the only English daily during the occupation period. See also Liu 2009: 278-9.

hid themselves to escape being caught by the Japanese army.⁸² Nevertheless, one of the immediate tasks for the new ruler was to resume a peaceful social ambience so as to bring order in the aftermath of the war.

In order to centralize, reorganize and revive the entertainment business for functional ‘decorative’ reasons, the newly formed Military Governorate Press Bureau dispatched special extra food to major filmmakers and, in March 1942, founded the Hong Kong Film Federation which had its name changed to the South China Cinema Federation soon afterwards. The English edition of *Hong Kong News* on 5 April 1942 reported that forty production companies and one hundred and sixty three of the estimated five hundred film people had registered with the federation (cited in Jarvie 1977: 14). The federation organized two troupes, one for the expatriates who were mainly from Shanghai and another for the local ones. Both troupes were expected to perform drama and opera at the re-opened theatres.⁸³ According to Ng Cho-fan, the purpose of these performances was “to give an aura of peace to the enemy’s rule” (cited in Fu 2003: 89). The federation, under the supervision of the press bureau, was also responsible for the registration and re-distribution of some three hundred Chinese films and some two hundred films imported from the West that the Japanese army seized from the local film production companies and distributors (see Zhou and Li 2005: 277; Yu 1998: 57, 59-60).⁸⁴ All the films were, of course, under close

⁸² For more on the exodus and the rescue of political figures and the cultural elite during the Japanese occupation, see Tse (1995: 6-22), Zhou and Li (2005: 290-6) and Lo Dun (2000: 128). For more on the rescue by the East River Column in Hong Kong, see Ye Wenyi (2004: 169-174). For more stories about the miseries of specific film people, see Zhou and Li (2005: 283-290).

⁸³ For more about the South China Cinema Federation and how the federation helped the filmmakers make their living with its two troupes, see Yu (1998: 56-9), Fu (2003: 88-9) and Zhou and Li (2005: 274-5, 288-9).

⁸⁴ The numbers of films here are based on the Chinese-language newspaper *Heung Tao Daily* as cited in Yu (1998: 57), but they do not match with those mentioned in Jarvie (1977: 14), in which the

scrutiny. The Japanese officially banned all Euro-American movies, but in order to fill up the programmes of all the re-opened theatres, they exempted some old Hollywood movies such as *The Thief of Baghdad* and *The Wizard of Oz* during the first year of their occupation (Fu 2003: 89).⁸⁵

On 5 June 1942, the Governor's Office of the Captured Territory of Hong Kong promulgated a list of regulations for censorship, which was published in *Heung Tao Daily* (9 June 1942; formerly *Sing Tao Daily*).⁸⁶ The most important regulations were:

Section 1 – Films and plays must be examined by the Governorate of the Captured Territory of Hong Kong before any presentation within the jurisdiction of the Governorate of the Captured Territory of Hong Kong.

Section 3 – If the contents of the film/play contradict any of the following matters, it must be stopped from screening/performing, or have part of it removed.

- (1) Disrespectful to the Imperial Army.
- (2) Libel or criticism against national policy, or being regarded as impairing national policy.
- (3) Impairing the prestige of the Empire's army and soldiers.
- (4) Being regarded as impairing the enforcement of military administration, the security of the country's territory and the prevention of espionage activity.
- (5) Impairing the reputation of an allied country.
- (6) Benefitting adverse nations and hostile nations, producing or fostering audience's admiration for adverse nations.

numbers were based on the English-language edition of *Hong Kong News*. In Jarvie's, four hundred Cantonese and sixty Mandarin titles were registered with the South China Cinema Federation.

⁸⁵ For more about the screening activities during the occupation period, see Yu 1998: 59-62, 66-7 and 70-6.

⁸⁶ *Sing Tao Daily* is a Chinese newspaper in Hong Kong first published in 1938. It changed its name to *Heung Tao Daily* during the Japanese occupation and resumed the title, *Sing Tao Daily*, after the liberation of Hong Kong from the Japanese Military.

- (7) Being regarded as disturbing the peaceful order of society.
- (8) Being regarded as having other reasons for prohibition from screening/performing.

Section 4 – When the examination result deems the film/play contradictory to the regulations and the film/play is banned from screening/performing or has part of it deleted, no appeal is allowed; the film is to be confiscated.

Section 6 – Things that have passed the examination are still subjected to banning or having part of it removed when found necessary afterwards. (Cited in Chen, Jinbo 1979: 76; my translation)

However, these regulations were simply words on paper and were in name only to the disobedient Hong Kong filmmakers as no one was likely to make any films under Japanese rule.

In the beginning, the South China Cinema Federation also served the critical function of roping in and recruiting famous Cantonese filmmakers to make a film to endorse the Japanese occupation, sanctify the war launched by the Japanese Imperial Army and propagandize the amity between Chinese and Japanese and the realization of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. However, the local filmmakers refused to service the invader and to involve themselves in such a project to promote something they could not agree to so, instead, they all went into exile. For instance, Ng Cho-fan, Pak Yin (also known as Bak Yin), Sit Kok-sin, Wong Man-lei, Tse Yik-chi, Mok Hong-si, Tang Xiaodan, Lo Dun and many others hid themselves and then risked their lives to flee to nearby regions such as Kwangchow (now Zhanjiang), Guangzhou, Macau and Taishan (traditionally known as Toishan). Later, a Japanese director Shigeo Tanaka came to Hong Kong to take charge of directorship, and actual filming started in mid-1942. The film was titled *The Battle*

of *Hong Kong* (*Hong Kong Kung Leuk Jin*, also known as *The Last Day of Britain* or *The Day England Fell*) and was released in Hong Kong on 8 December 1942 to celebrate the first anniversary of the start of the Greater East Asian War (the Japanese term for the Pacific War). It featured an all-Japanese cast apart from seventeen-year old Chinese starlet Tsi Lo-lin, being cheated by the Japanese into flying to Japan and played a minor role in the film.⁸⁷ In January 1943, the military administration gave up the plan to revive the Hong Kong film industry and abolished the South China Cinema Federation in the wake of the non-cooperation and exodus of the local film people. A Japanese corporation took over the business of film distribution and became the sole official movie supplier. Meanwhile, all Euro-American films were strictly banned in order to drive out Anglo-American imperialism (see Zhou and Li 2005: 277; Yu 1998: 68-9).

By mid 1944 . . . , the Hong Kong cinema industry collapsed when severe fuel shortages combined with high operation costs forced all but a handful of first-run houses, such as the Meiji (formerly Queen's) theatre, which had to cut back to one screening a day, either to shut down or switch entirely to live performances. The Japanese military administration thought, however, that the Hong Kong cinema industry deserved to collapse because of its refusal to cooperate: "Film is not merely entertainment . . . it is principally an instrument of social education," an official declared. "It has to carry out the critical mission of wartime cultural propaganda. But what had the Hong Kong film community done in achieving this mission? That's why we did not supply electricity to the . . . cinema industry." (Fu 2003: 90)

As mentioned previously, before the fall of Hong Kong, Mu Shiying commented that Hong Kong was a city of colonial culture; everything was grotesque, in a foul mess

⁸⁷ For more about the story behind the making of *The Battle of Hong Kong*, the exodus of the local filmmakers and how and why Tsi Lo-lin got involved in the film, see Zhou and Li (2005: 294-300), Yu (1998: 63) and Lo Dun (2000: 128-9).

(cited in Fu 2003: 69), and Cai Chusheng said that Hong Kong culture was backward and it was impossible to find any title that had a national defence theme that would justify Hong Kong's claim to be a cinematic centre (cited in Fu 2003: 70). What then did the Hong Kong filmmakers' disobedience to, as well as their non-cooperation with, the Japanese military during the occupation period represent?⁸⁸ In this regard, while Cai Chusheng defined a cinematic centre (at his time) as one that produced national defence themed film and while Shanghai filmmakers who stayed in Shanghai during the Japanese occupation period collaborated with Japanese to make entertainment films, Hong Kong filmmakers showed their nationalism by another action — giving up their careers.⁸⁹ In addition, in regard to Cai Chusheng's criticism, Fu says:

[T]here is margin in the centre and centre in the margin. China's marginalization in twentieth-century global politics is well known, but much less known is the Chinese marginalization of other places and cultures inside and/or outside its territorial boundaries. Hong Kong has been one of these Others. In fact, it has been doubly marginalized in the official discourses of Chinese nationalism and British colonialism. (2002: 220)

Nevertheless, about one year after the collapse of the Hong Kong cinema industry, the Japanese military rule also collapsed. In 1945, after the US dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on 6 August and another on Nagasaki on 9 August, Imperial Japan declared an unconditional surrender on 15 August. Hong Kong was then liberated from the imperial oppression, and the British claimed power again and asserted their authority. Hong Kong people wanted to revive the city. Welsh (1997: 421) says, "The great achievement of Japanese rule in Hong Kong was to

⁸⁸ For a detailed discourse corresponding to this question, see Fu 2002 [2000]: 199-226.

⁸⁹ For more about the Shanghai cinema during the Japanese occupation, see Fu 2003: 93-132.

convince the Chinese population that, by comparison with that of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, British rule was both benign and competent.”

Nonetheless, freedom of expression was still not guaranteed in the years ahead.

Chapter 3

The Complex Vicissitudes of Filmmakers and Colonial Film Censorship in the Heat of the Cold War

When Britain resumed control of Hong Kong after the Pacific War, law and order in the colony was maintained by the British military until Mark Young returned as governor on 1 May 1946 and restored normal civil administration (Endacott 1964: 302-3). But it took the film industry about a year to see the dawn of new prospects in part because the filmmakers who had fled did not return immediately after the retreat of the Japanese military, and in part because the production companies' filming equipment and stages were severely damaged in the war. A brief timeline of the film industry's recovery can be seen in the news reports and op-ed articles of contemporary newspapers. According to the Chinese daily *Wah Kiu Yat Pao* on 16 May 1946 (cited in Yu 1998: 80-1), the entertainment business flourished after the liberation of Hong Kong and appeared to grow by the day with twenty-six cinemas re-opening, showing mainly American films. Some three months later, the same newspaper (27 September 1946, cited in Yu 1998: 81) reported that the Legislative Council intended to adopt a quota system by which all the first and second-run cinemas had to allocate one-tenth of their show time for British films; offenders were subject to fines and imprisonment.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ When the Attorney General moved the "British Cinematograph Films Bill" at the Legislative Council on 10 April, he said, "The essence of the Bill to attain the first objective to ensure that by employment of a quota system for a quota period of 70 days it shall be incumbent on cinemas to which this Ordinance applies to show for at least 7 days British films of which one at least shall be 5,000 feet long." The council passed the bill on 24 April 1947 (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1947 Session*: 106, 128), and it was abolished in 1971.

These two reports indicate that regular business at the movie houses was back on track in the second half of 1946. According to *Wah Kiu Yat Pao* (21 September 1946; cited in Yu 1998: 88-9) again, two movie studios had productions at that time. On 5 December of the same year, Mok Hong-si's *Flames of Lust (Qing Yan)* had its premiere, marking the first showing of a local production after the war.⁹¹ Ten days later, the premiere of another local title, *Gone Are the Swallows When the Willow Flowers Wilt (Lu Hua Fan Bai Yan Zi Fei)* directed by He Feiguang took place.⁹² According to Law and Bren (2011:141), out of the nine Chinese-language titles released on-screen in 1946, only four were new productions. They were not, however, in the common language of Hong Kong, Cantonese, but in Mandarin. For example, one of the four new titles, *Flames of Lust* featured a Cantonese cast with lead roles by Lee Ching and the title holder of the first Miss Hong Kong contest held in 1946, Lee Lan, but it was a Mandarin-speaking film. It had to be in Mandarin in deference to the censorship of the Nationalist Government which was still the ruling regime in the Chinese Mainland. According to Chung (2011: 100), the Nationalist Government re-organized and centralized the Chinese film industry within its jurisdiction by nationalizing and suppressing the private film companies soon after the war. Law and Bren (2012: 141) remark that the Nationalist Government continued with the implementation of its regulatory provisions for film that started before the war and banned Cantonese-speaking films again. Thus, local film companies preferred to invest in Mandarin rather than Cantonese films so as to tap into the Mainland market.

⁹¹ For more about *Flames of Lust*, see Yu (1998: 87-8) and *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. II* (1998: 16).

⁹² For more about *Gone Are the Swallows When the Willow Flowers Wilt*, see Yu (1998: 82-84) and *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. II* (1998: 17).

But that did not stop local people still longing for films in their own language. It was Joe Chiu who filled the gap by bringing over the Cantonese films Grandview made in San Francisco during the Pacific War years.⁹³ Those films were well-received and yielded admirable profits in Hong Kong and other Nanyang (commonly known as Southeast Asia today) markets. The success of the Grandview films encouraged Hong Kong film companies to produce Cantonese films in spite of the prohibition in China (Law and Bren 2012: 141). The first one to come out was Wong Toi's *My Love Comes Too Late* (*Long Gwai Maan*), starring Ng Cho-fan and Pak Yin. Shooting started on 17 December 1946, and according to a report by *Wah Kiu Man Pao* (18 December 1946; cited in Yu 1998: 90), when the film was released on 21 January 1947, it achieved box-office success in Hong Kong and the Nanyang regions.⁹⁴ According to *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. II (1942-1949)*, ninety local titles, with seventy-two in Cantonese and the rest in Mandarin, were released in Hong Kong in 1947, which signified a recovery of the Hong Kong cinema after the war. In 1948 and 1949, Hong Kong produced more than three hundred films in total, with more than two hundred and fifty in Cantonese. According to *Chung Shan Yat Po* (15 September 1947; cited in Yu 1998: 123), published in Guangzhou, some Mandarin films were even dubbed into Cantonese in order to attract the local audience.

The fast recovery of the film industry was, firstly, because of the civil war and social turbulence in China, which led to the migration of filmmakers and entrepreneurs to Hong Kong (as discussed in Chapter 2). Among the migrants were Zhu Shilin, Bu Wancang, Cheng Bugao, Zhou Xuan, Li Zuyong, Zhang Shankun and his wife Tong

⁹³ According to *Wah Kiu Man Pao* (1 October 1946, as cited in Yu 1998: 81-2), an evening post of *Wah Kiu*, those Grandview films were in 16 mm format. Since the cinemas in Hong Kong were only equipped with the 35 mm projectors, Grandview also imported some 16 mm projectors.

⁹⁴ For more about *My Love Comes Too Late*, see Yu (1998: 90-2) and *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. II* (1998: 27).

Yuejuan. Many of them were considered to have been co-operative with the Japanese in occupied Shanghai during the Second Sino-Japanese War and thus were widely regarded as traitors by the nationalists and patriots.⁹⁵ Secondly, more and more major local filmmakers who fled during the Japanese occupation returned to Hong Kong in the latter half of 1946 including Ng Cho-fan, Pak Yin and Moon Kwan. Thirdly, the outbreak of full-scale civil war in China in July 1946 resulted in enormous crowds of refugees pouring into Hong Kong, including elite groups and talents from all walks of life that swelled the colony's population from about six hundred thousand in August 1945 (Endacott 1978: 142) to an estimated 2.36 million by March 1950 (Welsh 1997: 438), that is about six months after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Undoubtedly, the massive influx of refugees in the post war years put heavy strains on the colonial administration and caused substantial social issues but, at the same time, it also brought labour, talent and wealthy Shanghai capitalists whose wealth was under threat of confiscation by the Communists. Together, these people helped speed up the recovery of the colony's economy and the advancement of the industrialization of the city in the years to come (see Welsh 1997: 438-9).

Even the potential threat from Chinese Mainland troublemakers appeared to have been dealt with. The Labour Minister of Defence said in the House of Commons on 5 May 1949:

Hong Kong has long had a tradition of neutrality and non-interference with the politics of China . . . , steps have been taken . . . to deal with any breach of the conditions under which Chinese nationals, either

⁹⁵ For more about Zhang Shankun and Tong Yuejuan, see Wong and Lee (2009: 23-6) and Tong (2000: 25-44). For more about the occupation cinema in Shanghai and Zhang Shankun, see Fu (2003: 93-132) for a wonderful and insightful discussion that puts the orthodox, official and reductionist narratives of the occupation cinema in question. For an overview of Fu's discourse, see footnote 80.

Kuomintang [Nationalist] or communist, are allowed to reside there.
(Cited in Welsh 1997: 439)

But, perhaps, Britain was overly sanguine. After the birth of the PRC, the Communists, together with their fellow travellers (commonly referred to as the ‘leftists’) and the Nationalists, together with their fellow travellers (commonly referred to as the ‘rightists’) were going to cause considerable friction in various aspects of Hong Kong, including the film industry.⁹⁶ In addition, the Cold War and the tense power struggle that succeeded World War II would place Hong Kong cinema and filmmakers under considerable stress. When politics matter, when it’s a politically hypersensitive era, what, then, should the ‘politics’ be for filmmakers?

Hong Kong after New China was Born – an Enclave of Complexity

On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong (also transcribed as Mao Tse-tung and known as Chairman Mao), atop the Tiananmen Gate (also known as the Gate of Heavenly Peace) in Beijing, proclaimed the founding of the PRC (known for a time as New China or Red China) at three o’clock in the afternoon and asserted the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) over China. In December of the same year, the Kuomintang (KMT; also known as the Chinese Nationalist Party) led by Chiang Kai-shek (also known as Jiang Jieshi or Jiang Zhongzheng) retreated to

⁹⁶ After decades of evolution, the term ‘left’ today encompasses and refers to a complex variety of meanings. In the political context of contemporary Hong Kong, there are broadly at least two sects of ‘left’. One is usually addressed as ‘*joh pai*’ (literally ‘left faction’) which supports the CPC regime in China for various reasons, but without serious concern about the ethos and values of the conventional ‘left’, even though some of its members were once patriotic idealists some years ago. Another is usually addressed as ‘*joh yik*’ (literally ‘left-wing’) and it embraces and upholds freedom, democracy, equality and human liberty and is against the exploitation of capitalism and the authoritarian regime of the corrupt CPC. Although ‘leftist’ and ‘left-wing’ refer to the same in the English context, this text deliberately avoids using the term ‘left-wing’ while it is literally translated as ‘*joh yik*’ in the Chinese-speaking world. Instead, ‘leftist’ would be used to refer to ‘*joh pai*’. However, ‘leftist’ and ‘left-wing’ in citations are kept as they are.

Taiwan to re-establish its Nationalist Government. Nevertheless, the hostility between the two parties did not cease. The Chinese Civil War became a cold war punctuated by fragmentary small-scale ‘hot’ wars. It was to last for decades and had a significant impact on Hong Kong. During that time, historical, cultural and geopolitical factors placed Hong Kong at the centre of arena of the cold war between the CPC and the KMT regimes against the backdrop of the major Cold War.⁹⁷

The governments of the People’s Republic of China (Beijing) and the Republic of China (Taiwan) both considered Hong Kong rightfully part of their own territory, but set their claims aside while using the colony as a convenient location for espionage, agitation and propaganda one against the other. The government of the USA [United States of America], wrath against the People’s Republic of China and wholly supporting the Republic of China, made free use of the espionage facilities, while gravely damaging the colony’s economy in the interests of its crusade against Communism. The government of Great Britain, nominal masters of Hong Kong, were content to let things take their course as long as neither the People’s Republic of China (too important politically), nor the USA (essential economically), was offended. The interests of the people of Hong Kong were not much considered by any of these powers, but were reasonably well looked after, according to its own lights, by the colonial administration. (Welsh 1997: 442)

In addition, Hong Kong after the war was a particularly complex enclave where sections of the population were antagonistic to each other. There was hostility between the leftists and the rightists, the poor and the rich, workers and capitalists plus an increasing level of annoyance among the apolitical towards the struggle and

⁹⁷ A curator of the American Library of Congress says that the Cold War was the most significant international conflict during the last half of the twentieth century; it was also the longest and most distinctive form of war in the history of mankind (cited in Zhou 2009: 21). David Faure adds that there were the major and minor cold wars. While the major Cold War [with capital letters] referred to the contention between the US and the then USSR, which also included the confrontation between the ideologies of capitalism and communism, the minor cold war [with small letters] referred to the struggle between the CPC and KMT in Hong Kong [particularly during the 1950s and 1960s] (cited in Wong and Lee 2009: 5).

propaganda of the Nationalists and Communists as well as the disturbance brought about by the leftists and rightists. As a significant part of the population were former refugees from China, British historian Frank Welsh remarks, “Most of the newcomers were apolitical, relieved to be alive and anxious only to be left alone; insofar as they manifested an interest in politics it was likely to be unsympathetic to the Communists they were attempting to avoid” (1997: 445). However, in the 1950s, 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, there was a common sentiment among the population against exploitation by capitalists and suppression by British colonialists, in particular, the infamously corrupt Hong Kong police of that time. Police officers were bribed by the rich, triads and drug pushers to bully the poor. The mood among the general population meant that, even though there were not a large number of genuine leftists in Hong Kong, it was not difficult for the leftists to upset their British colonial rulers and their collusive capitalists. They organized trade unions to motivate a considerable number of poor workers (the proletariat) to fight for their rights and benefits. And the workers, since they were fighting for their own cause, did not necessarily need to be sympathetic to the Communists to participate in social and labour movements.

In times of political conflict, contention between rival ideologies plays an essential role in influencing and motivating public opinion. As cultural products always carry content which is influenced by an ideology, the cultural industries in Hong Kong inevitably got involved in, and became a battlefield for, the KMT and CPC’s cold war. Since both parties, particularly the CPC, considered film an effective medium for political propaganda, Hong Kong cinema turned into a battleground for the ideological struggles of the leftists and rightists, which was

something the colonial government could not disregard.⁹⁸ Against the backdrop of the Cold War, Britain was nominally part of the coalition allied with the United States of America (US). Being politically subordinate to the Government of the United Kingdom (British Government) and geographically close to China and Taiwan, the British colonial government of Hong Kong, on one hand, proclaimed its neutrality in the KMT-CPC conflict and, on the other, operated like a fence sitter actively preventing domestic social turbulence and passively reacting to political conflicts by referencing the greater international context and seeking instructions from London. In a tense triangle of power relations, the Communists, the Nationalists and the colonial government each implemented a regulatory administration, censorship and restrictive measures on market access within their respective jurisdictions to control film. For instance, soon after the CPC seized power in the Chinese Mainland, strict censorship was enforced within its jurisdiction. The Hong Kong edition of *Ta Kung Pao* (cited in Yu 2000: 25) reported on 13 February 1950 that fifty Hong Kong films, ten in Mandarin and forty in Cantonese, were banned in Guangdong because of their reactionary contents.⁹⁹ They included *Revenge at Guang Chang Long* (*Kwong Cheung Lung Yan Sau Gei*, 1937) banned for inducing superstition, Mok Hong-si's *The Romantic Thief White Chrysanthemum* (*Ching Chaak Pak Kuk Fa*, 1947) banned for inciting lust and covetousness, Wu Pang's *Waving the Red Ribbon* (*Foon Baai Hung Ling Daai*, 1948) banned for depicting love in a frivolous manner and tolerating traitor (*hanjian*) and Bu Wancang's *The Soul of China* (*Guohun*, 1948) banned for being faithful to the

⁹⁸ See Chapter 2 for the KMT's regulatory policy on film and Chapter 5 for the CPC's administration of film and Mao Zedong's 'literary and art' (*wenyi*) doctrines.

⁹⁹ The Hong Kong edition of *Ta Kung Pao* was first published in 1938 but stopped publishing during the Japanese occupation and resumed on 15 March 1948. Before turning to leftist politics in November 1948, it was a pertinent and unbiased newspaper run by idealist journalists (see Kwong Daat 3 May 2012).

monarchic ideas and feudalism.¹⁰⁰ Such bans were as autocratic as that of the Nationalist Government in the 1930s and were always orthodoxy, doctrine and ideology-driven, signifying that the regime change did not change the manner of film censorship. Significantly, cold war reasoning played a role. *The Soul of China*, for instance, was a film extolling the loyalty of Wen Tianxiang (also known as Man Tin-cheung), a scholar general during the last years of the Southern Song Dynasty, who chose to die instead of yielding to the country's enemy.¹⁰¹ When the film was distributed in China in October 1948, it received commendations from the Nationalist leaders in Nanjing and was shown to the army at the battlefield. Although the story of the film took place against the historical background of the feudalistic Song Dynasty, the film undoubtedly advocated patriotism. The Communist censors' decision of banning the film manifested a Cold War ideology, that is, what the enemy deemed right had to be wrong.

However, all the films mentioned above met no censorship problems in Hong Kong. Although the colonial government handled film censorship much in the way it did in the days of the Sino-Japanese conflict before the Pacific War (see Chapter 2), the contextual circumstances had become more complex with the interference from the US in addition to the antagonism between the CPC and KMT regimes.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ For more about *Revenge at Guang Chang Long*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. I* (1997: 177); for more about *The Romantic Thief White Chrysanthemum* and *Waving the Red Ribbon*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. II* (1998: 109, 163).

¹⁰¹ For more about *The Soul of China*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. II* (1998: 207-8), Fu (2003: 145-7) and Yu (1998: 152-3).

¹⁰² Welsh (1997: 447) notes: "The staff of the US Consulate in Hong Kong suddenly, and not at all mysteriously, multiplied, to the embarrassment of the colonial government. In 1938 there had been a Consul-General, two Consuls, and two Vice-Consuls; in 1953 there were 115 in all, including four Consuls and twenty Vice-Consuls, to administer the affairs of an American community of 1,262 — including themselves. Sir Alexander Grantham . . . [said] in his 1968 radio interview . . . : 'I took a poor view of it [the consulate] — the largest anywhere in the world', with a staff 'at enmity with the

While the Hong Kong administration did not share the American admiration for Chiang Kai-shek, although at the same time not being enthusiastic about the Communists, most people in Hong Kong had not initially been averse to the new government in China, believing that almost any change from the Kuomintang would be for the better. London agreed; after some hesitation, and following the established pragmatic principle of recognizing any government in obvious control of its territory, Britain was among the first, in January 1950, to offer recognition to the new regime in Beijing. Since Britain continued also to acknowledge the legitimacy of Taiwan, it was many years before relations were formalized by an exchange of ambassadors, but the China Hong Kong had to deal with was now the People's Republic. Since Beijing refused to agree that Hong Kong was anything other than an integral part of China, temporarily under foreign administration, it was impossible to have direct diplomatic links between the two; the dilemma was solved by entrusting Chinese interests to Xinhua (Hsin Hua), the New China News Agency, . . . ostensibly as a news agency but in fact, and quite openly, as the representative of the People's Republic.¹⁰³

None of this was at all to the liking of the United States, still committed to the support of the Kuomintang, and bitter criticisms of British weakness towards Communism were forthcoming. American subjects were advised to leave the colony, and some American companies closed shop. A rapprochement between the wartime allies was achieved in June 1950 when [Britain] . . . followed the United States' lead in opposing the North Korean invasion of the south. (Welsh 1997: 446)

lawful government of mainland China'. The CIA especially were 'extremely ham-handed at one time until we had taken a very strong line to stop them being so stupid' [*sic*]. Welsh (1997: 443) also comments, "[When the Nationalists were] confined to the island of Formosa – now to be known as Taiwan, where they ruthlessly established an authoritarian regime. It also took twenty years for American policy to accept that this did not constitute the government of China."

¹⁰³ Since its establishment up to 1 July 1997, the Xinhua News Agency Hong Kong Branch was *de facto* carrying out diplomatic mission of the PRC within the territory. It was renamed to 'The Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region' on 18 January 2000.

While the US was trying its best to suppress communism, the colonial government was seemingly guarding against communist infiltration so as to avoid open rupture with the US, social unrest in Hong Kong and the potential threat to British interests.

Hong Kong Cinema and the Colonial Prevention of Communism

On 1 June 1950, a Chinese-language newspaper in Singapore, *Nan Chiao Daily* (*Nan Chiau Jit Pao*), reported that, according to a telex dated 22 May 1950 from United Press (UP), a US news agency, the movie companies in Hong Kong were under the control of the Communist Party [referring to the CPC] almost without exception. The [colonial] government asked for a halt to all communist propaganda; that was to say, the government would not let Hong Kong ‘go red’ [go communist] (cited in Yu 2000: 24). In point of fact, a number of leftist people in the arts world fled from China to Hong Kong to escape persecution by the KMT. The people, who escaped from mid-1948 on, included renowned writers Mao Dun and Kuo Morou, screenwriter/director Ouyang Yuqian, screenwriters/playwrights Xia Yan, Yu Ling and Yang Hansheng, and some other talented filmmakers. According to Jarvie (1997: 29):

In the early days after the Communist victory in China, the left-wing film people in Hong Kong seemed to have been very cocky. This is understandable enough. Their side had won a great victory and could at any moment decide to extend control to Hong Kong.

However, the leftists in Hong Kong probably did not know when and why Beijing decided to leave Hong Kong alone. In fact, Yonghua (also known as Yong Hwa) Motion Picture Industries Limited, founded by Li Zuyong and Zhang Shankun, did

produce some communism-themed films in 1949 such as Wu Zuguang's *Peasant's Tragedy* (*Shan He Lei*, 1949) and *The Story of Little Shrimp* (*Chun Feng Qiu Yu*, 1949) as well as Cheng Bugao's *A Fisherman's Honour* (*Hai Shi*, 1949) when Ouyang Yuqian headed the company's major directorial and scripting works (Law and Bren 2012: 145-7).¹⁰⁴ However, this was not typical of the Hong Kong film industry in 1950, which was far removed from the UP telex description of being under the operation of the Communist Party almost without exception. Based on the materials available thus far, the telex overstated the situation at the time of its publication. Since the information was from a US news agency, it could be seen as a warning made by the capitalist camp in the Cold War. Almost at the same time the UP telex was published, the colonial government convened a meeting of the film producers. According to the English-language newspaper, the *Hong Kong Standard*, published on 23 May 1950, "Hong Kong Government . . . told [the film producers] not to produce films that would cause disturbance" (cited in Jarvie 1977: 29-30). Yu (2000: 24-5) further remarks that the government said that all screenplays had to be censored before actual filming, which was against the traditional British cultural policy, and no pro-communism film would be permitted (while erotic films were not on the list). Moreover, the telex was issued about one month before the outbreak of the Korean War, a sensitive and tense time for the Eastern and Western blocs in the Cold War. It was reasonable to assume that the colonial government, being politically subordinate to the British Government which was an ally of the Western bloc, was obliged to make a gesture indicating its stance about restricting communism. Later, the British Commonwealth Forces took part in the Korean War to fight against the North Korean army and the People's Liberation Army of the PRC.

¹⁰⁴ For more information about *A Peasant's Tragedy*, *A Fisherman's Honour* and *The Story of Little Shrimp*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. II* (1998: 329, 411 and 423).

In the 1950s, Britain valued Hong Kong as a trading centre and an entrepot, and the main task of the colonial government in Hong Kong was to safeguard British interests in China and Asia and the economic benefit Britain anticipated receiving. The profound lessons of the seamen's strike in 1922 and the sixteen-month long Guangzhou and Hong Kong Strike-Boycott from 1925 to 1926 had made the colonial government wary of labour movements and it considered workers' strikes a subversive action that threatened colonial rule, public order and economic prosperity.¹⁰⁵ It would also have been aware that, since mid-1948, the successive victories of the CPC in the Chinese Civil War had stirred up strong nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments among the local leftists. On 5 March 1949, Creech Jones, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, mentioned in a memorandum to the British Cabinet that he considered Hong Kong might face threats from three directions, namely, disturbance produced by leftist unions, the influx of refugees and guerrilla invasion from the outside organized by the CPC (cited in Chau 2009: 28). In light of the memorandum, the Hong Kong Government reinforced the colony's military and police force and strengthened its governance through legislation. As can be seen in the Legislative Council of Hong Kong SAR's *Hansard*, several ordinances in relation to these anxieties were enacted in 1949. On 20 January, the Legislative Council passed the "Immigrants Control Bill, 1949" into law (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1949 Session: 21-3*). Before the enactment of this ordinance, Chinese could enter into, exit from and move within the colony without any formality, but by this new ordinance, no persons could enter the colony except at

¹⁰⁵ For more about the seamen's strike of 1922, see Liu (2009: 143-6); for more about the Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott, see Liu (2009: 146-153), Anjali Cadambi (26 Sept 2010), Chan Lau Kit-ching (1999: 53-70), Au et al. (2011: 151-9) and Chan Ming Kou (1975: 268-356). See also Chapter 2 for the impact of the Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott on Hong Kong cinema.

specified points and with permission. In addition, Subsection 1 under Section 11 of the ordinance states:

[A]ny immigrant . . . [who] is suspected of being likely to promote sedition or to cause a disturbance of the public tranquility . . . the Immigration Officer may prohibit such person from landing in the Colony and may in his discretion detain him until an opportunity arises to return him to his place of embarkation or to the country of his birth or citizenship. (University of Hong Kong Libraries)

On 27 April, the Legislative Council enacted the “Illegal Strikes and Lock-outs, 1949” (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1949 Session: 152*), which was alleged to be:

An Ordinance to prevent strikes and lock-outs having an object other than or in addition to the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in which the disputants are engaged and being calculated to coerce the Government, and to prevent breaches of contract of service the consequence of which may be injurious to the public. (University of Hong Kong Libraries)

On 25 May, the “Societies Bill, 1949” was passed into law (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1949 Session: 178-9*); Subsection 3 of Section 5 of it states:

Where the Registrar is satisfied that a local society is a branch of or is affiliated or connected with any organization or group of a political nature established outside the Colony, he shall refuse to register it and where it appears to him that any local society is likely to be used for unlawful purposes or for any purpose prejudicial to or incompatible with peace, welfare or good order in the Colony, he shall refuse to register it. (University of Hong Kong Libraries)

On 17 August, the council passed the “Registration of Persons Bill, 1949”, which was “to provide for the registration of persons the issue of identity cards” (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1949 Session: 236-7*). Section 9 of it provided the Registration

Commissioner or any authorized police officer with the lawful power to arrest and detain any suspect, and to search his/her property (University of Hong Kong Libraries). On 31 August, the council enacted the “Expulsion of Undesirable Ordinance, 1949” and the “Emergency Regulations (Amendment) (No. 2), 1949” (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1949 Session: 240-3*); the former was purported to be “[a]n Ordinance to control the population of the Colony by providing for the expulsion of undesirables therefrom as occasion may require” (University of Hong Kong Libraries), and the latter clarified: “(a) that the death penalty and other sanctions may be imposed; (b) that it has always been the law that such emergency regulations could over-ride the ordinary law” (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1949 Session 1949: 234-5*).

Not long after the establishment of the PRC, the law-enforcement officials in Hong Kong exercised the power commissioned by the new ordinances mentioned above. On the fourth and fifth of January 1950, the colonial government expelled the chairman of the silk labour union and the principal of Heung To Middle School from Hong Kong respectively (Chau 2009: 95-6). On 31 January 1950, the government expelled three leaders of the tramway workers’ union after a more than one-month long strike which had led to a violent confrontation between the police and the workers on the night of 30 January 1950.¹⁰⁶ From 4 January 1950 to 29 May 1959, a total of one hundred and eighteen persons were expelled without any court trial (Chau 2009: 365-7).

In 1952, the colonial government used the “Expulsion of Undesirable” and the “Illegal Strikes and Lock-outs” ordinances against the leftist filmmakers for the

¹⁰⁶ For more about the tramway workers’ strike that occurred from 24 December 1949 to 10 February 1950, see Chau 2009: 50-6.

first time. After two large-scale productions, namely, Bu Wancang's *The Soul of China* and Zhu Shilin's *Sorrows of the Forbidden City* (*Qing Gong Mi Shi*, 1948), the film company mentioned earlier, Yonghua, went into financial crisis in 1949 even though the two films were instant hits upon their releases.¹⁰⁷ The crisis was mainly due to the collapse of currency and the paralyzed banking system in Yonghua's previous major market — China — after the CPC defeated the KMT and took power.¹⁰⁸ Very soon, Yonghua could not pay its staff regularly, and the financial crisis evolved into a severe conflict between the boss of the company, Li Zuyong, and the staff when the pay was in arrears for a time. The leftist filmmakers at Yonghua went on strike in succession and mobilized outside support from the film industry. In early January 1952, the company's business was crippled by a strike which was eventually ended by government intervention. On the tenth and fourteenth of January, Hong Kong police arrested ten leftist filmmakers and deported them.¹⁰⁹ In this outline, the incident might seem like an ordinary industrial dispute and has been represented as such by scholars such as Law and Bren (2012: 152) and Yu (2000: 66-7). Nevertheless, when the expulsion of the leftist filmmakers is placed in a greater socio-political context, it does not stand alone. It took place at a time of tension between the colonial government and leftist activists. The climax of the industrial dispute at Yonghua happened in the aftermath of a fire at the Tung Tau squatter area on 21 November 1951, which made more than fifteen thousand people homeless. Two days after the fire, the colonial government clashed with the

¹⁰⁷ For more about *Sorrows of the Forbidden City*, see Yu (1998: 153-9) and Wong (2001: 56).

¹⁰⁸ For more about the financial crisis of Yonghua, see Fu 2003: 146-7.

¹⁰⁹ The ten filmmakers were screenwriters Qi Wenshao, Shen Ji and Ma Kwok-leung; artistes Shu Shi, Liu Qiong, Yang Hua and Di Fan; director/actor Bai Chen; writer/critic Si Ma Wen Sen and cinematographer Jiang Wei (Chau 2009: 102, 366; Law and Bren 2012: 152). See also Wong (2001: 40-2) for Shu Shi's recall of his deportation experience.

squatters and sympathetic Hong Kong citizens when the government proclaimed the Tung Tau squatter area a demolition zone and asked all the victims to move to a hill at Ngau Tau Kok, a district in Kowloon. The government made matters worse by keeping the money donated by the public, a total of two hundred and twenty thousand dollars, and not distributing any of it to the victims. The government's performance angered the victims who were supported by social activists, mainly the leftists, who also gave food aid. On 6 January 1952, the victims' representatives issued an open letter to expose how wrong the government had been in dealing with the aftermath of the fire and revealed that some one hundred policemen had dismantled the remaining squatters' homes by force and injured some victims. Thus, the government, being pressurized by public opinion, distributed the donated money on 9 January but expelled two leftist union leaders and five representatives of the victims from Hong Kong between 10 January and 3 February.¹¹⁰ The expulsion started on the same night that the leftist filmmakers were expelled as a consequence of the strike of the Yonghua filmmakers. Shu Shi, one of the deported filmmakers, said in his monograph that he did not take part in any strike and had left Yonghua by the time the police arrested him. However, he was considered sympathetic towards the Communists as he had joined a group of filmmakers on a trip to Guangzhou to entertain and honour the People's Liberation Army after the establishment of the PRC (see Wong 2001: 37-41).

Research has shown that the strike at Yonghua and, thus, the subsequent expulsions of filmmakers, was not only due to salary matters, but also politics and that it was related to Yonghua's internal political censorship and the clash of

¹¹⁰ For more about the aftermath of the Tung Tau fire and how it developed into hostility between the leftists and the colonial government, see Chau 2009: 82-90.

ideologies. For example, according to Taiwanese film historians Du Yunzhi (1988: 414-6) and Huang Ren (2009: 71-2), Li Zuyong incinerated tens of thousand feet of the film negative of *The Misfortune Young Nobleman (Luonan Gongzi)* directed by Li Pingqian in 1950 because he was resentful about the director's alteration to the script on filming locations and considered the film sympathetic to the Communists. The incident upset the leftist filmmakers and led to a strike on the pretext of asking for owed wages. In addition, the newly established Central People's Government of the PRC (Chinese Government) froze Yonghua's box-office income in the Chinese Mainland and confiscated Li Zuyong's assets in Shanghai. Yonghua was forced to stop production for a year. A few years later in 1955, when Yonghua was about to go bankrupt, Li Zuyong turned to the KMT for backing. Yonghua finally dissolved when Li died a frustrated man in 1959 (see also Law and Bren 2012: 153). Fu (2003: 149) also attributes the issues to politics:

[What] troubled Li Zuyong most was what he saw as Communist infiltration in Yonghua. The escalation of the Nationalist-Communist conflict since 1947 had brought a stream of leftist writers and artists fleeing the white reign of terror to Hong Kong. . . . All of them were committed to transforming Hong Kong film culture into an ideological weapon against the Nationalist state. As a result, many well-known leftists were on the payroll of Yonghua. Under their influence, a few films produced in 1949 . . . contained subtle messages of class struggle. At the same time, 'study groups' (*dushu hui*) and other organized cultural activities were formed to discuss current affairs and promote the Communist cause among the staff.¹¹¹ An avowed Nationalist loyalist, Li Zuyong declared war on this Communist infiltration. He demanded that all scripts be approved by him, and no deviations from them either in dialogues or scene arrangement were allowed in production. This led to a series of confrontations between him and the leftists, whose numbers and influence had steadily increased after the

¹¹¹ The 'study groups' were set up to study the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism.

Communist victory on the mainland, culminating in a week-long strike in early 1950 that, among other things, demanded that Li respect their artistic autonomy and pay them all the salaries he owed them.

Yonghua stopped production during the strike, but Li refused to give up his anti-Communist policy.¹¹²

As Fu says, Li Zuyong was an “avowed Nationalist loyalist” and “refused to give up his anti-Communist policy”. However, Law’s analysis of Li and his work provides a different perspective:

[W]hen discussing the career of film mogul Li Zuyong . . . , Cheng’s book [1978, Beijing] describes him as an “arms merchant and an opportunist dealing in the gold market”. “He was also the major shareholder of an enterprise specializing in printing money for the reactionary KMT Government and maintained close links with reactionaries all over the country. He founded the Yonghua Studio not only to make money but clearly to put it at the disposal of the KMT reactionaries in their hour of flagging fortunes. Hence from the beginning, he drew to his side the traitor Zhang Shankun who had also fled to Hongkong, employing him as production chief. Because of his own reactionary standpoint and the KMT’s reliance on him, the majority of Yonghua’s productions — such as *Soul of China*, *Sorrows of the Forbidden City* . . . — contained reactionary thinking” (Volume 2 p. 316).

Here is what Du [1972, Taipei] says: “. . . [Li Zuyong] established the Yonghua Company with an investment of US\$3,750,000 and came up with high-quality works such as *Soul of China*, *Sorrows of the Forbidden City* Li was an outstanding Chinese filmmaker who could not fulfil his life’s ambitions because of the turbulent times he found himself and his country in. He died in frustration, a great loss for Chinese cinema. Li had many admirable qualities, one worth mentioning was his determined anti-communism. He would rather face the most extreme of difficulties than to bow to the demands of

¹¹² Shu Shi’s recall of Yonghua in Wong (2001: 37), though briefly, testifies to Fu’s narrative. For a complete story of and controversy over Yonghua from its founding to its collapse, see Du (1988: 405-416, 517-524) and Cheng et al. (1978b: 315-320); see also Fu (2003: 144-150), Yu (1998: 163-6; 2000: 66-7), Huang (2009: 71-3) and Wong (2001: 22-3) for relatively more objective views.

left-wingers. Such resolute anti-communism was rare in men”
(Volume 3, pp. 103-104).

Both authors display their obvious political leanings, their views of historic personalities in Chinese cinema being coloured by politics. Which author is correct? (1997: 15)

Perhaps, both Cheng and Du are incorrect, perhaps they are just biased, blinded by doctrinal ideologies and obeisance to political correctness. However, the contradiction between their views remains a clear illustration of the KMT-CPC, or the rightist-leftist, ideological rivalry as well as a manifestation of cold war reasoning. Law continues:

When it was first established, Yonghua was under the influence of ‘progressive filmmakers’ (Cheng’s words) or was ‘infiltrated by left-wingers’ (Du’s words). In point of fact, both the Peking regime and the Taipei regime were fighting a ‘united front’ war and both wanted to woo Yonghua. Li did not make known his preferences until the very end. Hence, how was it possible to maintain that he had political motives for founding Yonghua right from the very start? The facts have shown that both Li and Zhang Shankun established the company as a business investment. Li was the money-man, Zhang the brains behind the operation. Because Shanghai’s film industry was affected by the Civil War, Li and Zhang found it opportune to move to Hongkong and produce Mandarin-language films for distribution in the Mainland. They fished around for Shanghai talent to bring with them

The political orientation of these talented individuals cannot be determined one way or the other. Li and Zhang brought them to Hongkong not for any political reason. They were motivated by pure business facts, i.e. the depressing state of the industry in Shanghai and the Civil War. . . . In their business calculations, they failed to reckon with the speed with which the Communists won ascendancy over the KMT. In 1948, seeing that the situation in the company was worsening, Zhang Shankun announced that he was pulling out of

Yonghua for good. . . . [T]he vital Mainland market was lost when the Communist authorities started to ban Yonghua products. . . . Between 1950 and 1951, the studio was in dire financial straits with productions starting and closing down intermittently and staff not paid. The ‘progressive left-wing filmmakers’ employed by the studio (in particular Shen Ji) began to instigate workers to press for pay, leading to a workers’ strike (1997: 16)

If Law is correct, it would mean that Fu’s depiction of Li Zuyong’s refusal to give up his anti-Communist policy would have been based on the more commercial consideration of securing the Taiwan market rather than any political consideration. In another sense, Li Zuyong either made use of politics with the intention of furthering his business or he was manipulated by politics and political powers. In any case, the industrial dispute at Yonghua in 1952, which is understood to have been a struggle between the leftists and rightists, was just a prelude. In the following years, the Hong Kong film industry was split into the leftist and the rightist camps.

Hong Kong Cinema as Battlefield between Left and Right

Although the Chinese Civil War ended with the CPC’s seizure of power over the Chinese Mainland and the KMT’s retreat to Taiwan, both the PRC and the Republic of China (ROC) governments’ fight to be the legitimate government of China continued; cross-Strait relations remained in a state of war.¹¹³ In 1953, the US exported considerable quantities of armaments to Taiwan and was exchanging views with the ROC Government on the “Mutual Defense Treaty between the United

¹¹³ By and large, the state of war across the Taiwan Strait ceased in 1979 after the PRC established diplomatic relations with the US. However, the end of the state of war was officially signified when the Taiwan Government lifted martial law in 1987 and abolished the “Mobilization for the Suppression of Communist Rebellion Provisional Act” in 1991.

States of America and the Republic of China”. The aim was to forge the American policy of containment against the expansion of communism in East Asia.¹¹⁴ In response to the military liaison between the US and Taiwan, the People’s Liberation Army bombarded Taiwan’s Kinmen (also known as Quemoy) on 3 September 1954 and triggered off the First Taiwan Strait Crisis (also known as Formosa Crisis) that continued for one year. It was in this context that the leftist and rightist cinemas in Hong Kong systematically took shape.

The leftist and rightist cinemas, which were hostile to each other in ideology and political stance, both drew up their ‘united front’ in the cultural battlefield and were guided, supported and funded by either the CPC or the KMT regimes. The leftists described their comrades in the film industry as ‘progressive’ filmmakers, and the rightists described their fellow travellers in the film industry as ‘free’ filmmakers. In both cinemas, there were film people who pronounced themselves patriots with the difference that they were either patriots of the PRC led by the CPC or the ROC led by the KMT. The rightists disagreed with the CPC’s ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ and feared the Communist confiscation of private property while the leftists hated the corruption of the KMT. What the authentic leftist and rightist filmmakers shared in common was their advocacy of nationalism and democracy (albeit their own versions). However, paradoxically both the regimes they embraced, supported and were loyal to, were later proved to be totalitarian since they both used violent repression and political persecution against the people under their

¹¹⁴ The “Mutual Defense Treaty between the USA and the ROC” was terminated on 1 January 1980, a year after the US established diplomatic relations with the PRC. However, diplomatic relations between the US and Taiwan was *de facto* maintained under the Taiwan Relations Act enacted on 10 April 1979.

governance. By and large, the leftist cinema front line took shape about a couple of years earlier than the rightist cinema.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the leftist cinema in Hong Kong was mainly led by three companies, namely, Great Wall (also known as Changcheng) Movie Enterprises Limited, Feng Huang (also known as Phoenix) Motion Picture Company and Sun Luen Film Company.

In mid-1949, film producer Zhang Shankun, who was usually considered rightist, teamed up with former Shanghai lawyer Yuen Yang-an (also known as Yuan Yangan) and founded the Great Wall Pictures Corporation (also known as ‘old Great Wall’) with the financial support of the leftist shipping magnate, Lu Jiankang. The company’s debut film was *A Forgotten Woman* (*Dang Fu Xin*, 1949, an adaptation of Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*) starring the popular star, Bai Guang, and directed by Griffin Yue (also known as Yue Feng).¹¹⁵ As Zhang Shankun cared a great deal about publicity, he held a gala ceremony for the premiere of the film at the King’s Theatre in Central with Governor Alexander Grantham as the guest of honour (Fu 2003: 150). Other popular and successful productions of Great Wall included Ma Xu Weibang’s *The Haunted House* (*Quion Lou Hen*, 1949) and Griffin Yue’s *The Flower Street* (*Hua Jie*, 1950) starring the golden voice of Zhou Xuan.¹¹⁶ However, the financial situation of Great Wall deteriorated when it could not sell its productions to China after the CPC won the civil war. In this instance, Foucault’s theory of author function matters: As Zhang Shankun was formerly close to the KMT and an active film producer in the previously Japanese-occupied Shanghai, the CPC considered

¹¹⁵ For more about *A Forgotten Woman*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. II* (1998: 347).

¹¹⁶ For more about *The Haunted House*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. II* (1998: 418); for more about *The Flower Street*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. III* (2000: 68-9).

him an enemy and ‘traitor to the Chinese nation-race’ (*hanjian*), and, thus, prohibited his company’s productions.

In the wake of the CPC’s prohibition, Zhang Shankun argued that Great Wall should give up the Chinese Mainland market and develop the Taiwan market instead. However, his partner Yuen Yang-an disagreed. According to Huang (2009: 73), it was also at this time that the CPC began to consolidate its pro-communist films and set up a studio in Hong Kong. In 1950, the Communists made contact with Zhang Shankun via Ouyang Yuqian, advising him to return to China to declare his stance and then get back to Hong Kong to continue the work of Great Wall. Zhang Shankun refused to step foot in China because he was afraid of the Communist ‘political liquidation’. Zhang Shankun’s wife Tong Yuejuan (2000: 41) recalls the incident:

[W]e were approached by members of the Communist Party who asked us to join the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. We refused. . . . So we made some enemies there. Later, we left on a trip . . . on the pretext of promotion, and went to countries like Singapore, Thailand. We didn’t come back until two months later, and we found out that Great Wall had been turned into a kind of leftist study centre. We were booted out. That year should be around 1950.

The Great Wall without Zhang Shankun was restructured, renamed Great Wall Movie Enterprises Limited, and managed by Yuen Yang-an (see Huang 2009: 73). Yuen Yang-an brought in Lu Jiankang again to support him (Shen 2001: 305).¹¹⁷ However, after making a few films, Yuen Yang-an ran out of money again. The son-in-law of Yuen Yang-an, George Shen (*ibid*) writes, “To Beijing, after Great Wall ran out of money, Yuen’s major and only asset was his reputation. In 1956, he was

¹¹⁷ For more about the founding of Great Wall, see Wong (2001: xviii-xix), Yu (1998: 205-8), Fu (2003: 150-2), Fu (2003: 150-2) and Huang (2009: 73).

invited to lead a group of Hong Kong filmmakers to visit Beijing, and was received by Premier Zhou Enlai. But from that time onward, Mainland cadres would watch his every move at Great Wall. It was no longer his company.” Although George Shen has not made it clear, it is understood that Great Wall was funded by the CPC after Yuen Yang-an’s visit to Beijing. Yuen Yang-an left Great Wall the following year. Jarvie (1977: 29) remarks, “Perhaps the left’s greatest success was the infiltration and eventual take-over of the Great Wall Motion Pictures Co. . . . The name was varied to the Great Wall Film Production Company Limited [also known as ‘new Great Wall’] and was Communist in outlook.”

As mentioned earlier, before founding the old Great Wall Zhang Shankun established Yonghua Motion Picture Industries Limited with the financial support by Li Zuyong, and recruited many filmmakers who were previously based in Shanghai, such as Shen Ji, Shu Shi, Gu Eryi, Liu Qiong, Ouyang Yuqian, Zhu Shilin, Bu Wancang, Li Pingqian, Cheng Bugao, Wu Zuguang and so on (Law 1997: 16). Many of them had worked for Zhang Shankun’s joint Sino-Japanese venture, China United Productions Limited (*Zhonglian*), when Shanghai was occupied by the Japanese military.¹¹⁸ After *The Soul of China* and *Sorrows of the Forbidden City*, Zhang Shankun left Yonghua in 1948. When Yonghua fell into severe financial difficulties, a group of employees left and formed their own co-operative enterprise, the 50TH Year Motion Pictures, with their labour force serving as investment capital. They produced *The Fiery Phoenix* (*Huo Feng Huang*, 1951) directed by Wang Weiyi

¹¹⁸ ‘*Zhonglian*’ was the short form of ‘*Zhongguo Lianhe Zhipian Gufen Gonsi*’ (China United Productions Ltd). The establishment of *Zhonglian* in 1942 was facilitated by Zhang Shankun’s cooperation with the Japanese to centralize film production by merging twelve film companies in occupied Shanghai. As Zhang Shankun was also the managing director of *Zhonglian*, nationalist discourse usually depicted him as a ‘typical collaborator’ who betrayed his country for the sake of personal gain. For more about the occupation cinema of occupied Shanghai from 1941 to 1945, see Fu (2003: 93-132).

and *Witch, Devil, Man* (*Shen Gui Ren*, 1952) which was comprised of three stories directed by Gu Eryi, Bai Chen and Shu Shi respectively.¹¹⁹ The success of the two films encouraged the filmmakers to believe that the ‘co-operative’ mode was a viable means of running a film production business. In spite of their confidence, 50TH Year Motion Pictures could not carry on with its productions and was forced to close after the government deported the company’s core founding personnel such as Shu Shi, Liu Qiong and Bai Chen in 1952. But the idea continued and the co-operative mode in turn inspired Zhu Shilin to form Feng Huang later. During the early 1950s, Zhu Shilin was working for Dragon-Horse (*Loon-Ma*) Films, which was founded in 1950, financed by businessman Wu Xingzai and managed by director Fei Mu. After Fei Mu died of heart attack in 1951, Zhu Shilin took over the company when Wu Xingzai left the next year.¹²⁰ In 1953, Zhu Shilin, together with the filmmakers of Dragon-Horse and the former members of 50TH Year, formed Feng Huang and operated the company in co-operative mode, yet the company also received support from the CPC.¹²¹

Sun Luen, the only one among the three major leftist film companies that was devoted to Cantonese film productions, was founded in 1952 and headed up by the former editor of *Wen Wei Po*, Liu Yet-yuen (also known as Liao Yiyuan).¹²² The company was nominally financed by overseas Chinese patriots, but was, in fact,

¹¹⁹ For more about 50TH Year Motion Pictures, see Yu (2000: 21-3) and Wong (2001: 37-40); for more about *The Fiery Phoenix* and *Witch, Devil, Man*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. III* (2000: 198-9 and 496-8).

¹²⁰ For more about Dragon-Horse, Wu Xingzai and Fei Mu, see Yu (2000: 39-44) and Shen (2001: 261).

¹²¹ For more about the founding of Feng Huang, see Wong (2001: xix-xx, 84) and Zhou (2009: 24-5).

¹²² *Wen Wei Po* was first published in Shanghai in 1938. Its Hong Kong edition was launched in 1948 and serves as the mouthpiece of the PRC in Hong Kong.

funded by the Central People's Government of the PRC (Zhou 2009: 25 and Lo: 2000: 130). Its mission was to unite the 'progressive' Cantonese filmmakers in Hong Kong.

Great Wall, Feng Huang and Sun Luen shared the same guiding principles in both their productions and political stance, and recognized the PRC as their mother country. According to Chinese Mainland scholar Zhou Chengren (2009: 25), these companies were directly under the State Council of the PRC and seen by Zhou Enlai, the Premier of the PRC from October 1949 to January 1976.¹²³ After its entry into the Korean War, the PRC was isolated from the rest of the world because of the total embargo on trade of any kind imposed by the US and the strategic embargo imposed by the United Nations. The US embargo did not cease with the end of the Korean War but lasted until the early 1970s. Under such conditions, setting aside the 'Question of Hong Kong' became the pragmatic national policy of the PRC. In the 1950s and 1960s, Hong Kong served as a strategic window for closed-door China as well as a crucial, complex, cultural and politico-economical link between the PRC and the outside world (see Qi, Pengfei n.d.). Meanwhile, the leftist cinema in the colony functioned as a cultural means to propagate New China and was primarily targeted at the worldwide overseas Chinese communities, including Hong Kong.

In order to strengthen the influence of New China on Hong Kong, China had to support the leftist cinema. Hong Kong's leftist cinema had countless ties with China, in social, cinematic or people-to-people relationships. In importing leftist films into the country, China was showing mutual support in moral and economic terms, apart from allowing China to exert direct ideological influence on Hong Kong's culture. (Hu Ke 2000: 19)

¹²³ After the Cultural Revolution, the Xinhua News Agency dealt with the leftist film undertakings in Hong Kong.

However, since Great Wall, Feng Huang and Sun Luen were based in Hong Kong, they had to satisfy Hong Kong and overseas audience's taste for entertainment, and, therefore, may not have entirely matched the contemporary socio-political sensitivities of the Chinese Mainland. However, before 1964, the Chinese Government imported some of the Hong Kong leftist films that agreed with the literature and art policy set by the CPC (see Chapter 5).

The import of Hong Kong films into China was directly connected to the political atmosphere inside China. When the political situation was more volatile, the number of films imported decreased. Those that were imported were limited to the products of the Chang-Feng-Xin companies [Great Wall, Feng Huang and Sun Luen], whose styles were more sedate. When the political situation stabilized and became more relaxed, the numbers increased and the styles and contents of films imported varied greatly, to the delight of film fans.

The import of Hong Kong films reached a peak between 1960-62. 11 features were imported in 1960, five in 1961, and 17 in 1962.¹²⁴ (Hu Ke 2000: 23)

Nonetheless, from 1964 to 1977, no Hong Kong films were exported across the northern border because of the extreme left prohibition policies in the Chinese Mainland at that time and the outbreak of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (commonly known as the Cultural Revolution) in 1966.

As for the rightist cinema, its formation was, in fact, more market-oriented than politics-driven. From the 1930s onwards, China was a significant market for Hong Kong films, in particular, the Mandarin films, but the situation changed when the PRC was founded.

¹²⁴ According to Hong Kong Film Archive, Hong Kong produced eight hundred and ten films between 1960 and 1962, which implies that only a very small portion of Hong Kong films were imported into the Chinese Mainland in the three years even though it was already at a 'peak' in that era according to Hu (2009: 23).

New China adopted Soviet-style management to administer the country. The government created a special institution to govern the film industry. On 11 July 1950, the State Administrative Council of the Central Government promulgated . . . the “Provisional Measure for the Import of Foreign Films” which authorized a state institution to uniformly import, distribute and exhibit foreign films, including those from Hong Kong. The state was in total control of the import and export of films based on the country’s political, economic and cultural needs. The pre-1949 policy of free enterprise in handling film imports no longer existed. (Hu Ke 2000: 19)

In addition, the newly established PRC implemented strict film censorship to prohibit films that were not in line with the CPC’s ideology, in particular, all films from the capitalist territories except a limited number of titles produced by the leftist film companies in Hong Kong.¹²⁵ In view of the new situation, the Hong Kong film industry gradually explored, valued and relied on the Taiwan market because of its population, economic prosperity and having Mandarin as a standard language. In point of fact, the Communists were not as cunning as they might have thought with their censorship. History has shown that the development of the Taiwan film industry and, thus, its film market in the 1950s and 1960s was indirectly facilitated by the exclusionism and strict censorship of its antagonist CPC. In addition, after the PRC took part in the Korean War in late 1950, the anti-Communist atmosphere and general fear of communism was getting intense in Hong Kong. All these conditions provided an opportunity for the Nationalists to extend their influence over the Hong Kong film industry.

In order to consolidate existing supporters and attempt to recruit more ‘free’ filmmakers to join the Nationalist camp and recognize the ROC as their mother

¹²⁵ During the Cold War years, cultural exchanges between China and the UK were not possible; the export of Hong Kong leftist films to China obviously circumvented normal procedures of Sino-British relations.

country, the ‘Hong Kong & Kowloon Union of Free Workers in the Film Industry’ was founded in 1953. As membership had expanded to include workers in the Chinese opera undertakings by 1956, the union was renamed to ‘Hong Kong & Kowloon Union of Free Workers in the Cinema and Theatrical Enterprise’. In 1957, it was renamed once again this time as ‘Hong Kong & Kowloon Cinema & Theatrical Enterprise Free General Association’ (commonly known as the Free General Association) since capitalists were also accepted as members after the association’s statutes were amended (see Tso 2009: 271-3, Lee 2009: 87).¹²⁶ Such renaming signified the association’s transformation from a labour-oriented to a profession-oriented one, a characteristic that differentiated it from the leftist labour organizations that usually upheld proletarian solidarity and rivalry with the capitalists. According to Huang (2009: 74), the permanent site of the association was donated by Run Run Shaw, the boss of Shaw Brothers Studio. One of its founders Tong Yuejuan recounts in her monograph:

At that time, the number of members added up to a few thousand, including Shaw Brothers. Before any film was made, they had to register with us. We would then issue a certificate stating when the film was shot and sent it to Taiwan for approval. No films could be shown in Taiwan without the certificate. The Taiwan market was formidable at that time, and had many activities, such as the Double Ten Day [*Shuang Shi Jie*, also known as the Double Tenth Day; the national day of the ROC], film festival . . . and members could apply for the competition [the Golden Horse Award] with us. (2000: 37; my translation)

¹²⁶ The association was registered as a limited company in 1984 and renamed to HK & Kowloon Cinema and Theatrical Enterprise Free General Association Ltd. In 1996, it was renamed to Hong Kong Cinema & Theatrical Enterprise Association Ltd. In 1999, it was renamed one more time as Hong Kong & Macau Cinema and Theatrical Enterprise Association Ltd. For more about the founding of the Free General Association, see Huang (2009: 73-5) and Tso (2009: 272-3).

Other than membership fees, the Free General Association was financially supported by the Government Information Office of the ROC (Huang 2009: 75). The association claimed to lead the works of ‘free’ filmmakers and served as a communication channel between the Hong Kong film industry and the Taiwan Government. It asked Hong Kong filmmakers to differentiate themselves from the Communists and to embrace freedom and the ROC by action (see Du 1988: 515-6). It boycotted and isolated the leftist filmmakers; films which had involved the artistes, directors, screenwriters, cinematographers and so forth that had collaborated with the leftist film companies would not be allowed to be exhibited in Taiwan. It also forbade its members to work for the leftist companies and make any films within the PRC territories. By means of market restriction, the association functioned as a united front apparatus as well as a regulatory and censorship organ of the KMT stationed in Hong Kong during the cold war era. Not only were the films produced by its members censored, but also the political stance of the filmmakers. The constraints set by the association affected the Hong Kong film industry until the mid-1990s. For instance, in 1988, I served as the cinematographer for Taylor Wong’s box-office success *The Truth (Fat Noi Ching)*, starring Andy Lau and Deanie Ip. Since my debut directorial work *No Regret (Leng Mui Jing Juen, 1987)*, which was released in Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland a year before the release of *The Truth*, was financed by Sil-Metropole Organization Limited, a state-run company of the PRC, the Free General Association blacklisted me and prohibited me from the Taiwan market.¹²⁷ Therefore, not only my name could not appear in the front credits of *The Truth*, the cinematography was credited to a fake name in the end

¹²⁷ Sil-Metropole Organization Limited was founded in 1982 with the merger of Great Wall, Feng Huang, Sun Luen together with another leftist company, Chung Yuen Motion Picture Company. For more about the formation of Sil-Metropole, see Sil-Metropole 2010: 364.

roller too. At the end of the day, many of the filmmakers whom the Free General Association reckoned to be ‘free’ were essentially not free; they were wrapped around by pre-set restrictions. The so-called ‘free’ filmmakers sympathized with the Nationalist political stance in appearance only; many of them were neutral or apolitical but presented themselves as rightist for the sake of their livelihood and a better income. However, this type of ‘opportunist’ not only existed in the rightist camp, but in the leftist camp as well. This was what ‘politics’ meant for filmmakers in the heat of the cold war.

After the establishment of the Free General Association, Hong Kong cinema, in a broad sense, significantly and distinctly divided into the ‘left’ and the ‘right’ which competed with each other in political ideologies and poaching renowned filmmakers. Furthermore:

The American intervention in the KMT-CCP conflicts across the Taiwan Strait had the consequence of turning both Hong Kong and Taiwan into a strategic bulwark against the spread of communism over Southeast Asia. In order to contain the spread of communism on cultural fronts, American dollars came pouring into East Asia in support of academic, educational, and other cultural activities that might possibly impede the growth of radical ideologies.

The Asia Foundation, which was the chief American agent for such funding, supported three major publishing houses: *You Lian* [Union Press], *Jin Ri Shi Jie* [World Today], and Asia Press. The Asia Foundation was connected with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); *Jin Ri Shi Jie* was a branch office of the United States Information Service (USIS). . . . While all of these institutions supported anti-communist intellectuals — be they essayists, philosophers, or moviemakers — by subsidizing their research projects or study plans, the *You Lian* [Union] Press also established a research institute to

gather information about Communist China. (Law, Wing Sang 2009: 132-3)

As for targets other than publishing houses, the rightist film production company Asia Pictures Limited, founded in 1953 by former China correspondent for United Press Chang Kuo-sin who also headed up Asia Press, was also funded by the Asia Foundation.¹²⁸

The cold war between the leftist and rightist cinemas appeared to hinge on whether or not a certain Hong Kong film, even one without political content, was permitted to access the Taiwan market. Actually the political struggle was superficial and the real aim was to compel Hong Kong filmmakers to declare, or to lie about, their positive stance towards the KMT and break with the CPC. However, the struggle was much less distinct in the Cantonese cinema than in the Mandarin cinema. In a broad sense, the Cantonese cinema tended to be bound by commercialism. It was mostly concerned with making fast money, catered principally to the audiences seeking simple entertainment and paid little attention to quality and the pursuit of the aesthetic. Most of the Cantonese films were multifarious and messy in ideology and did not fall into the categorization of left or right, but survived and made their fortune amid left and right.

Nonetheless, there were some remarkable and respectable filmmakers in the Cantonese cinema that cared about their works' quality and positive influence on their audience, and also their contribution to the well-being of society. The most

¹²⁸ “[Chang Kuo-sin] was first to report the conclusions of the six agreements between the Nationalists and Communists under General Marshall’s mediation in 1946, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek’s decision to step down in December 1948, and the fall of Nanking in 23 April 1949 [*sic*]” (Lau, C. K. 22 February 2006). He came to Hong Kong in December 1949 and was the Head of the Communication Department of the Hong Kong Baptist College from 1978 to 1985. For more about Asia Pictures, see Yung, Sai Shing (2009: 125-144) and Wong and Lee (2009: 256-8).

noteworthy and outstanding among them were the filmmakers of Union Film Enterprise Limited, a co-operative enterprise without investment from a wealthy capitalist or a consortium headed by Ng Cho-fan. From 1953 to 1964, the company produced forty-three films, all black and white and all in Cantonese; many of them inherited the legacy of the May Fourth Movement and were serious dramas with a critical stance on social issues.¹²⁹ Although Ng Cho-fan had participated in a number of leftist films and had constant contact with the leftist filmmakers, Union Film had no support from Great Wall, Feng Huang or Sun Luen. However, Union Film was often seen as leftist because the leftist newspapers such as *Wen Wei Po* had regular reports and reviews on its productions since its first film while the rightist newspapers such as *Sing Tao Daily* never mentioned its films. In addition, the advertisements of the Union Film titles always occupied a large space in *Wen Wei Po* but a small space in *Sing Tao Daily*. Yet only four to five Union Film titles entered the Communist China market, and all Union Film titles were rejected by the Nationalist Taiwan market (see Liu, Chi Keung 2001: 111-3). Therefore, besides the local market, the company relied very much on the overseas markets in Nanyang and North America to survive. In the light of this, it did not make sense to categorize Union Film as a leftist or rightist company.

Filmmakers in Politically Sensitive Era: Left, Right, or Otherwise?

The simple dichotomous categorization of Hong Kong filmmakers in the cold war years into leftist and rightist is, indeed, reductionist. One should not ignore the fact that there were also filmmakers who did not trust the CPC or the KMT and

¹²⁹ For a filmography and introductions of the films by Union Film, see Liu 2001: 115-186.

chose to reside in Hong Kong so as to avoid living in either of the two parties' totalitarian states. They just took up a political stance to maintain their livelihood.¹³⁰ For example, director Evan Yang (also known as Yieh Veng), one of the founders of the Free General Association, and Yao Ke, who was supposed to be a rightist, wrote screenplays for *Great Wall* under aliases (Reeve 2010: 15).

Jarvie (1977: 27) maintains that politics were unavoidable in the Hong Kong film industry:

Politics have been a factor in the Hong Kong film industry from its beginnings After 1927, politics in China means Communists versus the KMT. The Japanese invasion and later World War II interrupted what was in effect a protracted civil war, but never stopped it. Twentieth century Chinese intellectuals, like many intellectuals the world over, have tended towards the left in varying degrees. Dr. Sun Yat Sen was himself a radical and a socialist. The May 4th Movement was also a radical one. But many things continued under the KMT that radicals had hoped China was rid of. This is why novelists, poets, playwrights, journalists, students and film directors tended to be radicals. It would be a long time before simple mistrust of the extreme radicalism of the Communists would create anything like a right-wing: most of the time there were Communists and fellow-travellers, and non-Communists.

Jarvie here briefly explains why most of the intellectual filmmakers before and after the war were, or tended to be, leftist and also indirectly suggests that the word 'rightist', as it is used to describe the filmmakers (and the personnel in other cultural professions as well) in the cold war years, does not necessarily signify 'Nationalist', 'sympathetic to the KMT', or 'anti-Communist'. No matter whether it is a

¹³⁰ According to the monographs of veteran filmmakers in the 1950s and 1960s, many of them did not identify themselves as either leftists or the rightists and stated that they were just labelled as such by the opposing camp. See Wong (2001) for the veteran filmmakers' monographs. See also Reeve (2010: 15-6).

descriptive modifier or a pronoun, the word ‘rightist’ is usually used in a loose sense and is just a term relative to ‘leftist’. The people who were regarded as ‘rightists’ during the cold war also included the non-Communists, the apolitical and the *de facto* non-KMT sympathizers. Above all, it should be noted that the usage of the terms ‘leftist’ and ‘rightist’ to describe filmmakers in the cold war years was just product of Cold War reasoning, under which the dichotomy of adversaries reigned, as in the Soviet Union versus the US, communism versus capitalism, friend versus enemy, and, thus, the ‘leftist’ versus the ‘rightist’.

Regarding the categorization of the left and the right, Liu Yet-yuen, former head of Sun Luen and a significant representative of the Hong Kong leftist cinema, said in an interview on 19 August 1987:

We would not claim ourselves to be leftist. Those who are neither anti-Communist nor anti-Chinese are friends. Therefore, there is a broad sphere of unification. We did not consider Shaw Brothers as rightist for there was almost no anti-Communist works in their productions. We would not reject them just because they led filmmakers to Taiwan every year to celebrate the Double Ten Day. Their productions were serious (though some were erotic). . . . Other than our own, we needed amicable companies too. We saw from their works; the Shaw Brothers did not tie in with the ‘counter-attack on mainland’ theme but just catered to the backward audience. (Cited in Zhou 2009: 28; my translation)

In point of fact, the leftist and rightist filmmakers in Hong Kong were not total rivals in relation to business and trades. From their establishment up to June 1966, that is, around the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the three major leftist film companies produced two hundred and sixty-two films (Liao [Liu] et al. 15 May 1997:

15).¹³¹ According to Liu Yet-yuen (15 October 1997: 9-10), the two leading and representational companies of the rightist cinema, the Shaw Brothers and the Cathay Organization Limited, were once the buyers and distribution agents of the Feng Huang and Great Wall titles in Southeast Asia respectively while Sun Luen sold its productions to Shaw Brothers, Cathay and also Kong Ngee Company (see also Lee, Pui-tak 2009: 86).¹³² Furthermore, veteran screenwriter and actor Chu Hak gives further evidence of the links:

Did you know that most of Great Wall's funding and outlet of productions depended on Shaw Brothers? Shaw Brothers once contracted with Great Wall that the latter made ten films a year, and the former handed over one hundred and twenty thousand Hong Kong dollars for each of them, including the distribution rights in the Singapore and Malaysia markets. With one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, Great Wall could make one film. The local box-office takings plus the purchase fees from the US, Africa and other overseas markets, which added up to about one hundred thousand dollars, would be used to support Great Wall's overheads. Therefore, some people once said: Great Wall was a leftist company but supported by Shaw Brothers. This paradox also illustrated one point, that is, Shaw Brothers owned many theatres in Malaysia, and it needed substantial film supplies. (Wong and Lee 2009: 254; my translation)

In March 1968, Shaw Brothers, Cathay and Kong Ngee signed an agreement that they would not buy and distribute any Communist movies (Huang 2009: 78), but it was an agreement with little meaning because the leftist film companies had almost stopped all their productions after the Cultural Revolution was set in motion

¹³¹ From 1966 up to the establishment of Sil-Metropole in 1982, Great Wall, Feng Huang and Sun Luen produced one hundred and seventeen films (Liao [Liu] et al. 1997: 15).

¹³² Kong Ngee ranked behind Shaw Brothers and Cathay to be the number three in film distribution in Southeast Asia. Shaw Brothers and Cathay were keen competitors in the 1950s and early 1960s; for more about their business in Southeast Asia, see Chung (2011: 190-201) and Law and Bren (2012: 188-195). For more about Kong Ngee, see Chung (2011: 151-4).

nationwide in Maoist China in May 1966. What can be deduced from all these is that, in terms of investment and commerce, the investors, as well as many filmmakers, no matter whether leftists or rightists, were primarily faithful to capital and profits rather than a political creed. This shows how reductionist it can be to evaluate filmmakers in a politically complex and sensitive era simply by their surface political stance while overlooking the complexity of contradictory motives and self-rationalizations. It is clear that politics was a deep and dirty business as illustrated by the fact that, at one level, the Communists' openly engaged in serious political struggle and at another, underneath, they were clandestinely collaborating with their adversaries. It is hard to make any sense of the Communist rationale given Liu Yet-yuen's statement that, "We would not reject [Shaw Brothers] just because they led filmmakers to Taiwan every year to celebrate the Double Ten Day" (my translation). Everybody knows that the celebration of the Double Ten Day in Taiwan is also the celebration of the ROC National Day, and participation in such a celebration is an admission that there exists a political entity named the ROC situated in Taiwan, which is another 'China'.

In the light of such a complexity, and as discussed earlier in this chapter, it would be shallow to conclude that the founders of Yonghua, Zhang Shankun and Li Zuyong, were stern anti-Communists or Nationalist loyalists for they were also businessmen seeking an advantageous position to safeguard their investments and gain the largest possible profit. When the PRC market was closed to them, they turned to Taiwan and became 'anti-Communists'. By the same token, one can suppose that if they were living in Hong Kong today, they would probably be in the guise of 'pro-Communist'. Adopting a political camouflage is a means to an end; the films the investor has invested in and the filmmakers are devoted to have one

destination — *the market*. Liu Yet-yuen, Lo Dun and the renowned film master Chang Cheh all said that filmmaking was a commercial and artistic pursuit, not really related to left or right (cited in Lee 2009: 91).¹³³ Chang Cheh wrote:

The new Great Wall . . . together with the later Feng Huang and so forth were customarily addressed as the ‘leftist companies’, which stood opposite to the so-called ‘rightist companies’ under the Free General Association. In fact, they had no distinguishing ideological left or right, and made commercial films primarily; only that the ‘leftist’ might get certain support in funding in liaison with the Chinese Mainland. From what I can see as an outsider, the liaison was not close. Its condition of funding was similar to that of Singapore to Motion Picture & General Investment Company Limited and seemed modest.¹³⁴ (1989: 23-4; my translation)

Despite Chang Cheh’s observation that the liaison between the leftist film companies and the Chinese Mainland was not that close, many leftists in Hong Kong, including a number of filmmakers, did conform to the ultra-left line of the Gang of Four in China during the Cultural Revolution.

The tragic Cultural Revolution not only induced a wave of illegal immigrants to flee across the border into Hong Kong, it also prompted the 1967 Hong Kong Leftist Riots, in which a considerable number of leftist film workers took part, including Fu Che and Shek Hwei.¹³⁵ The violent political turmoil in China and Hong Kong not only had a severe social impact, it was also a disaster for Hong Kong

¹³³ Such a statement is contrary to the CPC’s fundamental literature and art doctrine that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

¹³⁴ Motion Picture & General Investment Company Limited (MP & GI), founded in Hong Kong in 1956, was a constituent company under the Cathay Organization Limited that concentrated on film productions. The company was renamed Cathay Organization (HK) Limited in 1965 after the death of the founder of the Cathay Organization, Loke Wan Tho, in 1964. For more about MP & GI and its competition with the Shaw Brothers, see Law and Bren (2012: 162-164) and Chung (2011: 190-211).

¹³⁵ For more about the 1967 Hong Kong Leftist Riots, see Cheung Ka Wai’s *Inside Story of 1967 Riot in Hong Kong* (2000).

leftist cinema, and leftist production came to an almost complete halt (Shen 2001: 278). As Chung (2011: 120) remarks, from the late 1950s on, the struggle between the leftist and the rightist cinemas was not as intense as it had been. Productions gradually became less political. Chung attributes the easing in hostility to the power of the market which had replaced political films with commercial ones. In the course of their rivalry, at best, the Nationalists just weakened the leftist cinema; they did not succeed in killing it. In the last half of the 1960s, it was the Cultural Revolution that revolted against and inflicted serious damage on the patriotic (to the PRC) film industry in Hong Kong. Liu Yet-yuen recalls:

We are patriotic. Our country offered us some help; our films were also distributed in the country. . . . Who would have thought that when the Cultural Revolution came, we were criticized as the anti-revolutionary revisionist line in literature and art? We were said to have spread poison outside; what we had done was not good, but bad. . . . Our productions were works of patriotism. (15 October 1997: 14; my translation)

Leftist actress Chu Hung (also known as Zhu Hong) also says:

We were asked to make films about workers, peasants and soldiers, and to create heroic figures. But films of the Cultural Revolution era made the mistake of creating heroes that were divorced from reality, whom audiences couldn't accept. We ended up in a creative dead end. Towards the end of the Cultural Revolution, our hearts were tormented. The culture of a people, the Chinese culture with a 5,000-year history, should not be negated like this.¹³⁶ (Wong 2001: 243)

¹³⁶ According to Hu Ke (2000: 24): "Even though the Hong Kong leftist companies tried to conform to the Mainland's political agenda by making pictures of the extreme left line, these pictures were never imported into the Mainland either during or after the Cultural Revolution. [Great Wall, Feng Huang and Sun Luen] were terribly shaken up and suffered such losses in Hong Kong that made their futures untenable."

The most pitiful filmmakers were those loyal leftists who returned to the Chinese Mainland to serve their mother country. Although they were once seen by the CPC as patriotic and ‘progressive’ filmmakers in their heyday, they were criticized, denounced, beaten and tortured by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution for the ‘errors’ they had made in their film undertakings, ‘errors’ that were once regarded as something splendid and desirable for the country. Film directors Cai Chusheng (mentioned in Chapter 2), He Feiguang and Gu Eryi (mentioned earlier in this chapter) were persecuted to their deaths.

Director Li Han Hsiang once bantered, “If Jiang Qing had not died, Boss Shaw [Run Run Shaw] should confer a medal on her” (my translation), which means that if Jiang Qing, Mao’s last wife, had not destroyed the Chinese film industry to a degree beyond redemption, Shaw Brothers could not have developed rapidly over some ten years and dominated the overseas Chinese markets for so many years (Shu 2005: 90). Similarly, the disastrous Cultural Revolution also benefitted the Taiwan film industry and the rightist film companies by providing an opportunity for them to expand and grow in strength without external competition. This is another example of the cunning of history.

Colonial Film Censorship Strengthened in Response to Cold War

While Communist China was exercising ideological censorship of film and funding the leftist cinema in Hong Kong and Nationalist Taiwan was indirectly extending its censorship power by means of the Free General Association’s

restrictive measures to interfere with the Hong Kong film industry, the colonial government also implemented political censorship.

In the 1950s and 1960s, colonial political film censorship was seemingly directed mainly against the Communists, and was relatively lenient towards the Nationalists supported by the US. For instance, while the newsreel on Chairman Mao in Moscow was banned, the Taiwanese newsreel about the counterattack on the Mainland was allowed (see Yu 2000: 24-5). However, according to the documentation of the British National Archives (cited in Faure 2009: 14-5), the task of the colonial government in the early Cold War years was not to cope with the problem of 'left' and 'right', but in what way the British Government would be willing to hold the colony.¹³⁷ Back in 1947, when the Chinese Civil War was still in full spate, American officials suggested to London that it should return Hong Kong to China at an appropriate time because they saw Hong Kong as a potential source of further trouble and a constant irritant in Anglo-Chinese relations. When the Communists seized Nanjing from the Nationalists and seemed certain to win the Chinese Civil War in mid-1949, the destiny of Hong Kong was still at issue in the UK Parliament (see Welsh 1997: 437-9). It was not until 1950, the year the Korean War broke out, that Britain made it clear that it would not return Hong Kong either to Taiwan or Beijing (British National Archives, cited in Faure 2009: 14-5). Later on, after the Korean War was over, a group of the British Labour Party representatives paid a visit to Beijing. Before their visit, the PRC's Premier Zhou Enlai brought up the policies of advancing the Anglo-Chinese relations and endeavouring peaceful collaboration with Britain at a preparation meeting of the cadres on 12 August 1954.

¹³⁷ There were successive waves of anti-colonialism movements around the world in the first half of the twentieth century. After Britain had let go of India and Pakistan in 1947 and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1948, it was uncertain how long Britain would hold Hong Kong as its colony.

He also pointed out that Hong Kong was part of China but the opportune moment to resolve the question of Hong Kong was not ripe (Zhou Enlai 1990: 83). By that time, London knew well that Beijing did not intend to reclaim sovereignty over Hong Kong until the '1997 Question of Hong Kong' was officially laid on the table in the early 1980s. Thus, in order to maintain a stable social environment and to prevent any infringement of British rule and interests, competent governance became essential to the colonial administration in the midst of the political, economic and ideological struggles between the Nationalists and Communists and between capitalism and communism. While the PRC opposed and the US supported the KMT in Taiwan, a politically significant objective of colonial censorship during the Cold War years was to prevent any explicit offence against the PRC, which was "too important politically," and the US, which was "essential economically" (Welsh 1997: 442). Competent censorship of films by the colonial government had to avoid open rupture with either the PRC or the US. However, in true colonial style, the machinations over how that censorship was to be imposed were carried out behind closed doors.

Since the recovery of the local film industry after the war, movie-going had become a very popular activity among the population in Hong Kong, which was one of the reasons why Hong Kong cinema would, inevitably, become the site that both the leftists and rightists would contest every inch of.¹³⁸ In response to the popularity and possible socio-political influence of film and the political propaganda in the leftist and rightist cinemas, the colonial government began to strengthen its

¹³⁸ According to an article published in the *Oriental Daily* of 1 January 1992 (cited in Cheng 1995: 434), when the aftermath of the Tung Tau fire caused a riot in Kowloon in March 1952 (see Chau (2009: 86-90) for more about the riot), the Hong Kong Police Force called on the off-duty policemen to return to their duties by projecting a notice in the form of subtitles in all the Hong Kong movie houses. Such an incident demonstrates how popular movie-going was in Hong Kong during the 1950s.

control over film. Article 177 under Part VII of the “Places of Public Entertainment Regulations, 1934”, mentioned in Chapter 2, states:

All cinematograph films and posters . . . shall be censored by a board of censors, or by a member of such board, or by some other persons authorized in that behalf by the board in writing with the approval of the Governor. No film or poster shall be exhibited unless it has been censored and passed by the board of censors or by a member of such board or by some other person authorized as aforesaid. (University of Hong Kong Libraries)

Using the authority warranted by the 1934 legislation, the Governor in Council formulated the “Film Censorship Regulations, 1953” (now abolished, replaced by “Film Censorship Ordinance”). Under Section 2 of the regulations, film censorship was to be administered by a Panel of Censors, with the Government Public Relations Officer as its secretary and members appointed by the Governor. All films and their associated advertising materials had to be submitted to the panel for censorship. After viewing a film and referring to other related materials, censors were authorized to conclude whether or not the film was suitable for public exhibition, or approve the film with mandatory amendments or cuts, or approve the film but order it to be handled within specified terms. Upon request, censors were obliged to give a brief explanation of the censorship decision to the owner or hirer of the film within four days. A Board of Review was also formed in accord with the regulations. The owner or hirer of a film who refused to accept the censorship decision could appeal to the board within twenty-eight days after the issue of the initial decision. Under Section 11, any member of the public who regarded a film as not suitable for public exhibition because of ethical, religious, educational or other reasons could write to the Colonial Secretary to request a re-examination. After considering the

application, the Colonial Secretary could ask the Board of Review to re-censor the film and prohibit the film from exhibition before the re-censoring result was granted. Contravention of the regulations was an offence and the offender was subject to a fine or imprisonment (see Cheng, King 1995: 434-5). Since the request for a re-examination from any member of the public could easily be staged, Section 11 *de facto* provided the government the power to ban any approved films when the occasion arose. It was the first time in Hong Kong that a dedicated official institution was established to administer film censorship though it was revealed to be unlawful thirty-four years later (see Chapter 4).

Three years later, in accordance with the “Film Censorship (Amendment) Regulations, 1956”, the Board of Review was given the power to defer any appeal from six months to not more than two years, in effect a two-year ban in disguise (Cheng, King 1995: 436). On 5 August 1959, the Attorney General moved a bill entitled “An Ordinance to Amend the Indecent Exhibitions Ordinance, Chapter 150” in the Legislative Council, which was to give increased powers of seizure in the case of indecent cinema shows and similar exhibitions. The bill was passed on 19 August 1959 (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1959 Session 5*, 19 August 1959: 183, 203-4). Neither this nor any of the related ordinances and regulations stated, or just did not make public, any objective criteria or guidance for the censors; censorship thus relied solely on the censors’ subjective view. In other words, it left unlimited power for the government to control public film exhibitions. The vagueness of the regulations also enabled the government to exercise political censorship clandestinely and to adjust its censorship criteria expediently in view of the contemporary socio-political context in a way that favoured the colonial rule. Many years later, the declassification of the previously confidential government documents preserved at

the British National Archives corroborate such deductions and analyses.¹³⁹ The colonial government did practise political censorship without making it public during the Cold War years.

According to an internal document from the Public Relations Officer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (File Number: HKRS 160-1-51) dated 11 August 1952, because of the political circumstances at that time, the colonial government was badly in need of an official institution to impose the political censorship of film. It had to strictly forbid the exhibition of the films that were, for instance, about the US troops in the Korean War, or those eulogising the courage of the Nationalist and Communist armies or depicting the racial conflict between the American black and white. Politically sensitive films were deemed more hazardous and more likely to destroy the stability of the colony than those that were obscene, morally corrupt or violent. The document also emphasizes that Hong Kong could not emulate the censorship system of, for example, Britain or the US and let any non-government personnel or organization of the film industry handle censorship. In the interest of the effective governance of the colony, censorship work had to be unified and legislated for the government and guarded by a small group of appointed officials. As this document's suggestion, or advice, was based on political conditions at that time, the formulation of the "Film Censorship Regulations, 1953" can be understood as a political measure in response to the Cold War and cold war tensions. Another declassified document, however, reveals that the colonial government had, *de facto*, carried out political censorship since 1950 at least. A 1950 document titled "Terms of Reference for Film Censors" (File Number: HKRS 934-5-34) states that besides

¹³⁹ Unless otherwise stated, the declassified documents in this chapter are cited from Ng 2009: 53-69.

paying attention to a film's influence on social ethics, criminal activities and religious power, film censors should pay particular attention to films that: (i) Reinforced a political adversary and induced strong political sentiment; (ii) Triggered ethnic or national enmity; by, for example, introducing anti-foreign propagandist slogans, encouraging the misunderstanding produced by a comparison between different political systems, the unnecessary display of an army in order to encourage a military spirit and make people feel the military of a certain country was superior to that of other countries; (iii) Incited a certain section of the population to overthrow the current government; (iv) Included matter that affected and was not favourable to relations with friendly countries or teased or ridiculed the heads of another State who is in good relations with the British Government. These documents show that the colonial authorities were anxious about political sedition and the outbreak of social violence in the colony during the Cold War era.

Britain Recognizes PRC, Colonial Censorship Rejects Communist Propaganda

The Southern Film Corporation (Hong Kong) was founded in 1947. It is subordinate to the PRC regime and was a major leftist distribution company during the Cold War years. Besides serving as the sole distributor of the films produced in the Chinese Mainland since the foundation of the PRC till the mid-1990s, it distributed Soviet films too. According to Shu Don-lok who worked for Southern Film from 1948 to 1965, the distribution of Soviet films in Hong Kong was facilitated by Zhou Enlai (Shu 2005: 19). From 1946 to 1953, the company distributed about one hundred Soviet films, including some revolutionary and propagandistic ones such as the Vasilyev brothers' *Chapaev* and Mikhail Romm's

Lenin in 1918 and *Lenin in October* (Shu 2005: 20, 23), more than half of which were released before the PRC was founded. In 1947 and 1948, fifty-four Soviet films were submitted for censorship, only Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Admiral Nakhimov* was banned and two others were slightly cut (Shu 2005: 25). The data shows that censorship of the Soviet films was lenient at first. However, in the wake of the establishment of New China and the Cold War, the colonial government banned more and more Soviet films, especially after the outbreak of the Korean War (ibid).

In 1953, Southern Film distributed its first New China film, *When the Grape is Ripe* (*Pu Tao Shou Liao De Shi Hou*, 1952). The following year, the Yue Opera film *The Butterfly Lovers* (*Liang Shan Bo yu Zhu Ying Tai*, 1953) was distributed and achieved impressive box-office success in Hong Kong (Shu 2005: 33-7). From 1953 to 1956, Southern Film submitted fifty-nine films including features and documentaries and thirty-four shorts, comprised of newsreels, educational shorts and cartoons to the Panel of Censors, but only five features, six Chinese opera films, six documentaries and some shorts were approved (Shu 2005: 33). According to the explanatory notes on the censorship certificates, the bans and cuts were usually because the films contained political propaganda, matters that would obstruct or affect the diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries or matters that would impede public interests and so on. Although there was an appeal system, the Board of Review usually maintained the initial censorship decision. Illustrative examples of political bans on New China feature films in the 1950s include:

- (i) Tang Xiaodan and Cheng Yin's *From Victory to Victory* (*Nan Zheng Bei Zhan*, also known as *Fighting North and South*, 1952), which is about the Chinese Civil War, and Sha Meng and Lin Shan's *Shangganling Mountain*

(*Shang Gan Ling*, 1956), which is about the participation of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army in the Korean War. Both were banned because of their display of the People's Liberation Army and for other political reasons (Shu 2005: 43-4).¹⁴⁰

- (ii) Xie Jin's *Girl Basketball Player No. 5* (*Nu Lan Wu Hao*, 1957), which is about the different fates of the athletes of two generations before and after the establishment of the PRC. It was banned because of the Chinese athletes' crying scene at a national flag-raising ceremony (ibid).¹⁴¹
- (iii) Shui Hua and Wang Bin's *White-Haired Girl* (*Bai Mao Nu*, 1950), an adaptation of a ballet opera of the same name. In July 1948, the ballet opera was performed on stage in Hong Kong, where the wife of Governor Grantham was among the audience. The movie was banned in Hong Kong but released in Macau in September 1952 and was screened in London (Chau 2009: 185-6). The story of *White Haired Girl* is about the People's Liberation Army's rescue of a peasant girl who was previously cruelly oppressed by the landlord. The ban was probably due to the film's display and glorification of the People's Liberation Army.
- (iv) Sang Hu's *The New Year's Sacrifice* (*Zhu Fu*, 1956), an adaptation of Lu Xun's novel, was approved with many cuts when it was submitted for censorship in 1957. According to the explanatory notes written on the censorship certificate provided by Southern Film (cited in Ng 2009: 58),

¹⁴⁰ The *From Victory to Victory* (1952) here is a black and white film. There was another film of the same Chinese title directed by Cheng Yin, but in colour and produced in 1981. According to the filmography of the Southern Film (Shu 2005: 222-6), *Shangganling Mountain* (*Shang Gan Ling*, 1956) was renamed *Battle on Shangganling Mountain* (*Shang Gan Ling Zhan Yi*) and released in Hong Kong in 1977, some twenty years after the initial ban.

¹⁴¹ According to the filmography of the Southern Film (Shu 2005: 222-6) *Girl Basketball Player No. 5* was released in Hong Kong in 1980, twenty-three years after the initial ban.

the cuts were because of the extreme brutality towards the poor in some scenes.

- (v) In the notable musical *The East is Red (Dong Fang Hong, 1965)* produced by Zhou Enlai (as credited in the film), the first scene was cut because of the national flags of the US, the UK and Japan in the background. In the fifth scene, the shots in which the flags having 'get down with Chiang Kai-shek' (*dadao Chiang Kai-shek*) written on them, the fleeing of the US army and the KMT officials and the shooting down of the KMT flag and so on were not permitted (Chau 2009: 186).

A number of documentaries on scenery and the social and industrial developments of New China were also banned (Chau 2009: 185). Furthermore, the "Film Censorship Regulations, 1953" empowered the colonial government to ban any films which were already approved. For instance, the documentary *Democracy in the Northeast (Min Zhu Dong Bei)*, which is about the land reform in the Northeast of China after the Chinese Civil War, and Ling Zifeng and Zhai Qiang's *Daughters of China (Zhong Hua Nu Er, 1949)*, which is a feature about eight women who resisted the enemy during the anti-Japan war, were initially approved, but were ordered to be re-censored and were banned afterwards (Shu 2005: 43).

By and large, films about the Korean War, the Chinese Civil War and the anti-Japan war were taboo, and the films, usually documentaries, that bragged about the 'glory' and 'beauty' of New China were considered political propaganda; all these films were seen by the censorship authority. According to the filmography of the Southern Film distributions in Hong Kong (Shu 2005: 222-6), starting from *When the Grape is Ripe* in 1953 up to 1958, Southern Film had successfully distributed

fifty-nine PRC films, including features, Chinese opera films and documentaries, among which forty-four of them were released in 1957 and 1958. The data illustrates that colonial censorship of PRC films was getting more lenient towards the late 1950s. However, Chau (2009: 186) remarks that the colonial government banned seventy-two PRC films and required cuts on twenty-six PRC films before public exhibition.

Although Britain was one of the first countries to recognize the PRC in January 1950, the British Hong Kong Government did not allow any images symbolizing the PRC in films; all the shots that contained the PRC's national flag, national anthem, national emblem, national leaders and the People's Liberation Army had to be deleted or otherwise the whole film would be banned. From 1950 to 1964, all the documentaries on the celebration of the PRC national day and the International Workers' Day were on the list of banned films (Shu 2005: 44). However, in May 1958, the colonial government approved two documentaries from Taiwan, *Formosa Today – Taiwan (Jin Ri Bao Dao)* and *The Voice of Free Front (Zi You Zhen Xian Zhi Sheng)*, in which the national flag of the ROC, the picture of Chiang Kai-shek and the slogan of 'counter-attack on Mainland' (*fangong Dalu*) appeared. Such lopsided censorship agitated the leftists who considered the colonial government was playing a political game juggling 'two Chinas'. The Foreign Minister of the PRC, Chen Yi, held a press conference in Beijing to urge the British Government to see the situation clearly, or otherwise the PRC would take all necessary measures in response. London was alerted to Chen Yi's statement and asked for a report from the colonial officials. Southern Film also held a press conference in Hong Kong to make public a great quantity of data about the bans and cuts on the PRC films. After a series of denouncements of the unfair censorship,

the colonial government started to approve the films that contained the national anthem, flag and emblem of the PRC (see Shu: 2005: 47).

In September 1965, the leftist newspapers launched a vigorous propaganda campaign against the Hong Kong Government, claiming that the official censors' handling of Mainland films was discriminatory. The *Wen Wei Po* of 10 September maintained that the Panel of Censors implemented unreasonable restrictions on the Chinese Mainland films, leading to the bans on the feature film *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hong Se Niang Zi Jun*, 1961) and the documentary *A Glorious Festival* (*Guang Hui Di Jie Ri*, also known as *National Day of 1964*; 1965). The *Wen Wei Po* also stated that many outstanding Chinese films were banned in Hong Kong but were allowed in Macau (cited in Ng 2009: 59). On 11 September, *Ta Kung Pao* devoted a whole page to claiming that more than thirty films had been banned in the past ten years, and the shots of the People's Liberation Army and the scenes of the head of the State at the military parade had been cut (ibid). At the same time, Southern Film made appeals to and negotiated with the colonial government. According to Shu (2005: 47), the colonial government eventually lifted the ban on *A Glorious Festival* without any cut but maintained the ban on *The Red Detachment of Women*. However, according to the records of the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA), *A Glorious Festival* was approved for public screening after excision.¹⁴² As for the ban on *The Red Detachment of Women*, a document from the Panel of Censors to the Board of Review (File Number: HKRS 1101-2-13) dated 24 September 1965 states that it was due to the film's description of the war

¹⁴² The functions of the former TELA have been taken up by the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration (OFNAA) since 1 April 2012. The record of TELA here is cited from *Hansard: LegCo Meeting* (12 March 2003: 4458-4472).

between the KMT and the CPC and its anti-KMT dialogue, which the censors deemed very likely to induce turbulence and give rise to disputes among audiences without a uniform political stance. According to Shu (2005: 47), three more films were submitted for censorship together with *A Glorious Festival* and *The Red Detachment of Women*. They were *Red Guards of Lake Hong* (*Hong Hu Chi Wei Dui*, 1961), *Song of the Red Flag* (*Hong Qi Pu*, also known as *Keep the Red Flag Flying*, 1960) and *Sing Praise of the Revolution* (*Ge Ming Zan Ge*, 1965). All three were propaganda films about communism and armed struggle. The latter two got approved in their entirety after a nine-month delay and suppression by the government while *The Red Detachment of Women* finally got approved in 1971 after cuts and *Red Guards of Lake Hong* got approved in 1977 (Ng 2009: 65; Shu 2005: 47, 232, 234). All in all, 1965 was a remarkable year for the films imported from the PRC. Out of the seventy-nine films comprised of features and shorts that Southern Film submitted for censorship, fifty-eight of them passed, including the features and documentaries showing the contrast between the new and old societies. The approval of *A Glorious Festival* was particularly significant because the documentary is about the celebration of the PRC's fifteenth anniversary and contains images of national leaders and the People's Liberation Army. It was the first time that such images were allowed for public exhibition in Hong Kong since the foundation of the PRC (Shu 2005: 46-7), which signified a further easing of the colony's censorship of New China films in the mid-1960s. In 1966, sixty-one out of seventy-five films consisting of features and shorts submitted for censorship passed (Shu 2005: 47). In 1967, *From Victory to Victory* was submitted again for censorship together with Cheng Chung-li's *Lin Ze Xu* (1959), a film about the Opium War and the Sino-British relations that led to the cession of Hong Kong to Britain from the Qing Empire.

According to Shu (2005: 47-8), although Southern Film tried hard to negotiate for the distribution of these two films, the government maintained the bans.¹⁴³ About eighteen years later, *Lin Ze Xu* was renamed *The Opium War (Ya Pian Zhan Zheng)* and was approved for public screening without excision in 1985. The film was released in Hong Kong in August 1985, when was about three months after the ratification of the Sino-British Joint Declaration which stated that the Chinese Government would “resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong with effect from 1 July 1997”.¹⁴⁴ As Sze Yeung Ping, the editor of Shu’s book on the fifty years of Southern Film, says, “The distribution of the Chinese [PRC] films in Hong Kong was obviously not the same as that of ordinary films. It was not an ordinary commercial activity, but had a particular political connotation” (Sze 2005: 8; my translation). In much the same way, colonial censorship of PRC films during the Cold War era had a particular political connotation too.

In the 1950s and 1960s, censorship by the colonial authorities seemed hard on PRC films and relatively lenient towards Taiwanese films. Firstly, this was due to the anti-Communist sentiment and the fear of communism during the Cold War. Secondly, the colonial government also considered the public exhibition of Communist propaganda films might agitate the Nationalists and cause disturbances. Thirdly, the films from the PRC were more political and propagandist than those

¹⁴³ According to the records of TELA provided by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour in the LegCo meeting on 12 March 2003, *From Victory to Victory* was approved upon excision in 1967 (*Hansard: LegCo Meetings Year 2002-2003*: 4461). However, the film was not in the list of films distributed by Southern Film (see Shu 2005: 222-243) probably because Southern Film refused the cuts.

¹⁴⁴ The Sino-British Joint Declaration was formally known as the ‘Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong’.

from Taiwan. The rightist filmmakers were more interested in making commercial films that were, at least on the surface, apolitical and aimed to entertain.

During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, censorship of PRC films in Hong Kong became more lenient. Even explicit propaganda features and documentaries were approved and the appearance of Mao Zedong on screen was no longer extraordinary.¹⁴⁵ According to the previously mentioned declassified document dated 24 September 1965 (File Number: HKRS 1101-2-13), the colonial government knew well that the opportunity for showing Communist propaganda films was limited in Hong Kong, and the vast non-leftist local audience seldom went to watch such films. As can be seen in the box-office records, the films imported from the PRC were not as popular among the local populace as those before the Cultural Revolution.¹⁴⁶ In point of fact, other than documentaries, just a handful of films were produced in the PRC during the Cultural Revolution and all were adaptations of the eight ‘model operas’ (*yangbanxi*) — *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (*Zhi Qu Wei Hu Shan*), *The Red Lantern* (*Hong Deng Ji*), *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hong Se Niang Zi Jun*), *Sha Jia Bang*, *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment* (*Qi Xi Bai Hu Tuan*), *On the Dock* (*Hai Gang*), *Ode of the Dragon River* (*Long Jiang Song*) and *White-Haired Girl* (*Bai Mao Nu*). These ‘eight’ titles were all about the recent revolutionary struggles of China against foreign and class enemies, with a central theme of glorifying and boasting about the achievement and leadership of Mao Zedong. They were repeatedly remade and were produced mainly between 1970 and 1972. Later, Chinese people would say:

¹⁴⁵ For a filmography of the Southern Film distributions in Hong Kong, see Shu 2005: 230-4.

¹⁴⁶ For the box-office takings of the films distributed by Southern Film in Hong Kong, see Shu 2005: 222-243.

‘Eight hundred million people watched eight shows’ (*Bayi ren kan bage xi*).

Southern Film also distributed some of these films in Hong Kong but all were coldly received, if not ignored, by the Hong Kong populace.

Peculiarities of Colonial Censorship – Creating Balances amidst Left and Right

The colonial government started to strengthen the colony’s film censorship at a particular historical conjuncture when the CPC gained sovereignty over China and anti-communism became a momentous and strategic ideology of the Western bloc against the backdrop of the Cold War. However, it would be an over-simplification to assume the political regulatory measures embedded in the censorship system were solely directed against Communist infiltration and propaganda. In point of fact, the Nationalists also troubled the colonial government; for example, the violent Double Tenth Riot (also known as the Hong Kong 1956 Riot) initiated by the Nationalists in 1956.¹⁴⁷ As leftist film star Chu Hung puts it:

The colonial government was good at creating balances. When the Taiwan side was up, it propped up the left-wing to fight it. Vice versa when the left became powerful. People might not notice but we were very aware when it tightened and when it loosened. (Wong 2001: 241)

According to Taiwanese film historians Huang and Wang (2004: 116), if the Taiwan film industry was to make a substantial profit it could not ignore Hong Kong and the Nanyang region which were significant markets. In 1951, the Taiwan Government produced an explicitly anti-Communist propaganda film, *Bad Dreams (E Meng Chu*

¹⁴⁷ For more about the Double Tenth Riot, see Welsh (1997: 456-8), Liu (2009: 378-380) and Chau (2009: 123-134).

Xing), directed by Chung Yiu.¹⁴⁸ Besides the ban by the Hong Kong Government, Taiwan failed to sell the film to the Nanyang markets because the mainly British rulers there had diplomatic relations with the PRC and prohibited such propaganda films. The experience taught Taiwanese filmmakers to avoid explicit anti-Communist elements for the sake of smooth distribution in the overseas markets including Hong Kong. Thus, Taiwanese filmmakers in that era rarely made films that contained sensitive political issues. A noteworthy anti-Communist title was the Taiwan-Hong Kong co-production *14,000 Witnesses* (*Yi Wan Si Qian Ge Zheng Ren*, 1962) directed by Wang Hao, which was nominated for the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1961 and was one of the three winners of ‘Best Film of Merit’ award at the first Golden Horse Awards in 1962.¹⁴⁹ According to the records in *Hong Kong Filmography* published by Hong Kong Film Archive, *14,000 Witnesses* was not released in Hong Kong.

According to Law’s analysis (1997: 18-20), among the nine films produced by Asia Pictures, a rightist company based in Hong Kong funded by the Asia Foundation of the US, only one film could be considered even mildly anti-Communist and politically conscious.¹⁵⁰ The film, Tu Guangqi’s *Halfway Down* (*Ban Xialiu Shehui*, 1957), was about a group of homesick, middle-class intellectuals and entrepreneurs and their struggle to exist as refugees from the Communist Chinese Mainland in Rennie’s Mill (known later as Tiu Keng Leng).¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ For more about *Bad Dreams*, see Du 1988: 465-9.

¹⁴⁹ For more about *14,000 Witnesses*, see Du 1988: 492-3.

¹⁵⁰ According to the Taiwanese film historian Huang Ren (Wong and Lee 2009: 258), Asia Pictures also produced a film in Taiwan, which was a Taiwan-American co-production titled *The 11th Commandment* (1960), an anti-Communist film shot on location in Kinmen; however, the film was banned in Taiwan due to the display of the portrait of Mao Zedong and the red flags.

Another production of Asia Pictures, *Life with Grandma* (*Man Ting Fang*, 1957) directed by Tang Huang, also had anti-Communist elements but it was a satirical comedy and the elements were not explicit.¹⁵² By and large, the filmmakers of the rightist cinema were pragmatic, were well aware of commercial considerations and knew well that the Hong Kong Government as well as the governments of Singapore, Malaya, Indonesia and so on were very sensitive about the struggle between the left and right, and would prohibit all explicitly anti-Communist films. In addition, most of the Chinese audiences were not interested in politics. Under those circumstances, rightist films were consciously made to entertain rather than educate the audience. Serious rightist films stressed the importance of embracing Chinese culture and ethics but only criticized the Communists in a veiled manner. Examples of such films include *The Fishermen's Song (Remake)* (*Xin Yuguang Qu*, 1955) and *Swallows Come Home* (*Yan Gui Lai*, 1958), both directed by Ma Xu Weibang.¹⁵³ This explains why the Taiwanese films and the Hong Kong rightist films were not much troubled by colonial censorship.

In effect, colonial film censorship served not only as a repressive apparatus and technique of the colonial government directed against the expansion of communism, but also served to balance the powers of the participants in the Cold War. In 1954, the colonial government banned the American film *On the Waterfront* (1954) but lifted the ban three years later (Ng 2009: 53).¹⁵⁴ According to a

¹⁵¹ Starting from 1950, Rennie's Mill was a refugee village in Hong Kong where the former officials and followers of the KMT lived. The colonial government demolished the village in 1996. Today, the area has been re-developed and become part of the Tseung Kwan O new town. For more about *Halfway Down*, see Du 1988: 526-8.

¹⁵² For more about *Life with Grandma*, see Du (1988: 526) and Law (1990: 19).

¹⁵³ For more about *The Fishermen's Song (Remake)*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. IV* (English edition) (2003: 135).

declassified document from the Public Relations Officer to the Colonial Secretary (File Number: HKRS 160-1-50 [PRO209/1C]) dated 5 July 1956, the government was uneasy about the film and expected its public exhibition would induce labour disputes or even riots. Censors considered the film about labour protests to be crude and brutal, and thus ruled the film not suitable for public exhibition in Hong Kong in 1954. According to another internal document from the Secretary for Chinese Affairs to the Colonial Secretary dated 27 July 1956 in the same file, the government worried that if the film were screened in cinemas, it would probably incite the leftist unions to support the contemporary tramway workers by launching a series of strikes. As mentioned earlier, the colonial government was very sensitive about labour movements. Industrial disputes between the Hong Kong Tramways and its workers started in December 1949 and continued for years. By 1 September 1952, Hong Kong Tramways had fired one hundred and eighty-four workers, including the chairman of the union.¹⁵⁴ In the second half of 1954, more and more trade unions from other industries expressed their support for the tramway workers and a radical wave of industrial action was brewing. The fear of further crippling strikes and the censorship rhetoric of that a film about industrial disputes might incite further action, as seen in the declassified documents mentioned above, led to the colonial government's banning on *On the Waterfront*.

Paradoxically, the film *On the Waterfront* itself did not laud trade unions or advocate action by the labour movement but rather exposed the violence and corruption of the union leaders. As the declassified document also reveals, the

¹⁵⁴ For more information about *On the Waterfront*, see Nash and Ross 1986: 2251-2.

¹⁵⁵ For more about the industrial disputes of the Hong Kong Tramways and the industrial action of the tramway workers, see Chau 2009: 110-8.

Secretary for Chinese Affairs thought that the Chinese audiences would perceive the film's corrupt union leaders as the capitalists. This shows the political hyperaesthesia of the government officials and their reasoning during a time of Cold War tension. However, when the film was released on-screen in Hong Kong in February 1957, the leftist newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* (15, 16, 17 February 1957; cited in Ng 2009: 54) repeatedly criticized the film for purposely defaming unions as mob-controlled and ignoring the fact that most of the unions in the US were controlled and operated by big capitalists, politicians and the Mob. Their criticism implied that the leftist union leaders in Hong Kong had no connection with such people and were not like those in the US. Clearly, the government and the leftists read the film entirely differently; they employed what Stanley Fish terms a different 'interpretive strategy' (see Chapter 1). In fact, the colonial government overlooked the anti-communist 'nature' of *On the Waterfront*. The film's director (author) Elia Kazan had been a member of the American Communist Party in New York for about eighteen months in the mid-1930s but then, in 1952, in the middle of the McCarthy era, he became a 'friendly witness' and identified eight communists before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. His behaviour was widely considered anti-communist and had made him an anti-communist. In this regard, according to Foucault's theory of author function (discussed in Chapter 1), the author [in film, the director is the author] is defined as a constant level of value and a field of conceptual or theoretical coherence, and at the same time conceived as a stylistic unity and seen as a historical figure at the crossroads of a certain number of events (Foucault 1998: 214). Moreover, "the author is a particular source of expression that, in more or less completed forms, is manifested equally well, and with similar validity, in works, sketches, letters, fragments, and so on" (Foucault 1998: 214-5). In the light of

Foucault's discourse, since Elia Kazan was regarded as an anti-communist, his works would quickly be perceived as an anti-communist, which explains why *On the Waterfront* is generally perceived as an anti-communist film.

Perhaps, the initial ban on *On the Waterfront* indicated that the colonial government, although over-sensitive, was primarily neutral in the leftist-rightist struggle. Given that neutrality, the ban could be regarded as a preventive measure against any possible socio-political conflict that it might provoke thus ensuring a stable political and business environment for the wealthy capitalists. In reality, the colonial government, on one hand, prohibited Communist propaganda and, on the other, guarded against anti-communist propaganda so as not to enrage the leftists. In 1963, the Hong Kong Government banned John Frankenheimer's *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), starring Frank Sinatra and Janet Leigh, a Hollywood film about the Korean War, brainwashing and the dangers inherent in the spread of communism (Ng 2009: 61).¹⁵⁶ A 1963 document titled "General Principles for Guidance of Film Censors and the Film Censorship Board of Review" (File Number: HKRS 934-5-34) indicates that the film might be interpreted as an overtly political attack on the Chinese Communists. However, the film was later released in Hong Kong in September 1965 (IMDb). In April 1966, the production crew of Robert Wise's *The Sand Pebbles* came to Hong Kong to film a few scenes.¹⁵⁷ However, the film was banned in Hong Kong due to its anti-Chinese content. An article in the *Wen Wei Po* of 3 December 1968 (cited in Ng 2009: 63) criticizes the way the Chinese were represented in the movie. They were depicted as ignorant and incompetent, inferior even to the 'sick man of East Asia' (*dung ah beng fu*), and their brutality and cruelty

¹⁵⁶ For more about *The Manchurian Candidate*, see Nash and Ross 1986: 1865-6.

¹⁵⁷ For more about *The Sand Pebbles*, see Nash and Ross 1986: 2728-2730.

was worse than the barbarians. In 1968, American director J. Lee Thompson brought his crew to Hong Kong and intended to shoot some scenes for his movie, *The Chairman*, starring Gregory Peck.¹⁵⁸ The incident caused an uproar and strong objections by the leftists. The leftist newspapers *Wen Wei Po* (25 September 1968, cited in Ng 2009: 62) and *Ta Kung Pao* (4 December 1968, cited in Ng 2009: 62) reported with large headlines that the film was a conspiracy of the anti-Chinese and an insult to the Chinese. It also vilified the Red Guards, opposed the Chinese Communists' Cultural Revolution and defamed Chairman Mao. The leftists called on leftist organizations to take action with the intention of holding a rally to oppose the production of the film. The leftists also warned the colonial government that it would have to take the consequences if it connived in the production of such an anti-Chinese film. The radical leftists warned that if the film was shot or shown in Hong Kong, they would make trouble. An English newspaper, *The Star*, reported on 28 November 1968 (cited in Ng 2009: 62) that the Red Guards in Guangdong held rally to condemn *The Chairman* and burnt pictures of the then American President Lyndon B. Johnson and the lead actor Gregory Peck. Under pressure from the leftists, the colonial government prohibited the filming of *The Chairman* in Hong Kong. According to the *The Star* published on 30 November (ibid), the director was angry about the colonial government's 'shameful' decision and accused it of succumbing to a handful of unruly Communists. The American crew then shifted filming to Taiwan. In 1969, when the finished film was about to be released, the Hong Kong Government placed a ban on it (Ng 2009: 61). Ironically, *The Sand Pebbles* and *The Chairman* were also banned in Taiwan. Although Taiwan was controlled by Nationalists who were strongly opposed to the Communist and its

¹⁵⁸ For more about *The Chairman*, see Nash and Ross 1986: 389.

state-operated companies had produced some anti-Communist films (as mentioned earlier), the Nationalist Government banned strongly anti-Communist films too. According to Taiwanese film historian Huang Ren (see Wong and Lee 2009: 258), the Nationalist Government prohibited the display of the portrait of Mao Zedong, the five-star red flag and even the Communist hat badge for three decades after the KMT's retreat to Taiwan owing to the fear-of-Communist psychology. That is to say, although the Taiwan populace disliked the Communist, they, at the same time, feared the Communist as well. Furthermore, the Taiwan Government, on one hand, promoted anti-Communist propaganda, and on the other, rigidly prohibited all the PRC emblems in all movies, including the anti-Communist films.

Other than prohibiting Communist and anti-Communist propaganda, the Hong Kong Government was, unsurprisingly, very strict in the censorship of the films that were critical of colonialism too. For instance, censors banned the Italian film *The Battle of Algiers* (*La battaglia di Algeri*, 1966) directed by Gillo Pontecorvo in 1970 because of its excessive violence and anti-colonialist theme (Ng 2009: 60).¹⁵⁹ The ban was lifted in 1974 but screenings were restricted to private film clubs only. As previously mentioned, the initial ban on Cheng Chung-li's *Lin Ze Xu* (1959) in 1967 was also due to the film's anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist message.

According to TELA's records, provided by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour at the Legislative Council meeting on 12 March 2003 (*Hansard: LegCo Meeting Year 2002-2003*: 4458):

[A] total of 357 films were banned from public screening upon first submission between 1965 and the end of 1974. Among them, 71 films

¹⁵⁹ For more information about *The Battle of Algiers*, see Nash and Ross: 148.

were approved for public screening subsequently (46 of them were approved for screening upon excision, while the remaining 25 were subsequently approved for screening without excision). The reasons for banning these films from public screening are summarized as follows:

Major reasons for banning the film from public screening	Number of films banned from public screening	Number of films approved for public screening upon excision	Number of films subsequently approved for public screening without excision
A: Corrupt morals, cause deep shock or disgust, encourage crime, particularly crimes of violence	314	31	20
B: Provoke hatred between persons in Hong Kong of differing race, colour, class, nationality, creed or sectional interests	18	10	4
C: Damage good relations with other territories	16	2	-
D: Unwarrantably offend religious bodies	9	3	1
Total	357	46	25

The banned films came from various continents except Africa and Australia, and among the four reasons listed in the above table, reasons ‘B’ and ‘C’ could serve political purposes. American films were at the top of the list of first submissions for censorship, having seventy-five films banned because of reason ‘A’, three banned because of ‘B’ and the other three banned because of ‘C’. Of those coming from Europe, forty-two Italian films were banned, the most among those with a European origin; West Germany came next, with thirty-nine films banned, followed by the UK with thirty-eight films banned, all because of reason ‘A’ except three films. Of the Asian films, fifty-one Japanese films were banned because of reason ‘A’ and two other Japanese films were banned because of reason ‘D’. Taiwan had two films banned because of reason ‘A’ and the other two banned because of reason ‘D’. The

PRC had one film banned because of reason ‘A’, eleven and four films banned because of reason ‘B’ and ‘C’ respectively, making it the country with the most films banned because of political reasons. It has to be noted that the bans were executed between 1965 and 1974, which largely overlapped with the period of the Cultural Revolution, a time when China only produced films adapted from the eight ‘model operas’. As for Hong Kong’s own films, seventeen were banned upon first submission; fourteen of them were produced after 1970. All of the seventeen films were banned because of reason ‘A’ except one, that is Tong Shu-shuen’s *China Behind* (*Zai Jian Zhongguo*), which was banned because of reason ‘C’ (see *Hansard: LegCo Meeting Year 2002-2003*: 4459-4472). This shows that the Hong Kong film industry rarely produced explicit films on sensitive political issues or films having explicit political implication between 1965 and 1974.

Faceless Censorship Force Operates Outside Official Colonial Film Censorship

As mentioned in the above section, the only Hong Kong film banned between 1965 and 1974 because of transgressing the criterion “Damage good relations with other territories” was Tong Shu-shuen’s *China Behind*. The film tells the story of four college students and a middle-aged doctor’s attempt to escape from China to a new life during the Cultural Revolution. Three of them eventually make it to Hong Kong but get lost in the city’s capitalist society. The film was entirely shot in Taiwan and is the first Hong Kong film to tell a story against the backdrop of the Cultural Revolution directly.¹⁶⁰ As Teo puts it: “[*China Behind*] was perhaps the

¹⁶⁰ At that time, it was very risky for Tong to shoot such a film in Taiwan. First of all, she had to smuggle into Taiwan the prohibited props such as the *Little Red Book*, the five-star red flag, the portrait

most prominent victim of censorship in the territory. . . . [It was] the first to criticize [the Cultural Revolution's] madness and to see it as having catastrophic implications for a whole generation of young people" (2007 [1999]: 215). Since the film criticizes the Chinese Mainland under the leadership of the CPC, it was commonly and crudely seen as anti-Communist.¹⁶¹ Therefore, when the film was first submitted for Hong Kong censorship in 1974, government censors considered the film "damaging good relations with other territories", which carries the implication that 'other territories' refers to the Chinese Mainland.

According to a friend of Tong Shu-shuen, Cheuk Pak Tong (personal communication), the Xinhua News Agency invited Tong Shu-shuen over for a 'chat' about *China Behind* after the film had been submitted for censorship. Xinhua asked about the aim behind making such a film, and if the source of funding was from 'Soviet Revisionism'. How could Xinhua have seen the film which had not been released? How could they get a copy for their viewing? In fact, Hong Kong filmmakers at that time were well-aware of the covert negotiation and collusion between the colonial government and representatives of the CPC in Hong Kong (see a more detailed examination in Chapter 4). As it is listed in the records of TELA, the film was approved for public screening upon excision in 1980 (*Hansard: LegCo Meeting Year 2002-2003*: 4471); however, it was not publicly released but only shown in a screening activity organized by the Hong Kong Film Culture Centre, a film society, in March 1981. In 1984, the Hong Kong International Film Festival selected *China Behind* as one of the films on its programme (HKIFF 2002 [1984]:

and badge of Mao Zedong, etc. The highest punishment for possessing such taboo things could be either life imprisonment or the death penalty.

¹⁶¹ It is reductionist to conclude that *China Behind* is an anti-Communist film; for a brief but in-depth discussion of *China Behind*, see Ip, Iam Chong (2009).

150). Finally in 1987, the film came out on the commercial cinema circuit in Hong Kong. The Taiwan Government also banned *China Behind* for its display of the portrait of Mao Zedong and the *Little Red Book* (*Mao Yulu*, also known as *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*) (Liang 2004: 200). The ban was lifted in 1989, and the film was shown in Taiwan theatres for one week from 27 May to 2 June, at the same time as the 1989 Democracy Movement was taking place in Beijing (Diu 2004: 48-9).¹⁶²

The Plague (*Wan Yik*, 1970) directed by Patrick Lung (also known as Lung Kong) was another prominent victim of censorship. Nonetheless, no record of the ban on *The Plague*, or *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (*Jok Tin Kam Tin Ming Tin*) as the film was renamed in public exhibitions, can be found in the records of TELA. The film is about the social turmoil in Hong Kong that results from an outbreak of plague. Lung explains:

The film was inspired by Albert Camus's *The Plague*, but I set the story in Hong Kong swept by an epidemic. There was a great social divide between the rich and the poor, the former taking residence in posh Mid-Levels mansions and the latter living in overcrowded ramshackle squatter settlements. There was the ongoing story of unequal yet inevitable conflicts between the haves and the have-nots to tell. (2010: 29)

The Plague was a large-scale production featuring a stellar cast from both the Cantonese and Mandarin camps. Its production was supported by the Hong Kong Government, particularly assisted by the then Medical and Health Department, and involved mobilizing members of the Civil Aid Service and the Hong Kong Police

¹⁶² For more about *China Behind*, see Lau (2002: 108-9) and Liang (2004: 198-200).

Force to take part.¹⁶³ Lung shot the film in actual locations such as emergency rooms, medical wards and the airport. Although Lung did not admit it unequivocally in his monograph (2009: 10-49), the film was said to be alluding to the Hong Kong 1967 Leftist Riots and it condemned the violent leftist extremists and commended the colonial officials for their contribution to settling the turmoil. According to the reports of the leftist newspaper *Wen Wei Po* (12 December 1969 and 14 December 1969, cited in Shing and Lau 2010: 246-8), the leftists had known about the story and the characters in *The Plague* since it was in production. They were enraged and severely criticized and attacked the film. An article in the *Wen Wei Po* of 14 December 1969 gave Lung a warning: “Whoever is antagonistic to the compatriots of Hong Kong and Kowloon, whoever will run into bloody trouble. Better to draw the lesson from others’ mistakes; hope you can take care of yourself” (Shing and Lau 2010: 248; my translation).¹⁶⁴ According to Lung (2010: 30), after *The Plague* was completed and right before sending it to the censors, the production manager of the film, Lee Ka-yan, was badly frightened when he saw the dead rat that had been sent to Eng Wah (Eng Wah & Co. H.K.), the film company that invested in *The Plague* and employed Lee and Lung. Lung recalls the incident:

Lee told me that the leftist had left a message warning him that Lung was a British agent (‘Not again!’ I thought) and the *The Plague* was made with and for the Hong Kong British government. The film was not only to be banned; it had to be destroyed. . . .

¹⁶³ In 1989, the Medical and Health Department was restructured and split into the Hospital Services Department and the Department of Health. On 1 December 1991, the Hospital Authority was established to take over the function of the former Hospital Services Department.

¹⁶⁴ During the Hong Kong 1967 Leftist Riots, the leftists planted bombs in the city and killed the popular anti-leftist radio commentator Lam Bun. These were what “to draw the lesson from others’ mistakes” in the warning referred to.

Staying calm and composed, I explained, ‘Let’s put the question of me being an agent aside first. As both you and I know, *The Plague* was not funded by the Hong Kong government but made with Eng Wah’s money. There’s no dispute of that. Second, the film has yet to be released and doesn’t it strike you as odd that the leftists are blasting it as reactionary without actually having seen it?’ As to why the government granted filming permission, the reason I gave was ‘I applied for it and they accepted my application.’ ‘Before *The Plague*, both *The Story of a Discharged Prisoner* [*Ying Hung Boon Sik*, 1967] and *Teddy Girls* [*Fei Lui Jing Juen*, 1969] had filming done on government premises.¹⁶⁵ It seemed futile for me to defend myself if I was called a spy working for the Hong Kong British government on the ground that I was granted permission to film on government locations,’ I decided. ‘As the person who only wrote the film and directed it, I had no right to interfere with your decision. The fate of the film is solely in your hands,’ I suggested to Lee. (Ibid)

After the conversation, Lee handed the film over to the faceless authorities (‘them’) and let ‘them’ edit the film in whatever way ‘they’ deemed necessary. When the film was returned, the original two-hour long film was reduced to only some seventy minutes and had to be renamed to *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* because ‘they’ did not allow the original title. After all these years, Lung still does not know what criteria were used when the film was cut. Nevertheless, he says,

[Forty] years on, I still didn’t know and didn’t want to know whom Lee talked to. . . . Although hardly new to the business, it wasn’t until then I saw the invisible hand at work higher up the hierarchy.

Later on, the Cultural Revolution was officially proclaimed catastrophe that had brought serious disaster and turmoil to the Communist Party and the Chinese people, but I had yet to redress the grievances against *The Plague*. (Lung 2010: 30-1)

¹⁶⁵ For Lung’s recall of *The Story of a Discharged Prisoner* and *Teddy Girls*, see Lung (2010: 25-6 and 27-9).

In the 1960s, George Shen was responsible for the editorial work of the leftist magazine *The Great Wall Pictorial* and had connections with the leftist film industry. About Lung's unresolved question, Shen provides some more information:

1967 saw many homemade grenades going off in Hong Kong and, for a time, the lefties ran [wild] in the city. The world was watching. Eng Wah Film Company, a left-wing company, sent out a camera crew to capture the riot scenes in Kwun Tong and other areas, to be used as background materials in the movie *The Plague* The film invited the wrath of the left. A mob even tried to charge into Eng Wah's office to beat up its boss Ng Eng-wah.

The office of Eng Wah was inside Wah Ying Cheong Building on Nathan Road, right above the office of Feng Huang. Some Feng Huang staff members were sympathetic to the mob; others thought otherwise. Eng Wah was afraid that if the movie didn't pass the censors, the investment would go down the drain. It decided to seek advice from the Southern Film Corporation and sent a print to its office in the Bank of China Building.

The Southern people looked at the movie but didn't pass any judgment. They only casually mentioned that "there should be some excisions". So Eng Wah found out that Southern did not endorse the film, and brought in a third party to re-edit the movie. (Shen 2001: 310)

Lung and Shen's accounts explain why TELA has no record of the ban on *The Plague*. It was, in fact, censored not so much by the lawful and independent authority as by an authority under threat from the leftists who used tactics similar to those of triads. The incident also shows that while the objective of film censorship is to control the possible effects a film might have on audiences; it can also be subject to those in power who are close-minded and not brave enough to face criticism. Such features are still familiar today.

Chapter 4

Film Censorship Evolves from High-Handed-Colonial to Rule-of-Law Style as the ‘1997 Question of Hong Kong’ Surfaces

Official film censorship was used by the British colonial government as an effective tool to control the dispersal of ideologies, avoid openly offending political entities and bodies and, most importantly, to enhance security. As discussed in Chapter 3, the British Hong Kong Government proclaimed a neutral position in the Nationalist-Communist conflict and one of the political objectives of the colonial censorship during the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s was to balance the powers of the leftist and rightist cinemas and limit their political propaganda. It also used censorship to help prevent the expansion of communism thus reducing any potential threat against its governance and securing British international relations. However, the leftist cinema in Hong Kong became dormant soon after the outbreak of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (commonly known as the Cultural Revolution) in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1966, leaving the leftist film companies to exist in name only for more than ten years and the rightist film companies in charge of Hong Kong cinema.¹⁶⁶ As the struggle between the leftist and rightist cinemas subsided, the problem of whether a film was too left or too right became irrelevant for censors. The colonial rulers’ attention was diverted by more important matters.

¹⁶⁶ Although the struggle between the leftist and rightist cinemas has come to an end, the rightist Free General Association’s restrictive measures against Hong Kong filmmaker’s connection with the PRC (see Chapter 3) survived till Taiwan’s economy and film market melted down as one of the results of the Asian financial crisis that began in 1997.

The Cultural Revolution had also instigated the violent 1967 Leftist Riots, an organized, violent struggle against the British colonial rule involving the leftists' terrorist bomb, resulting in fifty-one deaths and more than eight hundred wounded, which dealt the colony a heavy blow (see Cheung 2000). In the wake of the riots, the leftists became a perpetual annoyance in Hong Kong, and underscored the deep-seated fears about the Communist Party of China (CPC). The Hong Kong population was alienated from all things of the 'left' and the limited number of leftist films, mostly re-run titles which were not entertaining, were coldly received by movie-goers.¹⁶⁷ In this socio-political context, film censorship's task of guarding against the expansion of communism became very much less significant. However, film censorship still had to serve other in the new political climate, particularly when the Question of Hong Kong, as it was called in the "Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong" (Sino-British Joint Declaration), and the expiry of the lease on the New Territories in 1997 surfaced.

Film Censorship Evolves as Result of Political Changes

In the early 1970s, the PRC saw a great change in its international relations and global political status as American support for Taiwan diminished. On 25 October 1971, the PRC replaced Taiwan to become the only lawful representative of China at the United Nations and took a permanent seat in the United Nations

¹⁶⁷ See also the section 'Britain Recognizes PRC, Colonial Censorship Rejects Communist Propaganda' in Chapter 3.

Security Council. About three months later, the United States of America (US) lifted its sanctions against China, and that was followed by the visit of the then president of the US, Richard Nixon, to China. Richard Nixon dubbed his one-week visit to China “the week that changed the world” after the Joint Communiqué of the USA and the PRC (also known as the Shanghai Communiqué) was issued on 28 February 1972 which confirmed the ‘one China’ policy of the US.

It certainly changed the face of Hong Kong, since in reference to Taiwan the communiqué announced: ‘The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China. The United States does not challenge that position.’ If the United States agreed that Taiwan, their own protectorate, was to be part of China, there was not much hope that Hong Kong, always looked upon askance as a ‘colony’, and thus anachronistic and deplorable, should be treated differently. It should therefore have been no surprise when, only five days later, the United Nations Committee on Decolonization was asked by the Chinese representative, Huang Hua, to remove Hong Kong from the list of colonial territories.

[O]n 13 March [1972] — a joint Anglo-Chinese communiqué was issued establishing embassies in London and Beijing, and agreeing ‘principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity’. This was the culmination of twenty years’ negotiations, and taken in conjunction with Britain’s tacit acquiescence in the removal of Hong Kong from the list of colonies, made it clear that the die had been cast. (Welsh 1997: 472-3)

Later, in October 1972, Alec Douglas-Home became the first Foreign Secretary of Britain to visit Beijing since the establishment of the PRC in 1949. According to a report by Associated Press on 7 November, the United Kingdom (UK) promised China that Hong Kong would not be used as a base for anti-Communist activities (cited in Cheng 1995: 450).

The year 1972 represents a significant turn in Anglo-Chinese relations as the two countries agreed to the “principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity” and Britain tacitly acquiesced that Hong Kong was an integral part of China and not a colony. Such an agreement and acquiescence implied that Britain was not determined to keep Hong Kong and it would only be a matter of time before the PRC took back Hong Kong although the Question of Hong Kong was not yet officially and openly on the negotiation table. However, according to British historian Frank Welsh:

[I]n July 1989, [the former Prime Minister of the UK Edward Heath] confirmed that in his first meeting with the Chinese Government in 1972 he “obtained from Mao Tse-tung [also known as Mao Zedong], in the presence of Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofang, an undertaking that nothing serious would happen in Hong Kong and that the changeover in 1997 would be peaceful” [*sic*].¹⁶⁸ . . . Even though by 1996 . . . [Heath] never regained office after his electoral defeat in 1974, he continued to be held in high esteem by the Chinese leadership, and in that world where personal relationships count for so much, he was able to speak more authoritatively than British Ministers. When in 1974, visiting Hong Kong . . . , Heath confirmed that Hong Kong would indeed be handed back to the Chinese in 1997, his statement should have been taken as definitive; it also strongly suggested the existence of a previously *arranged understanding*. (Welsh 1997: 473; emphasis added)

Later, in 1976, the official title of the head of public service, ‘Colonial Secretary’, which had been used by the colonial government since Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842, was renamed ‘Chief Secretary’. In the light of Welsh’s account and

¹⁶⁸ According to *China Daily* (19 July 2005) and LBC/IRN (n.d.), Heath visited the PRC 26 times in 27 years, and the first visit was in May 1974 which was about two months after he stepped down from the British premiership.

analysis, the new title signifies a change of the British attitude towards the Question of Hong Kong from being merely acquiescent manner to making an open gesture.

In order to tie in with the newly developed Anglo-Chinese relations and to cope with the ‘arranged understanding’ on the Question of Hong Kong, changes in the old colonial mode of governance in British Hong Kong in the ensuing years was inevitable, which in turn affected the population and affairs of Hong Kong, including Hong Kong cinema. Inevitably, colonial film censorship was also modified and evolved into something seemingly capable of surviving the new political relationships and the subsequent political conditions.

Although the Governor in Council had formulated the “Film Censorship Regulations, 1953”, the Hong Kong Government did not make the censorship standards public until May 1973, when the Television and Film Division of the Secretariat for Home Affairs published a booklet of fifteen pages titled *Film Censorship Standards - a note of guidance* (to be discussed in the next paragraph). In 1976, membership of the Film Board of Review was increased from four to seven persons. Besides having the Commissioner for Television and Films as the chairman, the board consisted of two unofficial members and four official members. It was decided that the two members drawn from a larger group selected by the Director of Home Affairs should be invited to attend each censorship screening and be asked to make their comments on record for the information of the authority (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1975-1976 Session: 994*). In 1977, the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA) was set up to take over the entertainment regulatory works including film censorship and the control of obscenity and indecency in the media.

The publication of *Film Censorship Standards - a note of guidance* was significant since it was the first time that the colonial government had made public its film censorship criteria in the form of explanatory sections. However, only general and vague principles and standards are stated. Section 3 of it explains:

Film censorship has no rigid norm. In order to make good use of these standards, a film will be looked upon as a whole during the examination of every film, and attention has to be paid to the story line and theme When a censor finds it difficult to make a decision, it is best to have it cut or banned from public screening and let the Board of Review decide whether the policy in force is appropriate or not during the hearing of the appeal. Regarding how to determine the taste of the audience and whether or not the interpretation of the film censorship standards has changed, film censors will take the principle illustrated in the decision of the Board of Review as their paradigmatic reference. The aim of censors is to reflect in their work what they consider is the present opinion of the ordinary human beings.¹⁶⁹ (Television and Film Division 1973: 2; my translation)

According to the principles and criteria stated in the note of guidance, vilifications of religion and judicature, subversion of public order and security, crime provocation, violence, sex and nudity were the main objects of censorship (Television and Film Division 1973: 5-9). Among such concerns, the issue of violence occupies most space, almost five whole pages. The note of guidance also expresses much concern about the influence and impact of the film on children in the audience. The four reasons provided in the record of TELA for banning films between 1965 and the end of 1974, given in Chapter 3, are also included under Section 5 (Television and Film Division 1973: 3-4). Films could be censored or banned because they might: (A)

¹⁶⁹ Such an explanation is problematic as it implies that the censors' work has to be based on "what they consider is the present opinion of ordinary human beings". The term 'ordinary being' is similar to the concept of 'reasonable person' in common law, which is a variable subject to contextual changes and never has been technically well-defined. Moreover, whether or not an 'ordinary human being' can guarantee reasonable opinion is another unsolved question.

Corrupt morals, cause deep shock or disgust, encourage crime, particularly crimes of violence; (B) Provoke hatred between persons in Hong Kong of differing race, colour, class, nationality, creed or sectional interests; (C) Damage good relations with other territories; and (D) Unwarrantably offend religious bodies. This evidently proves that the note of guidance existed long before it was made public and political censorship has been implemented in accordance with the clauses on “[provoking] hatred between persons in Hong Kong of differing race, colour, class, nationality, creed or sectional interests” and “[damaging] good relations with territories outside Hong Kong”. For the latter clause, the Chinese version of it varies a little in meaning; it literally means: Damage *friendly* relations with *the neighbouring territories* outside Hong Kong (emphasis added). Hong Kong people would easily associate the faceless neighbouring territories with China, Taiwan and Portuguese Macau. However, in light of the fact that Britain had established full diplomatic relations with China in 1972, the word ‘friendly’ narrows down the association to, probably, China. The phrase ‘friendly relations’ could be a British open expression of goodwill to Beijing on cultural aspects and, by the same token, it could cover a much broader area of association by virtue of its vagueness. Since the UK had promised the PRC that Hong Kong would not be used as a base for anti-Communist activities, the colonial government accordingly prohibited all anti-Communist films from public exhibition but also censored Communist propaganda.

Colonial Censorship Tangled Up with Communist and Anti-Communist Films

According to the information provided by the Government Secretariat (cited in Lo, Li and Ng 1987a), from 1975 to 1986, there were twenty films banned because

of the political censorship measure to prevent damaging good relations with territories outside Hong Kong.¹⁷⁰ Other than two from Hong Kong, these banned films came from North Vietnam, North Korea, the US, Italy, France, the PRC and Taiwan. The Soviet-Japanese co-production *Dersu Uzala* (1975) directed by Akira Kurosawa and shot on location at the Sino-Soviet border is also on the list. Significantly, Taiwan, led by the CPC's adversary the KMT, was the top of the list, having eight films banned, perhaps because there were more Taiwanese-made films exported to Hong Kong as a major market or perhaps because Taiwan made more films criticizing the PRC and communism. Films from North Vietnam and North Korea are explicit communist propaganda films, including *Victory on Road 9-Southern Laos* (*Chien Thang Duong 9—Nam Lao*) and *The Destiny of Keum-hee and Eun-hee* (1974). A spokesman of TELA said that censors banned the North Vietnamese films for the sake of good trade relations with the US, which implies that economic reasons also played a part other than political considerations (cited in Lo, Li and Ng 1987a). It might possibly be true, but the rhetoric around censorship avoids broaching anything related to the suppression of communism to avoid offending Communist China. Also, it is well-known that government officials always downplay, hide or deny political considerations in governmental decisions and attribute the cause of social problems and conflicts to economics. This is still a familiar practice of the Hong Kong government officials today, particularly when a problem involves Beijing's concerns and interference.

¹⁷⁰ The article by Lo, Li and Ng (1987a) states that there were 21 films banned from 1974 to 1986. I purposely counted the banned films from 1975 to 1986 so that the subsequent discussion would not overlap with that in Chapter 3, and the film banned in 1974, *China Behind*, is mentioned and discussed in Chapter 3.

The Taiwanese films banned between 1975 and 1986 included Chang Tseng-chai's *The Battle of Gunningtou* (*Gunningtou Da Zhan*, 1980), Wang Tung's *If I Were for Real* (*Jia Ru Wo Shi Zhen De*, 1981) and *Portrait of a Fanatic* (*Ku Lian*, 1982), Wang Chu Chin's *On the Society File of Shanghai* (*Shang Hai She Hui Dang An*, 1981), Pai Ching-jui's *The Coldest Winter in Peking* (*Huang Tian Hou Tu*, 1981) and *The Sunset in Geneva* (*Ri Nei Wa Di Huang Hun*, 1986; also known as *Twilight in Geneva*).¹⁷¹ These Taiwanese films are related to the depiction of conditions in the Chinese Mainland, unveiling the dark side of Maoist China to a great extent.

In the late 1970s, a new genre of Chinese Mainland literature emerged soon after the death of Mao Zedong, portraying the tragic experiences and sufferings of intellectuals and cadres during the traumatic and oppressive Cultural Revolution. Critics categorize this work as 'scar literature' (*shanghen wenxue*). Soon after the emergence of scar literature, a number of films were made on the same theme, leading to an equivalent genre of Chinese film, namely, the 'scar film' (*shanghen dianying*). Among the banned Taiwanese titles mentioned above, *The Coldest Winter in Peking*, *If I Were for Real*, *Portrait of a Fanatic* and *On the Society File of Shanghai* belong to this category. In these films, emblems of the PRC, such as the portrait of Mao Zedong, the five-star red flags and the Maoist songs that were previously prohibited by the Taiwan Government, always appear, but they met no censorship problem when they were released in Taiwan.

¹⁷¹ *On the Society File of Shanghai* had a sub-title *The Right of a Maiden's First Night* (*Shao Nu Chu Ye Quan*). For more about *If I Were for Real*, *Portrait of a Fanatic* and *On the Society File of Shanghai*, see Liang (2004: 243-7).

The Coldest Winter in Peking was financed by the KMT-run Central Motion Picture Corporation.¹⁷² It was made at a time when diplomatic relations between the US and Taiwan had just been severed and a wave of patriotism swept the Taiwanese populace. The film, perhaps the first scar film made in Taiwan, aimed to expose political catastrophe and inhumanity under the CPC regime. It features a top cast of the time, including Charlie Chin, Sibelle Hu, Rose Kuei, Chang Chung and Tien Feng. On its public release in Taiwan on 5 February 1981, the film caused a sensation and became a box-office smash (Liang 2004: 243). *The Coldest Winter in Peking* initially won censorship approval in Hong Kong, and its public screening took place on 25 March 1981. But then the Hong Kong Government suddenly proclaimed that the film was overtly political propaganda and would affect Hong Kong's relation with neighbouring territories. It withdrew the certificate for public exhibition and banned the film after it was publicly screened for one day.

The Chief Film Censor Pierre Lebrun said the film was passed as an entertainment based on well-known facts . . . “but it has now come to my attention that the film has political overtones and thus falls within the category normally banned in the circumstances of Hongkong.”

Ming Chi, . . . the producer, said the film is strictly “commercial, artistic and factual.” (Taiwan Info 1 June 1981)

The distribution company of the film in Hong Kong, Shaw Brothers, raised an objection but it was rejected by the government. Hong Kong citizens generally believed that the ban was due to pressure from the Xinhua News Agency. However, when *The Coldest Winter in Peking* was submitted for censorship again on 7 June 1989 (ibid), that is the third day after the June Fourth Massacre that marked an end to

¹⁷² Central Motion Picture Corporation became a private company when the KMT withdrew from it in December 2005 under the ‘Political Power out of Media’ policy. It was renamed to Central Pictures Corporation in 2009.

the 1989 Democracy Movement began in April 1989, the government censors approved the film, and the film was released again in Hong Kong on 22 June 1989 (Hong Kong Film Archive's *Online Catalogue*).¹⁷³ Prior to the re-distribution of *The Coldest Winter in Peking, If I Were for Real* also successfully passed the Hong Kong censorship and was released on 4 May 1989 (ibid).

No matter whether the re-submissions of these two films were owing to an opportunistic business motive during the 1989 Democracy Movement, the colonial government's approvals of the two previously banned films undoubtedly had a political motive. Although the government did not make public the reason for its approvals, it was probably nothing more than a British political move during the white-hot Anglo-Chinese negotiations over the Question of Hong Kong to stir up public opinion against Communist China and to gain more bargaining power. In point of fact, the June Fourth Massacre together with the memories of the Cultural Revolution induced by the *The Coldest Winter in Peking* did boost an intense fear of the CPC and worries about the future of Hong Kong among its citizens. The drastic increase in emigration in the ensuing several years clearly showed their sense of hopelessness.

Year	Number of Emigrants from Hong Kong	Year	Number of Emigrants from Hong Kong
1980	22,400	1988	45,800
1981	18,300	1989	42,000
1982	20,300	1990	62,000
1983	19,800	1991	60,000
1984	22,400	1992	66,000
1985	22,300	1993	53,000
1986	19,000	1994	62,000
1987	30,000		

Data are obtained from the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, <http://www.swik.org.hk> (Assessed 12 December 2006)

¹⁷³ For more about *The Coldest Winter in Peking*, see Liang 2004: 241-3.

Although it is not included in the Government Secretariat's information, another film produced by the Central Motion Picture Corporation of Taiwan, *The Gift of A Fu* (*A Fu De Li Wu*, 1984), was also not distributed in Hong Kong due to censorship problems. The film consists of three independent parts, sub-titled as *Hong Kong*, *Mainland* and *Taipei* directed by Mak Tai-kit, Luo Weiming and Li Chi-hwa respectively, and told the stories of three Chinese men of the same name, A Fu, but living in the three different places. The film was not wholly banned but approved upon the excision of the entire part on the A Fu living in the Chinese Mainland and all the foul language in the part on the A Fu in Hong Kong. Since the film owner considered that the cuts would ruin the film as a whole, it was not shown in Hong Kong. However, the part *Hong Kong*, which is about A Fu and his friends "mulling over their future as 1997 casts a shadow of uncertainty over all their lives" (HKIFF 1998 [1988]: 127), was approved by the authority a few years later, but restricted to the Hong Kong International Film Festival in 1988 only. The ban on the part set in Mainland China was also mainly due to breaking the censors' rules about films that could "damage good relations with territories outside Hong Kong".

Besides subjects that were considered anti-Communist, worries over the Question of Hong Kong were also considered taboo by censors. In mid-1983, less than a year after Deng Xiaoping told Margaret Thatcher bluntly on 24 September 1982 that the PRC's sovereignty over Hong Kong after 1 July 1997 was not negotiable, King Hoi-Lam's *The Home at Hong Kong* (1983) starring Andy Lau was approved for public screening upon excision of about seven hundred feet of footage, that is, about eight minutes of the film's running time. Censors considered the excised parts excessively violent but the Hong Kong International Film Festival introduces the film in this way: "The social and political uncertainties which hang

over the [film's] characters undoubtedly reflect the shadow of 1997" (HKIFF 1998 [1988]: 126), insinuating that people were panicking over the future of Hong Kong as 1997 was approaching.¹⁷⁴ Such panic showed a lack of reliance on, and negative view of, the future Communist rule, and was thus commonly understood as anti-Communist too.

The Reinforcement and Institutionalization of Film Censorship in Hong Kong

Before 10 November 1988, TELA would state in the censorship certificate whether or not an approved film was suitable for children. Although it was mandatory for film owners, hirers and cinemas to indicate to the public that particular films were not suitable for children, there was no law to prevent children and underage audiences from entering cinemas to watch any film that was not suitable for them. The issue was the subject of continual debate which started in the early 1970s and lasted for more than ten years. However, history is cunning — in the course of the debates in the Legislative Council and discussions among professionals and other stakeholders, the issue grew into a political and legal one leading to an 'unintentional' legal formalization and institutionalization of the colonial film censorship. The change marked a transition from censorship behind closed doors in true colonial style to a more transparent version of censorship which was responsive to community standards in a rule-of-law style which survived after 1997 (which, however, seems deteriorating since Leung Chun-ying became the Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR).

¹⁷⁴ For the synopsis of *The Home at Hong Kong*, see HKIFF 1998 [1988]: 126.

Back in June 1971, the issue was brought to the Legislative Council because of the increasing number of films that featured sensational graphic violence, crimes, sex and horror that had been appearing in Hong Kong films since 1967, of which Shaw Brothers was the leading player. In answering a question by a Legislative Council member of whether it would be possible to introduce regulations prohibiting children from seeing films marked with 'Not Suitable for Children', the Secretary for Home Affairs answered:

[U]nder the present Film Censorship Regulations, when the Chief Film Censor considers that a film is suitable for public exhibition in Hong Kong to adult audiences but not suitable for screening to young audiences he directs that the distributors should advertise the film as 'Not Suitable for Children'. It is thereafter a matter for discretion for the parents or guardians to decide whether they should be permitted to attend such public screenings whatever their age.

The Secretary of the Panel of Censors, in conjunction with other interested Departments, has recently considered whether or not it would be more effective to recommend a change in the law whereby this advisory system of classification could be changed to a compulsory system of classification, under which young persons below a certain age could be excluded by law from a cinema where films 'Not Suitable for Children' were being screened. His preliminary conclusion is that in the light of the family viewing habits which still persist in Hong Kong whereby many parents and their young children attend cinema shows together, it is better to leave discretion in this matter to the parents.

If a compulsory system of film classification were to be introduced with any hope of effective enforcement, it would be necessary for young people around the accepted age to carry valid documents testifying to their age and to be individually identified from such documents. The introduction of such a system would present a number of practical problems.

[A] short pilot public opinion survey has been conducted in different districts. This indicates that a majority of sample of some 600 people did think that regulations to prohibit children under 16 from seeing films containing scenes of a violent or sexual nature should be introduced into Hong Kong. The question posed did not however indicate that there would be any practical difficulties and the possibility even of rising prices. But the subject is certainly one which is under study and will remain so. (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1970-71 Session: 665-6*)

Legislative Council member Ko Siu-wah raised the issue again on 7 July 1976:

During the period from January 1 to August 31 last year, 417 films were submitted by distributors for censorship. Of this figure, 182 or 47% were classified as unsuitable for viewing by children. The figures for 1976, from January 1 to the end of June, show that 341 films were submitted for censorship and that 178 or 52% of them were classified as unsuitable for viewing by children. . . . I have mentioned before my concern regarding the increasing number of children and young people viewing films which have been classified as unsuitable for their age. I urge Government to reconsider very carefully the possibility of legislating to restrict entry to specified films to persons over a particular age. . . . [O]ne of the reasons for our increasing crime rate is the ready availability of films which make crime and violence appear the norm. (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1975-76 Session: 1049*)

The Secretary for Home Affairs replied:

[O]n the question of restricting admission of viewers to films according to their age . . . , the problem of enforcement is a difficult one. The Commissioner for Television and Films has recently discussed with the film industry the possibility of cinema managements taking up enforcement responsibilities but the response has not been encouraging. . . . I doubt if we will be able to find a satisfactory solution until the problems relating to enforcement have been resolved as it would be undesirable at the present time to place the extra burden on the Police Force. (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1975-76 Session: 1050*)

However, by the late 1970s, when Hollywood titles with youth as their subject, for example, *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) and *Grease* (1978), became a popular film genre, the Hong Kong film industry also produced a number of such films, albeit not musicals, which included Yim Ho's *The Happenings* (1980), Rachel Zen's *Cream, Soda and Milk* (1981), Ng Siu Wan's *Once Upon a Rainbow* (1982) and Clifford Choi's *Teenage Dreamers* (1982).¹⁷⁵

In 1979, Tsui Hark made *Dangerous Encounter - 1st Kind* (also known as *Don't Play with Fire*), initially entitled *The Gang of Four*, which contains teen violence and bomb-planting and tells the story of four youngsters' destructive and aberrant behaviour. The film was banned because the government considered that the film encouraged xenophobia, contained a strong anti-social sentiment and an apparent inclination to anarchism; and that its public screening would cause uneasiness and harm to the local community. Although a considerable number of critics and film workers expressed their opposition, the government maintained the ban.¹⁷⁶ In order to pass the censorship, Tsui Hark re-shot some scenes, removed some over-violent shots and re-edited the whole film with a new storyline. The film's Chinese title was changed from *Dai Yat Lui Ngai Him* to *Dai Yat Lui Ying Ngai Him*, with the former being the Chinese technical term for 'Category 1 Dangerous [Goods]' that refers to explosive ordnance while the latter literally means 'the first type of danger' without any specific references but simply the possibility of a cognitive association. The film was finally released in 1980 but also caused

¹⁷⁵ For more about *The Happenings*, *Cream*, *Soda and Milk*, *Once Upon a Rainbow* and *Teenage Dreamers*, see Li Cheuk-to 1990a: 62-8.

¹⁷⁶ For some of the opinions against the ban, see *City Entertainment*, *Issue 43* (September 1980), *Issue 55* (January 1981).

concern about the influence of the film on impressionable teenagers.¹⁷⁷ Although the censorship style of rhetoric emphasized the film's negative influence on youth, it probably masked the government's political concern. As suggested by the film's initial title *The Gang of Four*, which shares the same tag as the political faction led by Jiang Qing during the Cultural Revolution in the Chinese Mainland, the original idea could have been an allegory of the Cultural Revolution and the contemporary violence of the 1967 Leftist Riots in Hong Kong, which are still issues that the CPC would like to silence in order to suppress the possible 'transdiscursive' effect incited by such a film (see Chapter 1 for more about the term 'transdiscursive', see also Foucault 1998: 205-222).

Later in 1982, two highly controversial films on troubled youth were released, namely, *Lonely Fifteen* produced by Johnny Mak and Patrick Tam's *Nomad*.¹⁷⁸ While the former provoked hot debates and discussions on youth and film censorship problems in Hong Kong, the latter was caught in real trouble and was attacked by educational circles for its obscenity and the harm it would do to impressionable youth. In the real world of course, there are various forces that mete out criticism and discipline such as the educational and the religious networks that exist within a secure social structure. They are not licensed in the lawful sense, but in the cultural and ideological sense, to denounce anything infringing the social norms or code of conduct. Regarding *Nomad*, two scenes of the film seriously irritated the moralists. The first one was a love scene between the characters Louis and Tomato (played by Leslie Cheung and Cecilia Yip) on the first day they met. Another one was also a

¹⁷⁷ For more about the ban on and reviews of *Dangerous Encounter - 1st Kind*, see Cheuk (2008: 89-91), Chang (2006: 139-140) and Li (1990a: 11-9).

¹⁷⁸ For more about *Lonely Fifteen*, see Li 1990a: 69-77.

love scene but between the characters Kathy and Bon (played by Pat Ha and Kent Tong), in which the lovemaking starts on a moving tram and is carried on in a street. After the film's first Saturday mid-night shows, eighteen educational organizations and the principals of twenty-six schools jointly signed a letter of complaint to the Chief Secretary about the film. The film was then taken down from screens and re-censored. Later, after removing more than two minutes of the total running time, the film was allowed to be released again.¹⁷⁹ This is just an overt example of unofficial censorship, demonstrating that legislation is not the only means to make censorship legitimate.

However, *Nomad* also provoked intense disputes over the existing film censorship in Hong Kong. *Oriental Daily* reported on 12 December 1982 that one hundred and eighty teachers from primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary education institutes issued a joint statement, expressing their view that the censorship standards at that time were too lenient and should be reviewed comprehensively (cited in Cheng 1995: 440). Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) held two seminars on the issue in its programmes too. As reported by *Ming Pao* on 20 December 1982, film director and producer Ng See-yuen said at a seminar that once the 'certificate of approval' was issued, the film owner would prepare prints for distribution, launch promotions and arrange cinemas for screening, a process which would cost three hundred to five hundred thousand Hong Kong dollars. It was unfair to the film industry if the government banned the film after citizens' complaints when all these procedures had been carried out.

¹⁷⁹ For more about the controversy over and review of *Nomad*, see Cheuk (2008: 129, 131) and *Ming Pao Weekly* (25 Sept 2010, Vol. 2185) and Chang (2006: 137-8).

On 27 January 1983, *Ta Kung Pao* reported that Hong Kong film workers formed a provisional committee in response. The committee presented to the Chief Secretary a joint declaration signed by some one thousand film workers opposing the re-censoring system and pointing out that the re-censoring of *Nomad* had exposed a loophole in the then censorship regulations and requesting a review of them (cited in Cheng 1995: 441). According to the January 1983 issue of the monthly magazine, *The Seventies*, the chairman of the committee, Koo Siu-fung, stressed that the re-censoring regulation should be abolished and that before the regulation was amended, re-censoring and immediate banning of any film which had already been approved should not be carried out at the same time, which meant that a film undergoing re-censoring process should be allowed to continue its on-going screening (ibid). Despite the filmmakers' protests, their demands received no substantive response from the government.

In another similar instance later in September 1983, *Bad Boy*, an American film starring Sean Penn with troubled youth as its subject, passed the Hong Kong censorship and was granted a certificate of approval, yet the Commissioner of Police asked the Chief Secretary to ban the film because he considered it exaggerated violence too much. The film was, thus, re-censored, but TELA's Board of Review maintained the original ruling and allowed the film for public screening (*Ming Pao* 16 September 1983). Although such re-censorings were prompted by concern about sex and violence issues, they could also be used as a means to suppress freedom of speech and expression; that would, in turn, suppress freedom of creativity if an initially approved film was banned under a re-censoring order until the re-censoring result was issued.

In early 1984, the government eventually amended the unfair regulations of re-censoring. According to the *Hong Kong Government Gazette 1984, No. 7* (cited in Cheng 1995: 441), any film that was already theatrically released would not be banned during the period that the Chief Secretary ordered it to be re-censored upon any person's application. However, if the film distribution company did not follow the instruction to submit the film for re-censoring, the authority would place a ban and forbid the film from continuing its public screening.

According to the monthly magazine, *The Mirror* (March 1982; cited in Cheng 1995: 452-3), between November 1981 and January 1982, TELA commissioned a market research company to conduct a public opinion survey of the influence of motion pictures on the young. The result of the survey, announced on 6 February 1982, indicated that ordinary civilians believed censorship was lenient and inappropriate owing mainly to the inability to restrict certain audiences from entering cinemas. Eighty-six percent of the interviewees considered the aim of the advice, 'Not Suitable for Children', had not been achieved. Most of the interviewees said that if underage filmgoers could be prohibited from watching certain 'adult only' films, the contemporary criteria of film censorship were acceptable. *Wah Kiu Yat Pao* (28 February 1982, as cited in Cheng 1995: 453) reported that a control officer of the censorship authority said at a seminar, held by the Communication Department of Hong Kong Baptist College (now Hong Kong Baptist University) on 27 February, that a film classification system, or in its slang term 'three-tier ratings' that refers to a system consisting of three levels of ratings, would be implemented in early 1983. However, while Hong Kong citizens were anticipating a new film-rating system, it remained under consideration for several years and the implementation was adjourned again and again for unknown reasons although the progress of its

formulation was questioned closely by the Legislative Council members (*City Entertainment, Issue 210* 1987: 4). Three years later, on 6 November 1985, the Chief Secretary David Akers-Jones forecast its introduction again at a Legislative Council meeting:

[T]he proposal to introduce a new film classification system is expected to be submitted to the Governor in Council in about a month. Assuming approval, a draft bill will be gazetted for public information and comment, and for examination by this Council. On the assumption that the bill becomes law, the system could be introduced by mid-1986. With regard to enforcement, it is proposed that the onus be placed on cinema operators to ensure that only persons aged 18 or above are admitted to certain films. The Film Censorship Authority would make spot checks on cinemas showing such films. The level at which censorship standards is eventually set will depend upon the findings of an independently conducted public opinion survey. (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1985-86 Session: 47*)

However, by May 1986, even though “detailed drafting instructions were issued in March 1985 and no less than eight drafts of a film censorship Bill were produced” (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1986-87 Session: 1262*), no relevant legislation was enacted. The Chief Secretary explained later in 1987:

In the course of drafting the Bill, difficulties were encountered over the expression of the principles of film censorship. There were indeed differences with the Administration as to how the problem should be tackled but there was no lack of will . . . to deal with it. (*Ibid*)

That is to say, while everyone agrees it was difficult, no one could agree how to fix it, and, thus, the issue was adjourned and adjourned. Nonetheless, it was revealed later in 1987 that although the original intent to introduce a new classification system of film was provoked by social concern about impressionable youth, the adjournment of

the system was, in fact, owing to the government's embarrassment and a hidden agenda that the Chief Secretary had been trying to keep back (to be discussed in the next section).

In May 1986, the renowned and influential biweekly film magazine of the 1980s and 1990s, *City Entertainment* (Issue 188: 3-5), published an interview with the then Chief Film Censor Pierre Lebrun. Lebrun said that the classification of films (the three-tier system) was a new system, not a set of new standards. He further said that discussion about the question of film censorship began in the 1970s. In 1971, the focus of the question was on how to put in place the 'Not Suitable for Children' instruction aimed at preventing children from watching films that were not suitable for them. However, the discussion ended up with nothing definite because not many people were concerned about the issue, and it would have been difficult to check ages because it was not mandatory for Hong Kong residents to carry their identity cards in public areas in the 1970s.¹⁸⁰ While film people were very concerned about the new censorship system and complained that the relevant authority had not consulted them enough, Lebrun said that the new system would address the concerns of the public first, not filmmakers'. He remarked that the authority had consulted the film industry three times and had conducted one public survey since 1982. Whether there is enough discussion or not enough is subjective but three consultations and one survey in four years were what Lebrun saw as technically 'enough'. He also contended that the essence of the imminent three-tier censorship system was liberal; it would be the most liberal system in the whole of

¹⁸⁰ When the Touch Base Policy was abolished on 24 October 1980, it was made compulsory for Hong Kong residents over the age of fifteen to carry their identity cards in public areas. The Hong Kong Government implemented the Touch Base Policy in 1974 in an attempt to reduce the influx of illegal immigrants escaping from the Cultural Revolution in the Chinese Mainland during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Under the policy, any immigrants who crossed the border and reached the urban area could stay in Hong Kong.

Asia when it was implemented. However, he also considered that Hong Kong people were not liberal to the extent of allowing a completely relaxed censorship system. When talking about the details of the classification system, Lebrun commented that the *Film Censorship Standards: a note of guidance* published in 1973 was a bit ‘Victorian’ but maintained that the eight basic standards stated in it were a matter of principle and would not be changed. The set of standards were that films should not:

1. Cause deep shock or disgust.
2. Corrupt morals or encourage crime, particularly crimes of violence or encourage drug taking.
3. Provoke hatred between persons in Hong Kong of differing race, colour, class, nationality, creed or sensational interests.
4. Unwarrantably offend religious bodies or other local famous organizations.
5. Vilify the judicature.
6. Incite the audience to hate or despise the government.
7. Damage good relations with territories outside Hong Kong.
8. Encourage damage to public security.¹⁸¹ (My translation)

Lebrun said that the aim of the three-tier system was to protect the interests of audiences and it would keep certain standards to protect them against violence, pornography, bad language, storylines with negative political connotations, and while political jokes would be tolerated, films that would damage relations with territories outside Hong Kong would definitely be banned.

However, society’s patience to wait for the new film censorship system must have been sorely tried by another incident. After Derek Yee’s *The Lunatics* was premiered in the form of weekend mid-night shows on 31 May 1986, the Hong Kong

¹⁸¹ Although the seventh standard in the list is commonly regarded as political, the last four standards can be political too.

Council of Social Service criticized it and complained that the film's message was irresponsible and not constructive as it distorted the image of mental patients and deepened society's misunderstanding of and prejudice against mental patients. On 5 June, the Chief Secretary placed a re-censoring order on the film. Nonetheless, the Board of Review ruled on 6 June that the film could continue with its public exhibition, but it had to be indicated to the public that it was not suitable for children.¹⁸² The commissioner of the board maintained that if the film was banned, it would be tantamount to strangling creative freedom. *The Lunatics* incident further catalysed demands for the long-awaited film classification system.

Dark Side of Colonial Rule – Illegal Censorship

When the long-awaited film classification system was still at issue, *The Asian Wall Street Journal* published a prominent front-page article on 17 March 1987 titled “Hong Kong Plays Political Censor for China – Colony Government Retains Illegal Powers to Block Films That Might Offend Beijing”, written by Frank Ching. The article disclosed that the colonial government had been censoring films without legal authority for thirty-four years since 1953. It also revealed that a classified document for the Executive Council discussion on 3 March 1987 showed that the government practiced film censorship without legislative support and also meticulously banned the films that would displease Beijing and affect Sino-Hong Kong relations. According to the article, the Attorney General had sent a letter to the Secretary for Home Affairs in 1972, pointing out that regulations which did not stipulate the grounds for censoring a film were not legal. In 1977, the Attorney

¹⁸² For more about the re-censoring of *The Lunatics*, see *City Magazine*, Issue 190 1986: 4-6.

General further indicated to the Secretary for Home Affairs that the so-called *Film Censorship Standards: a note of guidance*, promulgated in an administrative way in 1973, was fundamentally internal administrative guidance and not part of the lawful film censorship regulations. The Secretary for Home Affairs still did not take any remedial action. In short, the article showed that the government had been exercising illegal film censorship knowingly and hiding its illegality deliberately. Furthermore, it uncovered the fact that the Deputy Governor David Akers-Jones had decided at the Executive Council meeting on 20 February 1987 to have the three-tier censorship system introduced through government administration instead of normal legislation.

Frank Ching's article triggered fiery reactions and instant controversy throughout the city. On the very night of the day the article was published, the Information Services Department issued a press release. It did not address the issue of illegal censorship but only reaffirmed the eight reasons for censorship in the *Film Censorship Standards: a note of guidance*. It did, however, admit that, in order to combat the bad influence of pornography and violence on young people, the government was considering having the three-tier film censorship system formulated within a short period. Significantly, the press release did not deny the illegality of colonial film censorship (*City Entertainment* (1987), *Issue 210*: 4).

On 18 March 1987, *Ming Pao* also said:

According to a memorandum obtained by this newspaper, which was submitted to the Executive Council for discussion on 3 March, the Hong Kong Government knows perfectly well that the film censorship regulations by which the authority has been practising political censorship are short of legal efficacy. In order to divert public

attention, the government still defers amending the film censorship bill to redeem this legal flaw, but would rather continue to carry out censorship through its own administration which is poor in legal terms. The document indicates that the Hong Kong Government still thinks that it is vital to continue censoring films that would “damage good relations with territories outside Hong Kong”. However, if it is to pass the film censorship bill to entrust the censorship authority with the power to carry out such censorship, it must get involved in convincing the public of the indispensability of the principles of the film censorship in legislation, including the principle of maintaining relations with territories outside Hong Kong. This may yet result in the Legislative Council calling for a relaxation in such censorship. In order to avoid disputes, the Hong Kong Government has decided to achieve its aim through administrative procedures that do not need to be legislated. (My translation)

According to another article, published in *Ming Pao* on 19 March 1987, by Margaret Ng, a barrister and a member of the Legislative Council, the “Film Censorship Regulations” only delegated the authority to censor films to the censorship body and Hong Kong had been without lawful censorship standards since 1953 (see also Chapter 3). While the film rating system which the public had been eagerly demanding was still at issue, the government had no intention of bringing the question of the legal loophole in film censorship regulations to the level of legislative discussion. Instead, the government recommended that the Executive Council adopt measures other than the normal legislative course. The intention behind introducing the rating system via administrative means was, on the one hand, to by-pass the risk of being seriously challenged about the illegality of the current film censorship regulations when the legislation was raised anew in the Legislative Council and, on the other, to shield the government from criticism by the public as well as law and media circles when the illegality was made public. It seems evident that the government was also aware of the possible lawsuits that would be filed by

the film owners, hirers and distributors who had their films illegally banned by the authority in the previous years. Its worst fears must have been realised after the illegality of its film censorship was revealed. On 20 March 1987, a number of local newspapers reported that Ng See-yuen, whose production titled *Without a Promised Land* was banned in 1980, planned to sue the government for his losses resulting from the illegal censorship of the government.

The subject of film censorship was continually and extensively covered by *City Entertainment* for more than a year from 1986. Articles included film people's comments, criticisms and discussions on the then anticipated film classification system and pieces about the illegal censorship of the government.¹⁸³ Such coverage was very often in the form of features reflecting the film industry's concerns about the issues. According to *City Entertainment* (1987, *Issue 210*: 4), a government spokesman said that the government cared a great deal about the leak of the classified document and did not understand the aim of the person who revealed the document. In response to the question of legality about the film censorship regulations, the Chief Secretary Robert Ford, the successor of David Akers-Jones, admitted that the current regulations were not satisfactory because they were made under an omnibus ordinance governing places of public entertainment. Legal advice had been given expressing doubts about their legality, and "the regulations under which the Film Censor was then currently operating were not defined legally and with due authority" (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1986-87 Session*: 1263-4). He

¹⁸³ For more about the discussions on the film classification system before its implementation and the subsequent discovery of the government's illegal censorship, see *City Entertainment Issue 187*: 30, *Issue 188*: 3-5, *Issue 189*: 3 and *Issue 190*: 4-6 published in 1986; *Issue 209*: 3-4, *Issue 210*: 3-6, *Issue 213*: 27-42, *Issue 214*: 5-6, *Issue 217*: 7, *Issue 218*: 3-4, *Issue 219*: 20 and *Issue 228*: 3 published in 1987; and *Issue 235*: 3-4 published in 1988.

gave an explanation, which he admitted was “not a very satisfactory one”, at the Legislative Council meeting on 25 March 1987:

Doubts about the legality of the existing film censorship regulations were first brought to the attention of the Administration in 1972. During the 10 years between 1972 and 1982, no action was taken to remedy the law. File records of the period show that there was very little discussion of the subject. I find it very difficult therefore . . . to comment on the matter as to why no action was taken to provide a tighter legal framework for censorship although there was indeed a legal framework. In trying to second guess the reasons for those concerned in reaching their decision, I can only make assumptions; I cannot verify them. But it would seem . . . that with a system operating to the apparent satisfaction of the public and the cinema operations, there was very little pressure on the Administration to raise what would obviously have been a rather delicate political problem. I suppose it is sometimes tempting to put off until tomorrow what it is difficult to have to do today. This . . . is not a very satisfactory explanation as I am sure Members will be quick to point out, but at least it has the merit of being honest! (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1986-87 Session: 1262*)

However, *City Entertainment* (1987, *Issue 210: 5*) commented that Robert Ford’s claim that “at least it has the merit of being honest” was both funny and embarrassing.

About the progress of the motion picture rating system, Robert Ford said:

The Administration has now proposed a system whereby films intended for public exhibition would be classified into three categories. The categories are: (I) films which may be shown to persons of any age; (II) films which may be shown subject to conditions relating to their viewing by persons under 18 years; and (III) films which are only suitable for viewing by persons who are 18 years or over. The classification system has been designed in response to public demand to protect impressionable young people from films with sex and violence which may have an undesirable influence on the personality development and the social behaviour of young people.

. . . In drafting the legislation, problems were encountered in finding an appropriate expression of the principles of film censorship which would adequately guide the film industry as to what was acceptable. Difficulties were found in circumscribing the powers of the censors and safeguarding against possible abuses. It was recognized that the public could be sensitive to the criteria for censoring films, currently embodied in the administrative 'Note of Guidance', being confirmed by statute.

Consideration was then given to identifying an alternative method of introducing a system of film classification within the existing framework. This could have been achieved by amending the 'Note of Guidance' to include a provision for film classification. (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1986-87 Session: 1262-3*)

Robert Ford also said that he understood that it would be difficult for cinema-operators to restrict a certain age group from entering a cinema without appropriate legislative backing. He added that the members of the Legislative Council were firmly in favour of a legislative approach (*ibid*). The fact that film distributors knew that the current censorship system lacked legislative support might lead to a situation where uncensored films were shown to the public before appropriate legislation was enacted. In order to tackle that possibility, the Chief Secretary said that the existing scheme would continue in force until a court decided that the regulations were without effect or until it was replaced by legislative arrangements that were free from doubt (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1986-87 Session: 1264*). The revelations about illegal censorship effectively made the "Film Censorship Bill" a high priority on the government agenda and hastened the implementation of the film rating system. By stepping back into such an episode of Hong Kong history, it can be seen that *rule of law* was being produced dynamically,

illustrating a change of the colonial rule after the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed on 19 December 1984 and ratified on 27 May 1985.

Significantly, when *The Asian Wall Street Journal* exposed the fact the government was censoring films without legal authority, there was another vehement dispute in Hong Kong caused by the passing of the “Public Order (Amendment) Bill, 1986” at the Legislative Council on 11 March 1987. The objective of the bill was to integrate Section 6 of “The Control of Publications Consolidation Ordinance”, which made it an offence to publish maliciously in any local newspaper false news that was likely to alarm public opinion or disturb public order, into the “Public Order Ordinance” to become a new Section 27 of it. The government had no consultation with the district boards at all before the second and third readings of the bill at the Legislative Council even though the bill had generated much public concern (see *Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1986-87 Session: 992, 1118*). After a long and heated debate, the bill was passed with amendments. The new Section 27 was enacted as the following:

- 1) Any person who publishes false news which is likely to cause alarm to the public or a section thereof or disturb public order shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable –
 - (a) on conviction on indictment, to a fine of \$100,000 and to imprisonment for 2 years; and
 - (b) on summary conviction, to a fine of \$30,000 and to imprisonment for 6 months.
- 2) It shall be a defence to a charge under subsection (1) for the person charged to prove that he had reasonable grounds for believing that the news to which the charge relates was true.

3) No prosecution for an offence under this section shall be commenced without the consent of the Attorney General.¹⁸⁴
(University of Hong Kong Library)

As former member of the Legislative Council, Chan Kam-chuen, said during the debate at the council meeting:

[T]he shifting of the burden of proof to the defendant — it is very much against British justice, as every defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty by the prosecution. Also, no defendant shall be compelled to be a witness against himself or herself in any criminal case. It is also very much against universal journalistic ethics for reporters to produce the source of information. Even if they do, the informer may deny what had been said and the poor reporters would be left holding the bag. (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1986-87 Session: 1025*)

As 1997 was approaching, there was extreme concern about any legislation which could have the effect of infringing any freedoms of the Hong Kong people. The enactment of the “Public Order (Amendment) Ordinance, 1986” was a suppression of the freedom of the press, inducing misgivings among Hong Kong citizens because it was in fact an instrument to secure the government’s power and a weapon for the government to kill dissents in the name of social stability.¹⁸⁵ After the press, film could be the next. Such an ordinance made the overdue film classification system a

¹⁸⁴ For detailed documentation of the Legislative Council members’ debate on the “Public Order (Amendment) Bill, 1986”, see *Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1986-87 Session: 1016-1084 and 1086-1115*.

¹⁸⁵ Section 27 is not found in the present “Public Order Ordinance”. According to an article by Lee Yee (2006), after the Legislative Council had passed the “Public Order (Amendment) Bill, 1986”, no government official took part in the forums related to the ordinance, which implied that they had no intention of trying to convince the public to accept it. After the bill was passed, there was no prosecution against the promulgation of false news. Lee Yee elaborates, “Although the bill was passed by the Legislative Council of Hong Kong, the Queen did not sign it when it was sent to London. This was the reason why the ordinance was not put into practice. In principle, under the system of constitutional monarchy, the monarch would sign all the bills passed by legislative bodies. However, the monarch has the power to defer the signing, which is equivalent to having the bill adjourned. Why did the Queen defer signing the “Public Order (Amendment) Bill, 1986”? The only reason was that the ordinance by which the press has to reveal their source of information was against her personal view on the value of freedom of speech” (my translation).

politically sensitive issue in due course. Although the Chief Film Censor said that the film classification system would be liberal, his statement did not ease concerns that the government would conspire with Beijing and would *de facto* tighten control over freedom of speech and expression during the transitional period of Hong Kong's return to China and beyond. As it turned out, after the ratification of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, Hong Kong citizens were kept isolated from, and ignorant of, the negotiation details about the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997 and the policy change in Hong Kong after 1 July 1997. Hong Kong citizens were, at best, accepted as spectators and were rejected as participants. Moreover, there was uncertainty about the part that Xinhua News Agency had played. Had it been involved and, in effect, dominant in Hong Kong censorship and the formulation of the film censorship regulations? Hong Kong citizens did not know when the official censors referred a film to their political consultants, whether or not representatives of Beijing were among those consultants. Moreover, there was a strong suspicion that the Xinhua News Agency and the leftists were involved in the cases of Tong Shu-shuen's *China Behind* and Patrick Lung's *Plague* (see Chapter 3).

The editor of *City Entertainment*, Li Cheuk-to, once said that the ultimate goal was to object to the current compulsory film censorship system and the film censorship authority should only be responsible for the classification of films and should have no power to ban or cut any film. This was the essential and progressive purpose behind the implementation of the three-tier censorship system (*City Entertainment* (1986), *Issue 189*: 3). However, the "Public Order (Amendment) Ordinance, 1986" was a forewarning that the new film censorship system would be far from such a goal.

Political Concern about the “Film Censorship Ordinance 1988” Legislation

On 3 April 1987, the “Film Censorship Bill” was published in the *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, and the government pronounced a consultation period of six weeks (*City Entertainment* (1987), *Issue 210*: 5).

[The bill was] to provide for the establishment of a Film Censorship Authority, a panel of censors and a panel of advisers, and for regulating and imposing restrictions on the exhibition of films; for the approval and classification of films; for the establishment of a Board of Review; for the creation of offences; to make consequential and other amendments to other Ordinances; and for matters connected therewith. (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1987-88 Session*: 894-5)

Besides introducing a three-tier system that classified films into three categories, the principles and standards in the *Film Censorship Standards: a note of guidance* of 1973 were also brought into the bill. Nevertheless, the government still preserved the power to exercise political censorship because the bill included the clause — “whether there is a likelihood that the exhibition of the film would seriously damage good relations with other territories,” a modification of the previous clause “damage good relations with other territories” — by consideration of which the government could ban a film from public exhibition. Filmmakers worried that it would threaten freedom of creativity and expression, and expressed their concern about whether or not the Chief Secretary would have the power to suspend the screening of films pending the result of re-censoring. At the same time, cinema operators worried that they would be unable to control underage audiences from entering cinemas to watch films that they were prohibited from watching.

While the “Film Censorship Bill” was still under consultation, the government gazetted the “Film Censorship Regulations 1987” on 5 June 1987. It was as an interim measure before the enactment of the lawful “Film Censorship Ordinance”, providing a legal status to the existing *Film Censorship Standards: a note of guidance* so as to remove the legal loopholes during the interim. According to *Hansard (LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1964-2000)*, on 8 July 1987, Martin Lee initiated an intense debate on political censorship at the Legislative Council when he moved a motion to delete from the “Film Censorship Regulations, 1987” the ‘good relations clause’, that is the clause empowering the censor to cut or ban a film when he/she was of the opinion that the showing of a film would damage good relations with other territories. Martin Lee, backed by the views of legal experts Eric Barendt, the Goodman Professor of Media Law at University College London, and Nihal Jayawickrama, professor of law at Hong Kong University, argued that the good relations clause was in violation of the Article 19 of the United Nations’ “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”, which had been enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration:

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.
3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
 - (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

(Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations)

Although Martin Lee did not point out that the previously mentioned “Public Order (Amendment) Ordinance, 1986” could be employed as an instrument for political censorship of the press, he asked (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1967*), “If we allow political censorship of films to exist today, what safeguard can there be that political censorship will not in the future be extended to cover television, theatre, as well as the print media?” Martin Lee emphasized that the good relation clause could only be necessary “unless it [had] been established that there is ‘a pressing social need’ for it” (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1968*). He also doubted that whether or not the exhibition of one or more political films would really bring about instability in Hong Kong (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1969*). However, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had previously expressed its opinion justifying the existence of the good relations clause provision:

Restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, etc. may be justified in the case of particular films on the basis of at least three criteria in Article 19(3). These are:

- (i) ‘rights or reputations of others’, which may be relevant in the case of films attacking public figures in another country;
- (ii) ‘the protection of national security’ which should be interpreted as covering the security of Hong Kong which may be exposed to either external or externally-inspired threat. The degree of such a threat and the need to anticipate such a possibility are matters of perception by the Government concerned; and there is, as I have earlier said, a margin of appreciation.
- (iii) ‘the protection of ... order’ would also be available if there was reason to suspect that a particular film could lead to public

disturbances or public disquiet leading to disaffection on the part of local public officials. (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1987-88 Session: 1965*)

As the debate went on, Martin Lee and other council members, either consciously or subconsciously, pointedly connected the good relations clause to relations with the PRC. Referring to the banned films, *The Coldest Winter in Peking* (1981) and *If I Were Real* (1981) (discussed in earlier section) that more than ten members of the Legislative Council had watched together before the meeting, Martin Lee said:

I completely fail to see how each of these two films can be said to damage the good relations with the PRC. Indeed, it may be thought by the people of Hong Kong, rightly or wrongly, that it is the PRC Government that does not wish them to see these films and it would put China in an unfavourable light with the people of Hong Kong. And during this transition period [of the regime change in Hong Kong], our Administration must not second guess China and ban a film merely because it thinks that China would be embarrassed by its exhibition in Hong Kong. (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1987-88 Session: 1969*)

In relation to the two films . . . , neither constituted an attack upon the reputation of public figures in the PRC as the principal characters were all fictional; nor do they expose Hong Kong ‘to an external or externally-inspired threat’ from the PRC.

Nor can it be argued that the exhibition of either of these films ‘could lead to public disturbance or public disquiet leading to disaffection on the part of local public officials’.

[I]s it being suggested by the Administration that the PRC is so bankrupt in self-confidence that she would not allow the people of Hong to be told about the dark years of the Cultural Revolution or the excesses of some of her cadres? By second guessing the PRC, does the Administration realize that it is unwittingly putting the PRC in a

very unfavourable light with the people of Hong Kong? (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1969-1970*)

Martin Lee also questioned whether the decision to ban a film was really made by the censor independently, or it was made by the political adviser. He said:

I asked expressly for the reasons why the two films . . . were banned. The Political Adviser's Office gave me a prepared answer over the phone and it is this: 'It is not our practice to disclose details of confidential discussions between our office and officials of other governments, including consular representatives in Hong Kong and the New China News Agency.' (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1996*)

Under the "Film Censorship Regulations 1987", film would be the only medium, or the only content carrier, that was subject to censorship prior to public exhibition. In view of this, Martin Lee expressed his concern:

[T]he issue . . . is not whether the public should have a wider choice of films to see, for most people in Hong Kong would not mind if that choice is somewhat narrowed down. But it concerns a much wider principle — the pre-publication censorship of films. . . . Where are we going from here? Are we going forward towards a government with a high degree of autonomy or are we entering an era when a nod or a shake of the head from someone in the New China News Agency [Xinhua] will decide what the people of Hong Kong may or may not see?

Further, once we allow pre-publication censorship in films, there is no way to arrest the tide of political censorship from overflowing to the theatre, television and to the print media. (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1970*)

Desmond Lee, who supported Martin Lee's motion, maintained that there should be no pre-publication censorship on any form of expression including film. He said:

Any form of control should be exercised through punitive measures which are imposed by law after the event. In order to obviate the risk of being punished, the publisher or producer may, if he so wishes, submit the publication or production to advance scrutiny or classification on a voluntary basis. This principle is used in the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance and should be applied to the Film Censorship Regulations. (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1984*)

Szeto Wah supporting Martin Lee's motion said that it was most regrettable that the government had been censoring films on political grounds unlawfully for many years when Hong Kong people cherished the rule of law. He also said that it was a matter of principle to guard against any breach of freedom of expression. He argued:

Before a certain period of time, we banned only films produced by China, and then after that period, mainly films produced by Taiwan were banned. During a certain period, even documentaries on the celebration of the national day of PRC were banned. Since time immemorial, China has been a neighbouring country to Hong Kong. When such a film was banned the United Kingdom Government had already established formal diplomatic relationship with China. And the banning of such a documentary film has indeed damaged good relationships between Hong Kong and a neighbouring country. Why was such a film banned? People use good relationship as an excuse. What they have in mind is just the preference of a certain country. What kind of standard is that?

The Chairman of the Central Advisory Commission of the PRC, Mr. DENG Xiaoping said that after 1997, Hong Kong citizens can still criticize the Communist Party, and of course they can do so before 1997.

It takes tremendous courage to introduce the concept of one country two systems. And if we want to implement this great concept we would also need tremendous courage. (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1988-9, capital letters in original*)

Lam Kui-shing considered that the themes of the two banned films mentioned by Martin Lee reflected history and human nature. He supported the deletion of the good relations clause from the film censorship regulations and said:

In fact, in the development of human history, we have the bright side as well as the dark and ugly side. If we report only on happy incidents, but omit all the sad events, or if we do the opposite, this is inappropriate. . . . There are a lot of films portraying the violence of Nazi Germany and imperialist Japan during the Second World War. People who are sensible and unbiased will not be prejudiced against modern Germany and Japan just because they have watched those films. So we should not exercise any favouritism. (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1987-88 Session: 1983*)

Nevertheless, the Attorney General maintained that the good relations clause was compatible with the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” and argued that the rights in Article 19 to express views and the right to receive them in the form of films or otherwise could never be absolute, could never be unlimited (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1987-88 Session: 1970-1*). Only a handful of the Legislative Council members expressed their support for Martin Lee’s motion; the rest opposed it without demur, although, as Martin Lee remarked, they paid lip service to the enormous value of freedom of expression (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1987-88 Session: 1995*). Cheong Kam-chuen said that if the “Film Censorship Regulations 1987” had been introduced before the Sino-British negotiations, no one would have raised a murmur. He also said that some people cleverly used the issue as a tool to sow seeds of distrust of the then current administration and the post-1997 administration in Hong Kong (*Hansard: LegCo Sitings 1987-88 Session: 1976, 1978*). By so saying, Cheong Kam-chuen overlooked, or otherwise purposely ignored, the fact that the Sino-British negotiations were carried out in a confidential

manner and were opaque to the public; it was not surprising that there was a distrust of the Hong Kong administration when the local citizens were kept in the dark. Fan Hsu Lai-tai also expressed her opposition to Martin Lee's motion:

Hong Kong is a trading centre. We need to maintain very good relationships with other countries so as to foster trade. . . . What we need is stability. . . . If we are to ban political censorship we will gain the applause from people in the film industry as well as the general public. However, the deletion of the provision might enable some people to make use of films to achieve political and economic goals. And this move might cause Hong Kong to be a forum for political struggle between foreign influences. It might also place Hong Kong in political turmoil thereby damaging our good relations with other countries and affecting our trade and economy.

We cannot just talk about principle and overlook the realistic situation. (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1980, 1981*)

Other members echoed Fan Hsu Lai-tai's view and supported the preservation of political censorship as the safeguard of stability and economic prosperity. Helmut Sohmen criticized political censorship in retrospect by saying that history was full of examples of political censorship, and pressures to conform had not and never would stimulate progress nor increase happiness; history had proven that suppression of unorthodox ideas had produced the very opposite effects. However, he contradictorily supported the good relations clause:

Hong Kong . . . is in a rather peculiar situation, claiming an economic, social, political and cultural background quite different from the country to which ethnically and geographically the Territory is very close and of which it legally soon will be an integral part. The maintenance of good relations with China, especially during the transition period leading up to the change in sovereignty, is of paramount importance to Hong Kong.

[I]n this context we are dealing not only with a domestic perception of what expressions are obviously, or possibly, prejudicial or not prejudicial but have to face the possibility that the interpretation, or misinterpretation, put upon them externally could also give rise to unwanted friction. (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1985, 1986*)

So Helmut Sohmen, indeed, agreed with Martin Lee and his supporters' view that the good relations clause was on behalf of and directed to the likes and dislikes of China, which the colonial government had been continuously denying or dodging from answering directly. The Chief Secretary only spoke of the characteristics of the film: "The impact of films is more immediate and more vivid and because they are shown to large audiences gathered together in one place, the reactions that can be provoked by them can be quite dramatic" (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1993*).¹⁸⁶ Daniel Tse added that he had heard from someone who had been in the film industry for a long time that Lenin saw films as the most influential tool for inciting the general public. Films could reflect the actual situation and create reality but could also distort the actual situation and create falsity (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1994*).

Among the fourteen Legislative Council members who had made speeches in the long debate, only three expressed their support for Martin Lee's motion. It was to be expected that the motion would be defeated, and no amendment was made on the "Film Censorship Regulations 1987" that would be in effect until the "Film Censorship Ordinance" was finally enacted later.

On 9 March 1988, a revised draft of the "Film Censorship Bill" was brought to the Legislative Council sitting after consultations, discussions and debates with the

¹⁸⁶ See also Walter Benjamin's discourse on film discussed in Chapter 1.

film industry, the public and the Legislative Council members. When the Secretary for Administrative Services and Information move the second reading of the bill, he said:

A draft or White Bill was published on 3 April 1987 for public information and comment. A revised draft was subsequently published on 3 November last year for further comment. The draft Bill was formally discussed by 11 district boards. We have had numerous meetings with the Legislative Council ad hoc group and with representatives of the film industry. We have received written submissions from interested groups and individuals and the proposed provisions, particularly the issue of censorship, have been the subject of considerable public debate and commentary.

. . . Few, if any, societies are devoid of censorship and there is strong evidence that the local community supports, indeed, demands constraints on what may be publicly viewed.

The Bill seeks to incorporate some of the present censorship criteria which are embodied in the Film Censorship Regulations made under the Places of Public Entertainment Ordinance and to introduce a three-tier system of film classification.

Our discussions with the ad hoc group have focussed on the issue of political censorship to a significant degree. At their instigation, we have modified our earlier proposals to a narrower formulation which now provides censorship where 'there is a likelihood that the exhibition of the film would seriously, which is a new word, damage good relations with other territories'. There has been considerable legal debate as to whether this provision is compatible with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We have consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the question and we are satisfied that the proposed formulation is not incompatible with the covenant.

There is no doubt that censorship on grounds of sex and violence reflects our community's expectations at large. It may also be claimed with justification that political censorship is necessary for the

protection of the well-being of our community. That is why political censorship has always been part of the film censorship process, even under the existing legislation. The Bill merely seeks to continue this provision with a tighter criterion.

It does not make sense to me to jeopardise our good relations with any territory for the sake of screening the odd film — and I mean ‘odd’ since only 21 films have been banned on political grounds over the past 15 years, that is, 10 549 films were submitted, of which 21 were banned or 0.2 per cent.

Hong Kong must not allow itself to be used as a base for propagating propaganda. I believe this point is well understood and accepted in Hong Kong.

The ad hoc group have suggested that the Bill should specifically require the censor to have regard to freedom of expression. This proposal presents problems. First, as the proposal gives guidance to the censor it may be more appropriate to include it in the guidelines to be issued . . . rather than in the Bill itself. Secondly, as the proposal adds nothing to the freedom which already exists it is unnecessary [*sic*]. Consequently no such provision has been made in the Bill.

[A]s for the future system for film classification . . . [i]t will allow the exhibition of films which might be enjoyed by mature or restricted audiences and which have hitherto had to be banned, or severely cut often to the detriment of the story flow.

The proposed three-tier system will make it possible for more than one version of a film to be approved for exhibition to different audiences.

It is also proposed that the appeal mechanism be revamped by replacing the official dominated review board with a board comprising a majority of nonofficial members, from whom a chairman will be appointed. This provides a greater public input at this important level of control.

. . . Provision is made . . . for the establishment of a panel of advisers to be appointed by the Film Censorship Authority. These advisers will be representative of a cross-section of our community. They can be called upon to advise the censors. This arrangement will allow for a further community input into the censorial process.

. . . In addition to the prescribed censorship criteria the censor will be obliged to take into account the matters . . . [that] include the effect of the film as a whole, its artistic and scientific merit, its cultural value and the circumstances of its intended exhibition.

. . . The Board of Review will have the power to review any decision of the authority or a censor upon the request of the person who has submitted the film for examination.

In addition if a person is aggrieved by the exhibition of a film upon moral, religious, educational or other grounds he may request the Chief Secretary to direct the board to review the film.

Earlier proposals to give the Chief Secretary the power to suspend the screening of films pending their review have been reconsidered and dropped.

. . . I acknowledge the concern of the industry on the practical problems of enforcing the underage rule but I would point out that the exhibition of Category III films is optional. Those operators who are content to exhibit films which conform with current censorship standards will not have to accept the extra responsibility of ensuring that underage persons are excluded.

The authority will have power . . . to appoint inspectors to undertake checks of all cinemas to enforce the film classification system and to initiate prosecutions against offending operators.

Transitional provisions are provided whereby certificates of approval for films granted prior to the commencement of the proposed legislation would remain valid for the duration of the validity of their existing certificates.

In summary . . . , this Bill proposes to put increased constraints on censorship criteria and to introduce a classification system which will allow more mature audiences to see films which hitherto could not be approved. It expands the community involvement in the censorial process, thus ensuring that censorship standards better reflect the community's views on what is acceptable or otherwise. (Extracted from *Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 895-8*)

After the second reading of the bill, the inclusion of the political censorship clause in the bill remained a contentious issue. By the end of March 1988, the Legislative Council Ad Hoc Group on Film Classification and Censorship finally arrived at a common consensus that the clause of political censorship could be included in the bill, but Article 19 of the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" that deals with the principle of freedom of expression also had to be added as a provision.

When the "Film Censorship Bill" was brought to the Legislative Council again on 18 May 1988, Martin Lee continued his attempt to safeguard the freedom of expression and said, "[I]f one freedom is violated today, then no freedom is safe tomorrow" (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1445*). He moved an amendment that the administration had to allow a High Court Judge or a District Judge to chair the Board of Review whenever the ground of complaint related to the good relations clause, that is in relation to political censorship, because it was quite likely that authorities would be cited to the tribunal based on decisions in the European of Human Rights, and it would require a chairman with good experience in law to fully appreciate these submissions (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1426*). In relation to the inclusion of Article 19 of the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" in the bill, Martin Lee also proposed the formulation of 'comply with' rather than that of 'take into account' based on a joint representation

by the Hong Kong Bar Association and the Law Society of Hong Kong. The reasoning behind the proposal was that merely requiring the censor to take Article 19 into account, without requiring him to comply with it, would result in a situation where a film could legitimately be banned under the good relations clause even though it contravened Article 19 (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1439-1440*).¹⁸⁷ However, the council finally agreed to add Article 19 of the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” as a clause but adopted the ‘taking into account’ formulation.

The “Film Censorship Bill 1988” was the first piece of legislation preceded by two white bills in Hong Kong history, passing through committee with amendments, and was then read the third time and passed into law (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1421, 1453-4*). In relation to censorship standards for excision and banning of a film, Section 10 of the “Film Censorship Ordinance 1988” states:

- (2) The censor shall as soon as practicable view the film and consider the following matters for the purpose of making his decision under subsection (4) -
 - (a) whether the film portrays, depicts or treats cruelty, torture, violence, crime, horror, disability, sexuality or indecent or offensive language or behaviours;
 - (b) whether the film denigrates or insults any particular class of the public by reference to the colour, race, religious beliefs or ethnic or national origins or the sex of the members of that class; and

¹⁸⁷ For the details of Martin Lee’s argument, see *Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1987-88 Session: 1439-1445*.

(c) whether there is a likelihood that the exhibition of the film would seriously damage good relations with other territories.

(3) The censor shall, in viewing the film and considering the matters referred to in subsection (2), also *take into account* the following matters –

(a) the effect of the film as a whole and its likely effect on the persons likely to view the film;

(b) the artistic, educational, literary or scientific merit of the film and its importance or value for cultural or social reasons;

(c) in relation to the intended exhibition of the film, the circumstances of such exhibition; and

(d) article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (which deals with the principle of freedom of expression). (University of Hong Kong Library; emphasis added)

Furthermore, Section 12 of the “Film Censorship Ordinance 1988” states:

(1) Where a censor approves a film for exhibition under section 10(4)(a), he shall classify it as -

(a) approved for exhibition to persons of any age;

(b) approved for exhibition to persons of any age subject to the condition that any advertising material which relates to the film shall contain the following notice, or a notice to the like effect, in block letters and Chinese characters prominently and legibly displayed –

“NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN.

不適合兒童 ”; or

(c) approved for exhibition only to persons who have attained the age of 18 years.

(2) The classification of a film under subsection (1) shall be designated by such symbols for each of the classifications under that subsection as are prescribed.

I	II	
Category I	Category II	Category III

(Ibid)

Enforcement of Film Classification System and Abolishment of Political Clause

From 10 November 1988, when the “Film Censorship Ordinance 1988” came into effect, until the end of the year, fifty-seven out of the one hundred and twenty-one films submitted for censorship were classified as ‘category III’ according to the record of TELA (cited in Cheng 1995: 454-5). Mou Tun-Fei’s *Man Behind the Sun*, presented by the state-run Sil-Metropole of the PRC and released in December 1988, marked the first public exhibition of a category III movie in Hong Kong.¹⁸⁸ The film is a graphic depiction of the atrocities by the Imperial Japanese military during the Second Sino-Japanese war. Although *Man Behind the Sun* consists of extremely nauseating images and graphic violence, it was officially approved and released in the Chinese Mainland because of its ‘political correctness’. In 1989, five hundred and eighty-two out of one thousand two hundred and eight films were classified as category III movies (ibid). In 1990 and 1991, the proportion of category III movies dropped, but still constituted the largest portions among the three categories.

¹⁸⁸ For a review of *Man Behind the Sun*, see Li (1990b: 102-4).

Category III movies were usually pornographic, exploitative, shocking or used excessive violence; notable ones include Michael Mak's *Sex and Zen* (1991) and one of my works, *The Untold Story* (1993).¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, category III films were still subject to excision, for example, *The Untold Story* was approved after more than four minutes of its content was cut. As the rating of category III is an indication of films which are not suitable for underage audiences, there are not only constraints and limitations at work, but also positive incentives at the business level to make certain kinds of films rather than others. On one hand, some filmmakers would rather avoid their films being classified as category III, or even category II, so that they can have a higher chance of achieving the biggest possible box office, for example, those who make the Chinese New Year celebration films. On the other hand, some other filmmakers, especially those who make low-budget films, would purposely make category III films and see the rating of category III as a selling point in the market. As seen from movie publicity, such a censorship result is always used as a marketing strategy and product packaging, particularly during the early implementation of the film classification system. However, while underage audiences are prohibited from watching category III movies in cinemas, such movies ironically become more alluring to them. In fact, category III titles can always guarantee good sales in the video market and are always at the top charts of video shops.

But as the new category system took effect, the dispute over political censorship continued. A documentary by the Taiwanese photographer Zhang Zautang, *Mainland 1989*, was scheduled to be shown at the Hong Kong Arts Centre

¹⁸⁹ For more about *Sex and Zen*, see Hammond (2000: 143-5). For more about *The Untold Story*, see Chan and Li (2007: 78).

on 8 December 1989. However, the Film Censorship Authority only approved the film after a cut of seventeen minutes of its content, which covered the interviews with Fang Lizhi and Yan Jiaqi, both politically sensitive people after the June Fourth Massacre. The cut was ordered because “there is a likelihood that the exhibition of the film would seriously damage good relations with other territories”. The Hong Kong government was once again criticized for its fear about displeasing Beijing (Cheng 1995: 451). Frank Ching, the journalist who revealed the illegal film censorship of the Hong Kong Government in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* in 1987, argued that since Fang Lizhi and Yan Jiaqi’s interviews took place before the June Fourth Massacre and there were no sensitive content, the government was over sensitive about the matter (*Hong Kong Economic Journal* 20 January 1991, as cited in Cheng 1995: 451-2).

In 1994, Martin Lee introduced a private member’s bill to amend the “Film Censorship Ordinance” by deleting the good relations clause. When he moved the second reading of the bill at the Legislative Council on 16 November 1994, he said:

The censorship power conferred on the Government by this provision [the good relations clause] is against the principle for citizens to enjoy the freedom of expression. That a government wants to have control on people’s speech in fact indicates its lack of trust in its people and that it directs the people’s thinking in a ‘patriarch’ state of mind. In fact, this is an infringement upon basic civil rights. Therefore, to uphold the principle of freedom of speech, this provision ought to be deleted.

On policy grounds, although the Government has seldom exercised the power conferred by this provision in censoring films, it does not mean that adverse effect has not been brought forth by the provision. This is because its existence is meant to be awe-inspiring so that film producers will *discipline themselves* and dare not make politics the

subject of their films. (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1994-95 Session: 1008; emphasis added*)

According to my experience and what I witnessed in the film industry, Martin Lee was accurate about what was happening in the film industry in those days, and it is still a familiar phenomenon today. In order to secure distribution and make a profit in various markets, particularly local and major overseas markets, film makers usually comply with the relevant censorship regulations and self-censor their productions. At the sitting on 7 December 1994, there were twenty-nine votes in favour of Martin Lee's motion and no vote against it. The president of the Legislative Council declared that the "Film Censorship (Amendment) Bill 1994" was carried (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1994-95 Session: 1349*) and the good relations clause that was widely seen as a clause of political censorship was finally removed from the "Film Censorship Ordinance". The amendment came into effect after the regime change in Hong Kong in 1997 and has continued to the present.

On 18 January 1995, the Secretary for Recreation and Culture moved the "Film Censorship (Amendment) Bill 1995" at the Legislative Council and said:

The object of the Bill is to give effect to the policy changes arising from the public opinion survey conducted by the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA) in 1994, as well as to make minor amendments to the Film Censorship Ordinance to improve its operation. (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1994-95 Session: 1675*)

The Legislative Council passed the bill on 19 July 1995 with amendments, which brought about two significant changes. Firstly, since the previously existing spectrum of the category II films was too wide, the category II films were further split into two sub-categories, namely, category IIA films that were not suitable for

children and category IIB films that were not suitable for young persons and children. The Secretary for Recreation and Culture said, “These two new sub-categories are advisory in nature. The aim . . . is to let movie-goers, in particular parents, have more information so that they can decide whether the film concerned is suitable for viewing by their children” (*Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1994-95 Session: 5577*).

Secondly, in order to bring in a wider range of community views into the Board of Review, the number of non-official members was increased to nine from six by replacing the three official members, namely, the Secretary for Home Affairs, the Director of Social Welfare and the Director of Education. The Secretary for Recreation and Culture remained as the ex officio member to advise on matters of policy (see “Film Censorship Ordinance” and *Hansard: LegCo Sittings 1994-95 Session: 5578*).¹⁹⁰

Triad (underground society) movie is a film genre that the Hong Kong film industry never gets tired of. Taylor Wong’s *Triads the Inside Story* (1989), starring Chow Yun-fat, for which I served as cinematographer, was the first ‘triad film’ rated category III. Even though it was rated category III, the Film Censorship Authority approved it after cuts of more than five minutes of footage, including scenes and shots displaying triad ceremonies, rituals and cryptic poems. In order to include audiences under eighteen, Cinema City Company Limited, the company that invested in and produced the film, had tried to cut the film regardless of plot and artistic integrity just so that it could be rated as category II. Nevertheless according to the censorship authority, in order to have the film rated as such, the three Chinese characters, *hak se wui*, in the Chinese title that literally means ‘triad’ or ‘underground

¹⁹⁰ The present post of the ex officio member of the Board of Review is taken up by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development.

society' had to be removed. After deliberations, Cinema City decided to keep the Chinese title. In the light of this, one can understand that explicit graphics and language of the triads were not permitted under the three-tier system although such a standard was not stated in the censorship regulations. However, on 3 December 1999, TELA promulgated the "Film Censorship Guidelines for Censors 1999" endorsed by the Secretary for Information Technology and Broadcasting K. C. Kwong, in which it stated (1999: 5-6):

With regard to the depiction of triad, the censor should consider the following:-

- (a) scenes showing triad ceremonies, rituals, hand signs and paraphernalia including cryptic poems and icons should only be permitted in Category III films;
- (b) triad expressions not generally accepted in, or in the process of being absorbed into, daily language should only be permitted in Category III films;
- (c) promotion or endorsement of triad society, triad activities or values should only be permitted in Category III films; and
- (d) glorification of the power of triads and membership in a triad society should not be permitted.

The emergence of these guidelines was believed to be largely owing to the remarkable popularity of Andrew Lau's *Young and Dangerous* series (1996-2000), which achieved admirable box-office successes when the rest of the local film industry was heading for its downfall because of the decline of movie-going activity in the 1990s.¹⁹¹ After the success of the first instalment of the series, a considerable number of filmmakers were eager to make more and more similar films of the same

¹⁹¹ For more about the *Young and Dangerous* series and some of the Hong Kong movies of the triad genre in the last half of the 1990s, see Stokes and Hoover (1999: 79-88), Chang (2006: 196-205) and Hammond (2000: 72-5).

genre, resulting in successive screenings of triad movies in cinemas for about three years. The community of Hong Kong, particularly parents and those in the education circle, expressed their deep concern about the influence of such films on young people. Thus, the Film Censorship Authority overtly tightened the censorship criteria on triad genre films in response. I made a film titled *War of the Underworld* in 1996, starring Tony Leung Chiu-wai and Jordan Chan, which was also a triad film. When the film was submitted for censorship, it was classified as a category III film. A number of idioms in the dialogues that previously were acceptable under category II were not allowed. The Film Censorship Authority said that those idioms were triad expressions that could only be approved under category III. In point of fact, many of the idioms that the authority regarded as triad expressions were actually in use in daily language. Such an incident shows a tightening of the authority's control over the triad genre although the "Film Censorship Guidelines for Censors 1999" was not yet issued.

Filmmakers had been complaining since the early 1990s about the growing trend of the government to demand more and more cuts in category III movies, which connoted a continual tightening of film censorship during the sensitive transition period before 1997. It was behaviour which suggested a suspicious collusion with Beijing. However, the Film Censorship Authority always denied there was such a trend and maintained that their work was carried out in response to the reactions and requests of the public. However, there is now a new trend. What can be seen today is that, since the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong on 1 July 1997, the PRC's control over films is not achieved simply by local censorship laws and regulations, rather it is carried out by means of underlying political and cultural united front tactics masked by alluring economic benefit. The popularization of the

Chinese Mainland-Hong Kong (Mainland-HK) joint production of film is a significant product of such tactics. Film censorship as an apparatus and a technique of governmentality for government has transformed into something very different from that conventional approach.

Chapter 5

Chinese-Foreign Co-Produced Film and Its Problematics

‘Chinese Mainland-Hong Kong (Mainland-HK) co-produced film’ has been a common term in the Hong Kong film industry since the beginning of the millennium and even the general public in Hong Kong is no stranger to it. Such co-produced films were a product of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)’s ‘reform and opening-up’ (also known as ‘Chinese economic reform’) policy. There are in fact technically three forms of co-production with China (see next section for a detailed examination). The commonly recognized ‘Mainland-HK co-produced film’ is officially called the ‘Chinese Mainland-Hong Kong joint production of films’ and is officially a ‘joint production’ under the “Provisions on the Administration of Chinese-foreign Cooperative Production of Films” (SARFT Order No. 31).¹⁹² Although such joint productions are not confined to Hong Kong and are open to other foreign countries and regions, Mainland-HK co-produced films prevail over all others. At one level they are numerous because they are economically facilitated by the continuous booming demand in the huge Chinese Mainland film market over the past decade, and, at another, because they are geo-politically benefited and catalysed

¹⁹² The ‘State Administration of Radio, Film and Television’ (SARFT) was established in June 1998 by reorganizing the former Ministry of Radio, Film and Television. In March 2013, SARFT merged with the General Administration of Press and Publication to form the ‘State Administration of Press and Publication, Radio, Film, and Television’ (SAPPRFT).

All the laws and regulations of the PRC are originally in Chinese. There is no unified archive of official English translation available. Inconsistent (e.g., the use of Sino-foreign and Chinese-foreign, provisions and measures, order and decree, etc.) and expired English versions are documented in scattered official and unofficial databases. The English translations cited in this text are selected from databases of various official and law-related academic institutions. The Chinese Government states that, in any case of discrepancy, the Chinese version shall prevail. When no authoritative English translation is accessible, translations are by the writer as indicated.

by the implementation of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA; the 'Mainland' refers to the entire customs territory of China) signed in 2003. Although the PRC has been a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since December 2001, the People's Central Government of the PRC (Chinese Government or Central Government) keeps its film market only partially open to the outside world in order to protect its domestic film industry from keen competition with foreign films and to prevent its population from the influence of foreign cultures, values and ideologies in imported films. In contrast, Mainland-HK co-productions are officially allowed to be distributed in the Chinese Mainland and are not limited by any quota which makes them commercially viable and valuable. In fact, Mainland-HK co-productions also enable Hong Kong film investors to enjoy a larger share of box-office takings. In addition, they provide more job opportunities for Hong Kong filmmakers who have seen their local film industry declining continuously since the early 1990s. But, co-productions also have a political function and serve as a regulatory apparatus and technique (*dispositif* and *techné*, see Chapter 1) for the Chinese Government to suppress Hong Kong filmmakers' freedom of expression and subsume Hong Kong cinema under the Chinese Mainland cinema mantle much in the way the Nationalist Government of Taiwan did during the cold war between the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Kuomintang (KMT). Stepping back into the latter half of the last century, the Taiwan Government, with the Free General Association as its agent, made use of its profitable market to lure Hong Kong filmmakers and encourage them to break any connection with the PRC, deny the legitimacy of the CPC regime and subsume the Hong Kong cinema under the rightist camp (see Chapter 3).

From the historical account discussed in the previous chapters, it can be seen that film productions and the manner and standards of film censorship plus the contemporary political conditions, always wrestle together in an interactive triangle that, in turn, shapes the characteristics and struggles of the Hong Kong cinema in a particular era. After Britain transferred sovereignty over Hong Kong to the PRC in 1997, the Hong Kong cinema, on the one hand, appears to be none of the PRC administration's business under the 'one country, two systems' policy, and, on the other, it is regulated and censored by Beijing via various techniques, significantly through the mode of Mainland-HK co-produced film over the past decade. In the 2010s, Mainland-HK co-produced film, which is subject to the Chinese Mainland censorship and the tastes of the Chinese Mainland audience, has become a problematic phenomenon vis-à-vis the identity of Hong Kong cinema — Hong Kong cinema is being Sinicized and is losing its cultural characteristics and sense of place under the sea change of market ecology and the cultural conflict between the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong. If successful business merely means one that brings in the greatest revenue, then Mainland-HK co-produced films are thriving but their success is achieved at the expense of the Hong Kong cinema's integrity.

Why is Chinese-foreign Co-Produced Film So Tempting?

In December 1978, Deng Xiaoping put an end to the PRC's closed-door policy by putting forward the 'reform and opening-up' national policy at the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC. After that, China has set out on the road to what the CPC termed the 'socialist market economy', involving not only socio-economic reforms, but also signifying a 'right turn' of the

Communist regime. On 11 October 2000, the CPC leadership adopted a document titled “The Central Committee of the CPC’s Suggestions Regarding the Formulation of the Tenth Five-Year Plan of National Economy and Social Development” (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Zhiding Guomin Jingji he Shehui Fazhan Dishige Wunian Jihua de Jianyi*; my translation), in which the concept of ‘cultural industries’ was introduced into the PRC’s national policy for the first time.¹⁹³ The document repeats Deng Xiaoping’s mantra: ‘Development is the absolute principle and the key to solve all the problems of China.’ It also urges the relevant personnel to perfect the policies on cultural industries, strengthen the construction and management of the cultural market and to push forward development of cultural industries (News of the CPC n.d.a), as part of the marketizational development of the Chinese economy under the ‘reform and opening-up’ policy. Accordingly, a series of policies favouring the development of cultural industries were promulgated in the ensuing years. Under such a national economy plan, cultural products were brought in line with the market that meant film was commodified, and pure entertainment films and their target consumer market have become possible and legitimate in the Chinese Mainland. According to the data from the previous SARFT, the nationwide box-office grossed about nine hundred million RMB in 2003, and there were less than two thousand movie screens in the whole country at that time (K618.Cn 23 January 2014, China-Consulting.Cn 2012). After ten years, China has developed into an immense market enticing in the world’s movie businessmen.

On 13 January 2014, *China Film News*, an official weekly magazine supervised by SAPPRT, published a seemingly self-congratulatory article reviewing

¹⁹³ For more about ‘cultural industries’, see Adorno and Horkheimer (1972: 120-167) and Hesmondhalgh, David (2002).

the Chinese Mainland cinema industry in 2013 (cited in SAPPRFT's Administration Center of Digital Film Content website). The article says that the ten years, up until 2013, saw a period of development in the Chinese Mainland cinema, characterized by the relaxation of the government's monopoly and control and the move to allow private enterprises to produce films and run relevant businesses such as movie houses and the distribution of domestic films under the supervision and guidance of the Central Government. It also provides some roundup data for the year 2013: (i) about six hundred and forty feature films were produced; (ii) there were more than six hundred million attendances of moviegoer in the cities, an increase of one hundred and fifty million person-times from 2012; (iii) the number of movie screens has increased by more than five thousand nationwide, at a rate of about fourteen per day making the total movie screens in the country to exceed eighteen thousand; (iv) the nationwide box-office gross takings indicate a growth of about thirty-three percent from 2012 adding up to almost twenty-two billion RMB, of which sixty percent were contributed by domestic titles; (v) thirty-three domestic and twenty-nine foreign titles each attained box-office gross takings of over one hundred million RMB.¹⁹⁴

According to the statistics released by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) in March 2013, China has overtaken Japan to become the world's

¹⁹⁴ Chinese Government officials have a habit of sweeping bad news under the carpet. The roundup article in *China Films News* does not say how many films out of the approximately 640 films made in 2013 could not get a theatrical release. According to Mtime.Com (2013), in 2013, there were a total of 352 films released theatrically in the Chinese Mainland, including 58 imports consisting of mainly Hollywood titles (see also M1905.Com 10 February 2014). Such figures imply that more than half of the domestic titles produced could not get a theatrical release. The article also does not mention that 40% of the yearly box-office gross takings were contributed by the 58 imported films. According to Yin (2014), the total worldwide box-office gross takings in 2013 was 36 billion US dollars, of which 20 billion was achieved by American titles while Chinese titles only achieved box-office gross takings of less than two billion US dollars in its domestic market and have no significant overseas market. However, SAPPRFT criticized movie houses for stealing box-office income and estimated that an average of 10% of the yearly gross takings were stolen via the ticketing system; thus, the announced data only reflected 'discounted' box-office gross takings (K618.Cn 23 January 2014).

second-largest box office territory, and the biggest outside the United States of America (US) (Guardian.Com 22 March 2013).¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the Chinese Government, film businessmen and filmmakers all consider that there is still great potential for the film market to grow by referencing the US as a well-developed paradigm. For instance, when there were only about four thousand and five hundred screens in the Chinese Mainland in 2010, Feng Xiaogang said that there were about one hundred and thirty screens per million people in the US while there were only less than seven screens per million people in China, but China had a total population of one billion more than the US (*People's Daily – Overseas Edition* 29 January 2010). Chinese Mainland scholar Yin Hong (2014) further remarks that while there are six hundred million person-times of moviegoers per year in China, the US has an average of nearly five moviegoing-times per citizen per year. In addition, while the North American market has an average yearly growth of only three to four percent in the past decade, the Chinese Mainland has sustained an annual growth of more than thirty percent for twelve consecutive years. A report issued in 2012 by the world's third largest global professional services firm, Ernst & Young, suggested that the Chinese box office at the current rate of expansion was set to pass the US in seven years (Guardian.Com 22 March 2013).

Confronted by the tempting, huge and continuously expanding Chinese Mainland film market, a lot of overseas filmmakers and businessmen are trying to get into it. However, the Chinese Government has been tirelessly implementing strict control over its cultural industries and censorship on cultural products on all

¹⁹⁵ “The MPAA’s Theatrical Market Statistics 2012 show China’s cinema audience is worth \$2.7bn (£1.7bn), up from \$2bn in 2011, taking it past Japan, whose total increased only slightly from \$2.3bn to \$2.4bn. The US was still the biggest by some distance, with a value of \$10.8bn in 2012, a 6% rise on 2011” (Guardian.Com 22 March 2013).

fronts ever since its establishment. During the Cold War years, it prohibited all films from the Western bloc, in particular, the American films. However, when the PRC was paving its way for WTO membership and trying to revive its declining domestic film industry in the 1990s, a breakthrough occurred. On 12 November 1994, the Hollywood film *Fugitive* starring Harrison Ford attained public exhibitions legally in the Chinese Mainland with box-office success and became the first revenue-sharing imported film in the PRC. Starting from 1995 on, the Chinese Government permitted a yearly quota of ten revenue-sharing imports of film, but the lucrative business of the national distribution of such films was exclusive to the state-owned China Film Group Corporation. After the PRC obtained WTO membership in December 2001, the quota was enlarged to twenty (Tong, Po 2008; Yang, En Pu 2008). In February 2012, the then Vice President of the PRC, Xi Jinping, together with the Vice President of the US, Joe Biden, announced in Los Angeles with immediate effect that the PRC further expanded the annual quota for revenue-sharing imports of foreign films from twenty to thirty-four, with the extra fourteen films allocated to 'enhanced' films made in three-dimensional (3-D), Image Maximum (IMAX) or animations, and such films' two dimensional (2-D) equivalents were also to be allowed. Under the new scheme, the rental, that is the share of revenue the rights owner can get, was increased to twenty-five percent of the total revenue from the previous share paid on a sliding scale ranging from fourteen to seventeen percent (Frater, Patrick 2012). Since the revenue-sharing films are usually hotly anticipated Hollywood titles, their theatrical release date in the Chinese Mainland is usually synchronous or close to that in other major markets of the world.

Other than the revenue-sharing quota, there is another quota system, namely, the flat-fee quota. Under this system, the purchase of foreign film is open to

domestic private corporations but importation work still has to be handled by China Film Group and national distribution must be handed over to China Film Group or Huaxia Film Distribution Company Limited.¹⁹⁶ The Chinese Government has never made public the exact number of the flat-fee quota. By examining the filmographies of the released films in the past ten years, the yearly quota was not a fixed one and is estimated to be around thirty to forty consisting of foreign titles that were not so popular in demand. Films imported via the two quota systems can usually secure theatrical release and their revenues largely rely on the box-office takings while “piracy means there is no legitimate DVD market” (*Economist* 21 December 2013). However, importing for television and online video is another option, which is currently officially unlimited in number but very limited in terms of revenue.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, as the quota systems can usually bring larger revenue, they remain the preference for foreign film rights owners. In addition to the quota systems putting a limit on the yearly imports of film to be released theatrically (of which Hollywood mega productions have monopolized a large proportion), the State Council also stipulates that all movie houses have to allocate two thirds of the screening time to domestic titles (see State Council 21 January 2010).¹⁹⁸ As a

¹⁹⁶ The national distribution of imported films was exclusive to China Film Group until Huaxia Film Distribution Company Limited (Huaxia Film) was established in 2003 and became the second corporation having the right to distribute imported films in the Chinese Mainland (Finance.Sina.Com.Cn 16 November 2005). However, the right of importing films is still monopolized by China Film Group, and all the 19 shareowners of Huaxia Film are state-owned corporations including China Film Group (Huaxia Film Distribution Co., Ltd 25 May 2012).

¹⁹⁷ The movie channel of CCTV (China Central Television) Channel 6 is the biggest buyer of imports for TV in the Chinese Mainland. It can usually offer a better price than the other Chinese Mainland TV stations.

¹⁹⁸ The General Office of the State Council issued “The General Office of the State Council’s Guidance Opinion Regarding the Advancement of Prosperous Development of the Film Industry” (*Guowuyuan Bangongting Guanyu Cujin Dianying Chanye Fanrong Fazhan de Zhidao Yijian*; my translation) on 21 January 2010 in the wake of the recording-breaking box-office success of *Avatar* (1.3 billion RMB, equivalent to more than one-fifth of the nationwide yearly gross). Although the document reminds movie house executives of the central government’s requirement of an allocation of at least two thirds of the screening time to domestic films, many movie houses do not abide by the

matter of course, all the films that are going to be released in the Chinese Mainland have to pass the Chinese Government's censorship.

Under the Chinese Government's administration of film, other than the gateways mentioned above, there is still a last but not least way for foreign films to enter into the huge and growing Chinese Mainland market. It is by means of 'cooperative production'. The Chinese Government claims that permitting the Chinese-foreign cooperative production of films serves to enhance the creation and production of film and to promote Sino-foreign exchanges of films. According to the latest "Provisions on the Administration of Chinese-foreign Cooperative Production of Films" (SARFT Order No. 31) promulgated on 6 July 2004:

Article 2 'Sino-foreign cooperation in film production' refers to the joint and coordinated production of films, and the production of films by appointment, inside or outside China, by a domestic film producer that has obtained a Film Production Permit or a Film Production Permit (Single Film) (Chinese Party) in accordance with the law and a foreign film producer (Foreign Party).

Article 7 The State shall implement a licensing system for Sino-foreign cooperation in film production. Domestic work units or individuals that have not obtained a Permit for Sino-foreign Cooperation in Film Production or an approval document may not produce films in cooperation with foreign work units or individuals. Foreign work units or individuals may not produce films *independently* in China without approval. (Ningbo Bureau of Culture Radio & TV, Press and Publication 27 April 2011; emphasis added)

According to Article 5 of the provisions, Chinese-foreign cooperation in film production has three forms:

stipulation for the sake of better business because Hollywood titles usually have very much better box-office takings than domestic titles. During the era of Hu Jingtao and Wen Jiabao, there was a popular saying in the Chinese Mainland, that is, 'decree gets no further than Zhongnanhai'.

1. joint production, namely the form of production by which the Chinese and foreign parties invest jointly (including investment of funds, labour or physical objects), produce jointly, and share the interests and bear the risks jointly;
2. coordinated production, namely the form of production by which the Foreign Party contributes capital and carries out filming in China, and the Chinese Party assists by providing equipment, apparatus, sites, labour, etc. for consideration; or
3. production by appointment, namely the form of production by which the Foreign Party appoints the Chinese Party to carry out production in China on its behalf. (Ningbo Bureau of Culture Radio & TV, Press and Publication 27 April 2011)

The films commonly regarded as Chinese-foreign (or Sino-foreign) co-production (or co-produced film) usually come under the first type, that is the joint production which is the preference of foreign film businessmen. By Article 14 of the provisions:

A Putonghua language version shall be produced for jointly-produced films, and its subtitles must be in standardized Chinese characters [simplified Chinese]. According to the needs of film distribution, the production of corresponding language versions for countries, regions and ethnic minorities based on the Putonghua version is permitted. (Ibid)

The joint production form differs from the coordinated production and production by appointment forms in significant ways. Firstly, it can enjoy *the same treatment and benefit as the domestic production* in its distribution in the Chinese Mainland. Secondly, it is *quota free and tariff exempted* while the other two forms are treated as imports that are restrained by the quota systems and subject to tariffs. Thirdly, although the rights owners of joint productions have to take care of the marketing and promotion costs, they can get forty-three percent of the allotment of box-office takings as revenue, whereas those of the other two forms can only get about

twenty-five percent. Thus, the joint production form is not only a viable means for foreign businessmen to get access to the Chinese Mainland film market, it may also bring attractive profits.

As the President and Managing Director of the Asia-Pacific Region for the Motion Picture Association (MPA) and Motion Picture Association International (MPA-I) Michael C. Ellis said, the joint production form has many aims, the foremost is to make more money (see Mtime.Com 13 November 2013), which is generally true of foreign film investors and enterprises, including those in Hong Kong. As it is stated in the “Provisions on the Administration of Chinese-foreign Cooperative Production of Films”:

Article 3 These Provisions shall apply to the cooperative production of fictional films, art films, science and educational films, documentary films and special features films (including films, digital films, films for television, etc.) of Chinese and foreign film producers inside and outside China.

Article 22 These Provisions shall apply to the cooperative productions of films in China by film producers from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Macao Special Administrative Region and Taiwan. (Ningbo Bureau of Culture, Radio and TV, Press and Publication 27 April 2011)

It can be seen here that the Central Government still regards Hong Kong as a ‘foreign’ region even though it has gained sovereignty over Hong Kong. Nonetheless, the joint production kind has its political role to play too; it serves other aims for Beijing in various ways such as foreign relations and affairs, particularly in regard to its ‘indirect’ governance over Hong Kong after 1 July 1997.

Mainland-HK Cooperation in Film Production as United Front Tactic

In fact, before the Chinese-foreign cooperative production of films became a popular trend, cross-border cooperation with other regions, whether in the form of co-finance, co-production or just providing assistance, was not new to the Hong Kong film industry. Such collaboration provided many advantages, such as tax concession, a way through regional quota restriction and trade barrier, lower production costs, a larger distribution network, more revenue, a new aesthetic and so forth.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, soon after the establishment of the PRC, the CPC began to strengthen the control over the imports of film, including those from colonial Hong Kong. According to Hu Ke, only about ninety Hong Kong films, mainly productions by the three leading leftist companies, Great Wall, Feng Huang and Sun Luen, were officially imported into the PRC from 1949 to 1979 (Hu 2000: 16); whereas Hong Kong produced about five thousand and six hundred films within the period (*Hong Kong Filmography*).¹⁹⁹ The Hong Kong film industry in the 1950s relied more on the Nanyang markets than before and also started to explore other markets. Taiwan was the obvious first target of Mandarin film production companies because of its population (about ten million in the 1950s) and standard language, Mandarin. In the mid-1950s, a number of film companies based in Hong Kong such as Wong Cheuk-hon's Liberty Film Company (also known as Freedom Company) and Zhang Shankun's Hsin Wha Motion Picture began to set up branch offices and co-produced films with their counterparts in Taiwan (Tso Kuei-fang 2000: 32-5). For instance, Wang Hao's *14,000 Witnesses* (mentioned in Chapter 3) was a

¹⁹⁹ For more about Great Wall, Feng Huang and Sun Luen, see Chapter 3.

co-production of Huaqiao Film Corporation of Taiwan and Haiyan Film Company of Hong Kong. But it was not only collaborations with Mandarin regions, there was also a marked shift towards co-productions with non-Chinese-language regions. For example, Zhang Shankun collaborated with Toho Company Limited in Japan to produce a number of films such as *Blood Will Tell* (*Haitang Hong*, 1955) and *Madame Butterfly* (*Hudie Furen*, 1956), both were directed by Evan Yang and featured Teresa Li (also known as Li Lihua).²⁰⁰ Shaw and Sons Limited invited Yamaguchi Yoshiko, widely known as Li Xianglan in China, to Hong Kong to star in three films, namely, *Chin Ping Mei* (1955), *The Lady of Mystery* (*Shenmi Meiren*, 1957) which was directed by Japanese director Wakasugi Mitsuo and *An Unforgettable Night* (*Yi Ye Fengliu*, 1958),²⁰¹ Cathay Organisation Limited's subsidiary Motion Picture & General Investment Company Limited (MP & GI) collaborated with Shochiku Company Limited to make *Hong Kong-Tokyo Honeymoon* (*Xianggang Dongjing Miyue Luxing*, 1957), directed by Japanese director Nomura Yoshitarou and starring Linda Lin.²⁰² These are just some of the notable examples of that era, and such co-productions could usually achieve higher box-office takings than the Cantonese and Mandarin films in Hong Kong. Other than Taiwan and Japan, there were also co-productions with Korea, the Philippines and Thailand during the 1950s, and the wave of co-productions with Taiwan, Japan

²⁰⁰ For more about *Blood Will Tell* and *Madame Butterfly*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. IV* (2003: 133, 185)

²⁰¹ Li Xianglan was a Japanese born in China, a famous singer and movie star in China during the 1930s and 1940s. For more about her legendary life, see *Zai Zhongguo de Ri Zi – Li Xianglan: Wo de Ban Sheng* (literally *The Days in China – Li Xianglan: Half a Life Time of Mine*, 1988). For more about *Chin Ping Mei*, *The Lady of Mystery* and *An Unforgettable Night*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. IV* (2003: 110, 253, 287).

²⁰² For more about Cathay Organization Limited and MP & GI, see Law and Bren (2012: 162-164). For more about *Hong Kong-Tokyo Honeymoon*, see *Hong Kong Filmography, Vol. IV* (2003: 239).

and Korea lasted till the 1970s.²⁰³ In the 1960s and 1970s, Shaw Brothers Studios also co-produced films such as *Five Golden Dragons* (1967), *Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires* (1974) and *Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold* (1975) with overseas counterparts in Europe and the US (see Law and Bren 2012: 216).²⁰⁴

Mainland-HK cooperation in film production, in fact, began as early as the late 1950s, but was confined to the Hong Kong leftist companies and the productions were mainly Chinese opera films in different Chinese dialects such as Cantonese opera *Butterfly Beauty* (*Choi Dip Seung Fei*, 1959) and Yueju opera *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hong Lou Meng*, 1962) (see Hu 2000: 23).²⁰⁵ In the 1960s, Great Wall co-produced popular Chinese opera films such as Hu Siao-fung and Lin Huan's *Bride Hunter* (*Wang Lao Hu Qiang Qin*, 1960) and Li Pingqian's *Three Charming Smiles* (*San Xiao*, 1964) with their counterparts in the Chinese Mainland (see Pai, Ti 2010: 67), and Hongtu Film Company, a subsidiary of Sun Luen, also co-produced films such as the popular Cantonese feature *The House of 72 Tenants* (*Chat Sap Yi Ka Fong Hak*, 1963) with the Pearl River Film Studio based in Guangzhou.²⁰⁶ However, such co-productions were interrupted and not able to further develop due to the political turmoil in the Chinese Mainland and the extreme left policy of the CPC during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Cultural Revolution) that broke out in 1966. The development of the present wave of Mainland-HK

²⁰³ For more about the co-productions between Hong Kong and other Asian regions in the 1950s, see Law and Bren (2012: 196-205, 210-7), Tso Kuei-fang (2000: 32-5).

²⁰⁴ For more about *Five Golden Dragons*, *Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires* and *Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold*, see IMDb.

²⁰⁵ For more about *Butterfly Beauty*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. IV* (2003: 362). For more about *Dream of the Red Chamber*, see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. V* (2005: 210).

²⁰⁶ Lin Huan was another pseudonym of Louis Cha. For more about *Bride Hunter*, *Three Charming Smiles* and *The House of 72 Tenants* see *Hong Kong Filmography Vol. V* (2005: 14-5, 284-5, 307).

co-produced film can be traced back to the implementation of the PRC's 'reform and opening-up' policy in 1979. However, in the early stages, it was not simply initiated and pushed forward because of business demands, it was also taken as a means to rebuild the international image of China, to improve China's foreign relations and, in particular, to enhance the united front image of joint productions with the regions of Hong Kong and Macau and the 'province' of Taiwan. In July 1979, the China Film Co-Production Corporation (CFCC) was established in accordance with a suggestion by Hu Yaobang, the head of the Central Propaganda Department (now renamed the Publicity Department) of the PRC at that time. The Ministry of Culture stipulated that all the administrative and coordinating affairs of Chinese-foreign film cooperation had to be subject to the unified management of the CFCC. According to the "Measures for Control over Imported Films, 1981":

Article 7 Business activities with respect to the joint production of films by China and foreign countries and the joint production of films by China's mainland and the regions of Hong Kong and Macao or by the mainland and Taiwan Province shall all be subject to the administration of the China Films Joint Production Corporation [China Film Co-Production Corporation], *with the exception of the business activities of the three Hong Kong films companies of the Great Wall, the Phoenix [Feng Huang] and the Sunlin [Sun Luen] when they come back to shoot films on the mainland [sic], where the Office of Hong Kong & Macao Affairs under the State Council shall directly approach the regions and units concerned for matters in this respect.* With respect to the import of the films jointly produced, the China Films Joint Production Corporation [China Film Co-Production Corporation] shall fulfil the formalities of import Customs declaration with the Customs. If, among these films, there are some that are to be released nationwide, the China Films Corporation shall, in accordance with the relevant regulations, fulfil the formalities with the

Beijing Customs for retroactive payment of Customs duties.²⁰⁷
(Laws and Regulations Database, People.Cn; emphasis added)

Under these measures, the priority of Mainland-HK cooperation in film production was firstly given to the three major leftist companies (Great Wall, Feng Huang and Sun Luen), which had a historical connection with the CPC, as they were under different administration. In fact, before the promulgation of such measures, Feng Huang had already produced Johnnie To's cinematic debut, *The Enigmatic Case* (1980), which was shot in Yuebei, a region of northern Guangdong province.²⁰⁸ It was followed by Cheung Sing-yim's *The Shaolin Temple* (1982), Jet Li's debut. The idea of making *The Shaolin Temple* was initiated by Liao Chengzhi, former Minister of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council as well as former Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), at a meeting with the personnel of Great Wall, Feng Huang and Sun Luen in the late 1970s. *The Shaolin Temple* was produced by Great Wall and Sun Luen but in the name of Chun Yuen Film Production Company. It was entirely shot in the Chinese Mainland and took two years to complete.²⁰⁹ When the film was released in 1982, it became an instant hit and achieved a great box-office success. However, the cooperative and liaison work for *The Enigmatic Case* and *The Shaolin Temple* were not handled by the CFCC. The managing director of Southern Film, Dixon Lau, pointed out that,

²⁰⁷ "Measures for Control over Imported Films, 1981" was approved by the State Council on 13 October 1981 and promulgated by the Ministry of Culture and the General Administration of Customs. The English translation of the document here comes from the "Laws and Regulations of the People's Republic of China Governing Foreign-related Matters" (July 1991) compiled by the Bureau of Legislative Affairs of the State Council of the PRC and published by the China Legal System Publishing House (Laws and Regulations Database, People.Cn). It should be noted that there is no standardized official English translation for the documents of many government bodies.

²⁰⁸ For more about *The Enigmatic Case*, see Sil-Metropole 2010: 328-9.

²⁰⁹ For more about the making of *The Shaolin Temple*, see Sil-Metropole (2010: 359-362) and Pai Ti (2010: 142-7).

based on the records of the CFCC, the first Mainland-HK film cooperation under the CPCC's coordination and assistance was Yeung Chi-hsiao's *Out of Danger*, which was shot in 1981 but released in 1985 (*Wen Wei Po* 10 October 2006).

In March 1982, the business-savvy and innovative filmmaker, Li Han-hsiang, went to the Chinese Mainland to co-produce two films with the CFCC, namely, *The Burning of the Imperial Palace* and *Reign behind a Curtain*, both were about the modern history of China. The CFCC provided full support, taking no account of financial risk and revenue. Since Li Han-hsiang was a renowned non-leftist film director who spent eight years in Taiwan making movies with his Grand Motion Picture Company from 1963 to 1970, the Chinese Government at that time considered that co-productions with him were a political task, a means to present the work as a united front which was much more significant than any financial gain (Yin and He 2009: 36).²¹⁰ *The Burning of the Imperial Palace* and *Reign behind a Curtain*, both credited as co-productions of Li Han-hsiang's New Kwun Lun Film Production Company Limited of Hong Kong and the CFCC of the Chinese Mainland, were the first joint projects between a non-leftist Hong Kong film company and Communist China since the CPC seized power over the Chinese Mainland in 1949. In addition to the official backing of the Chinese Government, these two films were also partly sponsored by Macau tycoon Ho Yin (Zhao 2007: 127), who was a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) at that time. When the two films were released in 1983, both were quite well-received and achieved box-office success not only in Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland, but also in other overseas

²¹⁰ For more about the career of Li Han-hsiang and his works, see Wong Ain-ling (2007).

markets such as Japan.²¹¹ As both Li Han-hsiang and his New Kwun Lun Film Production Company Limited's names had Foucault's 'author function' in that the director and his company are the assigned 'authors' of the films and contribute to its meaning (see Chapter 1 for a more detailed examination), these two co-productions demonstrated to the world a breakthrough of the Chinese Government's ideology — socialist China's door is open to the capitalist world. The unique historical relations and geopolitical connections of the Hong Kong cinema with the PRC (see Chapters 2, 3 and 4) subsequently sparked the 1980s trend of Mainland-HK co-productions.²¹² Notable titles include Yim Ho's *Homecoming* (1984), Tsui Siu-ming's *Holy Robe of the Shaolin Temple* (1985) and *Mirage* (1987), and Ann Hui's *Romance of Book and Sword* (1987) and *Princess Fragrance* (1987).²¹³

However, even though the early co-productions were not commercial ventures for the Chinese Government, they did provide Hong Kong filmmakers with more job opportunities — and more creative opportunities. It also helped boost the investors' share of the profits by lowering production costs thanks to the cheap labour and other resources of the Chinese Mainland. Such co-productions, characterized by Hong Kong filmmakers as the chief creative staff, also served as a rehearsal for the marketization of Chinese Mainland cinema.

²¹¹ For more about how the productions of *The Burning of the Imperial Palace* and *Reign behind a Curtain* were accomplished, see Sil-Metropole (2010: 369-371). For a review of the two films, see Li (1990: 129-135).

²¹² For more about the effect of Li Han-hsiang's *The Burning of the Imperial Palace* and *Reign behind a Curtain*, see Zhao 2007, 126-135.

²¹³ For more about *Homecoming*, see Cheuk (2008: 153-5). For a review of *Homecoming*, see Li (1990: 190-2). For more about *Romance of Book and Sword* and *Princess Fragrance*, see Sil-Metropole (2010: 387-9), Cheuk (2008: 65-6) and Erens (2002 [2000]: 185-6).

Politics in Early Mainland-HK Co-Production of Film

Although the Mainland-HK cooperation in film production started with the political aim of rebuilding the international image of China, improving its foreign relations and encouraging Taiwan and Hong Kong to present a united front with the PRC as filmmakers, there could be difficulties. The release of Ann Hui's *Boat People* (1982) is an example.

The producer of *Boat People* Hsia Moon was formerly a movie star, nicknamed the 'Big Princess' of Great Wall during the 1950s and 1960s. As she did not agree with and was upset by the traumatic Cultural Revolution in the Chinese Mainland, she moved to Canada suddenly and quietly in 1967, in the white heat of the revolution. She came back to Hong Kong in 1969 and ran a garment factory with her friends. In 1978, Hsia Moon became a member of the National Committee of the CPPCC keeping the seat until 2003, that is from the fifth session to the ninth session. In the late 1970s, Liao Chengzhi encouraged her to return to the film industry, but she chose to stay behind the scenes and formed Bluebird Movie Enterprises Limited, with herself as producer (see Wong 2001: 130-140).

Ann Hui's *Boat People* (1982) was the debut of Bluebird, entirely shot in Hainan with the full cooperation of the Pearl River Studio and the Chinese Government. The film was financially supported by the Hong Kong tycoon Henry Fok who was also a member of the National Committee of the CPPCC at that time and became the vice-chairman in 1993. The story of the film takes place in Da Nang, one of the major port cities in Vietnam, and is about a Japanese photo journalist witnessing the social miseries and political persecution under communist

rule after North Vietnam's victory in the Vietnam War.²¹⁴ The film was made not long after the 1979 Sino-Vietnam War at a time when the PRC and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were still hostile to each other, which explains why Beijing permitted Hong Kong filmmakers to make a film 'bad-mouthing' communist Vietnam within its territory. *Boat People* was released in Hong Kong in October 1982, less than one month after the then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's visit to China in September that marked the start of the formal negotiation between the United Kingdom (UK) and the PRC on the Question of Hong Kong. Because of the sensitive timing of the film's release, Hong Kong audiences 'read' the film as an analogy between the fate of Vietnam and Hong Kong after 1 July 1997. They substituted the communist Vietnam Government for the Chinese Government and the plight of Vietnamese residents for the possible plight of the future Hong Kong residents.

Li Cheuk-to referred to such interpretations as 'the China factor'. Looking back on the films of the 1980s from the perspective of 1990, he observed, "The China Factor resurfaced with a vengeance. Hong Kong movies were infused with allegorical treatments of 1997 and were obsessed with themes of destiny and fate." Certainly, *Boat People* falls squarely within this category. (Erens 2002 [2000]: 185)

Another film critic Reeve who wrote a film review column for the leftist newspaper *Wen Wei Po* during the 1980s, recalls that an editor told him via a phone call that only the technique and skill of *Boat People* could be commented on, but not the content. When Reeve asked the editor why, the editor only said it was the request of the newspaper's leader (Reeve 2009: 64). The incident indicated that the internal personnel of the CPC were suspicious of the film.

²¹⁴ For more about *Boat People*, see Liang (2004: 248-9) and Erens (2002 [2000]: 183-5).

Although Ann Hui has repeatedly stated that she is not political and does not understand politics (Erens 2002 [2000]: 179 and 184), and although the producer Hsia Moon and the financial supporter Henry Fok were ‘close friends’ of the PRC, *Boat People* was banned in the Chinese Mainland. The banning was probably owing to the censors’ reading of the film as a political act, a subversive criticism of the CPC with its partial resemblance to the Cultural Revolution. *Boat People* was watched and interpreted in such a way that, at all its level, the director (Author) was absent, which meant that, with the removal of the director, the meanings and interpretations given to the film by its audiences, including the censors, was not up to the director’s explanation. Here, Barthes’ theory of ‘the death of the author’ wins over Foucault’s theory of ‘author function’ while the latter is problematic in this case (see Chapter 1).

Ironically, although *Boat People* was widely regarded as anti-communist, it was also banned in Taiwan because the Government Information Office of Taiwan rigidly conformed to the prohibition of any film that was filmed on PRC soil or had any Chinese Mainland actor (Qi Mengshi of the PRC in *Boat People*) playing one of the lead roles.²¹⁵ Moreover, the lead actor of the film, George Lam of Hong Kong, had been blacklisted by the Taiwan Government until he made it clear to the Taiwan Government that he had not turned communist but was only fulfilling his obligations in accordance with his acting contract.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Taiwan Government lifted the ban in 1997. However, *Boat People* was only distributed in the video market in Taiwan (Liang 2004: 250).

²¹⁶ Many film crew members of *Boat People* used fake names in the credits out of fear of being blacklisted by the Government Information Office of Taiwan. For instance, Chiu Kang-chien used his wife’s name Dai An-ping as the screenwriter’s name.

Boat People achieved record-breaking box-office success in Hong Kong and became an award-winning film later at the second Hong Kong Film Awards held in 1983.²¹⁷ After its first theatrical run, the film disappeared in Hong Kong for about ten years without any distribution in the form of audio-visual products. Its suspicious disappearance was probably owing to the film owner's withdrawal because of the controversy stirred up by the film and the disappointment of the Chinese Government. As Reeve (2009: 64) remarks, if it were not for the exceptional relationships of the investors, Hsia Moon and Henry Fok, and the fact that the power of the CFCC was not as centralized as it is today, *Boat People* would not have been made. It was an exceptional co-production which came out under exceptional circumstances and interpersonal relationships of the CPC's senior cadres.

In another instance, in 1986, Yim Ho's *Buddha's Lock* (released in Hong Kong in 1987) co-produced by Shenzhen Film Enterprise and Highland Films Enterprises (HK) Limited, a film based on true events, also got caught up in censorship trouble in the Chinese Mainland. The film was about the Yi people, an ethnic minority group that the Chinese Government recognizes as part of the Chinese nation.²¹⁸ As the Chinese Government is always sensitive about the issue of ethnic minorities, the film was banned because the censors were afraid that the film would induce the Yi people's misunderstanding or even stir up discontent (see Reeve 2009: 74-5).

²¹⁷ *Boat People* earned gross box-office receipts of HK\$15.5 million in its first theatrical run in Hong Kong. The film won five awards at the 2nd Hong Kong Film Awards, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenplay.

²¹⁸ For more about *Buddha's Lock*, see Cheuk (2008: 151-2).

The bans on *Boat People* and *Buddha's Lock* illustrate that Mainland-HK co-productions put Hong Kong filmmakers' freedom of expression, speech and creativity at stake. All in all, the CPC regime is far from liberal and democratic, and politics always matters when the Communist ideology holds sway.

Hong Kong Cinema Rescued Chinese Mainland Cinema

There were reasons, other than political, for the Chinese Government to favour Mainland-HK co-productions. The Chinese Mainland film industry needed Hong Kong cinema's commercial experience to rescue its film industry from any awkward situations during the early days of marketization after the implementation of the 'reform and opening-up' policy.

On 20 October 1984, the CPC adopted "The Central Committee of the CPC's Decision on Economic System Reform" (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Jingji Tizhi Gaige de Jueding*; my translation), by which all state-owned enterprises, including those of film undertakings, would have a separate account and would have to assume sole responsibility for their profits and losses (The Central People's Government of the PRC 2008).²¹⁹ The new policy placed all the film studios at the time in a predicament, and the cause can be traced back to decades ago.

Soon after the establishment of the PRC, film undertakings in the Chinese Mainland were under the unified control and operation of the CPC. Film — a

²¹⁹ Other than a small private sector that lasted for a short period of time in Shanghai during the early 1950s, film production before the adoption and implementation of the "Regulations on the Administration of Movies, 1996" was monopolized by state-owned and state-run studios; no private enterprise was permitted to produce films in the Chinese Mainland (see Hu 2000: 20).

communication medium and a form of art that even the illiterate can ‘read’ — was considered a functional propaganda instrument under the guidance of Mao Zedong’s literary and art doctrines, which asserts that literature and art are for the people, in particular, the workers, peasants and soldiers. In 1942, Mao Zedong delivered a speech at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art:

[L]iterature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind. (Mao Zedong 1942; transcribed by the Maoist Documentation Project)

In his speech, Mao Zedong combines the fundamental guiding principle of Marxism and the specific circumstances of the Chinese revolution. He employs the world view and methodology of dialectical materialism and historical materialism to explain the CPC’s fundamental principles on ‘literature and art’ (*wenyi*) and to discourse on a series of important problems of ‘literature and art’ in relation to the people, politics, life and the era, as well as the relationship between content and form, inheriting and to innovating, the popular and the transcendent, a world view and the creation of ‘literature and art’, and so on. He emphasizes that ‘literature and art’ should serve the masses and that the correct stance of ‘literature and art’ workers should be that of the proletariat. In short, the central idea of Mao Zedong’s speech is: ‘Literature and art’ have to be in the service of politics (see Mao Zedong 1942).

Starting from the establishment of the PRC up to the early 1980s, the Chinese Mainland cinema was entirely under a socialist planned economy, and film enterprises and studios were all state-owned, state-funded and state-run. While film production was under the CPC’s planned-quota system and was required to follow

and serve the needs of politics and ideology (see Yin 2007), film distribution was under the unified management of the Central Government. Under such a system, the Central Government was the only investor as well as market agent. The assessment of films was based neither on profit nor on box-office takings, but on political and propaganda effects — the concept of market was null and out of context. After living under such conditions for decades, film studios lacked the experience and ability to cope with the market and to run their business with a sense of what the market wants.

After the promulgation of “The Central Committee of the CPC’s Decision on Economic System Reform”, by which said film studios should be responsible for their profits and losses and learn to deal with the market economy, entertainment films became a hot topic for discussion in the Chinese Mainland.

Since 1986, the Chinese Mainland film industry and film theorists, and even the government officials, were all discussing, valuing and advocating ‘entertainment films’ in order to revive the Chinese cinema by entertainment genre films. . . . According to the statistics at that time, starting from 1988, commercial genre films occupied over sixty percent of the total yearly productions. (Yin and He 2009: 37; my translation)

During the late 1980s, a number of the renowned filmmakers who had emerged after the Cultural Revolution, known as the Fifth Generation directors, who were widely regarded as famous for making art films also turned to entertainment films. Notable titles included Tien Zhuang-zhuang’s *Rock Kids* (1988) and Zhang Yimou’s *Codename Cougar* (1989; also known as *Operation Cougar* or *The Puma Action*). However, most of the commercial attempts were badly received and turned out to be box-office losers resulting in financial losses for the studios. Furthermore, the political unrest resulting from the June Fourth Massacre in 1989 also led to the rise

of the formalist faction within the CPC that halted the further economic reform until early 1992 when Deng Xiaoping reinforced the 'reform and opening-up' policy via his southern inspection tour. During the tour, Deng Xiaoping visited southern cities such as Shenzhen, Wuchan and Zhuhai and delivered a series of talks in which he successfully reasserted the value of economic reform and brought the policy back on track (Deng 1993: 370-383). However, by that time, film studios knew well that they were incapable of producing any film that would appeal to a mass audience and were afraid to launch any productions. In addition, the growing popularity of television, video-players and video tapes also impacted on the Chinese Mainland cinema. In fact, many other enterprises were also not able to cope with the market and were in the same predicament as the film industry. From the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, many state-owned enterprises, including film studios, had ceased business or closed down, leading to millions of laid-off workers across the country. In contrast, the Hong Kong film industry was thriving and adept at making entertainment films. In terms of quantity, Hong Kong at that time was the world's third largest film production region after the US and India and the world's second largest film exporter after the US (see Chung 2011: 27-9). The Hong Kong cinema momentarily became a paradigm of entertainment film production for the Chinese Mainland cinema. Unsurprisingly, the Chinese Mainland cinema, which was in dire need of its Hong Kong counterpart's commercial skill and experience, was eager to work with Hong Kong film enterprises and filmmakers to produce entertainment films. The cooperation between the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong took off in the early 1990s. Many genre films were made and attained box-office success both in Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland. Notable titles included Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), Raymond Lee's *Dragon Inn* (1992), Chen Kaige's

Farewell My Concubine (1993), Corey Yuen's *Fong Sai-yuk* (1993), Lee Lik-chee's *Flirting Scholar* (1993).²²⁰ However, some of these titles were actually funded by Taiwanese investors but in the names of Hong Kong companies so as to bypass trade restrictions imposed because of the political and historical relations across the Taiwan Strait. For instance, *Raise the Red Lantern* was financed by Era International (H.K.) Limited, which was actually a subsidiary of the Era International Limited based in Taiwan, and *Farewell My Concubine* was financed by Tomson International Entertainment Distribution (HK) Limited which was also a subsidiary of the Tomson International Entertainment Distribution Limited based in Taiwan.

In order to further the marketization of Chinese Mainland cinema, the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television (Ministry of RFT, the predecessor of SARFT) published a notice on 5 January 1993 titled "Some Opinions Regarding the Current Deepening of the System Reform of Film Industry" (*Guanyu DangQian Shenhua Dianying Hangye Jizhi Gaige de Ruogan Yijian*, widely known as "No. 3 Document"; my translation). Other than reaffirming that censorship on domestic and imported films had to be continued and grasped firmly (Article 7) and that films inclined to bad political thoughts had to be eliminated (Article 8), the notice relaxed the administrative regulations of film distribution. Before the issuance of the notice, China Film Corporation (the predecessor of China Film Group Corporation before 1999) had the monopoly on the national distribution of all films. It operated by buying copies of films from production units and distributed them to various provinces, cities and autonomous regions. The price of each copy was fixed, and there was no such thing as price negotiation. Thus, the film studios' revenue relied

²²⁰ For more about *Dragon Inn*, *Fong Sai-yuk* and *Flirting Scholar* see Wang (2002: 30, 40-2, 48-9). For more about *Raise the Red Lantern*, see Dai (1999: 233-5). For more about *Farewell My Concubine*, see Dai (1999: 261-277) and Berry (2008: 106-113).

solely on the number of copies that China Film Corporation would buy. However, with the issuance of the “No. 3 Document”, conditions changed. Article 2 of it has two main points. Firstly, China Film Corporation was no longer to be the sole unified distributor of domestic feature films, and domestic production units could negotiate directly with the regional distribution units, although China Film Corporation was to remain the country’s only importer and distributor of foreign films.²²¹ Secondly, the control over film ticket prices should be lifted in principle. In addition, under Article 3, production units and local distribution companies would be allowed the economic freedom of selling regional distribution rights, contracted ‘production of a single film’ (a term under the Chinese Government’s licensing system of film), sharing box-office takings, and serving as distribution agents and so forth (Chinaacc.Com). Tsui Hark’s blockbuster *Once upon a Time in China III* (1993), a co-production of Film Workshop Company Limited of Hong Kong and Beijing Film Studio of the Chinese Mainland, became the first revenue-sharing film of Chinese-foreign cooperation to benefit from the policy change (see Yin and He 2009: 38-41).²²² Nonetheless, there were, concurrently, a significant number of ‘cooperations’ that were in fact pseudo co-productions — some state-owned studios did not invest in any co-production at all but simply sold their production quotas to Hong Kong film companies so as to lessen their financial difficulties. Such studios were not involved in any creative, core production or distribution aspects but were only responsible for the official application for the production and submission for censorship.²²³ However, the foreign investors and filmmakers of co-productions at

²²¹ See footnote 196.

²²² For more about *Once upon a Time in China III*, see Teo (2007 [1997]: 172-3) and Cheuk (2008: 99-104).

²²³ In point of fact, Tsui Hark’s *Once upon a Time in China III* was also a ‘pseudo co-production’.

that time did not consider the Chinese Mainland their target market but were just attracted by its scenery, architecture and cheap labour. For Chinese Mainland cinema, co-productions served the purpose of rescuing the film industry and market that had been withering since the mid-1980s because of the domestic studios' lack of funds and marketing experience.

Development of Mainland-HK Co-Production Disturbed by PRC Policy

Since cultural industries in Communist China are always a matter of political concern, the marketization of the Chinese Mainland cinema and the development of Mainland-HK co-production was not free and undisturbed. The Chinese Government is always afraid of letting the people and economy under its governance go their own way, thus, the reform of the economy is always wrestling with the socialist planned economy in a constant cycle of easing and tightening of policies.

When the PRC was paving its way for WTO membership in the mid-1990s, the Chinese Government led by Jiang Zemin started to formalize the PRC's administration of film by promulgating a series of provisions and regulations. On 5 July 1994, the Ministry of RFT promulgated the "Administrative Measures Regarding Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Film Production, 1994" (*Guanyu Zhongwai Hezuo Sheshi Dianying De Guanli Guiding*; my translation) (Ministry of RFT Order No. 14; expired), which was the first official open document fully devoted to the administration, examination, approval and so forth regarding

Chinese-foreign co-produced films.²²⁴ The document states some typical but vague principles of censorship, for example: (i) conforming to the PRC's *Constitution*, laws and relevant provisions; (ii) beneficial to the propagation of the outstanding traditional culture of the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*); (iii) beneficial to the Chinese economic and cultural construction and social stability; (iv) beneficial to Chinese-foreign cultural exchange and cannot harm the interest of third country. It also specifies: (i) the administrative procedures regarding the importation of filming materials and exportation of filmed material; (ii) screenplay has to be submitted for examination and 'project initiation' (*lixiang*); (iii) the principal creative personnel such as director and cinematographer have to be approved by the authority and should, in general, consist mainly of citizens within the Chinese borders; (iv) all finished co-productions have to pass the Chinese Government's censorship before any release inside and outside the borders; and so forth (Laws and Regulations Database, People.Cn).

On 29 May 1996, the State Council adopted the "Regulation on the Administration of Films" (State Council Order No. 200; expired), which was promulgated on 19 June upon the signature of the Premier Li Peng and came into force on 1 July the same year.²²⁵ It was the first official, dedicated and open legal document to make clear the officially unified management and regulations governing the Chinese Mainland film industry. Article 23 of it makes it clear and definite that the State adopts a film censorship system. Some six months later, the PRC's very first formal, specialized legal document on film censorship, the "Provisions on Film

²²⁴ The document was later replaced by SARFT's "Administrative Measures on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Film Production" in 2003, which was in turn replaced by "The Provisions on the Administration of Chinese-foreign Cooperative Production of Films" in 2004.

²²⁵ The latest amended version is the "Regulations on the Administration of Movies, 2001" (State Council Order No. 342) promulgated on 25 December 2001.

Censorship” (*Dianying Shencha Guiding*; my translation) (Ministry of RFT Order No. 22; expired), was promulgated and took effect on 16 January 1997, although the Ministry of RFT had implemented the “Interim Provisions on Film Censorship” (*Dianying Shencha Zanxing Guiding*; my translation) (Ministry of RFT Order No. 9; expired) on 4 June 1993 and a few notices about film censorship measures before (see Chinalawedu.Com n.d.).²²⁶ It can be seen that the Chinese Government’s administration of films and its implementation of film censorship had not been based on any legislation or legal authority for almost half a century since the founding of the PRC. Censorship had been carried out arbitrarily by the administration rather than by rule of law (*cf.* the colonial Hong Kong Government’s illegal film censorship discussed in Chapter 4).²²⁷

Another important document to regulate co-production of film, the “Provisions Regarding the Constitution of Chief Creative Personnel of Domestic Feature and Co-Production Film” (*Guanyu Guochan Gushipian, Hepaipian Zhuchuang Renyuan Guocheng de Guiding*; my translation) (Ministry of RFT Release *Dianzi* (1996) No. 465; abolished), was promulgated on 4 November 1996. The Ministry of RFT proclaimed that the provisions aimed to eliminate the unfavourable influence brought about by ‘pseudo co-productions’. Other than being a reminder of the previous stipulation that the chief creative personnel of co-productions should consist mainly of citizens within the Chinese borders, the provisions further stipulate that not less than fifty percent of the leading characters

²²⁶ The latest film censorship criteria are included in the “Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006” (SARFT Order No. 52), which was promulgated on 22 May 2006 and took effect on 22 June 2006.

²²⁷ In the 1990s, the PRC was paving the way for admission to the WTO; the Chinese Government promulgated a series of laws and regulations regarding various trades in order to fulfill the admission requirements.

should be played by the Chinese domestic artistes (Flssw.Com). However, in 1998, I directed a film titled *Fascination Amour*, starring Andy Lau and Hikaru Ishida, which was distributed in the Chinese Mainland as a Chinese-foreign co-production. However, it was, strictly speaking, a pseudo one. In order to comply with the provisions set by the Chinese Government, *Fascination Amour* had two fairly popular Chinese Mainland actors playing significant roles. When the film was released in the Chinese Mainland in 1999, my name in the front credits was paired with and placed after the name of a Chinese Mainland director whom I knew nothing about and had never met before. Such a pairing also happened to the other chief creative personnel such as the screenwriter and cinematographer. This is, perhaps, a demonstration of the Chinese civil tactic: ‘The higher ups have policies while the lower downs have their own ways of getting around them’ (*shang you zheng ce, xia you dui ce*).

With the implementations of the regulations and provisions mentioned above, which replaced the past stipulations that were not formulated through legislative procedures, the Chinese Government’s administration of film seemed to transform into a more lawful system. However, in actual practice, such regulations and provisions are not only subject to the arbitrary interpretations of the governmental bodies’ leaders, but also serve as a tool to suppress dissidents, the freedom of expression and other human liberties in a legalistic fashion, implying a development of the CPC regime’s rule-by-law governance in the guise of a rule-of-law one. Moreover, the rule-of-man culture of governance did not fade away. The Chinese Government did not give up administering its control over film by delivering guiding principles through the speeches of relevant authorities’ leaders on public occasions. Such guidances which are without lawful ground but always understood and taken by

the subordinates as lawful orders. For instance, significant guidance on film production was delivered at the Changsha Conference, a national working conference on the Chinese Mainland cinema held in Changsha from 23 to 26 March 1996. In the conference, the CPC leadership brought up their orthodox doctrines on cinema again. According to the documentation of the CPC (News of the CPC n.d.b), the head of the Publicity Department (formerly known in the West as the Propaganda Department) Ding Guangen, indicated at the conference:

Our films should unfold the sublime ideal and good style of the Party and the outstanding tradition and virtue of the Chinese nation to the audience; should unfold the artistic image that reflects the thought and spirit of patriotism, collectivism and socialism to the audience; should unfold the state, style and manner of the heroic example figure who promotes social righteousness and arduously begins his undertakings to the audience; should arouse people's passionate feelings to share a common fate and to throw in their lot with the mother country and nation; should cultivate people's sentiment of sublime morality and the emotional appeal of a healthy aesthetic; so as to render edification, enlightenment and joy to the people.

. . . In order to do the film works well, one has to carry through the Party's guidelines on 'literature and art': (1) to insist on Deng Xiaoping's theory of the construct of Chinese-style socialism and the Party's fundamental line, fundamental guiding principle; (2) to insist on the direction of serving the people and serving socialism; (3) to insist on the guideline of 'let a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend' [*baihua qifang, baijia zhengming*], to make the past serve the present, to make the West serve the Chinese and to push out the old and bring in the new;²²⁸ (4) to insist on the principle of 'focus

²²⁸ In Communist China, 'Let a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend' (*baihua qifang, baijia zhengming*) was originally a policy launched by Mao Zedong in 1956, which aimed to promote the arts and scientific progress. Lu Dingyi, the head of the Central Propaganda Department at that time, said that the policy was to advocate the freedom of independent thought, debate, creativity and criticism, as well as the freedom to voice, to insist on and to keep one's own opinion (News of the CPC n.d.c). The intellectuals welcomed the policy. Nevertheless, those who responded to the policy with criticism of the regime were regarded as rightists and were persecuted and prosecuted in the Anti-Rightist Movement launched by Mao Zedong in 1957. The 'let a hundred flowers bloom, a

on construction, establishment as principle' [*zhong zai jianshe, yi li weiben*];²²⁹ (5) to insist on promoting the 'major theme', to advocate diversification; (6) to insist to go deep into life, go deep into reality, relating closely to the masses; (7) to insist firstly on social benefit, to strive to achieve the unification of economic benefit and social benefit; (8) to insist on grasping prosperity on one hand and grasping management on the other hand; (9) to insist on going on the road of reform and opening-up.

. . . Our films should derive source materials from Chinese history and reality as the sources of creation, reflect the spirit of the Chinese nation and take the need of the Chinese [Mainland] audience as the fundamental need.

. . . We will implement the '9550 project', that is to make fifty outstanding films during the 'ninth five-year plan' period, having ten per year. (News of the CPC n.d.b; my translation)

Five months later, on 25 August, the Film Bureau convened a conference on the works of film co-production during the Changchun Film Festival. The Film Bureau emphasized that co-production had to insist on the principle of 'based on me principally' (*yiwu weizhu*; my translation) (Yin and He 2009: 42). Here, the word 'me' (*wo*), in its precise sense, refers to the Chinese Mainland, but my experience in the industry tells me that the interpretation of such a 'me', in actual practice, was subject to the ideological and political preference of the authority at the time, which is still a familiar feature today. What the ideological state apparatus wanted to convey through the two conferences was clear; they were not only about the

hundred schools of thought contend' policy is generally considered an entrapment orchestrated by Mao Zedong to flush out dissidents. Although Ding Guangen harked back to the policy, there were, in reality, still many taboos against the freedom of speech.

²²⁹ 'Focus on construction, establishment as principle' (*Zhong zai jianshe, yi li weiben*) is the CPC's slogan for the construction of spiritual civilization under the 'reform and opening-up' policy. 'Focus on construction' precisely means taking construction as the starting point and basis of work, and 'establishment as principle' refers to the emphasis on the preciousness of practicality and the demand of real progress. In another sense, the whole slogan, on one hand, encourages construction, and, on the other, ignores criticism.

economy, but, more importantly, they were political. As in Foucault's theory of governmentality, the conferences were all about the disposition of the Chinese Mainland film industry organized around the theme of 'reason of the State' (*raison d'Etat*), and it aimed to arrange the Chinese Mainland cinema in such a way that, through a certain means, certain ends could be achieved (see Chapter 1 and Foucault 1991: 95): Firstly, the aim was to enhance the planned economy component in the film industry and integrate it into the system of political unification, thus enforcing a link between socialism and the market economy through cinema. This link can be understood as part of the construction of the Chinese-style socialist market economy. Secondly, it was to instruct filmmakers to make more 'patriotic' and 'nationalistic' films with a positive attitude to the CPC regime, praising the CPC leadership and the goodness of the country and the Chinese nation. Thirdly, it aimed to confine film subjects to only those relevant to China or, more precisely, the Chinese Mainland. Fourthly, it aimed to pull back film production to comply with the guidance on 'literature and art' that Mao Zedong delivered at the Yanan Forum in 1942. In short, film had to be in the service of politics. Fifthly, it reaffirmed that film is the ruling power's ideological, functional and propaganda instrument, which aims to instill into the governed population a sense of national superiority conceived and perceived as the CPC leadership's achievement and lull the population into governable docility.

The two conferences resulted in a drastic drop in the number of domestic film productions, especially entertainment movies and Chinese-foreign co-productions.²³⁰ Film investment was subject to policy risks far greater than market risks. The original intention behind the Chinese Mainland studios' co-productions had been to

²³⁰ The number of the Chinese Mainland domestic productions dropped from 110 in 1996 to 82 in 1998, while that of the Mainland-HK co-productions dropped from 29 to 7 in the same period (Yin and He 2009: 44).

revitalize the domestic film industry and market by making more entertainment films, but it was then halted by the authorities after about ten years of development. The principle of ‘based on me principally’ significantly limited the scope of Hong Kong filmmakers’ creativity and artistic integrity. And there were a lot of taboos about those things that would cause censorship problems. Those things and their relevance were subject to the authority’s interpretation which was deeply political.²³¹ However, while Mainland-HK co-production were stuck in a creative impasse, the ‘healthy’ and ‘politically correct’ domestic films, which are, indeed, propaganda films, particularly the big productions of ‘major themes’ that the authorities advocated were a step back in time and were not welcomed by audiences. Chinese Mainland cinema was once again in decline and remained so until the PRC became a member of the WTO in December 2001. As a new member, it needed to relax its restrictive administration so as to revive its film industry and to gain audiences’ confidence in its domestic cinema in order to counteract the ‘invasion’ of entertaining Hollywood films that, while not large in number, strongly appealed to the mass audience. In the wake of the relaxation of the Chinese Government’s provisions and the speeding up of the development of the market economy in the new millennium, the Chinese Mainland film market saw the start of an unprecedented boom. Meanwhile, the once vibrant Hong Kong film industry has been in a perpetual decline since the early 1990s. The yearly number of film productions dropped from more than two hundred in the 1980s to less than one hundred by the end of the 1990s. During the first decade of the new millennium, the yearly number further dropped to fifty something (see Chung 2012: 3). The decline was owing to a number of causes such as rampant piracy, loss of audiences due to massive

²³¹ For what the ‘things’ refer to, see Chapter 1 and Foucault (1991: 93) for reference.

diversification of entertainment offerings, bad quality of a large portion of Hong Kong films, vanishing of hot money from Taiwan and Korea, rise of neighbouring competitors, incompetence with Hollywood mega-productions of advanced technology and so forth. Above all, the Asian financial crisis had made many fully convertible Asian currencies such as the Indonesian rupiah and Malaysian ringgit suffer heavy devaluation, while the economy of Hong Kong was dealt a severe blow, but its currency remained pegged to the US dollar.²³² Hong Kong films, thus, became excessively expensive, compelling their rights owners to lower selling prices and making conventional Asian overseas markets hardly guarantee any profits, or even a break-even. In such a context, in order to make film production a profitable business again, Hong Kong films, especially those of medium to big budget, have to acquire distribution in the booming Chinese Mainland market, which was not a significant, or even not a market, before the twenty-first century. However, as it booms, it also helps Beijing to extend its control over the declining Hong Kong cinema, encouraging self-censorship among Hong Kong filmmakers.

Hong Kong Cinema Impeded by Chinese-Style Socialism

In accordance with the *Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the PRC (Basic Law)* and the ‘one country, two systems’ policy, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) remains outside the PRC’s socialist system and the previous capitalist system and Hong Kong way of life can remain unchanged for fifty years after 1997. Theoretically and in law, Hong Kong films

²³² In the aftermath the Asian financial crisis, Hong Kong had suffered from economic deflation for sixty-eight months from 1999 to 2004.

are not bound by the PRC's problematic censorship system unless they are going to be distributed in the Chinese Mainland. For half a century after the end of the Pacific War, and particularly after the CPC seized power in 1949, the Hong Kong film industry had no need to rely on the Chinese Mainland market because the local market together with the other overseas markets could provide enough revenue for its survival and prosperity (see Chapter 3). Although a relatively small number of Hong Kong films, particularly the Sil-Metropole productions, were exported to the Chinese Mainland during the first two decades after the implementation of China's 'reform and opening-up' national policy, they made little money for the investors and sometimes resulted in losses for the Chinese Mainland buyers. However, while the declining Hong Kong film industry was still suffering a great deal in the aftermath of the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, the Chinese Mainland film market began to boom, and there was a rapid and enormous increase of movie houses and screens across the the PRC (broached in previous section). In the light of the geopolitical relations of Hong Kong with the PRC, Hong Kong film enterprises saw the booming market in the north as a business opportunity and hoped for the revival of the Hong Kong film industry. Significantly, after the promulgation of the economic agreement, CEPA, more and more film people turned to the north to explore opportunities to take part in Mainland-HK cooperation, in particular, joint productions.

The Government of Hong Kong SAR and the Central Government of the PRC signed the "Main Text" of CEPA on 29 June 2003. The year 2003 was both a special and a tragic year for Hong Kong. In that year, there was the devastation caused by 'severe acute respiratory syndrome' (SARS) epidemic. There was also the a large-scale demonstration march on 1 July, a day that was supposed to celebrate the transfer of the sovereignty over Hong Kong from the UK to the PRC and the

establishment of the Hong Kong SAR. More than five hundred thousand Hong Kong citizens turned out to express their resentment and anger about the proposed legislation under Article 23 of the *Basic Law* and the poor performance, ineffectiveness and incapability of the Hong Kong SAR Government. CEPA was announced against such a backdrop. The Hong Kong Government describes CEPA as follows:

CEPA is a win-win agreement, bringing new business opportunities to the Mainland, Hong Kong and all foreign investors. For Hong Kong, CEPA provides a window of opportunity for Hong Kong businesses to gain greater access to the Mainland market. CEPA also benefits the Mainland as Hong Kong serves as a perfect ‘springboard’ for Mainland enterprises to reach out to the global market and accelerating the Mainland’s full integration with the world economy. Foreign investors are also welcome to establish businesses in Hong Kong to leverage on the CEPA benefits and join hands in tapping the vast opportunities of the Mainland market. (Trade and Industry Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR 2014)

Under the terms of CEPA, the huge Chinese Mainland market was opened up to Hong Kong goods and services. On the surface, CEPA was a means for Beijing to boost the economy of Hong Kong. Although officially in public it is always claimed that the citizens’ resentment was due to the economic recession, it cannot hide the fact that it was always Beijing and the Hong Kong Government’s intention to disguise political resentment as entirely down to poor economic conditions. The research by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, City University of Hong Kong (see Online CyberLaw and Telecommunications Policy in Greater China), points out that the political implications of the introduction of CEPA are more important than its economic implications. CEPA was a ‘gift’ from Beijing to save

the inadequate administration of Tung Chee Wah, the then Chief Executive of Hong Kong, in the aftermath of SARS and the July 1 demonstration.

As it is stated in the “Main Text”, the objectives and principles of CEPA are:²³³

Article 1 To strengthen trade and investment cooperation between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region . . . and promote joint development of the two sides, through the implementation of the following measures:

1. progressively reducing or eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers on substantially all the trade in goods between the two sides;
2. progressively achieving liberalization of trade in services through reduction or elimination of substantially all discriminatory measures;
3. promoting trade and investment facilitation.

Article 2 The conclusion, implementation and amendment of the CEPA shall adhere to the following principles:

1. to abide by the ‘one country, two systems’ principle;
2. to be consistent with the rules of the World Trade Organisation;
3. to accord with the needs of both sides to adjust and upgrade their industries and enterprises and to promote steady and sustained development;
4. to achieve reciprocity and mutual benefits, complementarity with each other’s advantages and joint prosperity;
5. to take progressive action, dealing with the easier subjects before the more difficult ones. (Trade and Industry Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR 2014)

²³³ According to the Trade and Industry Department of the Hong Kong Government, the Mainland and Hong Kong submitted to the WTO a joint notification on the CEPA on 27 December 2003 and joint communications regarding the provisions of the subsequent Supplements in the corresponding ensuing years. The English translation of the CEPA text and the Supplements submitted are posted on the Trade and Industry Department’s website. It is noted on the webpage that CEPA was signed in the Chinese language and only the Chinese text is authentic.

Through CEPA, Hong Kong can enjoy preferential access to the Chinese Mainland market. As a matter of fact, much of the preferential treatment goes beyond the PRC's compliance upon its accession to the WTO. Up to the present (September 2014), CEPA has undergone eleven stages with ten supplementary documents, making nearly one thousand and eight hundred goods of Hong Kong origin that fulfilled the requirement of CEPA's rules of origin that entitle them to zero tariffs. While CEPA has approved more than one hundred and thirteen thousand Certificates of Hong Kong Origin that cover twenty product types, the Chinese Government relaxed and liberalized the market access in forty-seven service sectors including accounting, legal services, mining, insurance, logistics, medical services, telecommunications and audio-visual (ibid).

With regard to film production that is included in the audio-visual services, the significant liberalization measures stated in CEPA's "Annex 4" of the "Six Annexes" signed on 29 September 2003 include:

[1] Chinese language motion pictures produced in Hong Kong may be imported for distribution in the Mainland on a *quota-free* basis, after vetting and approval by the relevant Mainland authority.

[2] Chinese language motion pictures produced in Hong Kong refer to those motion pictures made by production companies which are set up or established in accordance with the relevant laws of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and which own more than 75% of the copyright of the motion pictures concerned. Hong Kong residents should comprise more than 50% of the total principal personnel in the motion pictures concerned.²³⁴

²³⁴ "Principal personnel includes personnel performing the roles of director, screenwriter, leading actor, leading actress, supporting actor, supporting actress, producer, cinematographer, editor, art director, costume designer, action choreographer, and composer of the original film score" (Trade and Industry Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR 2014).

[3] Motion pictures jointly produced by Hong Kong and the Mainland are treated as Mainland motion pictures for the purpose of distribution in the Mainland. Translated versions of the motion pictures in languages of other Chinese ethnic groups and Chinese dialects, which are based on the Putonghua version, are allowed to be distributed in the Mainland.

[4] For motion pictures jointly produced by Hong Kong and the Mainland, there is *no restriction on the percentage of principal creative personnel from Hong Kong, but at least one-third of the leading artistes must be from the Mainland*; there is no restriction on where the story takes place, but *the plots or the leading characters must be related to the Mainland.*²³⁵ (Trade and Industry Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR 2014; emphasis added)

Before CEPA, the import of Hong Kong titles to the Chinese Mainland was under the quota system of foreign films; clause [1], mentioned above, indicates a liberalization of the previous distribution. Clause [2] defines ‘Chinese-language motion pictures produced in Hong Kong’. Clause [3] is more or less the same as before CEPA, but it states clearly that translated versions of Mainland-HK co-productions in languages of other ethnic groups and Chinese dialects can be distributed in the Chinese Mainland. Clause [4] relaxes the requirement of the principal creative personnel when compared with SARFT’s requirement before CEPA that the principal creative personnel should, in general, consist mainly of citizens within the Chinese borders, and the leading roles played by the Chinese domestic artistes should not be less than fifty percent (as previously pointed out in this chapter). However, in respect of film

²³⁵ (i) The numeration in this text regarding the measures stated in the CEPA documents is not the same as that in the original; it is just for the convenient referencing of the related discourse.

(ii) “[Principal] creative personnel refers to personnel performing the roles of director, screenwriter, cinematographer and leading artistes. Leading artistes refer to leading actor, leading actress, leading supporting actor and leading supporting actress” (Trade and Industry Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR 2014).

content and subject matter, the clause still adheres to the principle of ‘based on me principally’ (*yiwǒ wéizhǔ*; my translation) that the Film Bureau advocated in 1996.

Under “Supplement II to CEPA” signed on 18 October 2005:

[1] The Cantonese version of motion pictures co-produced by Hong Kong and the Mainland is permitted to be distributed and screened in Guangdong Province, after obtaining the approval of the relevant authorities in the Mainland; the Cantonese version of motion pictures produced by Hong Kong and solely imported by the Film Import and Export Corporation of the China Film Group Corporation is permitted to be distributed and screened in Guangdong Province, after being examined by and obtaining the approval of the relevant authorities in the Mainland.

[2] The import of Chinese language motion pictures made by production companies which are set up in accordance with the relevant laws of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and which own more than 50% of the copyright of the motion pictures concerned is exempted from quota restrictions for distribution in the Mainland, after being examined by and obtaining the approval of the relevant authorities in the Mainland.²³⁶ (Trade and Industry Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR 2014)

Before the signing of “Supplement II to CEPA”, imports of Hong Kong films, which are usually in Cantonese and are not Mainland-HK co-productions, had to be dubbed into Putonghua for distribution in the Chinese Mainland. However, under clause [1] above, the original Cantonese version of imported Hong Kong films can be distributed and screened in Guangdong Province where Cantonese is the common language. Clause [2] above relaxes the definition of ‘Chinese language motion

²³⁶ “Hong Kong residents should comprise more than 50% of the total principal personnel in the motion pictures concerned. Principal personnel includes personnel performing the roles of director, screenwriter, leading actor, leading actress, supporting actor, supporting actress, producer, cinematographer, editor, art director, costume designer, action choreographer, and composer of the original film score” (Trade and Industry Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR 2014).

pictures produced in Hong Kong' that can be distributed in the Chinese Mainland on a quota-free basis by lowering the Hong Kong production company's share of copyright ownership from the previous seventy-five percent to fifty percent. The clause enables Hong Kong film companies to incorporate more foreign investment.

“Supplement VI to CEPA” signed on 9 May 2009 makes further concessions:

To allow post-production of domestic films (including co-productions) to be processed in Hong Kong after obtaining approval of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television [SARFT] on applications initiated by the principal production entity in the Mainland. (Trade and Industry Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR 2014)

In fact, before the signing of “Supplement VI to CEPA”, some domestic films and co-productions already had part of, and sometimes the whole of their post-production done in Hong Kong or some other foreign regions such as Thailand. Some of them got official approval, but the others just smuggled the necessary materials abroad. Such smuggling was usually not difficult because bribing is always effective in corrupt regimes. In general, the post-production of film, particularly in the colour grading process, always involves all the dailies, that is, the raw and unedited footage. Before CEPA, it was mandatory that all the dailies shot within the Chinese Mainland had to be kept in the domestic film processing laboratory and post-production had to be done within the Chinese Mainland territory. For any completed film, only its interpositive, internegative and the sound duplicates, after the examination and approval of the relevant authorities, were allowed to be exported, but not the original camera negative, the unused footage, the original sounds and the unprocessed negative. Older Hong Kong people know well that in the early 1980s and before, foreign tourists, including those from Hong Kong, were not allowed to bring

unprocessed film out of the Chinese Mainland territory when they left. They were required to have all the photographed film processed before passing through customs, otherwise the film would be confiscated. Furthermore, customs officers would perform a random check on tourists' pictures to prevent any images that were undesirable to the PRC, especially those classified under national security, such as pictures of the People's Liberation Army's camps, being brought to the outside world. Such a practice is commonly perceived as a traditional means for national security of the regime behind the bamboo curtain.

Further liberalization enabled by "Supplement X" signed on 29 August 2013 includes:

[1] To allow Mainland motion pictures and motion pictures co-produced by Hong Kong and the Mainland to be processed in Hong Kong.

[2] To allow motion pictures produced by Hong Kong to screen the original sound track of the dialects spoken in the motion pictures when it is contextually required, on the condition that standard Chinese subtitles are provided on screen.

[3] To allow the dialect version of motion pictures co-produced by Hong Kong and the Mainland to be distributed and screened in the Mainland, after obtaining the approval of the relevant authorities in the Mainland, on the condition that standard Chinese subtitles are provided on screen.

[4] To allow the dialect version of motion pictures produced by Hong Kong and solely imported by the Film Import and Export Corporation of the China Film Group Corporation to be distributed and screened in the Mainland, after being examined by and obtaining the approval of the relevant authorities in the Mainland, on the condition that standard Chinese subtitles are provided on screen.

[5] To allow contractual service providers employed by Hong Kong service suppliers, in the mode of movement of natural persons, to provide services under the specific liberalization commitments of this sector or sub-sector in the Mainland. (Trade and Industry Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR 2014)

Clause [1] above is actually getting less relevant day by day as digital technology has almost replaced analogue technology in filmmaking. By clause [2], only Chinese dialects are allowed but not foreign languages. Moreover, the phrase ‘contextually required’ is problematic since it depends on how the PRC’s censors comprehend the context and how the CPC’s ideology is involved in their comprehension. For instance, it is quite a common phenomenon that Chinese citizens today, particularly the young people, have English names, but when I submitted the screenplay of a film that is tentatively titled *Shock Wave* for project initiation in early 2014, CFCC recommended me to avoid using English names for the movie characters and avoid using English dialogue even when the characters are talking to foreigners. Instead, CFCC preferred that the foreigners spoke Mandarin. Clause [3] and [4] is a further relaxation in that it allows the dialect version of Hong Kong films and Mainland-HK co-productions to be imported not just to Guangdong Province, but to the entire state.

CEPA was introduced and is still regarded by Beijing and the Hong Kong Government as an economic arrangement that aims to promote the joint economic prosperity and development of the Chinese Mainland and the Hong Kong SAR, and to facilitate the further development of economic links between the two sides and other countries and regions (ibid). Hong Kong citizens, particularly the businessmen and tycoons, generally welcome such an arrangement. However, as far as film is concerned (and the products of other cultural industries as well), CEPA is also an institution designed to embody political purposes. It makes use of the

huge and booming market of the Chinese Mainland to extend the Chinese Government's censorship to Hong Kong so as to regulate the content and ideology carried in film which the CPC conventionally sees as a powerful, functional propaganda instrument. Although CEPA enables Hong Kong film investors preferential access to the Chinese Mainland market, in order to enjoy the financial benefits, all films have to fulfill the condition of "being examined by and obtaining the approval of the relevant authorities in the Mainland" as is stated frequently in the CEPA documents. In actual practice, every film to be officially released in the Chinese Mainland market has to comply with the PRC's censorship procedures. According to the latest amended "Provisions on the Administration of Chinese-foreign Cooperative Production of Films, 2004" (SARFT Order No. 31):

Article 15 Sino-foreign cooperatively-produced films that have been completed shall be submitted to the film examination commission of SARFT [now SAPPFRFT] after the opinion on the preliminary examination has been submitted by the local radio, film and television administrative department at the provincial level. Films for which the project has been applied by film production work units under the central government and State authorities and work units that hold a Film Production Permit (Single Film), and whose production has been completed, shall be directly reported to the film examination commission of SARFT [now SAPPFRFT] for examination.

Article 16 Jointly-produced films may only be distributed and screened publicly inside or outside China after they have passed examination and obtained a Permit for Public Screening of Films issued by SARFT [now SAPPFRFT].

Article 19 Where a jointly-produced film needs to participate in Chinese or foreign film festivals (exhibitions), it shall be reported to SARFT [now SAPPFRFT] for record filing according to the provisions on the holding of and participation in Chinese and foreign film festivals

(exhibitions). (Ningbo Bureau of Culture Radio & TV, Press and Publication 27 April 2011)

Article 6 lists six principles that Chinese-foreign cooperation in film production shall abide by:

1. it shall be in accord with the Constitution, laws, regulations and the relevant provisions of China;
2. it shall respect the customs, religions, beliefs and living habits of all ethnic groups in China;
3. it shall facilitate the propagation of the refined indigenous culture and traditions of China;
4. it shall facilitate economic, cultural, and thought and moral construction, and the social stability of China;
5. it shall facilitate Sino-foreign exchanges of films; and
6. it may not harm the interests of a third country.²³⁷ (Ibid)

In addition, all the co-productions are also governed by other laws, regulations, administrative orders and Chinese custom (see the account of the making and release of *The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake* in Chapter 6 for example), particularly the censorship criteria set by the authorities.

The “Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006” (SARFT Order No. 52) adopted on 3 April 2006 at the Administrative Meeting of SARFT was promulgated on 22 May 2006 and took effect on 22 June 2006. It is the latest *main* legal document controlling film production and contains the major administrative procedures for censorship and a list

²³⁷ These principles, except the second one, are more or less the same as the previous version of the provisions. The second principle is not found in the “Administrative Measures Regarding Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Film Production, 1994” (Ministry of RFT Order No. 14). It was added in the “Administrative Measures on Chinese-foreign Co-operation in Film Production, 2003” (SARFT Order No. 19), the predecessor of “Provisions on the Administration of Chinese-foreign Cooperative Production of Films, 2004” (SARFT Order No. 31).

of censorship criteria.²³⁸ Article 1 of it states: “These Provisions are formulated in accordance with the Regulation on the Administration of Films for the purpose of regulating and improving the archival filing of film scripts (abstracts) and the administration of films” (Peking University Center for Legal Information).²³⁹ The “Regulations on the Administration of Movies, 2001” (State Council Order No. 342) mentioned in the article was promulgated on 25 December 2001 and came into force on 1 January 2002. Article 25 of it lists a set of “contents prohibited from being recorded in a movie”:

1. That which defies the basic principles determined by the Constitution;
2. That which endangers the unity of the nation, sovereignty or territorial integrity;
3. That which divulges secrets of the State, endangers national security or damages the honor or benefits of the State;
4. That which incites the national hatred or discrimination, undermines the solidarity of the nations, or infringes upon national customs and habits;
5. That which propagates evil cults or superstition;
6. That which disturbs the public order or destroys the public stability;
7. That which propagates obscenity, gambling, violence or instigates crimes;
8. That which insults or slanders others, or infringes upon the lawful rights and interests of others;
9. That which endangers public ethics or the fine folk cultural traditions;

²³⁸ The “Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006” is described here as a ‘main’ legal document because it is the usual practice for the relevant authorities to issue follow-up and subsidiary notices, reminders, suggestions, supplementary provisions in the subsequent course of the implementation of any regulation, provision and order.

²³⁹ The “Regulation on the Administration of Films” mentioned in Article 1 of the “Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006” is not the same as the one mentioned earlier in this chapter that was adopted in 1996 and catalogued as “State Council Order No. 200” (expired). The one mentioned here refers to the latest amended version catalogued as “State Council Order No. 342” adopted on 12 December 2001.

10. Other contents prohibited by laws, regulations or provisions of the State.
(Ministry of Culture of the PRC)

However, the “Regulations on the Administration of Movies, 2001” does not exhaust the censorship criteria. As the “Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006” aims to serve as a specialized order covering the matters related to film censorship, it contains a longer list of the latest amended criteria:

Article 13 Films may not contain content which:

1. *Violates the basic principles of the Constitution;*
2. Threatens the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state;
3. Divulges state secrets, threatens national security, harms the reputation and interests of the state;
4. Instigates national hatred and discrimination, undermines the harmony among ethnic groups, or *harms ethnic customs and practices;*
5. Violates state policies on religion, and *propagates cult religion or superstition;*
6. Disrupts social order or social stability;
7. Propagates obscenity, gambling, violence, or abets criminal activities;
8. Insults or defames others, or *infringes upon others’ legitimate rights and interests;*
9. *Corrupts social morality, or defames the superiority of national culture;*
10. Other contents prohibited by state laws and regulations.

Article 14 Films containing any of the following content must be cut or altered:

1. *Distorting Chinese civilization and history, seriously departing from historical truth; distorting the history of other countries, disrespecting other civilizations and customs; disparaging the image of revolutionary leaders, heroes and important historical*

- figures; tampering with Chinese or foreign classics and distorting the image of the important figures portrayed therein;*
2. *Disparaging the image of the people's army, armed police, public security organ or judiciary;*
 3. Showing obscene and vulgar content, exposing scenes of promiscuity, rape, prostitution, *sexual acts, perversion*, homosexuality, *masturbation* and private body parts including the male or female genitalia; containing dirty and vulgar dialogues, songs, background music and sound effects;
 4. Showing contents of murder, violence, terror, ghosts and the supernatural; distorting value judgment between truth and lies, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, righteous and unrighteous; showing deliberate expressions of remorselessness in committing crimes; showing specific details of criminal behaviours; exposing special investigation methods; showing content which evokes excitement from murder, bloodiness, violence, drug abuse and gambling; showing scenes of mistreating prisoners, torturing criminals or suspects; containing excessive horror scenes, dialogues, background music and sound effects;
 5. *Propagating passive or negative outlook on life, world view and value system; deliberately exaggerating the ignorance of ethnic groups or the dark side of society;*
 6. Advertising religious extremism, stirring up ambivalence and conflicts between different religions or sects, and between believers and non-believers, causing disharmony in the community;
 7. Advocating harm to the ecological environment, animal cruelty, killing or *consuming nationally protected animals*;
 8. *Showing excessive drinking, smoking and other bad habits;*
 9. Opposing the spirit of law.

Article 15 *The spoken and written language used for the film title and subtitles should comply with the regulations set forth in China's Copyright Law and Law on Standard Spoken and Written Language.*²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ The English translation of the "Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006" is by Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC, 1 April 2008).

(SARFT 22 May 2006, emphasis added; see also SARFT 16 January 1997)

When compared with the PRC's first formal, specialized legal document on film censorship mentioned earlier, that is the "Provisions on Film Censorship" (Ministry of RFT Order No. 22; expired) promulgated in 1997, the list of criteria in the 2006 edition is much longer; other than covering all the criteria stated before, the *italics* above indicate the added terms while Clause 7 and 10 of Article 13 and Clauses 3, 4 and 6 of Article 14 are either an expansion or rewording of the previously existing criteria. It is essential to take note of Clause 10 of Article 13, that is "Other contents prohibited by state laws and regulations" (SARFT 22 May 2006), which is a rewording of Clause 9 of Article 9 in the 1997 edition, which is: "Other contents prohibited by the stipulations of the State" (SARFT 16 January 1997; my translation). The rewording is more legalistic, which suggests a contextual and political change in the PRC governance over the ten years from a rule-of-man style to a rule-of-law style, although it is actually a 'rule-by-law' style. Regarding the other principles and prohibitions mentioned above, it can be seen that in their vagueness they share a resemblance to the Hong Kong film censorship standards (see Chapter 4). It also seems that they are quite broad too and driven heavily by ideology.

As for the technical aspect, Article 25 of the "Regulations on the Administration of Movies, 2001" states: "The technical quality of movies shall be in conformity to the State standards" (Ministry of Culture of the PRC), while Article 16 of the "Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006" states: "The technical quality of films should be censored according to relevant national standards" (SARFT 22 May 2006). Such censorship is sometimes carried to the point of absurdity. For instance, when

Barbara Wong made *Tears in a Fallen City* (2011), she purposely employed a digital effect to make the last part of the film extraordinarily grainy for aesthetic reasons. When the film was submitted for the Chinese Mainland censorship, censors ruled that the technical quality of the grainy images was not up to the State standards. In order to avoid trouble, Barbara Wong reluctantly restored the grainy part to the original visual version (personal communication).

With respect to censorship procedures, Article 6 of the “Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006” states that only an abstract of not less than one thousand words is needed for the archival filing procedure. However, it also states:

For those films whose main characters and plots are related to the aspects of foreign relations, ethnicities, religion, military affairs, public security, judicature, famous historical figures, famous cultural figures and so forth, a literature screenplay must be submitted in triplicate, and the opinions of the relevant provincial level department in charge or the central authorities and State organs have to be sought. (SARFT 22 May 2006; my translation)

The provisions further mentions a category of film described as ‘major revolutionary and major historical theme films’. Article 9 of the provisions states:

For the production of ‘major revolutionary and major historical theme films’, submission of screenplays are required for examination upon the application for screenplay initiation, and to be handled in accordance with the SARFT’s provisions on screenplay initiation regarding ‘major revolutionary and major historical theme films’. (Ibid; my translation)

When a film is about the modern or contemporary history of China, or any Chinese historical or political figures, censorship is particularly strict and inspection is specifically handled by appointed specialists (Chapter 6 gives an example of how

such films get approval for production and public exhibition in the Chinese Mainland).²⁴¹ It is well known that the CPC implements strict control over any discourse on history.

The “Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006” seems to provide the reason for the censorship criteria. Article 12 coming right before the three articles that contains the criteria says:

The state calls for efforts to produce good movies that are creative, artistic, entertaining, and close to reality, life and people, which can protect the healthy development of minors. Action will be taken to develop advanced culture, support healthy and constructive culture, transform backward culture, and eliminate corrupt culture. (Ibid; my translation)

However, experience has taught filmmakers the contrary. After more than enough censorship authority refusals, filmmakers understand that much subject matter that is close to reality, life and people is, in fact, not allowed. The underlying meaning of such an article is that all the bad things about China, all the past errors of the CPC and all the criticisms of the ruling regime are prohibited even though such things and errors can serve as lessons for a better future. Filmmakers also know well what can be made into a film and what would be banned. From what I have learnt and

²⁴¹ The historiography of China is quite different from that of the West. Chronically, while the traditional schematic periodization of European history divides the European history into Antiquity (or the Classical World), Middle Ages, Modern Times and then the contemporary, contemporary Chinese historians, based on a historical materialist interpretation, divide Chinese history into the ancient, the modern and the contemporary. However, the period of modern Chinese history does not match up with the same timeline as the modernity of the West. Some Chinese historians prefer to regard modern Chinese history as the period that falls between 1840 (the year the first Opium War started) and 1919 (the year of the May Fourth Movement). However, roughly around 1998, the Chinese Government defined modern Chinese history as a history of revolution and national revival, which should refer to the period from 1840 to 1949, the year New China, under the leadership of the CPC, was founded (see Zhang Haipeng 20 Nov 2009; Gov.Cn, Chinese version).

understood from the experiences of my career, reality, life and people that are actually taboo subjects for film include:

- spoofs involving CPC leaders and members;
- the problem of land reform;
- the injustice in the suppression of counter-revolutionaries from December 1951 to October 1952;
- the mistakes in the ‘Three-Anti’ (anti-corruption, anti-waste and anti-bureaucracy), the ‘Five-Anti’ (anti-bribery, anti-theft of state property, anti-tax evasion, anti-cheating on government contracts and anti-stealing state economic information) and the ‘thought reform’ campaigns in 1951 and 1952;
- the Anti-Rightist Movement from 1957 to 1959;
- the Three Years of Great Chinese Famine (also known as the Three Years of Natural Disasters or Three Years of Difficult Period) and the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1961;
- the Three Red Banners advocated as the core works of the second five-year plan of the PRC under the leadership of the CPC;
- the Four Cleanups Movement in the 1960s;
- the ten years of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution;
- the Anti-bourgeois Liberalization Campaign in the 1980s;
- the 1989 Democracy Movement and the June Fourth Massacre;
- Falun Gong in the 1990s;
- the corruption of the Public Security (the police force in the Chinese Mainland), Procuratorate and Courts;

- the problems of the China Armed Police Force and the People's Liberation Army;
- the major wicked social incidents;
- the grievances of peasants;
- the impasse in the situation of laid-off workers;
- the miserable plight of the poor;
- opposition between the rich and the poor;
- depiction of prostitutes;
- casinos, gamblers and gambling;
- child labour;
- child and woman stealing;
- social polarization;
- worker strikes and disturbances;
- the worsening of social order;
- ghosts;
- homosexuality;
- triads;
- smuggling of armaments;
- drug trafficking and drug abuse.

Of course, it is not an exhaustive list of all the taboo subjects that Chinese Mainland censors forbid or find too risky. Although the Chinese Government leaders and spokesmen always encourage filmmakers to make films that reflect social reality, they are just paying lip-service to the idea as the actual work of the official censors attests. Notable examples of banned films that are based on reality and are close to life and people include: Tien Zhuang-zhuang's *Blue Kite* (1993), Zhang Yimou's *To*

Live (1994), Jia Zhangke's *Xiao Wu* (1997, also known as *The Pickpocket*) and *Platform* (2000) and Ying Liang's *When the Night Fall* (2012). These films are either social dramas or having their stories set against a historical backdrop; they involve no religious material, and none of them involve graphic violence or sex. The bans on such films more or less demonstrate the temperament and mindset of the PRC censors. The CPC regime rejects criticism, any mention of past errors and any depiction of scandal about China. They are also scared of the 'transdiscursive', or overarching, effect that certain films may bring about so that they prefer silencing those films. All in all, the PRC is a country where politics is always placed higher than human liberty.

Since the implementation of CEPA, the number of Mainland-HK co-produced films has been increasing each year. In 2009, fifteen out of the totally forty-eight Hong Kong films released in Hong Kong were Mainland-HK co-productions, and it was thirty out of fifty-six in 2010 and thirty-eight out of sixty in 2011 (cited in *Today Literary Magazine* 2012: 81). It is a matter of fact that CEPA does provide the Hong Kong film industry with access to the booming Chinese Mainland market. But, at one level, Hong Kong filmmakers are lured to make films which are relevant to the Chinese Mainland (see the PRC authorities' principle of 'based on me principally' mentioned earlier), and at another, in order to cope with the Chinese Mainland market, the Hong Kong film industry gradually turns to catering to the taste of Mainland audiences instead of Hong Kong audiences. Both are at the expense of the identity of Hong Kong cinema and the integrity of Hong Kong filmmakers. At the same time, the Chinese Government blacklists any filmmaker who badmouths or acts against the PRC and the CPC. It does so without any public announcement, but by means of a boycott advocated by the 'fifty cents party'. The

effect is to make the filmmaker unemployable in any Mainland-HK co-production as happened, for example, to the Hong Kong actor Chapman To in 2014. In the light of such phenomena, CEPA is not simply a trading arrangement, but also a political move to extend the PRC's governance over Hong Kong filmmakers. It is a bond that ties Hong Kong filmmakers and the PRC censorship together as well as being a 'colonizing instrument' making Hong Kong filmmakers succumb to the censorship system of the Chinese Mainland, self-censor their creative works, discipline themselves and transform themselves into Chinese Mainlanders. It can be seen from CEPA that the actual realization of censorship today has gone beyond the conventional definition of censorship. Recapping Sue Curry Jansen's definition of censorship mentioned in Chapter 1:

The term [censorship] encompasses all socially structured proscriptions or prescriptions which inhibit or prohibit dissemination of ideas, information, images and other messages through a society's channels of communication whether these obstructions are secured by political, economic, religious, or other systems of authority. It includes both overt and covert proscriptions and prescriptions. (1991: 221)

In short, by means of CEPA, together with Mainland-HK co-production, Beijing is able to suppress Hong Kong filmmakers' freedom of expression with its power, tame Hong Kong filmmakers with the Chinese Mainland market and buy Hong Kong filmmakers' integrity with the promise of good box office receipts.

Chapter 6

The Story of a Mainland-Hong Kong Co-Produced Film

In the course of my career in the Hong Kong film industry, I have made a number of Mainland-Hong Kong (Mainland-HK) co-produced films. Through one of them, *The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake* (*Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin*, 2011), I believe, I encountered almost all of the problems embedded in Mainland-HK co-productions. However, the making of the movie constitutes a part of my study both empirically and ethnographically since I participated in the production as a film director, and observed and gathered data as a researcher. Significantly, it illustrated, empirically, what filmmaking is under Chinese-style socialism and what the Chinese Mainland censorship means for Hong Kong filmmakers. It was also an empirical way of identifying and understanding the problems of film production in the context of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), and perceiving that there is a world of cultural difference between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland about what constitutes legal authority

Why Film *The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake* in the Chinese Mainland?

The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake is about the extraordinary life of a remarkable figure in modern Chinese history — Qiu Jin (1875 – 1907).²⁴² Qiu Jin advocated the overthrow of the corrupt Qing Dynasty (also known as Empire of the

²⁴² See footnote 241.

Great Qing) and was beheaded after a failed uprising. Although she did not see the collapse of the last Chinese feudal monarchy, she is widely recognized by the Chinese populace, as well as the two governments facing each other across the Taiwan Strait, as a heroine-martyr before the Xinhai Revolution (also known as the Revolution of 1911). Other than being a revolutionary, Qiu Jin was also a pioneering women's rights activist, educator, publisher, poet and writer. The making of *The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake* was no easy job, but it was not because of any difficulties arising from the making of the film per se. It was because of external, contingent factors such as finance, government policy, the way we are governed, socio-cultural constraints and regulatory measures to control freedom of expression. Luckily, the film escaped a ban on filming and public exhibition in the Chinese Mainland.

I had been longing to make a biopic on Qiu Jin for years but could not secure any investors because the conventional wisdom of Hong Kong cinema is that such a historical subject is risky in terms of box-office takings. Luckily, the year 2011, the one-hundredth anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution, provided a turning point. As expected, there was a variety of celebrations and activities in China and other overseas Chinese communities of the world. Given that the anniversary year was likely to have a special ambience, I opportunistically pitched the Qiu Jin idea again and successfully secured an investor in early 2010. I then started working on the screenplay with screenwriter Erica Li and planned to start the actual filming in the Chinese Mainland in early October 2010. The Qiu Jin film had to be filmed in the Chinese Mainland for, at least, two reasons. Firstly, it is a period film with certain inevitable, predetermined, big scenes, which pushed up the budget to a sum that would make the Chinese Mainland market the only conceivable place where it could

make a profit; secondly, the Chinese Mainland provides filmmakers with various locations and scenery essential to Chinese period film. Therefore, if we were not going to spend an awfully large sum of money to build the sets elsewhere, and if we were to pursue a realistic aesthetic rather than using an enormous amount of visual effects, filming in the Chinese Mainland was a necessary and essential condition for the Qiu Jin project.

Nevertheless, filming activities in the Chinese Mainland are highly regulated by the Communist Party of China (CPC). According to the latest “Regulations on the Administration of Movies” (State Council Order No. 342) promulgated in 2001:²⁴³ “No overseas organization or individual may be *independently* engaged in the activity of producing movies inside the territory of the People’s Republic of China” (Ministry of Culture, Article 18; emphasis added). Therefore, in order to make the Qiu Jin film possible, the anchor investor, National Arts Film Production Limited of Hong Kong, had to produce the film jointly with a Chinese Mainland company. National Arts got Xian Mei-Ya Culture Communication Limited as its Chinese Mainland counterpart.²⁴⁴ Thus, the project fell into the category of a *joint production* in accordance with “Order No. 31” of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) under the State Council of the Central People’s Government (Chinese Government or Central Government), that is, “The Provisions on the Administration of Chinese-foreign Cooperative Production of Films”

²⁴³ Government bodies in this chapter are *of the PRC* unless otherwise indicated. All the laws and regulations of the PRC are originally in Chinese. There is no unified archive of official English translation available. Inconsistent (e.g., the use of Sino-foreign and Chinese-foreign, provisions and measures, order and decree, etc.) and expired English versions are documented in scattered official and unofficial databases. The English translations cited in this text are selected from databases of various official and law-related academic institutions. The Chinese Government states that, in any case of discrepancy, the Chinese version shall prevail. When no authoritative English translation is accessible, translations are by the writer as indicated.

²⁴⁴ Xian Mei-Ya is a company set up in Shaanxi province.

promulgated on 6 July 2004.²⁴⁵ Article 7 of it also states: “Foreign work units or individuals may not produce films *independently* in China without approval.” Article 5 of the provisions supposes that the Chinese and foreign parties jointly invest (in the form of capital, labour or physical objects), co-produce and share the benefits and risks of film production (Ningbo Bureau of Culture Radio & TV, Press and Publication 27 April 2011) (see also Chapter 5). However, National Arts was, in fact, the sole investor and producer of the Qiu Jin project and the Chinese party was just a nominal partner which served as an agent for National Arts.

Obtaining the ‘License for Producing A Movie’ – An Eleven-Month Process

After securing an investor and having the screenplay done, I started the application for filming in the Chinese Mainland. According to Article 19 of the “Regulations on the Administration of Movies” (2001):

With respect to the production of movies through Sino-foreign cooperation, the Chinese cooperator shall propose an application for project initiation [*lixiang*] in advance to the administrative department for radio, movie and television under the State Council. The administrative department for radio, movie and television under the State Council shall, after soliciting opinions from the relevant departments, issue a one-off “License for Producing Movies through Sino-foreign Cooperation” to the applicant who is examined to be qualified. (Ministry of Culture n.d.)

Furthermore, “The Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films, 2006” (SARFT Order No. 52) states:

²⁴⁵ SARFT was established in June 1998 by reorganizing the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television. In March 2013, SARFT merged with the General Administration of Press and Publication to form the State Administration of Press and Publication, Radio, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT).

Article 2 The State implements a system of archival filing of film scripts (abstracts) and examination of films. The film scripts (abstracts) that have not been put in the archival files shall not be shot into films.

Article 7 The procedures for archival filing of a film script (abstract):

(1) The film production entity puts forward an application for archival filing to the SARFT or the provincial administrative department of radio, film and television that implements the territorial censorship; and

(2) The SARFT or the provincial administrative department of radio, film and television that implements the territorial censorship issues a Return Receipt on Archival Filing of Film Script (Abstract) within the time limit prescribed in the Administrative License Law

If the administrative department of radio, film and television has not put forward opinions within 20 working days, the film production entity can shoot the film on the basis of the film script (abstract) that is put on archives.

If the administrative department of radio, film and television has the opinions for alteration of the film script (abstract) that is put on archives or does not agree to shoot the film, it shall notify the film production entity in written form within 20 working days.

If it is necessary to invite other relevant administrative departments and experts to appraise the film script, 20 working days shall be prolonged, and the administrative department of radio, film and television shall notify it to the film production entity in written form.

(Peking University Center for Legal Information)

I called the Qiu Jin film *Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin* (it did not have an official English title at that time) and accordingly submitted the screenplay and other necessary documents to the authority for the application of project initiation via Xian Mei-Ya in early May 2010. However, the submission was at a time when new policy was about to come into force making the subsequent process go far beyond the time frame stated in the provisions.

On 24 February 2011, SARFT issued the “Notice on Improving and Perfecting Archival Filing of Screenplays (Abstracts) and Film Examination Work” (*Guanyu Gaijin he Wanshan Dianying Juben (Genggai) Beian, Dianyingpian Shencha Gongzuo di Tongzhi*, my translation). The notice said:

All provincial administrative departments of radio, film and television are responsible for archival filing of film scripts (abstracts) and preliminary film examination management work in their administrative regions, and establishing corresponding management organs and film examination organs, which are to be specifically responsible for reporting to the higher body and giving the examination results of archival filing of film scripts (abstracts), and preliminary examination of films and final examination of some films in their administrative regions. . . .

This notice takes effect on the day of issuance. Exceptional provincial administrative departments of radio, film and television, which temporarily cannot undertake film examination due to technological facilities reasons and so forth, are required to submit a written report, but implementation must take place before 30 June 2010. (SARFT; my translation)

Before the issuance of this notice, SARFT administered the unified film regulatory system nationwide with the exception of Jilin, Guangdong, Zhejiang, Shaanxi, Hubei and Beijing where the relevant regional departments and bodies implemented the examination of film scripts (abstracts) and film within their own jurisdictions. However, with the issuance of the notice, all provincial administrative departments of radio, film and television were instructed to be responsible for their respective regional film management works, including the archival filing of film scripts (abstracts) and part of the examination works. On 10 May 2010, SARFT named the arrangement the ‘one filing, two examinations system’ (*yi bei er shen zhi*; my translation) for films. Such an arrangement could be regarded as devolution of the

power of the Central Government to regional authorities although the final examination of project initiation and approval of *major revolutionary and historical theme films*, major historical documentaries and Chinese-foreign co-productions would still be conducted by SARFT. The new arrangement was also prompted by the fact that SARFT had been overloaded with work because of the rapid expansion of the domestic film industry and the Chinese-foreign co-production of films over the past decade. According to the “Notice on Improving and Perfecting Archival Filing of Screenplays (Abstracts) and Film Examination Work”, the aim of the new arrangement was to provide a more convenient and highly efficient service for film production units. However, it was, in fact, not so convenient and efficient in practice during its initial stage. Taking *Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin* as an example, it took a very much longer time than before to get the authorities’ reply.

On 3 August 2010, which was three months after our application for filming, we received an e-mail from Xian Mei-Ya. The e-mail said:

The Administration of Radio, Film and Television of Shaanxi Province already had preliminary examination opinions on the screenplay of *Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin*; they classified the film as a major revolutionary and historical themed one. Now we have to proceed to SARFT for project initiation application. *[We] have liaised with Teacher Zhong, SARFT’s official-in-charge of major revolutionary and historical theme film examination, and heard that China Film [China Film Group Corporation, a state-owned enterprise] has already applied for project initiation on the same subject [Qiu Jin] and has started its shooting.²⁴⁶ SARFT regards the two films ‘clash’ severely into the same subject and recommends us to give up the project. (Personal communication, emphasis in original; my translation)*

²⁴⁶ Today, ‘Teacher’ (*Laoshi*) is widely used in the Chinese Mainland as a respectful form of addressing experienced betters who are knowledgeable in certain fields.

Considering the announcements of various film companies, there would be quite a few ‘clashes’ in subject matter in this booming film industry epoch in the Chinese Mainland. However, the recommendation of SARFT still came like a bolt from the blue because an authoritative recommendation is almost equivalent to an ‘order’ within Chinese custom and the conventional understanding of Chinese bureaucracy. Since we had planned to start the actual filming in early October, we had already signed contracts with most of the casts and crew and started pre-production work in Hengdian, Zhejiang Province.²⁴⁷ I read the e-mail over and over again, pondered over the matter and tried to interpret what the recommendation really meant. Before the e-mail, I had already read in the entertainment news that China Film Group planned to make a movie titled *Qiu Jin* (Sohu.Com 24 June 2010). It might possibly have been that SARFT was trying to protect the interest of China Film Group, but this could not be the official, open reason to reject another project initiation application. The only legitimate reason must have been that our screenplay contained prohibited material violating the Chinese laws or regulations, although I had already avoided all the sensitive and ‘risky’ content in the screenplay. Despite the fact that the recommendation might be an ‘order’, I instructed National Arts to write an e-mail to thank Teacher Zhong for kindly reminding us of China Film Group’s *Qiu Jin* and to affirm that we would like to go on with the project initiation application. We got a prompt response on 5 August, requiring us to submit our screenplay to Teacher Zhong who would read the screenplay and

²⁴⁷ The order of the State Council on “Regulations on Administration of Movies (2001)” states that “no unit or individual shall, without permission, be engaged in the activities of [movie] production”, and “a movie production unit shall . . . be responsible for the examination of screenplay *before* putting into filming” (Ministry of Culture, Article 5 and 26; emphasis added). However, it is a common practice of filmmakers to start pre-production work or even to start actual filming before official approval if they believe there is no significant prohibited material in the film they are making. The common reasons for filmmakers to go ahead with pre-production work and actual filming ahead of approval include the availability of the cast, following a marketing strategy that involves catching a favorable exhibition schedule and an unexpected delay obtaining official permission.

determine whether or not it was similar to China Film Group's. If the two screenplays were found very much alike, SARFT would not allow another project initiation. Fortunately, Teacher Zhong notified us on 17 August that we could go on with the application procedures. Hence, Xian Mei-Ya requested the Administration of Radio, Film and Television of Shaanxi Province (Shaanxi ARFT) to continue with the procedure of reporting to SARFT.

As required by Shaanxi ARFT, Xian Mei-Ya e-mailed us a list of materials which were to be submitted to SARFT for examination. The materials included:

- (i) the preliminary examination opinion of Shaanxi ARFT;
- (ii) a report consisting of the intended film title, information about chief creative personnel, copyright authorization letter from the screenwriter, story abstract, scale of production, completion time of the screenplay and information about the production units;
- (iii) twenty sets of the screenplay and abstract (for relevant controlling authorities and experts to comment and examine); and
- (iv) a letter of consent from a family member of Qiu Jin.

We had no problems with items (i) to (iii), but item (iv) did put us into a predicament because Qiu Jin had passed away more than a century ago and it was difficult for us to locate her descendants. However, I was aware that China Film Group should also have had obtained consent from Qiu Jin's descendants in order to pass the project initiation examination. After some inquiries, the general manageress of Mei Ya Chang Cheng Culture Communication Ltd, a Beijing-based company under the same parent company as Xian Mei-Ya, claimed that she could communicate with some officials of SARFT directly and told us that China Film Group did not obtain any consent from Qiu Jin's descendants, but only got a written consent from the Qiu

Jin Museum in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province. This sounded odd for we could not figure out if there were any connections between the Qiu Jin family and the Qiu Jin Museum although the location of the museum was once the home of Qiu Jin. However, since SARFT had accepted the written consent from the Qiu Jin Museum in the place of consent from a Qiu Jin family member, we could follow China Film Group's example. Thus, our production manager went to the Qiu Jin Museum. The people there knew well that we were going to make a film on Qiu Jin because we had visited the museum twice when we were doing research work for the film. Nonetheless, the person in charge said that he only managed the museum and was not supposed or authorized to sign any consent for such a project. He also said that he did not provide any signed document for China Film Group! We trusted what he said, but we had no intention of finding out who had lied, not only because it would not help resolve the issue but also because it might displease some influential persons and make everything worse.

During our pre-production, we were in negotiation with the Hangzhou Government about a degree of collaboration.²⁴⁸ With the help of the government officials, we found out that the grand-nephew of Qiu Jin (the grandson of Qiu Jin's elder brother), Mr. Qiu Jingwu, was living in Shaoxing at the time. Our production manager and assistant director, armed with our screenplay, went to Shaoxing to visit the seventy-four-year-old man. After reading the screenplay, Qiu Jingwu said that there were many problems. He said that we should show more about the Qiu family, for example, by emphasizing that the Qiu family had funded Qiu Jin's education in

²⁴⁸ In order to promote tourism of the city through popular movies, the Hangzhou Government is keen to collaborate with film production units. They sponsored Feng Xiaogang's *If You Are the One* (*Fei Cheng Wu Rao*, 2008) which had a scene shot at Xixi, and one of my films, *All's Well, Ends Well 2010* (*Fa Tin Hei Si 2010*) which had a scene shot at West Lake. Since Qiu Jin's tomb is situated by the side of West Lake, the Hangzhou Government was eager to collaborate on a Qiu Jin biopic whose story was relevant to the city.

Japan and helped a lot in Qiu Jin's revolutionary undertakings. He also criticized that some parts of the screenplay were not accurate and some notable personages were missing. Last but not least, he expressed dissatisfaction about the characterization of Qiu Jin's husband, Wang Tingjun (1879-1909), whom he described as 'something lower than animal'. I could sense that Qiu Jingwu and I had fundamentally different perceptions about an 'adaptation' and I had no confidence that I could convince him to share my view. Moreover, I felt that he held a definite biased view on some people and some matters appearing in the course of Qiu Jin's life. Since I did not want to rewrite the screenplay into Qiu Jingwu's version and did not want to give up the project, I wrote an e-mail to Xian Mei-Ya:

Qiu Jin passed away more than one hundred years ago; any living descendant of hers is probably the third or fourth generation. Even if we can get a written consent from one of her descendants, it does not imply a collective consent of all the descendants. There is still a chance that any one of the other descendants may oppose the production of such a movie. Therefore, a written consent from one descendant does not seem conclusive and it is difficult and not feasible to find out and then identify all the living descendants who are living in different parts of China and abroad to concur. In addition, some of the descendants may not be willing to show up or to follow up on any later issues derived from the consent.

Recently, the government of Shaoxing supported and sponsored a musical play about Qiu Jin as a celebration event of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution. The play has no consent from any descendant of Qiu Jin. A Shaoxing government official told me that no descendants of Qiu Jin would oppose a play extolling their ancestor.

The Qiu Jin project has got support from the governments of Hangzhou and Shaoxing. They even asked us to speed up the production. We sincerely hope that SARFT can waive the

requirement of consent from any Qiu Jin family member so that a patriotic film can be realized. (Personal communication 24 August 2010; my translation)

Xian Mei-Ya forwarded my response to Shaanxi ARFT. The president of National Arts also wrote an e-mail to Mei Ya Chang Cheng querying if SARFT would accept a letter of guarantee stating that National Arts, a listed company in Hong Kong, would be fully responsible for any lawsuits and claims for indemnity that might arise out of our Qiu Jin project. Mei Ya Chang Cheng replied the next day that SARFT had to consult its superior about the matter. By that time, about two hundred crew members, mainly of the art, costume and production departments, were working on the pre-production in Hengdian and more and more crew members were joining in as the planned schedule of actual filming was approaching. However, when we still got no answer from SARFT by 19 September, another obstacle came up — we received a call from Mei Ya Chang Cheng, telling us that China Film Group objected to our filming of *Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin* on the grounds that they had already filed a movie initiation on the same subject before us.

China Film Group, as broached in Chapter 5, is a ‘special’ and privileged corporation. It is the largest, the most comprehensive and extensive state-owned and state-run film enterprise in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). It has a large number of fully funded subsidiaries, proprietary and joint stock companies, joint ventures and a movie channel. Its comprehensive industry chain, which facilitates film production, distribution and exhibition, makes it the most influential film producer and distributor in the country. Its dominant position in the market has drawn criticism from other industry players. Zhang Weiping, a film producer and partner of Zhang Yimou, once accused China Film Group of exercising its power and

influence to monopolize the film market, to restrict and oppress other competitors, and everybody was well aware of the problem of corruption (*Yangcheng Wan Bao* in People.Com.Cn 12 December 2009). Zhang Yimou also expressed that it was a known fact that China Film Group was in a dominant class of its own and the abuse of its power was inherent in the institution (*Tiantian Xin Bao* in Sina.Com.Cn 18 Dec 2009).

China Film Group's objection really drove us to despair. But as Joan Baez (n.d.) once said, "Action is the antidote to despair," and I wrote again, emphasizing five points:

(i) Teacher Zhong of SARFT has reminded us that our project might clash with the same subject of China Film Group's *Qiu Jin*. However, after reading our screenplay, Teacher Zhong, who supposedly has also read the screenplay of *Qiu Jin*, told us that there was no substantive problem with our screenplay and green-lighted our application procedures. We, therefore, assume that our film should be quite different from that of China Film Group.

(ii) One more company to make one more film to advocate the national spirit should always be preferred to one less in the market.

(iii) The phenomenon of 'film clashes' is usual and is just an illustration of benign competition in a healthy and flourishing free market. This has happened in the past and will happen again in the near future too, for example:

- Films on Ip Man - *Ip Man* [2008] and *Ip Man 2* [2010] by Wilson Yip, *The Legend is Born – Ip Man* [2010] by Herman Yau;
- Films adapted from *Journey to the West* - both Soi Cheang and Stephen Chow are making movies about the Monkey King.

(iv) Since China Film Group is producing a film titled *Qiu Jin*, we can compromise and avoid using the words 'Qiu Jin' in our film title if this helps resolve the issue.

(v) We have browsed the website of SARFT and could only find the approval of another *Qiu Jin* produced by Zhejiang Yue Opera Troupe [*Zhejiang Yue Ju Tuan*], but not any announcement about the project initiation of China Film Group's *Qiu Jin*.²⁴⁹ (Personal communication, 20 September 2010; my translation)

Coincidentally, there was a news report about many more films with subjects that clashed published in Sina entertainment website on 19 September.²⁵⁰ I enclosed the news clip in an e-mail to Mei Ya Chang Cheng.

Although we had still not obtained the 'License for Producing A Movie' (*sic*) in accordance with the "Regulations on the Administration of Movies" (2001), we took the risk of starting actual filming clandestinely on 3 October 2010 as scheduled. One week later, we finally received an official reply consisting of some comments on our screenplay and a list of necessary amendments required by SARFT's 'Leading Group for Major Revolutionary and Historical Theme Film and TV Production – Film' (*Zhongda Geming He Lishi Ticai Ying Shi Chuangzuo Lingdao Xiaozu – Dianying*; my translation), a group composed of relevant controlling authorities and experts. This was a piece of delightful news because the screenplay was basically approved and SARFT only required minor amendments. In my experience, minor amendments often imply approval of the project initiation. Usually, if all the amendments are complied with, SARFT will issue a license for filming in two weeks. As a matter of course, we complied. Thus, I burnt the midnight oil with my

²⁴⁹ In accordance with Article 8 of Order No. 52 of SARFT, "Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films (2006)", SARFT would publicize the film scripts (abstracts) filing and project initiation situation at fixed intervals in its official website.

²⁵⁰ According to the news clip, many upcoming films have found their film subjects clash. For instance, *The Legendary Amazons* by Frankie Chan and *Saving General Yang* by Ronny Yu are both based on the traditional story of *Women Generals of the Yang Family (Yang Men Nu Jiang)*; *White Vengeance (Hong Men Yan)* by Daniel Lee and *The Last Supper (Wang Di Shengyan)* by Lu Chuan are both based on the historical event of the Feast at Hong Gate during Chu-Han Contention (Sina.Com.Cn 19 Sept 2010).

screenwriter to amend the screenplay accordingly, and sent the amended screenplay to SARFT the next day. However, another unexpected problem came up three weeks later.

One day, National Arts forwarded me an urgent e-mail from Mei Ya Chang Cheng. The e-mail said that Qiu Jingwu, the grand-nephew of Qiu Jin, had written a letter to SARFT on 25 October, saying that we had not obtained consent from *him*, and had started the actual filming of *Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin*. Mei Ya Chang Cheng passed on Teacher Zhong's message, saying that SARFT had accepted earlier our request to forego consent from Qiu Jin's relatives because they accepted our explanation of the difficulties and unfeasibility of locating her descendants and that no single descendant could represent all the descendants. However, since Qiu Jingwu had already raised unequivocal objection, SARFT required us to get consent from him before we could go ahead with the procedure of getting a filming license. I responded immediately to the e-mail. First of all, I replied that we were just working on pre-production and having rehearsals in Hengdian; actual filming had not started yet (this is the best I could say in view of possible severe punishment). Secondly, the screenwriter of the film, Erica Li, went to Shaoxing to approach Qiu Jingwu on my behalf as I had to carry on with the shootings because any suspension would mess up the production schedule and result in great loss to the investor. By that time, we were about to move to Shanghai to continue with the shooting.

Qiu Jingwu was difficult; he gave no room for negotiation. As Erica Li told me, Qiu Jingwu just repeated what he had said before. He particularly and repeatedly emphasized his acute dissatisfaction that the screenplay had 'glamorised' the character of Qiu Jin's husband, Wang Tingjun, who was just 'something lower

than animal' in his view. It seemed that he hated Wang Tingjun and his family very much. Qiu Jingwu said that he would not sign the authorization letter unless we fixed and corrected the screenplay according to his instruction and direction, but I just could not accept the revision and amendments he insisted on. While he took himself as the sole authority on any discourse on Qiu Jin's life, I just could not see any authenticity in his view for several reasons. Firstly, the screenwriter and I had carried out in-depth research on Qiu Jin. Since information and description from different sources often varies, we were aware that we could not rely on any single statement or opinion as the basis for any single incident. Whenever possible, we had cross-checked with different sources and materials to verify individual documentation of the historical facts. Secondly, the image of Qiu Jin in the screenplay, and later in the film, was a composite constructed from our own understanding and interpretation and compiled by comparing different materials in different literature including standard histories and anecdotes, and the books edited by Qiu Jingwu as well, plus our own imagination and reflexivity. Thirdly, I admitted that the screenplay could not cover everything due to the conventional limited length of a feature film. We had just selected materials we deemed appropriate from a sea of data. Such a screenplay could by no means be entirely factual, accurate or fully objective. It was, after all, a creative work based on real-life stories and historical events, and a certain amount of adaptation and artistry was essential in order to achieve a narrative which gave a deliberately chosen perspective on Qiu Jin's life. We had our views too, and the screenplay was written to reflect those, but for some momentous matters and incidents, we had been faithful to history and humanity. Fourthly, as for the character of Wang Tingjun, I had reflected upon the commonly accepted 'truth' and had historical literature and

evidence as the grounds for a more sympathetic portrayal of him. In short, I held the view that Qiu Jingwu had a strong bias against Wang Tingjun and his family without valid or convincing reasons. Last but not least, Qiu Jingwu had asked to meet me and the boss of the film.

Since I could not reach a compromise with Qiu Jingwu, I had to seek another way out in order to get official approval for filming. I searched for similar cases in the Chinese Mainland film industry as references and researched relevant Chinese laws and regulations. I could not find out if there were any biopics which were forbidden or banned from filming because of opposition raised by, or having no consent from, a relative or descendant of the subject of the film. However, there were disputes over a few biopics. When *Confucius (Kong Zi)*, (2010) was about to be released, an alleged seventy-fifth-generation descendant of Confucius considered some footage of the film offensive to the image of his ancestor after watching the trailer. He issued a public statement requesting some cuts to the film, or else he would file a lawsuit against the film (Yule.Sohu.Com 12 December 2009). However, the film was not re-edited and no lawsuit was brought to court afterwards. My queries were: Does any law entitle Chinese citizens a right to sue someone for tort or defamation against a deceased person? Will the people's court accept a case of dispute over the rights of a deceased person's reputation? If yes, who has the right to sue?

The "Interpretation of the Supreme People's Court on Problems Regarding the Ascertainment of Compensation Liability for Emotional Damages in Civil Torts, 2001" states:

The people's court shall accept according to law cases arising from any of the following infringements related to the death of a person that caused mental suffering to the *close relative* of the deceased, and brought to the court by the [close] relative for claiming emotional damages:

1. infringement upon the name, portrait, reputation or honor of a deceased person by insulting, libeling, disparaging, vilifying or by other means contrary to the societal public interests or societal morality. (Peking University Center for Legal Information, Article 3; emphasis added)

Then, who is the close relative? According to the “Opinions of the Supreme People’s Court on Several Issues Concerning the Implementation of the General Principles of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China, 1988”, the term ‘close relative’, as applied in civil procedure, refers to spouse, father and mother, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, grandfathers and grandmothers, grandsons and granddaughters (Peking University Center for Legal Information, Article 12). This means that only the lineal blood relatives within three generations have the right to raise a lawsuit if infringement or tort against their deceased relative occurs. Hence, it was no wonder that no lawsuit on the case of *Confucius* was filed; it might probably be because the descendant could not legitimately make a libel claim about the alleged ‘distorted’ image of his ancestor who died more than two thousand years ago. Yet, in 2006, Ronny Yu’s *Fearless* (*Huo Yuan Jia*, 2006) fell into judiciary trouble. A grandson of Huo Yuanjia, aged eighty-one at the time, sued the production companies for defamation against his ancestor and the tort of inflicting emotional distress because the film shows the massacre of the whole Huo Yuanjia family, leading people to doubt his identity as Huo Yuanjia’s descendant (ChinaCourt.Org 15 December 2006; NetEase 16 December 2006). A people’s

court in Beijing verified the identity of the alleged grandson of Huo Yuanjia and accepted the case. After the hearing, the court deemed that, although the film contained some inaccurate details with respect to history, the fundamental tone of the film still commended the patriotic spirit of Huo Yuanjia and showed the profound spirit of Chinese martial arts. The film as a whole did not distort the historical status of Huo Yuanjia. The court finally adjudicated that the film did not constitute any defamation against Huo Yuanjia (*Yantai Ri Bao* in Shm.Com 27 December 2006).

In recent years, it has become a common occurrence in the Chinese Mainland for relatives and descendants to call into question and protest about biopics. After all, regarding *Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin*, was it not mandatory to obtain consent from a close relative before producing a biopic on a notable figure? The *Constitution of the PRC* (Gov.Cn 14 March 2004) states that “citizens of the People’s Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration” (Article 35) and that “citizens of the People’s Republic of China, in exercising their freedoms and rights, may not infringe upon the interests of the State, of society or of the collective, or upon the lawful freedoms and rights of other citizens” (Article 51).²⁵¹ Legally speaking, as long as one abides by the latter article, he/she who enjoys the freedoms entitled by the former article is not obliged to obtain any consent of others in order to make a biopic even if the subject

²⁵¹ It is a matter of debate whether Article 35 of the *Constitution* has ever been realized. The Chinese Government has been persecuting free speech fiercely. A well known example is the eleven-year prison sentence of dissident Liu Xiaobo and the imprisonment of many intellectuals in the wake of Liu’s winning the Nobel Prize. Although the PRC signed the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” adopted by the United Nations on 5 October 1998, it has never ratified the covenant up to the moment I am writing this. Sidney Jones, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch’s Asia Division, notes that signing is only the first step to becoming a party to the treaty; it then must be sent to the National People’s Congress for ratification, but the Chinese Government announced no timetable for doing so. Only after ratification will China be legally bound by the treaty’s provisions (see Human Rights Watch 6 October 1998).

is still alive, although strict, extensive and arbitrary censorship through a regulatory system are widespread across the Chinese Mainland. However, if anyone's freedom of speech infringes the lawful rights of others, or constitutes any torts against others, the victims can claim compensation or remedy through judiciary means, and that applies to the close relatives of famous or notable figures.

A biopic (or any other forms of biography) connects three parties, namely, the director (the author), the film's central character, and the audience including family members and descendants of the central character. Disputes over the reputation and authenticity of the central character are always due to conflicts between different aspects, such as perspectives, points of view, frames of reference, focalization and positioning of the three parties. However, the director and the audience are subjectively active (though may be influenced by others) while the central character is considered passive. Disputes are also caused by discrepant understandings, or misunderstandings, or non-understandings between the director and the audience about what a piece of creative work is meant to be or might have been. Even documentaries (which are, indeed, also creative works) can cause disputes because there is actually no such thing as fully and purely objective authenticity or truth, and that goes for the audience and the director (see Chapter 1 for Barthes' theory of 'the death of the Author' and Fish's theory of 'interpretive strategy'). When Ba Jin, one of the most prominent and widely read Chinese writers of the twentieth century, knew that an author was going to write his biography, he gave the author a free hand. He said, "Use my stuff to write your own work" (Xu, Kailei 2003, epilogue; my translation). By so saying, Ba Jin, briefly but distinctly, elucidates his profound respect for the author. He recognizes that the author is not a recording machine and that the subject of the biography is not the owner or master of the subsequent work,

but just its centre and the work is open to the interpretation of others. In much the same way, any creative work based on actual events, real-life stories or people deserves a certain freedom that allows adaptation and artistry. It also deserves an audience that will take a lenient view if the work deviates from individual members' personal idea of historical 'fact' or subjective 'truth'. At the same time, all audiences have every right to appraise, comment, criticize or denounce a work, but not the coercive 'right' to impose any veto on its making or exhibition.

Meanwhile, after drawing together the basis of its argument, National Arts sought advice from a law professional and then wrote to Mei Ya Chang Cheng:

Mr. Qiu Jingwu is just the grandson of Qiu Jin's elder brother. . . . He is not a lineal blood relative of Qiu Jin. We have sought advice from Chinese lawyers; they hold the opinion that Mr. Qiu cannot represent the lineal descendants of Qiu Jin and her husband by law.

We hope SARFT can clarify and define whom the terms 'family member' and 'lineal descendant' refer to when we are required to obtain the corresponding consent. . . . Lastly, Mr. Qiu said that our screenplay has many problems, but the screenplay has been regarded as having 'no big problem' and only minor amendments were required by SARFT. (Personal communication 4 November 2011; my translation)

I also wrote another e-mail to Mei Ya Chang Cheng to explain more:

Our screenplay depicts Qiu Jin's husband, Wang Tingjun, as a negative character created by the feudal society, but Mr. Qiu Jingwu considers our depiction of him is 'too good' and insists that we have to rewrite and portray him as scum, someone who is lower than animal.

About the depiction of Wang Tingjun in our screenplay, we have historical literature such as *Huiyi Funu Gemingjia Wang Qiu Jin Nushi* [*Recalling Woman Revolutionary Madam Wang Qiu Jin, Part 1*, 1951; *Part. 2*, 1982] by Hattori Shigeko, *Xiangxiang Shi Di Changshi*

[*General Knowledge of Xiangxiang History and Geography*, 1935] by Tan Rifeng, and so forth as evidence.

About the fund which Qiu Jin used for her pursuit of education in Japan, different historical accounts have different views — some say it was from the Wang family, some say it was from her sworn sisters, Wu Zhiying and Xu Zihua and others say Qiu Jin sold her trousseau. Thus, in the screenplay, we do not say explicitly where the fund comes from, but Mr. Qiu Jingwu insists on that we have to mention it is from the Qiu family.

Qiu Jin concealed her revolutionary undertakings from her family during her lifetime because she did not want to implicate her family. After the execution of Qiu Jin, the Qiu family went into hiding in order to escape arrest by the Qing government. The people who took the risk of burying Qiu Jin were Wu Zhiying and Xu Zihua. Wu Zhiying lived next door to Qiu Jin in Beijing and knew Wang Tingjun. When Wang Tingjun died, the Wang family wanted to bury Wang Tingjun and Qiu Jin together and Wu Zhiying did not object. We can infer that Wang Tingjun was not that bad in the eyes of Wu Zhiying.

The daughter of Qiu Jin, Wang Canzhi, was very proud of her mother. When she was very young, she imputed the death of her mother to her father and changed her last name to Qiu. However, she forgave her father when she grew up and changed her last name back to Wang.

We have considered different aspects of the issue and concluded that we should not depict the character of Wang Tingjun in an unduly negative way if we do not have concrete evidence. Otherwise, we would upset the lineal descendants of Qiu Jin. . . .

The grandfather of Mr. Qiu Jingwu, that is the elder brother of Qiu Jin, passed away in 1909, two years after the execution of Qiu Jin. Mr. Qiu Jingwu was not associated with any lineal descendants of Qiu Jin since his birth in 1936. His knowledge on Qiu Jin is also obtained by research which is in no way more authentic than that of other scholars. We cannot figure out the reason why he is more authoritative than other

scholars. (Personal communication 4 November 2010; my translation)

On 9 November, we got the attorney's letter from the Guangdong Good Comrade Law Office. Other than further confirmation of the legal support mentioned earlier, the letter gives some more legal opinions favouring our situation:

(iv) In accordance with Article 4 of the "Regulations on the Administration of Movies" and Article 4 of the "Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films", the right of examination of film scripts belongs to SARFT. . . . There are no laws currently in effect requiring film production units to obtain consent from relatives of the historical figure when producing a film about a historical figure. In accordance with Article 15 of the "Copyright Law of the People's Republic of China", a screenplay is a work protected by the copyright law; its right of authorship is protected by law and exercised by the scriptwriter. The right of creation should belong to the scriptwriter. . . . Mr. Qiu Jingwu has no rights to compel the film production unit to amend the screenplay according to his notion.

(v) We deem that the examinations of film scripts and films belong to SARFT but not Mr. Qiu Jingwu. If you create and produce the film in accordance with the "Regulations on the Administration of Movies" and the requirement of SARFT, Mr. Qiu Jingwu will have no right to raise any unreasonable or unlawful requests. (Personal communication; my translation)

We sent the attorney's letter to Mei Ya Chang Cheng and got a prompt reply:

There was, indeed, no requirement of consent from any family member in the regulations for project initiation applications, which was why SARFT accepted the explanation of 'could not contact any family members', and let *Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin* move on without inquiring into the matter during the earlier stage of application.

However, there is an exceptional case, which is, when a family member, claiming to be a descendant, initiated a contact with SARFT

after having heard of the start of actual filming. This is the case for Mr. Qiu Jingwu who has formally reported to the higher official of SARFT in written form that *Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin* has started filming without authorization.

So far, SARFT cannot ignore the written document and can only contact the production company requiring the production company to communicate with Mr. Qiu Jingwu.

SARFT has no right to judge whether or not the *weiquan* [rights-defending] protest of Mr. Qiu Jingwu is reasonable or lawful, which can only be resolved by the production company. SARFT only accepts two outcomes:

- (i) The production company reaches a consensus with Mr. Qiu Jingwu and has an ‘authorization of descendant’ sent to SARFT.
- (ii) The production company and Mr. Qiu Jingwu cannot reach a consensus and have to let the judiciary decide the matter. After that, the production company can hand over a statement issued by the judiciary department, proving Mr. Qiu Jingwu does not possess the qualification of [lawful] descendant and has no right to raise any objection.

Of course, the second outcome is what SARFT wants to avoid. SARFT hopes that we can settle the matter in accordance with the principle of *yi he wei gui* [‘to regard harmony as the most valuable’; my translation] and communicate with Mr. Qiu Jingwu, endeavoring to get an authorization letter. (Personal communication 12 November; my translation)

The meaning of SARFT’s words was clear. One of the two ways to resolve the issue was already ruled out. We could still choose the virtually excluded way, but this would be more risky and it would not favour our situation if we acted against the authorities’ will. We were all in despair when it dawned on me — in order to bypass the regulation about getting consent from Qiu Jingwu, we could try to apply

for project initiation again, but with a different film title and all the characters' names in the screenplay changed to some fictitious names, that is, we were going to make a 'fictional film' which would appear as a work of fiction and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales would be entirely coincidental. This would be not only a reluctant compromise, but also a sacrifice and a shame. Although no one knew whether SARFT would accept this 'trick' or not, we could only try for we had no other way out. After negotiation with SARFT, Mei Ya Chang Cheng asked us to prepare the related documents for a 'new' project initiation application on 18 November. We took it as a last resort and proceeded with the 'new' application.

The 'clandestine' shooting of the whole film wrapped on 4 December 2010. While I was doing the post-production, I had an on-and-off discussion with the investor about how to resolve the discrepancies between us and Qiu Jingwu. In mid-January 2011, we decided to talk with Qiu Jingwu again to make things clear to both sides. Since Qiu Jingwu is a bad-tempered old man, our production manager called his son in the afternoon on 1 February and asked him to pass on some words of advice to his father: Mr. Qiu Jingwu has no legal right to raise any objection to the making of our movie, but in order to show respect for him, we would like to honour him as the consultant of the movie and render him an amount of money as his special remuneration if he will sign a letter of consent. Qiu Jingwu called back that night and rejected the offer. He said he wanted to meet me and the boss directly, but our production manager replied that we were too busy to spare time for the meeting. Qiu Jingwu then said that since he had no legal right to oppose our film, he would not support our film too, and he just hoped that our movie would not degrade the image of Qiu Jin. At this point, the struggle with Qiu Jingwu seemed to be settled.

On 24 February 2011, we received good news. After discussion, the Leading Group for Major Revolutionary and Historical Theme Film and TV Production - Film of SARFT decided that we could continue to use the name of Qiu Jin in the film title and as the protagonist's name in our project initiation application. This meant that we did not have to disguise the film as a fictitious one and the film could be restored to its original intended appearance, that is, an adaptation of a real life story. On 7 April, we finally got a license for producing *Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin* from SARFT, which was eleven months after our initial application for filming. I gave the film the English title — *The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake (The Woman Knight)*.

The Road to Public Exhibitions

The Chinese Government implements a double licensing system based on an examination scheme to regulate movies. According to the “Regulations on the Administration of Movies, 2001”, after obtaining the ‘License for Producing A Movie’ (*sic*), finished movies have to be examined and adopted by the movie examination institution of SARFT under the State Council before any public exhibition inside or outside the PRC territory. The examination of movies consists of two levels — the content examination and the technical examination. The former examines movies to see if there is any prohibited content. “The specific measures shall be decided by the administrative department for radio, movie and television under the State Council” (Article 26). The technical examination examines whether the technical quality of any movie is in conformity with the State

standards (see Chapter 5). If a movie is examined and qualifies, SARFT issues a ‘License for Public Projection of Movies’.

Although we had almost finished the post-production of *The Woman Knight* by the time we got the license for filming, we were not going to submit the finished work for content examination too soon to avoid any suspicion of jumping the gun. Hence, we submitted the film in mid-June and scheduled a public release on 25 August and a gala premiere at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. We got an examination decision letter from SARFT on 13 July. The letter stated that the Leading Group for Major Revolutionary and Historical Theme Film and TV Production – Film, together with the movie examination institution, had adopted our film with some required minor amendments.²⁵² I amended the film accordingly and hurried it along for the technical examination. Meanwhile, we were launching a promotion campaign.

The day 15 July 2011 was the 104th death anniversary of Qiu Jin. The producer (he was also the investor), the cast and I went to Hangzhou on that day to attend a media conference organized by the Chinese Mainland promotion team. We announced that *The Woman Knight* was coming to theatres on 25 August. We also went to worship Qiu Jin at her tomb situated by the side of West Lake, Hangzhou. A few days after I came back to Hong Kong, I read in a news report that Qiu Jingwu had raised an objection to our film again, knowing it was coming out soon. He wrote to SARFT again, asking the authority to ban the film from all screenings. Together with his letter, dated 20 July 2011, he enclosed another letter from Qiu Jin’s granddaughter, Wang Yanhua, dated 3 February 2011, which states that Wang Yanhua

²⁵² As to the film director, or the author of a piece of artwork, there will be no such thing as ‘minor’ amendment if such amendment is enforced by coercive power external to the will of the author.

authorized him to handle all matters about the protection of Qiu Jin's reputation as well as the related rights and interests. No one verified the authorization letter, but we knew that Wang Yanhua was born in 1935 and was recognized as a close relative of Qiu Jin by the Civil Law of the PRC. Her family emigrated to the United States of America (US) in 1992. Qiu Jingwu told the media that he found Qiu Jin portrayed like an aggressive fighter and a gangster in the trailer of *The Woman Knight*. He also said that he had read the screenplay in which Qiu Jin was depicted as a shrew and scenes of husband and wife quarrels covered seventy to eighty pages out of a screenplay of some one hundred pages. He was angry because he considered that the film subverted the heroine image of Qiu Jin, was not true to history and had no authorization from *him*. The media reported widely about this incident and Qiu Jingwu kept on making accusations about our film in the follow-up interviews. I admit that the trailer contains plenty of action because of commercial considerations. Conventional marketing wisdom tells us that a historical drama would not interest the general public, particularly, young people. That is why I intentionally made the film with more action and packaged it as an action or martial arts film. It is also true that the film had no authorization from any descendants of Qiu Jin by that time. Other than this, I deemed that all the accusations and attacks by Qiu Jingwu were neither true nor valid.

According to Mei Ya Chang Cheng, SARFT had a phone conversation with Qiu Jingwu on 21 July 2012. SARFT told Qiu Jingwu that they had, unanimously, come to the conclusion that *The Woman Knight* was a well-made film which would boost Qiu Jin's image as a martyr and that it would not mar her reputation. SARFT also advised against his seeking a ban on the movie. Qiu Jingwu told SARFT he needed to watch the film. Hence, SARFT instructed us to communicate with Qiu

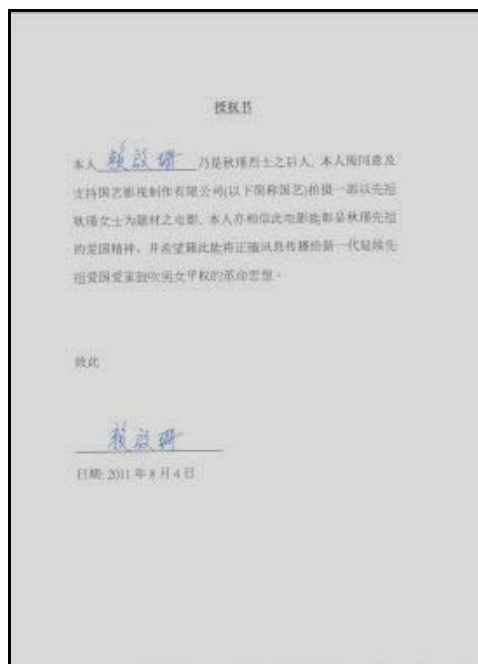
Jingwu again. Two senior staff of Mei Ya Chang Cheng went to visit Qiu Jingwu on 28 July and invited him to watch the movie. By the time they arrived Qiu Jingwu's home, some news reporters were there. Qiu Jingwu refused to watch the film and said he wanted to see people from National Arts. Thus, our production manager contacted Qiu Jingwu at once and made an appointment with him in the evening of 29 July. When our production manager arrived at Shaoxing, Qiu Jingwu postponed the meeting two times. Firstly, he postponed it to 30 July and then postponed it again to 31 July. When they finally met, there were TV news and press reporters again. Qiu Jingwu yelled abuse at our production manager when he arrived. He said we had made the film without his authorization and the film had degraded the reputation of Qiu Jin. Our production manager invited him to watch the film and said that the film did not degrade Qiu Jin; otherwise, the expert group from SARFT would not have approved and adopted the film. Nevertheless, Qiu Jingwu, again, refused to watch the film. At this point, we knew we were not able to reach any reconciliation with him because he fundamentally opposed to any Qiu Jin films which had no authorization from him. We also had a clear picture that SARFT still saw consent from Qiu Jin's descendant as a way of resolving the issue. Since it was already August, there was little hope for us to resolve the issue in one or two weeks. We decided to put off the release date of the film to a later time, cancel the grand premiere at the Great Hall of the People and drop all the promotion activities. We re-scheduled the release date to 13 October 2012. In the meanwhile, we tried to seek the support of Qiu Jin's other descendants. We tried our best to find them, especially Wang Yanhua who might be misled by Qiu Jingwu and did not know he had instructed us to depict her grandfather as scum and something lower than animal, something we thought she would not agree with.

The lead actress of our film, Huang Yi, was particularly concerned about the situation. Her assistant, a girl from Wuhan, told us that she might be able to find out how to contact some Qiu Jin's descendants who were living in Wuhan. About one week later, we got the contact details of a woman, Lai Qishan — granddaughter of the son of Qiu Jin. We knew this woman was also not a lawfully qualified close relative of Qiu Jin and did not know how she would respond to the film we made, but if she were willing to sign an authorization letter for us, we still had a little hope that SARFT would accept her consent as a defence against Qiu Jingwu's opposition. At around the same time, someone in Hangzhou had found the contact address of another woman living in Shanghai, named Wang Weici, then aged one hundred and three years old. She is the daughter of Qiu Jin's sister, also not a lawfully qualified close relative of Qiu Jin, but a family member who was more senior and had a higher position than Qiu Jingwu in the family tree. We sent people to approach Lai Qishan and Wang Weici respectively. Our production manager contacted Lai Qishan and went to Wuhan to visit her with a DVD of our film on 10 August. She watched the film the next day and was so moved that burst into tears. She said that the film was touching, loyal to history and had glorified her great-grandmother, though the action sequences were a little too exaggerated. She understood that the action material was necessary to attract young audiences and that a film without any entertainment value would not be audience-friendly today (personal communication; see also ChinaNews.Com 20 Sept 2011). She agreed to sign an authorization letter for us, to attend the premiere and to be the 'honour consultant' of the film. Good news also came from Shanghai. Wang Weici and her daughter, Yang Wen (granddaughter of Qiu Jin's sister), were happy to hear that someone had made a film about Qiu Jin.

Though Wang Weici had not watched the film, she was willing to write a holograph of congratulatory message for us.



Left: The original poster of *The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake* with the original release date - 25Aug 2011.



Right: The authorization letter by Lai Qishan.

On 2 September, the media reported that Wang Yanhua was very worried about Qiu Jin's male attire and the action footage which she saw in the trailers of our film, and that she had written a letter to Premier Wen Jiabao to express her concern. At the same time, Qiu Jingwu also told the media that our film was a commercial *kuso* (spoof) as well as a low-brow, low-down and low-class production which had no respect for history (People.Com.Cn 2 Sept 2011). We wondered if Wang Yanhua had actually written to Premier Wen Jiabao and, if so, how seriously the Premier would view the issue. We also felt terrible about Qiu Jingwu's criticism, but we chose not to defend ourselves via the media because we did not want to prompt a war of words which might embarrass and aggravate SARFT. We preferred to contact Wang Yanhua. Lai Qishan had her phone number; they had met before at a

memorial ceremony of the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Qiu Jin, held in 2007. After a phone conversation with Wang Yanhua on 3 September, Lai Qishan informed us that Qiu Jingwu had phoned Wang Yanhua many times since mid-July and had criticized our film severely and negatively. Lai Qishan responded with her positive views towards the film and the fact that Qiu Jingwu had not watched the film at all. Lai Qishan also asked Wang Yanhua if she had written to the Premier. The reply was ‘no’. We then planned to visit Wang Yanhua with a DVD of the film to explain everything, but Lai Qishan said that Wang Yanhua did not want to meet strangers. However, Lai Qishan had no visa to the US and it would take almost a month for her to get the visa. We were running out of time, yet we did not want to take the risk of sending a DVD to Wang Yanhua by post because the film had not been released. We sent her the screenplay via e-mail instead, but she was not accustomed to computers and could not retrieve it. We then sent a hard copy to her by express mail, along with an invitation to a media conference which was going to be held in Hangzhou on 20 September, in which we would show the film to the media. By then it was 8 September.

We finally got the ‘License for Public Projection of Movies’ on 13 September, but also got an e-mail from Mei Ya Chang Cheng the next day:

The Film Bureau [of SARFT] phoned us this morning and said that Wang Yanhua had, indeed, written to Premier Wan Jiabao. The State Bureau for Letters and Calls has passed the letter to the Film Bureau. The Film Bureau paid much attention to the letter and has talked with Wang Yanhua via a phone conversation to validate the film with many explanations. Wang Yanhua said she wanted to read the script and watch the film. The Film Bureau hopes we can communicate with her as soon as possible and arrange a screening for her so as to ensure the

film can be released without any hitches. (Personal communication 14 September 2011; my translation)

We did not know whether the Film Bureau had verified with Wang Yanhua that she had sent a letter to the Premier. Since Wang Yanhua told Lai Qishan she had not written such a letter, it could either be that Wang Yanhua lied, or Qiu Jingwu faked Wang Yanhua's name and wrote the letter. Nonetheless, the letter was not important by then and we had to follow the Film Bureau's instructions because we sensed that SARFT could withdraw the license if we did not appear submissive. We sent a DVD to Wang Yanhua via express mail on 16 September in a state of trepidation. And then there was the e-mail from Mei Ya Chang Cheng:

I told the Film Bureau that Lai Qishan had had a phone conversation with Wang Yanhua and talked about the situation of the film, but Wang Yanhua told the Film Bureau that the son of Qiu Jin was sterile. His kids were adopted and that is why the Qiu clan does not acknowledge Lai Qishan and her siblings as members. (Personal communication 14 September 2011; my translation)

Meanwhile, Qiu Jingwu, on hearing we had approached Lai Qishan for authorization, also told reporters about the sterility of Qiu Jin's son, Wang Yuande. Qiu Jingwu stressed that adopted kids had no right to authorize any filming of Qiu Jin's story. I was shocked. I doubted that Wang Yuande would have adopted two daughters if he were sterile.²⁵³ I could hardly believe a person living in feudal times about a hundred years ago would adopt a girl rather than boy. I could not prove Lai Qishan's consanguinity but the mere word of either Qiu Jingwu or Wang Yanhua could disprove it.

²⁵³ Historians generally accept that Qiu Jin and her husband, Wang Tingjun, had one son and one daughter, named Wang Yuande (1897-1955) and Wang Canzhi (1901-1967) respectively. Wang Yuande who had ten concubines (some say nine) had two daughters, named Wang Jiadong and Wang Jialiang. The latter had five children; Lai Qishan is one of the children. Some sources say Wang Yuande also adopted a son named Wang Xiaomin (1925 -) and a daughter, named Wang Yulin.

Since there was not much we could do, we thought the best way to defend ourselves against Qiu Jingwu's accusations was to let the film speak for itself. Therefore, we showed *The Woman Knight* at a media conference held in Hangzhou on 20 September. Lai Qishan and her sister Lai Qixiang, Yang Wen together with her husband, Huang Yi, the film producer and I watched the film with the media. The film was well received. The media people saw that the film was faithful to history and in no way disgraced Qiu Jin. We also showed a video in which Wang Weici gave a brief speech to express her support for our film. Lai Qishan affirmed her authorization to the media afterwards and asserted in great agitation that she was a lineal descendant, a blood relative of Qiu Jin in the direct line of descent. When the news of the conference came out, Qiu Jingwu severely criticized it as a false authorization by a false descendant. He asked for DNA tests on Lai Qishan, himself and Wang Yanhua (ChinaNews.Com 23 Sept 2011). Lai Qishan and Lai Qixiang later held a media conference on 5 October, and, in some agitation, said that they were not the only ones who suffered from Qiu Jingwu's defamation. They said that Qiu Jingwu had drawn up a family tree in which he noted that the daughters of Wang Yuande were adopted and deleted all the relatives who might be a threat to his authoritativeness as the only spokesman about Qiu Jin. In 1997, the year of the one-hundredth death anniversary of Qiu Jin, when the Lai sisters went to Hangzhou to offer sacrifices to Qiu Jin with their father, Qiu Jingwu did not acknowledge them and made a statement that the Wang family were lower than animals. Afterwards, the cousin of Qiu Jingwu, Qiu Zhongying who was also the president of the Society for the Study of Qiu Jin in Shaoxing, wrote a letter of apology to Lai's father. The Lai sisters showed the letter to the media and stated that they would sue Qiu Jingwu for defamation (Sina.Com.Cn 5 Oct 2011). Meanwhile, in order to undermine all

the Wang family members' support for our film, Qiu Jingwu told the media that after the success of Xinhai Revolution, Sun Yat-sen granted a certificate of martyrdom to the Qiu family, but not the Wang family; therefore, it was the Qiu family who had the right to speak for Qiu Jin (see Sina.Com.Cn 11 Oct 2011). He also dismissed Wang Weici by saying that her mother, the younger sister of Qiu Jin, was abandoned by her husband (ibid). At this stage it seemed that the main effect of *The Woman Knight* was to incite an enormous family row.

On 23 September, we were informed that the Film Bureau had talked to Wang Yanhua again. Wang Yanhua had watched the movie and acknowledged it. In addition, we received a notice from SARFT, dated 9 September, issued to all the film-related institutions. The notice declared that *The Woman Knight* was the number-two film on the SARFT list of recommendations about celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution. It was finally released in the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong on 13 October 2011. Unfortunately, it ended up with disastrous box-office takings although it was generally well received by critics and praised by the audiences who had watched it.

A Cultural Translation of the Story of the Making of *The Woman Knight*

The above story was a hard experience for a film practitioner but it also provided a basis for an in-depth study of the harsh reality of so-called freedom of expression in the PRC, of which Hong Kong is a part. That reality exists alongside the constant claims of the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments that the implementation of the 'one country, two systems' policy guaranteed the right of

Hong Kong people to self-rule. Despite the situation, Hong Kong filmmakers and the administration of the PRC are brought closely together by both governments by means of CEPA.

In *The Friends of Voltaire*, Evelyn Beatrice Hall (2005: 199) summed up Voltaire's attitude towards Claude Adrien Helvétius's controversial book *De l'esprit* (*On Mind* or *Essays on the Mind*) in a statement which is always misattributed to Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."²⁵⁴ The statement has become a celebrated description of the principle of freedom of speech. There is another dubious quote, also attributed to Voltaire, which shares the same essence: "I detest what you write, but I would give my life to make it possible for you to continue to write."²⁵⁵ This perhaps not-so-popular statement can be regarded as an eloquent defence of tolerance, as well as the right to freedom of expression. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are synonymous in everyday usage, but in the strict sense, the latter encompasses a realm beyond literal utterance. According to the United Nations' "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" (came into force on 23 March 1976), of which the PRC is a signatory, the term freedom of expression also includes "freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in

²⁵⁴ The first publication of *The Friends of Voltaire* in 1906 was under the name S. G. Tallentyre, a pseudonym of Evelyn Beatrice Hall. "The statement was widely popularized when misattributed to Voltaire as a 'Quotable Quote' in *Reader's Digest* (June 1934), but in response to the misattribution, Hall was quoted in *Saturday Review* (11 May 1935), p. 13, as saying: I did not mean to imply that Voltaire used these words verbatim and should be surprised if they are found in any of his works" (Wikiquote 2011). Voltaire probably never said or penned the words.

²⁵⁵ The editor of *A Book of French Quotations*, Norbert Guterman, "noted a letter to M. le Riche (February 6, 1770) in which Voltaire is quoted as saying [the quote] . . . This remark, however, does not appear in the letter" (Wikiquote 2011).

writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice”
(Article 19).²⁵⁶

The story behind the making of *The Woman Knight* is an illustration of opposition against the principle of free speech and the right to freedom of expression under the peculiar governance of the Chinese Government. In addition, in the course of events, I encountered an ethical dilemma because we started to conceal transgressions against the official provisions and demands, and bypassed the influential individual who was not in favour of us. At the same time, the producer and I ran the risk of being punished. I, as a filmmaker, was a semi-voluntary participant — on one hand I was voluntary because there was no explicit coercive power forcing me to initiate and take part in such a project and, on the other, my action was involuntary because if I were to give up the filming and distribution in the Chinese Mainland, I would have no other options for various practical and realistic reasons mentioned earlier. However, I would like to make it clear that the rules we broke were just matters of procedure at the administrative level. Content-wise, the film was shot and executed in a way that followed the official rules and regulations and the official orders to make amendments. The screenwriter and I self-censored ourselves; we avoided in the screenplay all the ‘sensitive’ materials, perspectives and issues that might have been unwelcome to the Chinese Government. For instance,

²⁵⁶ “The UDHR [Universal Declaration of Human Rights], together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, form the so-called International Bill of Human Rights” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights n.d.). China signed the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” in 1998. “The US said the move played a part in its decision to drop an annual motion criticizing China’s human rights record at the UN. But some critics say the biggest change it represents is in China’s handling of public relations” (BBC 5 Oct 1998). “Human Rights Watch expressed concern that China might attach ‘reservations’, or other exceptions known as ‘declarations’ or ‘understandings’, to some of the covenant’s most important provisions, including Article 19 . . . (The US attached more exceptions than any other party to the treaty)” (Human Rights Watch 6 Oct 1998).

during my research, I found that the revolutionaries from Zhejiang and the nearby areas were not getting along well with those led by Sun Yat-sen from southern China; however, I excluded this in the screenplay. Also our screenplay did not touch on the Three Principles of the People (also known as *San-min* Doctrine or *san min zhuyi*) and the idea of ‘separation of five powers’ (modified from the *trias politica* principle of the West) advocated by Sun Yat-sen.²⁵⁷ As for the completed film, the examination officials asked for a few shots to be cut, which I thought as necessary and essential to the film as a whole. Furthermore, the original version of the film included a song by Lowell Lo, but I was asked to remove it because it is supposed to be about the June Fourth Massacre.²⁵⁸ I reluctantly but obediently complied with all these requests, which were, in effect, official orders. Even so, the obstacles we encountered had already landed us in a predicament. Since no one knew when we would actually get the ‘License for Public Projection of Movies’ or whether we would get a licence at all, the publicity plan was disrupted and the promotion campaign was hindered because there was no definite release date.

One of the hindrances in making *The Woman Knight* may seem quite peculiar from a liberal perspective; that is, the influential power of Qiu Jingwu. There is no Chinese law bestowing on Qiu Jingwu the right to censor our screenplay, production and ultimately the film. However, the government officials were concerned about his interference. Why and how does Qiu Jingwu attain such status? The question

²⁵⁷ The Three Principles of the People (*san min zhuyi*) are nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood. “The principle of nationalism called for overthrowing the Manchus and ending foreign hegemony over China. The second principle, democracy, was used to describe Sun's goal of a popularly elected republican form of government. People's livelihood, often referred to as socialism, was aimed at helping the common people through regulation of the ownership of the means of production and land” (Rinn-Sup Shinn and Robert L. Worden 1987).

²⁵⁸ The song is *Qihei Jiang Buzai Miandui* (literally *Won't Face the Dark Again*; my translation), music by Lowell Lo, lyrics by Gene Lau and performed by Lowell Lo. The song was included in a Lowell Lo album titled *1989*.

demands some understanding of Chinese culture because film, as a content carrier and representation medium, is not being questioned by the authority alone, traditional culture also plays a dominant part.

In China and for most of the Chinese, a significant portion of social values are derived from Confucianism (an imprecise translation of *Rujia*) which is an ethical and philosophical system derived from the teachings of the ancient Chinese thinker and socio-political philosopher Confucius ((*Kong Fuzi*, 551-479 BCE).²⁵⁹ Confucianism has played a central role in shaping Chinese thought and culture, as well as in stabilizing the whole socio-political structure of the State. It is the foundation of traditional Chinese morality, disciplining people's everyday lives and governing social order during the long history of feudal imperial China. Although it was overshadowed by other belief systems for several centuries, particularly by Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty, it still has a substantial and substantive influence on Chinese people today. "For Confucius, unless there are at least two human beings, there can be no human beings" (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 48). This corresponds to the Confucian virtue of *ren* (benevolence or humanness). The Chinese character of *ren* is comprised of two parts, with the left side meaning 'person' and the right side meaning 'two' showing that the word is about the interrelationship of human beings. *Ren* is the core moral virtue and the totality of all moral virtues of Confucian thought. According to the foundational text of Confucianism, the *Analects* (*Lunyu*; also known as *Analects of Confucius*), *ren* is the

²⁵⁹ There is no single Chinese term equivalent to 'Confucianism'. The term 'Confucianism' embraces a combination of the Chinese terms, namely, *Rujia* (Confucian School), *Rujiao* (Confucian Teaching) and *Ruxue* (Confucian Study). Note that the Chinese *ru*, which literally means 'scholars', can also refer to a Confucian scholar or simply scholar in contemporary daily usage.

perfect virtue which primarily means “to love all men” (Bk. XII, Ch. XXII).²⁶⁰ Yet, ‘to love all men’ in the Confucian sense is bound by a series of doctrines and rules. In order to achieve the virtue of *ren*, Confucianism puts the main emphasis on the self-cultivation of morality and harmonious human relationships by asserting the values of some key themes.

One of the important key themes of Confucianism is *xiao* which primarily means ‘being good to parents’, the first duty of every person in the Chinese sense.

The word [*xiao*] has been translated since the Jesuits in the 1500s as ‘filial piety’, but . . . the term . . . denotes a subjective state, i.e. a state of mind, a state of worshipful piety, rather than an objective state, i.e. a way of conduct, indeed a whole way of living one’s life, as prescribed by the sages. (Feng Xin-ming 2008)

Xiao Jing (*The Classic of Xiao*), a work written by Zeng Zi (505-436 BCE) but traditionally attributed to Confucius, is the main source of knowledge about *xiao*. According to *Xiao Jing*, Confucius said, “The body, hair and skin, all have been received from the parents, and so one doesn’t dare damage them — that is the beginning of *xiao*” (translation by Feng Xin-ming 2008). Nevertheless, the scope of *xiao* is not limited to being good to parents, but to ancestors as well.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ (i) All the translations of the *Analects* in this chapter are cited from *The Four Books* by James Legge (1900).

(ii) There are distinct interpretations of the *Analects* among scholars, and Chinese authorities interpret it differently in different periods of time. Legge’s translation of the meaning of *ren* as ‘to love all men’ is not universally accepted. Another possible meaning can be ‘to love men’. According to *A Historical Outline of Chinese Thoughts, Vol. 1* (ed. Hou Wailu 1980: 43-44), the objective of the Confucian love embedded in *ren* is not directed to all men. Men are divided into classes in hierarchical societies. Confucius further divided men into the *junzi* (superior man) and the *xiaoren* (mean man), and he opposed the latter resolutely. He did not suggest any kind of universality for human love. In Chinese societies where slavery was a legitimate institution and the commodity economy was not well-developed, it was impossible to produce the thought of ‘universal love’ which was later advocated by the bourgeoisie.

²⁶¹ Thus, the conventional translation of *xiao* as ‘filial’ is also imprecise.

Xiao, as prescribed by Confucius and Zeng Zi, is the very foundation of civil society itself. While most traditional civilizations base their civil orders upon divine, religious commandments, traditional Chinese civilization has been unique in remaining throughout its long history basically secular and not dominated by religion. . . . [T]he imperative underlying traditional Chinese civilization has been the secular yet idealistic concept of *xiao*. (Feng Xin-ming 2008)

Xiao sets the foundation of the notion of Chinese ethics by extending the parent and child relationship to four other cardinal human relationships — ruler and subject, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend relationships — altogether they are called the ‘five bonds’ or ‘five relations’ of Confucianism (*wulun*).²⁶² Except for the friend and friend relationship, all these relationships infer one’s superiority over another. With a set of precepts generated from *xiao*, such as loyalty, rightness, reverence, obedience, serving and so forth, everyone is assigned specific moral obligations to others based on one’s particular situation and position in relation to others. From the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) “until the overthrow of the Imperial system itself in 1911, *Xiao Jing* has been one of the most basic, must-read classic texts that every Chinese who considers himself educated has studied” (ibid). In the course of time, the doctrines of *xiao* have matured into an ideology on which the basic traditional Chinese worldview and core values rest, even though commoners have no firsthand knowledge of Confucianism. That is why there are two popular Chinese sayings: ‘*Xiao* is fundamental to Chinese culture’ (*Zhongguo wenhua yi xiao wei ben*; my translation) and ‘*Xiao* comes first among all the moral behaviours’ (*baixing yi xiao wei xian*; my translation). In the contemporary world, while Western culture, with its heritage of

²⁶² Confucianism is androcentric and patriarchal and Confucius did not teach that all human beings are equal.

the Enlightenment, values the individualist system of contractual relationships and celebrates individuality, Chinese culture values the notion of family more because *xiao*, which starts from family and involves a highly ordered kinship system, still plays a significant role in Chinese societies.

In the context of the tradition laid by *xiao*, Qiu Jingwu's interference in *The Woman Knight* was regarded as an act of *xiao* by the government officials. As mentioned earlier, SARFT once used the term *weiquan* (rights-defending) in our communication to describe his objection, which implies that SARFT considered the acts of Qiu Jingwu the duty of a descendant instead of an unreasonable intrusion. *Xiao*, in effect, had vested him with the right to censor our film. When Qiu Jingwu talked to the media, his rhetoric was full of references to safeguarding his ancestor and that he was doing what a descendant was obliged to do. Since *xiao* also lays stress on respect for and the superiority of senior members in the kinship system, Qiu Jingwu had to disqualify Wang Weici's support for our film so that he could retain his right as the only spokesman and authoritative agent of Qiu Jin. In addition, Qiu Jingwu's continual outbursts in the media had exerted a certain pressure on SARFT because he had the widely acknowledged *xiao* as his 'weapon', although Chinese Mainland netizens said that what Qiu Jingwu really wanted was money.

Harmony (*he*) is another equally significant theme of Confucianism. It is the ultimate goal of the perfect virtue *ren*. Harmony is a highly valued virtue in Chinese civilization and is celebrated as the highest cultural achievement (see Ames and Rosemont 1998: 56-57). Confucius lived in the Spring and Autumn Period of Chinese history, an era of constant warfare between neighbouring states. His ideal was to bring peace and order and strive for harmony among the states. According

to the *Analect*, another meaning of *ren* is “to subdue one’s self and return to propriety [*li*]” (Bk. XII, Ch. I). In order to accomplish harmony, Confucius advocated *li* (rites or propriety), which is the basis of the rules of Confucianism.²⁶³

Li are those meaning-invested roles, relationships, and institutions which facilitate communication, and which foster a sense of community. . . . They are a social grammar that provides each member with a defined place and status within the family, community, and polity. *Li* are life forms transmitted from generation to generation as repositories of meaning, enabling the youth to appropriate persisting values and to make them appropriate to their own situations.

Full participation in a ritually-constituted community requires the personalization of prevailing customs, institutions, and values. What makes ritual profoundly different from law or rule is this process of making the tradition one’s own. (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 51).

The Confucian notion of *li*, with its embedded idea of ‘what is proper’ and ‘the fitness of things’, does not only point to the rites practised by people alone but expresses the social customs and culture-specific norms that are meant to govern all human relationships (see Legge 1900: 9). *Li* work in an inseparable manner with *xiao*; they together suggest an understanding of political principles and every one’s proper position embodied in the social order. They function to preserve the harmony of human relationships, and thus the long-term stability of society and the State.²⁶⁴ Confucius said, “In practising the rules of propriety [*li*], a natural ease [*he*] is to be prized” (*Analects*: Bk. I, Ch. XII).²⁶⁵ Under the widespread influence of

²⁶³ The Confucian term *li* is commonly translated as ‘rites’ or ‘propriety’ which is also imprecise translation.

²⁶⁴ Another ancient Chinese school of thought, Taoism (aka Daoism), echoes this Confucian thinking. According to Taoism, the traditional Chinese model of ontology is mutual harmonization of *yin* and *yang* in the Supreme Ultimate (*Taiji*, introduced by the Taoist classic *Zhuangzi*).

²⁶⁵ According to my understanding, Legge’s translation of the term, *he*, here as ‘natural ease’ is more precise than the commonly used translation — ‘harmony’. Even with the same Chinese term,

Confucian thought, Chinese consider harmony [*he*] the highest goal in all kinds of relationships. Thus, the Chinese embrace Confucianism, hold *li* in very high regard and believe China to be a ‘country of courtesy and morals’ (*li yi zhi bang*; my translation).²⁶⁶

Today, the leaders of the PRC always maintain at international occasions that Chinese culture upholds the principle of harmony, regardless of the fact that the CPC induced considerable class struggles and conflicts in the past. Nonetheless, the official pursuit and realization of harmony today connotes the illegitimacy of resistance and struggles. In the *Analects*, Confucius said, “*There is government, when the prince is prince, the minister is minister; when the father is father, the son is son*” (Bk. XXII, Ch. XI; emphasis in original translation). This hierarchical sequence, from ruler down to son, is believed to be the basis of a harmonious society in Confucianism. *Li* emphasize self-restraint and set the rules of obedience, submission and obligation. They theoretically and then culturally legitimize the absolute power of the ruler. Indeed, traditional Chinese culture, with its embedded tendency to harmony, has illegitimized resistance and struggles and has undermined the human rights of individuals. Under the Confucian doctrines, a person who suffers for the sake of harmony in the social order is extolled as a good person, and any action challenging the authority is not in accordance with *li*. This is the opposite of Western societies for Western culture values personhood — every individual is valued as a subject with human rights who is licensed to struggle for his/her inherent rights and to exercise his/her rights to resist suppression. The

Legge uses different translations in accord with specific meanings as it is used in different parts of the *Analects*. However, I use “harmony” in the rest of the text to cover the broad sense of the term *he*.

²⁶⁶ To be more precise, *yi* here means “one’s sense of appropriateness that enables one to act in a proper and fitting manner, given the specific situation ([*Analects*:] 4.10, 9.4, 18.8)” (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 54).

Chinese, specifically the government and conservatives, see protests in Western societies as signs of unrest which would be a sign of impending chaos if they occurred in Chinese societies (see Sun, Lung-kee 1983: 140-146). The Chinese Government is now enforcing a policy of ‘stability preservation’ (*weiwen*) and requires societies under its sovereignty to be stable. The problem is that it believes suppression and silencing are the means to harmony.

As mentioned earlier, the SARFT official mentioned the principle of *yi he wei gui* (‘to regard harmony as the most valuable’; my translation) in our communication. We were ‘advised’ to communicate with Qiu Jingwu to resolve the issue and reach consensus. In other words, the aim was to achieve harmony, instead of trying to resist, struggle, dispute or make racket. Although it was Qiu Jingwu who was making loud noises in media, it was our ‘duty’ to ease his mind in the light of *xiao*, together with *li* and harmony. SARFT also said that they did not want to see any lawsuit about our dispute filed in court, in line with the Confucius saying, “In hearing litigation, I am like any other body. What is necessary, *however*, is to cause *the people* to have no litigation” (*Analects*: Bk. XII, Ch. XIII; emphasis in original translation). For the Chinese, bringing a case to court always implies a conflict and a rupture in a relationship, which are against the principle of ‘to regard harmony as the most valuable’. In Confucianism, harmony is also the objective of *li*. *Li* are the key to resolution and the settlement of disputes.

Literally, Confucianism is a prescription for rule of man instead of rule of law. The law is still not regarded as the best institution to resolve disputes in Chinese societies. “Chinese social life was interdependent and it was not liberty but harmony that was the watchword — the harmony of humans and nature for the

Taoists and the harmony of humans with other humans for the Confucians” (Nisbett 2003: 19). Confucius said, “If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame” (*Analects*: Bk. II, Ch. III). Confucianism differs from liberalism: Confucianism contains no concepts about individuals and emphasizes self-restraint in order to achieve harmony, whereas liberalism stresses the realization of the rights of the individual and the restraint of the ruler’s power by means of the institution of law. Significantly, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of ruling with perfect virtue, but does not offer any definitive guidance about poor or bad rulers. The *Analects* only warns, “In serving a prince, frequent remonstrances lead to disgrace. Between friends, frequent reproofs make the friendship distant” (Bk. IV, Ch. XXVI). By the doctrines of *li* and the notion of loyalty generated from *xiao*, people must obey the ruler even though the ruler is wrong or bad. Under the influence of Confucianism, there is hardly a hero or heroine who fought for the rights of individuals in Chinese history, and Qiu Jin was one of the rare examples. Chinese history eulogizes people who devoted their lives to the ruler or to the state. In short, Confucianism is not a philosophy of human rights, but one that aims to set society and the state in order. It constructs hierarchical politics which favour the authorities and the ruler (see Qin, Guoji 2008).

Interestingly, even though Confucianism is so deeply rooted in the minds of Chinese people and has been so influential, it has been criticized severely by those in authority since the establishment of the PRC.

One of the more recent ironies regarding the *Analects* occurred during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in which China’s political leadership tried to erase the country’s cultural past. The

‘Anti-Confucius Campaign’ (*pikong*) orchestrated a nationwide critique of Confucius that had the entire literate Chinese population studying the *Analects* in order to call it into question — a strategy that did more to reauthorize this classic than to stem its influence. (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 17-18)

However, there are signs in recent years that the Chinese Government is trying to revive Confucianism as the official State ideology. The erection of a nine-and-a-half-meter-tall statue of Confucius at Tiananmen Square on 12 January 2011 is an indication of its efforts (see IfengCom 25 Jan 2011). The award of the Confucius Peace Prize, China’s first-ever peace prize is another sign although also, apparently, a move to counter the Norwegian Nobel committees’ decision to confer the Nobel Peace Prize on the imprisoned Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo who was charged with inciting subversion. However, the Chinese Government has denied any connection to the Confucius Peace Prize, and “Tan [the chairman of the awards committee] declined to give details about his group — other than saying it is a non-government organization — or how the five-judge awards committee operated” (see CNN.Com 8 Dec 2010).²⁶⁷ Overall, it appears that government officials today are abiding by Confucianism.

China is in fact a country on its way to recapturing and rearticulating the Confucian moral and political commitments that lie at the foundations of Chinese culture

[Jiang Qing] proposes that contemporary Confucians draw on the rich resources of political Confucianism in order to build modern

²⁶⁷ The Confucius Peace Prize (2010) was handed out just one day before the handing out of the Nobel Peace Prize to the absent Liu Xiaobo, but the laureate of the Confucius Peace Prize, former Taiwanese vice president Lian Shen, was absent from the award ceremony too.

Confucian political institutions that can serve as an alternative to Western liberal democracy.²⁶⁸ (Fan, Ruiping 2011: 1, 4)

But, why this alternative? Although written in 1959, a time when the US and the PRC were embroiled in the tensions emanating from the Cold War, prominent American historian of China John K. Fairbank's words could be a well description of the PRC policy today:

That Confucian ideas persist in the minds of Chinese politicians today should not surprise us. Confucianism began as a means of bringing social order out of the chaos of a period of warring states. It has been a philosophy of status and obedience according to status, and consequently a ready tool for autocracy and bureaucracy whenever they have flourished. (Cited in Schurmann and Schell 1977: 48)

Such a courageous and self-sacrificing national martyr as Qiu Jin is undoubtedly a historical figure in the public mind. However, the CPC lays considerable stress on a 'correct' historical view adhering to the party line. An official narrative of modern Chinese history, albeit concise and amended four times during the past thirty years, can be found in the "Preamble" of the *Constitution*. Under the CPC's materialist conception of history, there is a close link between the 'historical' and the 'political'; ideas and views that diverge from the party line are considered undesirable. Liberal thought sanctions discussion, comment, criticism, evaluation, re-evaluation and even making fun of public political figures, but that is not the case in the Chinese Mainland. Political figures, particularly leaders of the CPC past and present, as well as controversial incidents in contemporary Chinese history, are not open for public discussion, comment or criticism. To do so always means facing the risk of a criminal charge. Talking about political figures and any

²⁶⁸ Here, Jiang Qing is a scholar of Confucianism, not the last wife of Mao Zedong although the two have the same spelling in pinyin.

issues related to revolution is always questionable. Hence, it is not surprising that *The Woman Knight* was also questionable and fell into the category of ‘major revolutionary and historical theme films’ which involved the examination of a specialist group. Nevertheless, the story of the making of *The Woman Knight* illustrates that a decision by SARFT may not be final.

On 26 August 2011, film director Feng Xiaogang delivered a speech in a session of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference:²⁶⁹

Film is an industrial product that carries content, in which creation is cardinal. Accompanying the flourishing growth of the Chinese film industry is the growing concern of all circles in society. Criticism of film is getting more and more incisive, and unwarranted accusations are coming from all walks of life, among which there is too much misinterpretation without real understanding as well as negative associations. The phenomenon of unreasonable conjectures, bludgeoning and labelling filmmakers is emerging in an endless stream. An unverified internal reference, public sentiment about an extract, a spoof on the internet or a critique from an irresponsible entertainment reporter, all can lead to instruction from official leaders of different levels and thereby subvert the legal examination result obtained through proper procedures. All this results in a peculiar phenomenon — the Film Bureau examines films, and everyone examines the Film Bureau. (News.Mtime.Com 30 Aug 2011; my translation)

Feng Xiaogang unambiguously described what was happening to the Chinese Mainland film industry and, in so doing, helped to explain the real story of the

²⁶⁹ The *Constitution of the PRC* states: “The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a broadly based representative organization of the united front which has played a significant historical role, will play a still more important role in the country's political and social life, in promoting friendship with other countries and in the struggle for socialist modernization and for the reunification and unity of the country” (Gov.Cn 2004).

making of *The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake*, a Mainland-HK joint production promoted by CEPA but placed under the jurisdiction of the Chinese Government's film administration body. Making film was, in short, all about how a peculiar style of censorship operates under an autocratic regime in a Chinese way and in the context of Chinese-style socialism.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

In the previous chapters, I have attempted to map out the trajectories of the evolution and transformation of the film censorship system in Hong Kong from the early stages of Hong Kong cinema up to and after the sovereignty change in 1997, concentrating on political censorship and the effect of politics on film censorship and filmmakers. Such a study aims to examine the interactive relationships between politics, political censorship, film production and filmmakers. It also looks at how formal and informal censorship affects film production, what effect politics has on Hong Kong filmmakers and how film censorship is covertly imposed by political and economic systems in the post-1997 era. In this last chapter, I would like to conclude by making several important points under different headings as follows.

Pre-1997 British Colonialism and Post-1997 Chinese Colonialism

Hong Kong cinema has never broken away from colonialism — British colonialism in the pre-1997 era and Chinese internal colonialism in the post-1997 era.

When the British colonialists retreated from Hong Kong in 1997, it did not become an independent political entity like other former colonies of the world; instead it turned into the only one of its kind in the history of colonialism. Before the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong took place in 1997, no one was sure

about how it would be governed and what the form of governance over post-1997 Hong Kong would be. However, the mother country of Hong Kong did not ‘liberate’ Hong Kong. After seventeen years (up to 2014), it is quite evident that the former suzerain of Hong Kong, Britain, has just been replaced by a new suzerain, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), as Beijing’s governance of Hong Kong via the Government of Hong Kong Special Administration Region (SAR) is nothing other than that of a colonial master (see Ma, Kwok-ming 2004: 8-10).²⁷⁰ This is particularly true of the regime under Leung Chun-ying. Leung, who took over the Chief Executive’s office in 2012, administers Hong Kong affairs in a way that mirrors the governors in colonial Hong Kong, but he does so on behalf of the Communist Party of China (CPC). In addition, signs and incidents in the past couple of years, also show that Beijing is interfering in Hong Kong affairs in a more and more direct and active manner, mainly via the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the HKSAR, in spite of the ‘one country, two systems’ policy. The governance of Hong Kong has reverted to the closed-door, high-handed colonial style that existed before the 1970s. It is marked for example, by the sudden increase in the high-profile arrests and prosecutions of social activists and dissidents over the past two years (up to 2014). However, Leung overlooks, or simply ignores, the political maturity of his subjects, and that has led to the growth of activist groups that are radically opposed to government policies. Recent examples include the conflict between the government and citizens induced by the North East New Territories Development Plan and the 2014-15 Budget.

²⁷⁰ For example, the consecutive government demolition of the old Star Ferry Pier in 2006 and the Queen’s Pier in 2007 were incidents manifesting the suppression of Hong Kong citizens’s collective memories of anti-colonial movements during the British colonial period, which echoed the typical cultural suppression of colonial rule. For a more detailed examination about the internal colonialism in Hong Kong after 1997, see Yau 2010: 94-115.

In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping promised that Hong Kong would retain its established political, legal and economic systems for at least fifty years after 1997, and his promise was written into the *Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the PRC (Basic Law)*. In these respects, Hong Kong is different from the rest of the Chinese Mainland. Today, it seems that the pledge covered not only the pre-1997 capitalist system and Hong Kong way of life but also the form of colonial governance. It is important to note that the meaning of colonialism cannot ever be reduced to a matter of sovereignty and, in fact, Beijing never mentioned the question of decolonization during its negotiations with the British Government over the Question of Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, it also seems that the ‘one country, two systems’ constitutional principle is also a synonym for internal colonialism, and that what the ‘special administrative’ in the ‘Hong Kong Special Administrative Region’ refers to is just a kind of colonial administration. In fact, the PRC has been practicing internal colonialism for decades before 1997, for example, in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and the Tibet Autonomous Region, albeit it is a charge which the Central People’s Government of the PRC (Chinese Government or Central Government) always refutes.²⁷¹ Perhaps, in the eyes of the Chinese Government today, Hong Kong people are also an ethnic minority (see Ma 2004: 114-120). In his essay “Internal Colonialism and the Uyghur Nationality: Chinese Nationalism and Its Subaltern Subjects” (1998), Dru C. Gladney describes the Uyghur ethnic group in the PRC as “subaltern subjects”, which “are the very groups, individuals, and subjectivities that continue to be regarded as somehow less authentic, more peripheral, and farther removed from a core Chinese tradition.” Such a description can also be applied to

²⁷¹ For more about the internal colonialism in the PRC, see Gladney (1998).

the Hong Kong people under the ‘one country, two systems’ principle, particularly when Hong Kong people are seeking and confirming their own cultural identity in the post-1997 era.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the filmmakers who fled from Shanghai to Hong Kong in the 1930s saw the then British colony as a place of inferior, slavish and un-Chinese culture. Fu (2003: 51-92) attributes such a prejudiced elitist view and the marginalization of Hong Kong cinema in the PRC’s official narratives to what he calls ‘Central Plains syndrome’. There is no doubt that colonial conditions and experiences have made the Hong Kong Chinese a cultural and political ‘other’ to the Chinese Mainland Chinese. Even though Hong Kong is officially a part of the PRC, the belief that Hong Kong has an ‘un-Chinese culture’ still persists and is embodied as an ideology in the Chinese Government administration. Fuelled by the growing sense of nationalism which has resulted from China’s expanding economic power over the last twenty years, the local culture of Hong Kong is still being marginalized by the PRC authorities. As Ackbar Abbas, in his *Hong Kong – Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, puts it:

[W]hile 98 percent of the [Hong Kong] population is ethnic Chinese, history (both colonial history and history on the mainland) has seen to it that the Hong Kong Chinese are now culturally and politically quite distinct from mainlanders; *two peoples separated by a common ethnicity*. . . . This has produced many instances of mutual mistrust and misunderstanding, with one side demonizing the other. . . . The Hong Kong person is now a bird of a different feather.²⁷² (1997: 2; emphasis added)

²⁷² Abbas’s *Hong Kong – Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* was published in 1997. According to the 2011 Population Census, 94% of the population are Chinese (ethnically speaking, Han Chinese) (Race Relations Unit, the Hong Kong SAR Government).

However, the two peoples separated by a common ethnicity have been brought very much closer together since 1997. While the PRC is politically very much more powerful and possesses the legitimate right to use force when it deems the occasion demands it, Hong Kong people, being its subaltern subjects, are weak in both aspects.

Colonialism is the extension of one power's control over a weaker political 'other' and, by its nature, always means the cultural subjugation of the colonized 'other'. Hong Kong is under the internal colonial rule of the PRC, ergo, the subjugation of Hong Kong cinema is an example of cultural subjugation. As discussed in Chapter 5, in 1996, the Film Bureau of the Chinese Government urged that Mainland-Hong Kong (Mainland-HK) co-productions should follow the principle of 'based on me principally' (*yiwo weizhu*; my translation), in which the word 'me' (*wo*) refers to the Chinese Mainland. By making that differentiation, the principle shows that there is an 'other' relative to the Chinese Mainland, and that other is Hong Kong. The instruction carried on after the 1997 handover.

The Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) measure also states that the plots or the leading characters of Mainland-HK joint productions of film must be related to the Chinese Mainland (see Chapter 5). The Chinese Government also prohibits film content from "distorting Chinese civilization and history, . . . disparaging the image of (Chinese) revolutionary leaders, heroes and important historical figures" and "disparaging the image of the people's army, armed police, public security organ or judiciary" (SARFT 22 May 2006). It is the authorities that decide whether or not a film is distorting, disparaging or reflecting the truth. The PRC's censorship is particularly strict with films which are

about the modern or contemporary history of China, or any Chinese historical or political figures, and those movies are specifically handled by a group of appointed specialists (see Chapters 5 and 6). Such a measure indicates that, under the PRC, there is no free speech about history. Only the official version is legitimate and any rewriting of history that deviates from that will be subject to the charge of sedition and a stiff penalty. In its official capacity, the State Administration of Press and Publication, Radio, Film, and Television' (SAPPRFT) forbids criticism and any mention of quite a number of episodes of Chinese modern and contemporary history in film so as to hide the CPC's inconvenient past from the public (see the censorship taboos listed in Chapter 5), echoing the former British Hong Kong Government's ban on the films about the history of colonization (see Chapter 3).²⁷³ Furthermore, the Chinese Government states in its provisions that "jointly-produced films may only be distributed and screened publicly inside or outside China after they have passed examination and obtained a Permit for Public Screening of Films issued by SARFT [now SAPPRFT]" (Ningbo Bureau of Culture Radio & TV, Press and Publication 27 April 2011). All these measures are typical of colonial governments' suppression of cultural and creative industries.

The banning of Mainland-HK joint productions of film that contain historical discourses that deviate from the official narrative needs special mention because it is always an important and characteristic task of a colonial power to implant collective amnesia in its governed subjects about certain episodes of the past. "Colonialism [and the autocratic regime as well] creates pasts that need forgetting" (Mageo 2001:

²⁷³ The State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) was established in June 1998 by reorganizing the former Ministry of Radio, Film and Television. In March 2013, SARFT merged with the General Administration of Press and Publication to form the State Administration of Press and Publication, Radio, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT).

5). What the authorities want people to forget are the pasts that would embarrass the Chinese Government or challenge the legitimacy of the CPC leadership. By banning the undesirable historical films, or preventing the production of such films, the Chinese Government can build another incomplete or inauthentic history of their own and create another collective memory for its people. Such a false history, and collective memory, in turn help to construct 'knowledge' of the present socio-political environment favouring the ruling body.

Knowledge refers to any and every set of ideas accepted by a social group or society of people, ideas pertaining to what they accept as real for them. . . .

Knowledges are subject to these two distinct processes: they are socially produced or generated, and they are socially distributed. . . .

Knowledge itself is a historical construct, forever changing its forms and the ways that it positions people within the worlds they inhabit. Knowledges cannot be divorced from the historically specific forms of social intercourse, communication, and organization.
(McCarthy 1996: 16, 23)

For these reasons, and because film is an art form designed for mass consumption and simultaneous collective experience — making it a strong social generator as well as a powerful distributor of knowledge — the Chinese Government wants to master the desirable and, at the same time, restrict the undesirable construction of historical knowledge by film. The most important task for the appointed specialist group responsible for the examination of 'major revolutionary and major historical theme films' is to identify if the public exhibitions of those films would result in any undesirable historical knowledge among the people (see Chapters 5 and 6). When certain officially constructed knowledge, which can be false knowledge, matures

enough, it produces among the governed an ideology that is in line with that of the government, which is also the ultimate goal of the ideological state apparatus of the Chinese Government. The CPC is much concerned with ideology because:

Ideologies claim a position of privilege, a position that grants to its possessor a claim of universality. Ideologies are absolutizing voices, passing themselves off as natural, as the only way of viewing things. All knowledges contain within them the seeds of ideological thinking. But some knowledges, because of their totalizing features and their ability to naturalize social reality, and to reproduce institutions of power, achieve more perfectly the status of ideologies. Ideologies succeed as ideologies by repressing the constructive function of knowledge, by hiding the social histories and circumstances from which ideas and systems of knowledge derive their logics. (McCarthy 1996: 7)

Such a rationale is a significant feature of colonial rule, particularly when it is engaged in the censorship of Mainland-HK joint productions of films. This explains why film, which is an ideology carrier capable of producing knowledge among the mass, is always under the special supervision of the ideological state apparatus of the Chinese Government. The contention under colonial rule is: “For those with power [the colonists], collective memories can serve ideological purposes; for those without [the colonized], recollecting contrary memories can be a subversive act and one constitutive of class consciousness” (Mageo 2001: 3). Colonial film censorship suppresses the recollection of contrary memories and the generation and distribution of those memories by film. However, the contrary memories that were suppressed by the Hong Kong Government during the British colonial period are also taboo subjects of the Chinese Mainland film censorship which is imposed on Hong Kong filmmakers via CEPA. Such taboo subjects include the historical incidents accounted in Chapters 2 and 3, for example, the seamen’s strike and the

Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott in the 1920s, the Double Tenth Riot in 1956, the Leftist Riots in 1967 and the Cultural Revolution that took place in the PRC from 1966 until 1976. Such sameness is not an irony because the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997 just signified a transformation of the former British colony to a PRC internal colony.

A Production Theory of Hong Kong Cinema

This study is also an attempt to develop a production theory of Hong Kong cinema.

Technology has made the reproduction of a work of art much cheaper. However, generally speaking, film differs from other forms of art such as painting, literature and music because its production always costs a much larger sum of money, which makes it necessarily and essentially a commodity that relies on a wide distribution network and mass appeal in order to survive as a sustainable industry. Therefore, it is very hard for filmmakers to neglect the market, except in those states whose ruling regime monopolizes film production and takes film as a functional propaganda instrument, such as in the PRC before the implementation of the ‘reform and opening-up’ national policy put forward by Deng Xiaoping (see Chapter 5 for a closer examination). In addition, filmmakers also have to avoid censorship problems and tackle censorship restrictions so that their works will not be banned from the market by the authorities. Therefore, an in-depth cinema study isolated from the cultural and socio-political context, which is a dominant factor affecting the conditions of productions, market and censorship, can hardly be a thorough one.

This applies particularly to Hong Kong cinema, which is a highly commercial industry rooted in a highly commercial city.

Why is Hong Kong a highly commercial city? It can be owing to mainly two reasons. Firstly, during the British colonial period, Britain valued Hong Kong as a trading centre and an entrepot and encouraged business activities in Hong Kong. Secondly, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, because of the social and political unrest, the turmoil of wars and the Chinese Communist rule, there were several waves of migration from the Chinese Mainland to Hong Kong from the 1930s to the early 1970s.

Hong Kong has up to quite recently been a city of transients. Much of the population was made up of refugees or expatriates who thought of Hong Kong as a temporary stop, no matter how long they stayed. The sense of the temporary is very strong, even if it can be entirely counterfactual. (Abbas 1997: 4)

At one level, the refugees saw livelihood, a matter in close relationship with money, as the most important thing in the British colony, and, at another, they also pursued instant pecuniary reward and wanted to earn and save more money so that they could aid their family members in the Chinese Mainland and emigrate to another better place someday. Most of them had no vision about their future in Hong Kong. It was such a psychology and mentality that sowed the seeds of pragmatism and utilitarianism in Hong Kong culture, making the colony a city of transients that was, and still is, highly commercial. In fact, since the United Kingdom (UK) and the PRC started their negotiation on the Question of Hong Kong in the early 1980s, there was a wave of emigration in Hong Kong that lasted for more than ten years, during which the June Fourth Massacre had prompted a peak of outflow of Hong Kong

residents in the early 1990s (mentioned in Chapter 4). However, as the post-1980s and the subsequent generations grow up, they are more rooted in and see Hong Kong as their home city, and are culturally and politically more distinct from the Chinese Mainlanders than their older generations, but Hong Kong remains a highly commercial city as it is still mastered by the older generations in power.

In *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (1983 [1958]), Raymond Williams examines, and makes sense of, a number of English literatures and the transformation of the common use of a number of English words by placing them in the context of the cultural and socio-political conditions during the Industrial Revolution. Being enlightened by Raymond Williams, by contextualizing film production and articulating it into a relationship with its contemporary cultural and socio-political conditions, the production theory of Hong Kong cinema becomes a theory that makes sense of the relations between film production, film censorship and the film market, which are highly dependent on, and subject to, their contemporary cultural and socio-political context, that is, the relations between film production and its conditions of production.

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, in the complex political context of the colony during the Cold War (as well as the cold war) years, the business concerns of the Hong Kong film industry and decisions of filmmakers were often read as ‘political’ by critics, whether they were influenced by the colonial government or other powers, such as the faceless representatives of the friendly neighbouring territories.²⁷⁴ When later scholars adopt such a reading strategy by retrospectively

²⁷⁴ David Faure suggests that there were the major and minor cold wars. While the major Cold War [with capital letters] referred to the contention between the US and the then USSR, which also included the confrontation between the ideologies of capitalism and communism, the minor cold war

judging and categorizing the politics of particular films and filmmakers, it also becomes problematic. Taking the film producer Zhang Shankun (mentioned in Chapter 3) as an example, it tends to be reductionist to presume he was sympathetic to the Kuomintang (KMT; also known as the Chinese Nationalist Party), even though he was a renowned film producer of the rightist camp in the 1950s, during which Hong Kong cinema was divided into the leftist and rightist camps. Back in the early 1940s, when Shanghai was occupied by the Japanese military, he collaborated with the Japanese to form China United (*Zhonglian*) Productions Limited and produced a number of entertainment films. He was then accused by nationalists of betraying his country for the sake of personal gain. When the Pacific War was over, he moved to Hong Kong and was recruited by Li Zuyong to establish Yonghua Motion Picture Industries Limited, but he left after two big productions, *The Soul of China* (1948) and *Sorrows of the Forbidden City* (1948). In mid-1949, Zhang Shankun was financially supported by the leftist shipping magnate, Lu Jiankang and founded the Great Wall Pictures Corporation (also known as ‘old Great Wall’) that would become a major leftist film company in the mid-1950s. However, after the CPC seized power over the Chinese Mainland in late 1949, he had never stepped foot in China because he was afraid of the CPC’s political liquidation, even though the Communist representatives asked him to join the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference in 1950. He left Great Wall in 1950 and continued to produce films with his own companies, firstly the Far East Company and then Hsin Wha Motion Picture. The latter set up branch office in Taiwan and co-produced a number of films with its Taiwan counterparts. Zhang Shankun died in 1957; his wife Tong Yujuan was one of the founders of the rightist Free General Association.

[with small letters] referred to the struggle between the CPC and KMT in Hong Kong [particularly during the 1950s and 1960s] (cited in Wong and Lee 2009: 5).

The founder of Yonghua, Li Zuyong is another example of the kind. Both the Chinese Mainland scholar Cheng Jihua and Taiwanese scholar Du Yunzhi sees him as a rightist, but overlook his business concerns (see Chapter 3). In addition, even during the politics sensitive era of the cold war, there were collaborations between the rightist and leftist cinemas under the table when business was concerned (see Chapter 3 under the heading ‘Filmmakers in Politically Sensitive Era: Left, Right, or Otherwise?’). By and large, the socio-political context at that time just meant a business environment for Hong Kong filmmakers, in which filmmakers had to endure the rules and censorship standards set by the relevant political powers. Most of them were essentially not stern leftist or rightist sympathizers, but adopted a political camouflage as a means of livelihood and to continue their careers in the film industry. Indeed, both of the rightist and leftist filmmakers in Hong Kong rarely made explicit political propaganda films.

Another example was the Hong Kong cinema during the late 1930s. After the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, national defence became a main genre side by side with the entertainment genres. It could be driven by the patriotic sentiment of Hong Kong filmmakers. However, one cannot ignore the business concerns involved. As the society was brimming with anti-Japan and national sentiment, filmmakers, particularly the producers, highly anticipated that national defence would be a genre widely welcomed by the people, especially when the earlier films of the genre had attained box-office success. However, in 1939 and 1940, there was a decline in the number of such films. Other than owing to the tightening of the colonial government’s political censorship, Zhou and Li (2005: 234-5) attribute the decline to the previously excessive releases and the commercial consideration of investors since the later national defence films could not attain

satisfactory box-office takings (see Chapter 2 under the heading ‘Chinese National Cinema vis-à-vis Colonial Censorship’).

In short, the Hong Kong filmmakers, in the main, just went with the flow in politics as they sought opportunities to make profitable films and continue their film business. Such business-orientation motive still persists today and has developed into an internal culture and a get-rich-quick mentality of the mainstream Hong Kong cinema, which, in addition to the economic and geo-political reality, make CEPA a successful institution that embodies the PRC’s film censorship (see Chapter 5).

Reflection

The world is changing rapidly; this is what I have profoundly experienced and felt when I was doing this study. After researching on the relevant materials for a year, I started to write the first chapter (Chapter 6) in 2012. In the course of the writing, there were new research findings as well as new government policies, affairs and happenings in both the PRC and Hong Kong. At one level, I could not ignore these because I did not want this study to be too much lagging behind the present reality, and, at another, all these would constitute different views and interpretations of the past and affect the discourse of this study. Practically, contextualization as a research method is not merely horizontal in its temporal and spatial concerns, but also vertical. I believe that film, as both an art form and a commodity for mass consumption, mirrors the filmmakers’ response to the context of the era in which they are living. However, given that I contextualize the past from today, there is inevitably an inherent bias because I cannot entirely escape the belief, experience,

knowledge and value that I have acquired and understood in the present days, which are not the same as those of the past.

I have been trying to manage this study in an objective manner, but since I am a current practitioner in the Hong Kong film industry and there is emotional involvement towards the imposed film censorship, I admit that this study can hardly be an impartial one.

Feminists insist that it is not possible for researchers to be completely detached from their work: emotional involvement cannot be controlled by mere effort of will and this subjective element in research should be acknowledged, even welcomed. . . . '[H]ygienic research' is a myth which presents a simplistic and often misleading view of research. (Letherby 2003: 68)

My subjectivity is that suppression always exists in the power relations of a society and is always legitimised by those in power. The intention of this study, by taking film censorship as a frame of reference, also aims to manifest the socio-political changes and transformations of governance in Hong Kong over the past one hundred years. Last but not least, what I have observed from the study is: Some people are cunning, but they are not as cunning as history. History always makes the past pave the conditions of the present in a cunning way, which is beyond the expectation of those who were in power in the past.

Glossary

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
<i>14,000 Witnesses</i> (film)	<i>Yi Wan Si Qian Ge Zheng Ren</i>	《一萬四千個證人》
50 TH Year Motion Pictures		五十年代影業公司
Administrative Measures on Chinese-foreign Co-operation in Film Production (2003)		中外合作攝製電影片管理規定 (2003)
(The) Administrative Measures Regarding Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Film Production (1994)	<i>Guanyu Zhongwai Hezuo Sheshi Dianying De Guanli Guiding</i>	關於中外合作攝製電影的管理規定 (1994)
<i>All's Well, Ends Well 2010</i> (film)	<i>Fa Tin Hei Si 2010</i>	《花田囍事 2010》
<i>(The) Analects</i>	<i>Lunyu</i>	《論語》
Anti-Confucius Campaign'	<i>pikong</i>	批孔
<i>Artland</i> (magazine)	<i>Yilin</i>	《藝林》
Asia Pictures Limited		亞洲影業公司
<i>At This Crucial Juncture</i> (film)	<i>Jui Hau Gwaan Tau or Zuihou Guantou</i>	《最後關頭》
Ba Jin		巴金
<i>Bad Dreams</i> (film)	<i>E Meng Chu Xing</i>	《惡夢初醒》
Bai Chen		白沉
Bai Guang		白光
based on me principally	<i>yiwo weizhu</i>	以我為主
<i>(The) Battle of Changsha</i> (film)	<i>Changsha Huizhan</i>	《長沙會戰》
<i>(The) Battle of Gunningtou</i> (film)	<i>Gunningtou Da Zhan</i>	《古寧頭大捷》
<i>(The) Battle of Hong Kong</i> (aka <i>The Last Day of Britain</i> or <i>The Day England Fell</i>) (film)	<i>Hong Kong Kung Leuk Jin</i>	《香港攻略戰》
<i>Battle on Shangganling Mountain</i> (aka <i>Shangganling Mountain</i>) (film)	<i>Shang Gan Ling Zhan Yi or Shang Gan Ling</i>	《上甘嶺戰役》 aka 《上甘嶺》
Beijing Film Studio		北京電影製片廠
Beiyang Government		北洋政府
benevolent (an imprecise translation) of Confucianism	<i>ren</i>	仁
<i>(The) Blood-stained Baoshan Fortress</i> (film)	<i>Huet Chin Bo Saan Shing or Xuejian Bao Shan Cheng</i>	《血濺寶山城》
<i>Blood Will Tell</i> (film)	<i>Haitang Hong</i>	《海棠紅》
<i>Blue Kite</i> (film)		《藍風箏》
Bluebird Movie Enterprises Limited		青島電影製片有限公司
<i>Boat People</i> (film)		《投奔怒海》
<i>Bride Hunter</i> (film)	<i>Wang Lao Hu Qiang Qin</i>	《王老虎搶親》
Bu Wancang		卜萬蒼
<i>Buddha's Lock</i> (film)		《天菩薩》
<i>(The) Burning of the Imperial Palace</i> (film)		《火燒圓明園》

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
<i>Butterfly Beauty</i> (Film)	<i>Choi Dip Seung Fei</i>	《彩蝶雙飛》
<i>(The) Butterfly Lovers</i> (film)		《梁山伯與祝英台》
Cai Chusheng (aka Tsai Chu-sang)		蔡楚生
Cantonese Film Salvation Movement		粵語片救亡運動
Cathay Organization Limited		國泰機構
(The) Central Committee of the CPC		中國共產黨中央委員會
(The) Central Committee of the CPC's Decision on Economic System Reform	<i>Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Jingji Tizhi Gaige De Jueding</i>	中共中央關於經濟體制改革的決定
(The) Central Committee of the CPC's Suggestions Regarding the Formulation of the Tenth Five-Year Plan of National Economy and Social Development		中共中央關於制定國民經濟和社會發展第十個五年計劃的建議
(The) Central People's Government of the PRC		中華人民共和國 中央人民政府
(The) Central Politics and Law Commission of the CPC		中國共產黨中央政法委員會
Cha, Louis		查良鏞
Chan, Frankie		陳勳奇
Chan Kam-chuen		陳鑑泉
Chang Cheh		張徹
Chang Chung		張沖
Chang Kuo-sin		張國興
Chang Tseng-chai		張曾澤
Cheang, Soi		鄭保瑞
Chen Jinbo		陳錦波
Chen Jitang		陳濟棠
Chen Kaige		陳凱歌
Chen Yi		陳毅
Cheng Bugao		程步高
Cheng Chung-li		鄭君里
Cheng Jihua (aka Cheng Chi-hua)		程季華
Cheng, K Leonard		鄭國漢
Cheng Yin		成蔭
Cheong Kam-chuen, Stephen		張鑑泉
Cheuk Pak Tong		卓伯棠
Cheung, Leslie		張國榮
Cheung Sing-yim		張鑫炎
Chiang Kai-shek (aka Jiang Jieshi or Jiang Zhongzheng)		蔣介石
Chin, Charlie		秦祥林
<i>Chin Ping Mei</i> (film)		《金瓶梅》
<i>China Behind</i> (film)		《再見中國》
China Film Co-Production Corporation		中國電影合作製片公司 aka 中制公司 or 合拍公司

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
China Film Group Corporation		中國電影集團
<i>China Film News</i> (magazine)		《中國電影報》
<i>China Mail</i> (newspaper)		《德臣西報》 aka 《中國郵報》
China Movie Studio		中國電影制片廠
China Sun Film Production Company	<i>Man San</i> or <i>Minxin</i>	民新製造影畫片公司
China United Productions Limited	<i>Zhongguo Lianhe Zhipian Gufen Gonsi</i>	中華聯合製片股份有限公司 (簡稱「中聯」)
Chinese (as a language in Singapore and Malaysia)	<i>Huayu</i>	華語
Chinese-foreign cooperative production of films		中外合作攝製電影片
<i>Chinese Mail</i> (newspaper)	<i>Wah Dzi Yat Po</i>	《華字日報》
Chinese nation	<i>Zhonghua minzu</i>	中華民族
Chinese-style socialism		中國特色社會主義
Ching, Frank		秦家聰
Chiu, Joe (aka Joseph Sunn)	<i>Chiu Shu-sun</i> or <i>Zhao Shu-sen</i>	趙樹榮
Chiu Kang-chien		邱剛建
Choi, Clifford		蔡繼光
Chow Shouson		周壽臣
Chow, Stephen		周星馳
Chow Wing-loi		周永萊
Chow Yun-fat		周潤發
Chu Hak		朱克
Chu Hung (aka Zhu Hong)		朱虹
Chuang Tzu (aka Zhunagzi)		莊子
<i>Chuang Tzu Tests His Wife</i> (aka <i>Zhuangzi Tests His Wife</i> or <i>The Defamation of Choung Chow</i>) (film)		《莊子試妻》
Chun Yuen Film Production Company		中原電影製片公司
Chung Po Yin		鍾寶賢
<i>Chung Shan Yat Po</i> (newspaper)		《中山日報》
Chung Yiu		宗由
<i>City Entertainment</i> (magazine)		《電影雙週刊》
<i>(The) Classic of Xiao</i>	<i>Xiao Jing</i>	《孝經》
<i>Codename Cougar</i> (aka <i>Operation Cougar</i> or <i>The Puma Action</i>) (film)		《代號美洲豹》
<i>(The) Coldest Winter in Peking</i> (film)	<i>Huang Tian Hou Tu</i>	《皇天后土》
Committee for the Establishment and Research of a National Language	<i>Guoyu Biancha Weiyuanhui</i>	國語編查委員會
(The) 'common language' of China (aka <i>Putonghua</i>)	<i>Putonghua</i>	普通話
Confucian Study	<i>Ruxue</i>	儒學
Confucian Teaching	<i>Rujiao</i>	儒教

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
Confucianism	<i>Rujia</i>	儒家 (imprecisely equivalent)
<i>Confucius</i> (film)	<i>Kong Zi</i>	《孔子》
<i>Conscience</i> (film)	<i>Leung Sum</i>	《良心》
Copyright Law of the PRC		中華人民共和國著作權法
counterattack on Mainland	<i>fangong Dalu</i>	反攻大陸
country of courtesy and integrity	<i>li yi zhi bang</i>	禮義之邦
<i>Cream, Soda and Milk</i> (film)		《忌廉溝鮮奶》
Dai An-ping		戴安平
<i>Dangerous Encounter - 1st Kind</i> (aka <i>Don't Play with Fire</i>) (film)	<i>Dai Yat Lui Ying Ngai Him</i> aka <i>Dai Yat Lui Ngai Him</i>	《第一類型危險》 aka 《第一類危險》
<i>Daughters of China</i> (film)	<i>Zhong Hua Nu Er</i>	《中華女兒》
Decree gets no further than Zhongnanhai		政令不出中南海
<i>Democracy in the Northeast</i> (film)	<i>Min Zhu Dong Bei</i>	《民主東北》
Deng Xiaoping		鄧小平
<i>(The) Destiny of Keum-hee and Eun-hee</i> (film)		《金姬與銀姬的命運》
<i>Devils on the Doorstep</i> (film)		《鬼子來了》
Dhondup Wangchen		當知項欠
Di Fan		狄梵
Ding Guangen		丁關根
Double Ten Day (aka the Double Tenth Day)	<i>Shuang Shi Jie</i>	雙十節
Dragon-Horse Films	<i>Loon-Ma</i>	龍馬影業公司
<i>Dragon Inn</i> (film)		《新龍門客棧》
<i>Dream of the Red Chamber</i> (film)	<i>Hong Lou Meng</i>	《紅樓夢》
Du Yunzhi		杜雲之
<i>(The) East is Red</i> (film)	<i>Dong Fang Hong</i>	《東方紅》
East River Column		東江縱隊
Eight hundred million people watched eight shows	<i>Bayi ren kan bage xi</i>	八億人看八個戲
Eng Wah & Co. H.K.		香港永華公司
<i>(The) Enigmatic Case</i> (film)		《碧水寒山奪命金》
Era International (H.K.) Ltd		年代國際(香港)有限公司
Extraordinary President	<i>feichang dazongtong</i>	非常大總統
<i>Fascination Amour</i> (film)		《愛情夢幻號》
Fan Hsu Lai-tai, Rita		范徐麗泰
Fang Lizhi		方勵之
Far East Company		遠東公司
<i>Fearless</i> (film)	<i>Foh Yuen Gaap</i> or <i>Huo Yuan Jia</i>	《霍元甲》
Fei Mu		費穆
Feng Huang (Phoenix) Motion Picture Company		鳳凰影業公司
Feng Qun	<i>Feng Qun</i>	鳳群
Feng Xiaogang	<i>Feng Xiaogang</i>	馮少剛

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
<i>(The) Fiery Phoenix</i> (film)	<i>Huo Feng Huang</i>	《火鳳凰》
filial of Confucianism (an imprecise translation)	<i>xiao</i>	孝
<i>Film Censorship Standards - a note of guidance</i>		《電影檢查標準指南》
Film Workshop Company Limited		電影工作室有限公司
<i>(A) Fisherman's Honour</i> (film)	<i>Hai Shi</i>	《海誓》
<i>(The) Fishermen's Song (Remake)</i> (film)	<i>Xin Yuguang Qu</i>	《新漁光曲》
five bonds (aka 'five relations') of Confucianism	<i>wulun</i>	五倫
<i>Flames of Lust</i> (film)		《情燄》
<i>Flirting Scholar</i> (film)		《唐伯虎點秋香》
<i>(The) Flower Street</i> (film)	<i>Hua Jie</i>	《花街》
focus on construction, establishment as principle	<i>zhong zai jianshe, yi li weiben</i>	重在建設， 以立為本
Fok, Henry	<i>Fok Ying Tung</i>	霍英東
<i>Fong Sai-yuk</i> (film)		《方世玉》
<i>(A) Forgotten Woman</i> (film)	<i>Dang Fu Xin</i>	《蕩婦心》
<i>Formosa Today – Taiwan</i> (film)	<i>Jin Ri Bao Dao</i>	《今日寶島 – 台灣》
<i>From Victory to Victory</i> (aka <i>Fighting North and South</i>) (film)		《南征北戰》
Fu Che		傅奇
General Administration of Press and Publication (of Taiwan)	<i>Xinwen Chuban Zongshu</i>	中華人民共和國 新聞出版總署
<i>General Knowledge of Xiangxiang History and Geography</i>	<i>Xiangxiang Shi Di Changshi</i>	《湘鄉史地常識》
(The) General Office of the State Council's Guidance Opinion Regarding the Advancement of Prosperous Development of the Film Industry	<i>Guowuyuan Bangongting Guanyu Cujin Dianying Chanye Fanrong Fazhan de Zhidao Yijian</i>	國務院辦公廳 關於促進電影產業繁榮發展的 指導意見
get down with Chiang Kai-shek	<i>dadao Chiang Kai-shek</i>	打倒蔣介石
<i>(The) Gift of A Fu</i> (film)	<i>A Fu De Li Wu</i>	《阿福的禮物》
<i>Girl Basketball Player No. 5</i> (film)	<i>Nu Lan Wu Hao</i>	《女籃五號》
<i>(A) Glorious Festival</i> (aka <i>National Day of 1964</i>) (film)	<i>Guang Hui Di Jie Ri</i>	《光輝的節日》
<i>Gone are the Swallows When the Willow Flowers Wilt</i> (film)	<i>Lu Hua Fan Bai Yan Zi Fei</i>	《蘆花翻白燕子飛》
Government Information Office (of Taiwan)	<i>Xinwen Ju</i>	(台灣) 政府新聞局
Grand Motion Picture Company		國聯影業有限公司
Grandland (aka Great Earth) Motion Picture Corporation	<i>Dadi</i>	大地影業公司
Grandview (US) Film Co. Grandview (HK) Film Co., Ltd.	<i>Daguan or Tai Quon</i>	大觀聲片(美國)公司 大觀聲片(香港)有限公司

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
Great Wall Movie Enterprises Ltd.		長城電影製片有限公司
Great Wall Pictures Corporation	<i>Changcheng</i>	長城影業公司 (舊長城)
Gu Eryi		顧而已
Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott (aka Canton-Hong Kong Strike)	<i>Sheng-kang Ta-pa-kung</i>	省港大罷工
Ha, Pat		夏汶汐
Haiyan Film Company		香港海燕影業公司
<i>Halfway Down</i> (film)	<i>Ban Xialiu Shehui</i>	《半下流社會》
Han Feizi	<i>Han Feizi</i>	韓非子
<i>(The) Happenings</i> (film)		《夜車》
harmony	<i>he</i>	和
<i>(The) Haunted House</i> (film)	<i>Quion Lou Hen</i>	《瓊樓恨》
He Feiguang		何非光
<i>Heartaches</i> (film)	<i>Sum Hun</i>	《心恨》
<i>Heung Tao Daily</i> (newspaper)		《香島日報》
Heung To Middle School		香島中學
(The) higher ups have policies while the lower downs have their own ways of getting around them	<i>shang you zheng ce, xia you dui ce</i>	上有政策, 下有對策
Highland Films Enterprises (HK) Ltd		海聯影業機構(香港)有限公司
<i>Histoire du Cinema Modial</i>	<i>Shijie Dianying Shi</i>	《世界電影史》
<i>History of the Development of Chinese Cinema</i>	<i>Zhongguo Dianying Fazhan Shi</i>	《中國電影發展史》
Ho Yin		何賢
<i>Holy Robe of the Shaolin Temple</i> (film)		《木棉袈裟》
<i>(The) Home at Hong Kong</i> (film)		《家在香港》
<i>Homecoming</i> (film)		《似水流年》
Hong Kong and Kowloon Cinema & Theatrical Enterprise Free General Association		港九電影戲劇事業自由總會
Hong Kong and Kowloon Union of Free Workers in the Cinema and Theatrical Enterprises		港九影劇從業人員自由工會
Hong Kong and Kowloon Union of Free Workers in the Film Industry (aka Hong Kong and Kowloon Filmmakers Free General Association)		港九電影從業人員自由工會
Hong Kong & Macau Cinema and Theatrical Enterprise Association Limited		港澳電影戲劇總會
Hong Kong Cinema & Theatrical Enterprise Association Limited		香港電影戲劇事業總會有限公司

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
<i>Hong Kong Daily Press</i> (newspaper)		《孖刺日報》
Hong Kong Film Company		香港影片公司
<i>Hong Kong News</i> (newspaper)		《香港日報》
<i>Hong Kong Standard</i> (newspaper)		《英文虎報》
<i>Hong Kong Telegraph</i> (newspaper)		《士蔑西報》 aka 《香港電訊報》
<i>Hong Kong-Tokyo Honeymoon</i> (film)	<i>Xianggang Dongjing Miyue Luxing</i>	《香港東京蜜月旅行》
Hongtu Film Company		香港鴻圖影業公司
Hou Wailu		侯外廬
<i>(The) House of 72 Tenants</i> (film)	<i>Chat Sap Yi Ka Fong Hak</i>	《七十二家房客》
Hsia Moon		夏夢
Hsin Wha Motion Picture		新華影業公司
Hu Hanmin		胡漢民
Hu Jingtao		胡錦濤
Hu Siao-fung		胡小峰
Hu, Sibelle		胡慧中
Hu Yaobang		胡耀邦
Hua Guofang		華國鋒
Huaxia Film Distribution Co., Ltd.		華夏電影發行有限責任公司
Huang, Crystal	<i>Huang Yi</i>	黃奕
Huang Hua		黃華
Huaqiao Film Corporation		華僑影業股份有限公司
Hui, Ann		許鞍華
Huo Yuan Jia		霍元甲
<i>(The) Idiot's Wedding Night</i> (film)	<i>Soh Jai Dung Fong</i>	《傻仔洞房》
<i>If I Were for Real</i> (film)	<i>Jia Ru Wo Shi Zhen De</i>	《假如我是真的》
<i>If You Are the One</i> (film)	<i>Fei Cheng Wu Rao</i>	《非誠勿擾》
Interim Provisions on Film Censorship, 1993	<i>Dianying Shencha Zanxing Guiding, 1993</i>	電影審查暫行規定（1993）
Interpretation of the Supreme People's Court on Problems regarding the Ascertainment of Compensation Liability for Emotional Damages in Civil Torts		最高人民法院 關於確定民事侵權精神損害 賠償責任若干問題的解釋
Ip, Deanie		葉德嫻
Ip Man		葉問
January 28 Incident		一·二八事變
Jia Zhangke		賈樟柯
Jiang Qing		江青
Jiang Qing		蔣慶
Jiang Wei		蔣偉
Jiang Wen		姜文
Jiang Zemin		江澤民
<i>Jing Xiong Nu Xia – Qiu Jin</i> (film)		《競雄女俠 – 秋瑾》
<i>joh pai</i>		左派

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
<i>joh yik</i>		左翼
<i>Journey to the West</i> (film)	<i>Xi You Ji</i>	《西遊記》
King Hoi-lam		敬海林
Kinmen (aka Quemoy)		金門
Ko Lei-hen		高梨痕
Ko Sing Theatre		高陞戲院
Ko Tim-keung		高添強
Kong Ngee Company		光藝有限公司
Koo Siu-fung		古兆奉
Kuei, Rose		歸亞雷
<i>(The) Kung Sheung Daily News</i> (newspaper)	<i>Kung Sheung Yat Po</i>	《工商日報》
Kuo Morou		郭沫若
Kwan, Moon	<i>Kwan Man-ching</i>	關文清
Kwan Tak-hing	<i>Guan Dexing</i>	關德興
Kwong, K. C.		鄺其志
<i>(The) Lady of Mystery</i> (film)	<i>Shenmi Meiren</i>	《神秘美人》
Lai Buk-hoi (aka Lai Pak-hoi, Li Beihai)		黎北海
Lai Hoi-shan		黎海山
Lai Man-wai (aka Li Minwei)		黎民偉
Lai Qishan		賴啟珊
Lai Qixiang		賴啟湘
Lam Bun		林彬
Lam, George		林子祥
Lam Kui-shing, Conrad		林鉅成
Language of the state officials (during the Ming and Qing periods)	<i>Guanhua</i>	官話
<i>(The) Last Supper</i> (film)	<i>Wang Di Shengyan</i>	《王的盛宴》
Lau, Andrew		劉偉強
Lau, Andy		劉德華
Lau, Gene	<i>Lau Cheuk Fai</i>	劉卓輝
Law Kar		羅卡
Leading Group for Major Revolutionary and Historical Theme Film and Television Production - Film	<i>Zhongda Geming He Lishi Ticai Ying Shi Chuangzuo Lingdao Xiaozu – Dianyin</i>	重大革命及歷史題材 影視創作領導小組 – 電影
<i>Leaving Fear Behind</i> (documentary)		《無懼》
Lee Ching		李清
Lee, Desmond		李汝大
Lee Hysan		利希慎
Lee Ka-yan		李嘉恩
Lee Lan		李蘭
Lee, Martin		李柱銘
Lee, Raymond		李惠民
Lee Yee		李怡

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
Legalism	<i>Fajia</i>	法家
<i>(The) Legend is Born – Ip Man</i> (film)	<i>Ip Man Chin Juen</i>	《葉問前傳》
<i>(The) Legendary Amazons</i> (film)	<i>Yeung Moon Lui Jeung Ji Gwan Ling Yue Saan</i>	《楊門女將之軍令如山》
let a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend	<i>baihua qifang, baijia zhengming</i>	百花齊放, 百家爭鳴
Leung Chiu-wai, Tony		梁朝偉
Leung Chun-ying		梁振英
Li Cheuk-to		李焯桃
Li Chi-hwa		李啟華
Li, Erica	<i>Li Man</i>	李敏
Li Han-hsiang		李翰祥
Li, Jet		李連杰
Li Peng		李鵬
Li Pingqian		李萍倩
Li Shaobai		李少白
Li Shuguang		李曙光
Li Si		李斯
Li, Teresa	<i>Li Lihua</i>	李麗華
Li Yizhuang		李以莊
Li Zuyong		李祖永
(The) Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region		中央人民政府 駐香港特別行政區 聯絡辦公室
Lian Shen		連戰
Liao Chengzhi		廖承志
Liberty Film Company		自由影業公司
License for Producing A Movie		攝製電影片許可證（單片）
License for Public Projection of Movies		電影片公映許可證
<i>Life with Grandma</i> (film)	<i>Man Ting Fang</i>	《滿庭芳》
<i>Lifeline</i> (film)	<i>Saang Meng Sin or Shengming Xian</i>	《生命線》
Lin Huan (real name Louis Cha)		林歡（本名查良鏞）
Lin, Linda	<i>Lin Dai</i>	林黛
Lin Shan		林杉
<i>Ling Sing</i> (magazine)		《伶星》
Ling Zifeng		凌子風
literary inquisition	<i>wénzìyù</i>	文字獄
<i>Little Red Book</i> (aka <i>Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong</i>)	<i>Mao Yulu</i>	《毛語錄》
<i>(The) Little Tiger</i> (film)	<i>Siu Lo Fu</i>	《小老虎》
Liu Qiong		劉瓊
Liu Shuyung		劉蜀永
Liu Xiaobo		劉曉波

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
Liu Yet-yuen (aka Liao Yiyuan)		廖一原
Lo, Lowell	<i>Lo Goon Ting</i>	盧冠廷
Lo Dun		盧敦
Loke Wan-tho		陸運濤
<i>Lonely Fifteen</i> (film)		《靚妹仔》
<i>(The) Lost Bladesman</i> (film)	<i>Guan Yun Chang</i>	《關雲長》
Lou Ye		婁燁
Lu Chuan	<i>Lu Chuan</i>	陸川
Lu Dingyi		陸定一
Lu Jiankang		呂建康
Lu, Sheldon Hsiao-peng		魯曉鵬
Lu Xun		魯迅
<i>(The) Luminescent Cup</i> (film)	<i>Ye Gwong Booi</i>	《夜光杯》
<i>(The) Lunatics</i> (film)		《癲佬正傳》
Lung, Patrick	Lung Kong	龍剛
Luo Weiming		羅維明
Ma Kwok-leung		馬國亮
Ma Xu Weibang		馬徐維邦
<i>Madame Butterfly</i> (film)	<i>Hudie Furen</i>	《蝴蝶夫人》
<i>Mainland 1989</i> (film)		《大陸 1989》
Mak, Johnny		麥當雄
Mak, Michael		麥當傑
Mak Siu-ha.		麥嘯霞
Mak Tai-kit		麥大傑
<i>Man Behind the Sun</i> (film)		《黑太陽 731》
Mandarin (national language)		國語
Mao Dun		茅盾
Mao Zedong (aka Mao Tse-tung)		毛澤東
<i>March of the Guerrillas</i> (aka <i>March of the Partisans</i> , re-titled <i>Song of retribution</i> when it was released) (film)	<i>Yau Gik Jun Hang Kuk</i> or <i>Youji Jinxing Qu</i>	《遊擊進行曲》
(The) Marco Polo Bridge Incident (aka the Incident of 7 July or Logou Bridge Incident)		七. 七盧溝橋事變
May Thirtieth Movement		五卅運動
(the) mean man of Confucianism (an imprecise translation)	<i>xiaoren</i>	小人
Measures for Control over Imported Films		進口影片管理辦法
Mei Ya Chang Cheng Culture Communication Limited		美亞長城影視文化(北京) 有限公司
<i>Ming Pao</i> (newspaper)		《明報》
<i>Ming Pao Weekly</i> (magazine)		《明報周刊》
<i>Mirage</i> (film)		《海市蜃樓》
<i>(The) Mirror</i> (magazine)		《鏡報周刊》

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
<i>(The) Mischief Makers</i> (film)	<i>Nau Gai Jo Chung</i>	《扭計祖宗》
<i>(The) Misfortune Young Nobleman</i> (film)	<i>Luonan Gongzi</i>	《落難公子》
model opera	<i>yangbanxi</i>	樣板戲
Mok Hong-si		莫康時
Motion Picture & General Investment Company Limited		國際電影懋業有限公司 (電懋 in short)
Mou Tun-Fei		牟敦芾
<i>Movie</i> (magazine)	<i>Dian Ying</i>	《電影》
Mu Shiyong		穆時英
Mukden Incident (aka the September 18 Incident or the Manchurian Incident)		九. 一八事變
<i>My Love Comes Too Late</i> (film)	<i>Long Gwai Maan</i>	《郎歸晚》
Nam Yang Motion Picture Co.		南洋影片公司
<i>Nan Chiao Daily</i> (newspaper)	<i>Nan Chiau Jit Pao</i>	《南僑日報》
National Arts Film Production Ltd		國藝影視製作有限公司
national cinema	<i>minzu dianying</i>	民族電影
'national defence' film	<i>guofang dianying</i>	國防電影
(The) National Educational Cinematographic Society		中國教育電影協會
New Culture Movement	<i>Xin Wenhua Yundong</i>	新文化運動
New Kwun Lun Film Production Company Limited		新崑崙影業有限公司
<i>(The) New Year's Sacrifice</i> (film)	<i>Zhu Fu</i>	《祝福》
Ng Cho-fan (aka Ng Chor-fan)		吳楚帆
Ng Choy (aka Wu Ting-fan)		伍廷芳 aka 伍才
Ng, Esther (aka Ng Kam-ha or Esther Eng)	<i>Wu Jinxia</i>	伍錦霞
Ng, Margaret		呈靄儀
Ng See-yuen		吳思遠
Ng Siu Wan		吳小雲
Ngau Tau Kok		牛頭角
<i>Nightmare of Fortune</i> (film)	<i>Fan Wah Mung</i>	《繁華夢》
<i>Nomad</i> (film)		《烈火青春》
Notice on Improving and Perfecting Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and Film Examination Work	<i>Guanyu Gaijin he Wanshan Dianying Juben (Genggai) Beian, Dianyingpian Shencha Gongzuo di Tongzhi</i>	關於改進和完善電影劇本 (梗概) 備案、電影片審查 工作的通知
<i>Ode of the Dragon River</i> (film)	<i>Long Jiang Song</i>	《龍江頌》
<i>Offbeat</i> (magazine)		《警聲》
<i>On the Dock</i> (film)	<i>Hai Gang</i>	《海港》
<i>On The Society File Of Shanghai</i> (aka <i>Right of the Maiden's First Night</i>)	<i>Shang Hai She Hui Dang An</i> (aka <i>Shao Nu Chu Ye Quan</i>)	《上海社會檔案》 aka 《少女初夜權》

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
<i>Once upon a Rainbow</i> (film)		《彩雲曲》
<i>Once upon a Time in China III</i>		《黃飛鴻之三獅王爭霸》
one filing, two examinations system	<i>yi bei er shen zhi</i>	一備二審制
Opinions of the Supreme People's Court on Several Issues Concerning the Implementation of the General Principles of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China		最高人民法院關於貫徹執行《中華人民共和國民法通則》若干問題的意見
<i>(The) Opium War</i> (aka <i>Lin Ze Xu</i>) (film)	<i>Ya pian zhan zheng</i> or <i>Lin Ze Xu</i>	《林則徐》
<i>Oriental Daily</i> (newspaper)		《東方日報》
<i>Orphan Island Paradise</i> (film)	<i>Gudao Tiantang</i>	《孤島天堂》
<i>Out of Danger</i> (film)		《絕處逢生》
Ouyang Yuqian		歐陽予倩
Pai Ching-jui		白景瑞
<i>(The) Pain of Separation</i> (film)	<i>Haak To Chau Han</i> or	《客途秋恨》
Pak Yin (aka Bak Yin)		白燕
<i>(A) Patriotic Woman</i> (film)	<i>Oi Gok Fa</i>	《愛國花》
Pearl River Film Studio		珠江電影製片廠
<i>(A) Peasant's Tragedy</i> (film)	<i>Shan He Lei</i>	《山河淚》
'Political power out of media' policy		黨、政、軍退出媒體政策
<i>Portrait of a Fanatic</i> (film)	<i>Ku Lian</i>	《苦戀》
Preparatory Commission for the Unification of the National Language	<i>Guoyu Tongyi Choubei Hui</i>	國語統一籌備會
<i>Princess Fragrance</i> (film)		《香香公主》
project initiation	<i>lixiang</i>	立項
Provisions on Film Censorship, 1997	<i>Dianying Shencha Guiding, 1997</i>	電影審查規定（1997）
Provisions on the Administration of Chinese-foreign Cooperative Production of Films (2004)		中外合作攝製電影片管理規定（2004）
Provisions on the Archival Filing of Film Scripts (Abstracts) and the Administration of Films		電影劇本（梗概）備案、電影片管理規定
Provisions Regarding the Constitution of Chief Creative Personnel of Domestic Feature and Co-Production Film	<i>Guanyu Guochan Gushipian, Hepaipian Zhuchuang Renyuan Guocheng De Guiding</i>	關於國產故事片、合拍片主創人員構成的規定
<i>Public Enemy</i> (film)	<i>Gung Dik</i>	《公敵》
(The) Publicity Department of the CPC (formerly known as the Propaganda Department of the CPC)		中國共產黨中央委員會宣傳部 （中宣部 in short）
Putonghua		普通話
Qi Mengshi		奇夢石
Qi Wenshao		齊聞韶
Qin Shi Huang		秦始皇

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
Qiu Jin		秋瑾
Qiu Jingwu		秋經武
Qiu Zhongying		秋仲英
<i>Raid on the White Tiger Regiment</i> (film)	<i>Qi xi Bai Hu Tuan</i>	《奇襲白虎團》
<i>Raise the Red Lantern</i>		《大紅燈籠高高掛》
<i>Recalling Woman Revolutionary Madam Wang Qiu Jin</i>	<i>Huiyi Funu Gemingjia Wang Qiu Jin Nushi</i>	《回憶婦女革命家王秋瑾女士》
<i>(The) Red Detachment of Women</i> (film)	<i>Hong Se Niang Zi Jun</i>	《紅色娘子軍》
<i>Red Guards of Lake Hong</i> (film)	<i>Hong Hu Chi Wei Dui</i>	《洪湖赤衛隊》
<i>(The) Red Lantern</i> (film)	<i>Hong Deng Ji</i>	《紅燈記》
reform and open-up (aka 'Chinese economic reform')		改革開放
(to) regard harmony as the most valuable	<i>yi he wei gui</i>	以和為貴
Regulations on Administration of Films		電影管理條例
<i>Reign behind a Curtain</i> (film)		《垂廉聽政》
<i>Resist!</i> (film)	<i>Dai Kong!</i>	《抵抗》
<i>Return from the Battleground</i> (film)	<i>Chin Dei Gwat Loi</i>	《戰地歸來》
<i>Revenge at Guang Chang Long</i> (film)	<i>Kwong Cheung Lung Yan Sau Gei</i>	《廣昌隆恩仇記》
rights-defending	<i>weiquan</i>	維權
rites of Confucianism (an imprecise translation)	<i>li</i>	禮
<i>Rock Kids</i> (film)		《搖滾青年》
<i>Romance of Book and Sword</i> (film)		《書劍恩仇錄》
<i>Romance of the Songsters</i> (film)	<i>Goh Lui Ching Chiu</i>	《歌侶情潮》
<i>(The) Romantic Thief White Chrysanthemum</i> (film)	<i>Ching Chaak Pak Kuk Fa</i>	《情賊白菊花》
Sang Hu		桑弧
<i>Saving General Yang</i> (film)	<i>Zhonglei Yang Jia Jiang</i>	《忠烈楊家將》
scar films	<i>shanghen dianying</i>	傷痕電影
scar literature	<i>shanghen wenxue</i>	傷痕文學
scholar	<i>ru</i>	儒
separation of five powers		五權分立
<i>Seven-Day Post of Chinese and Foreign News</i> (newspaper)	<i>Chung Oi Sun Man Chat Yat Po</i>	《中外新聞七日報》
<i>Sex and Zen</i> (film)		《玉蒲團之偷情實鑑》
<i>Sha Jia Bang</i>		《沙家浜》
Sha Meng		沙蒙
<i>(The) Shaolin Temple</i> (film)		《少林寺》
Shaw, Run Run		邵逸夫
Shaw, Runji.	<i>Shao Zui Weng</i>	邵仁傑, nickname 「醉翁」
Shek Hwei		石慧

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
Shen Ji		沈寂
Shenzhen Film Enterprise		深圳影業公司
Shochiku Company Limited		松竹株式會社
Shu, Don-lok		許敦樂
Shu Shi		舒適
Shui Hua		水華
Si Ma Wen Sen		司馬文森
sick man of East Asia	<i>dung ah beng fu</i>	東亞病夫
Sil-Metropole Organization Limited		銀都機構有限公司
<i>Sing Praise of the Revolution</i> (film)	<i>Ge Ming Zan Ge</i>	《革命贊歌》
<i>Sing Tao Daily</i> (newspaper)		《星島日報》
Sit Kok-sin		薛覺先
Situ Huimin		司徒慧敏
Some Opinions Regarding the Current Deepening of the System Reform of Film Industry	<i>Guanyu DangQian Shenhua Dianying Hangye Jizhi Gaige de Ruogan Yijian</i>	《關於當前深化電影行業機制改革的若干意見》
<i>Song of retribution</i> (formerly <i>March of the Guerrillas</i>) (film)	<i>Ching Hei Goh</i> or <i>Zheng Qi Ge</i>	《正氣歌》
<i>Song of the Red Flag</i>	<i>Hong Qi Pu</i>	《紅旗譜》
<i>Sorrows of the Forbidden City</i> (film)	<i>Qing Gong Mi Shi</i>	《清宮秘史》
<i>(The) Soul of China</i> (film)	<i>Guo Hun</i>	《國魂》
South China Film Association	<i>Wah Laam Din Ying Hip Wui</i>	華南電影協會
<i>South China Morning Post</i> (newspaper)		《南華早報》
Southern Film Company		南方影業公司
stability preservation	<i>weiwen</i>	維穩
standardized national pronunciation of the most important characters	<i>Guoyin changyong zihui</i>	國音常用字彙
(The) State Administration of Press and Publication, Radio, Film, and Television	<i>Guojia Xinwen Chuban Guangbo Dianying Dianshi Zongju</i>	國家新聞出版廣播電影電視總局
(The) State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT)	<i>Guojia Guangbo Dianying Dianshi Zongju</i>	國家廣播電影電視總局 (廣電總局 in short)
State Bureau for Letters and Calls	<i>Guojia Xin Fang Ju</i>	國家信訪局
<i>Stealing a Roast Duck</i> (aka <i>The Trip of the Roast Duck</i>) (film)	<i>Tau Shiu Aap</i> or <i>Tou Shao Ya</i>	《偷燒鴨》
<i>(The) Story of a Discharged Prisoner</i> (film)	<i>Ying Hung Boon Sik</i>	《英雄本色》
<i>(The) Story of Little Shrimp</i> (film)	<i>Chun Feng Qiu Yu</i>	《春風秋雨》
study group	<i>dushu hui</i>	讀書會
<i>Summer Palace</i> (film)		《頤和園》
Sun Fo		孫科
Sun Luen Film Company		新聯影業公司
Sun Lung-Kee		孫隆基

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
<i>(The) Sunset in Geneva</i> (film)	<i>Ri Nei Wa Di Huang Hun</i>	《日內瓦的黃昏》
Sun Yat-sen		孫逸仙 aka 孫中山
Sung Man-lei		宋萬里
(the) superior man of Confucianism (an imprecise translation)	<i>junzi</i>	君子
Supreme Ultimate	<i>Taiji</i>	太極
<i>Swallows Come Home</i> (film)	<i>Yan Gui Lai</i>	《燕歸來》
Szeto Wah		司徒華
<i>Ta Kung Pao</i>		大公報
<i>Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy</i> (film)	<i>Zhi Qu Wei Hu Shan</i>	《智取威虎山》
“Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art”		〈在延安文藝座談會上的講話〉
Tam, Patrick		譚家明
Tan Rifeng		譚日峰
Tang Huang		唐煌
Tang Xiaodan		湯曉丹
Teacher	<i>laoshi</i>	老師
<i>Tears in a Fallen City</i> (film)		《傾城之淚》
<i>Teddy Girls</i> (film)	<i>Fei Lui Jing Juen</i>	《飛女正傳》
<i>Teenage Dreamers</i> (film)		《檸檬可樂》
Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority		影視及娛樂事務管理處
<i>Ten Thousand Li Ahead</i> (film)	<i>Qiancheng Wanli</i>	《前程萬里》
<i>Three Charming Smiles</i> (film)	<i>San Xiao</i>	《三笑》
(The) Three Principles of the People	<i>san min zhuyi</i>	三民主義
<i>Tiantian Xin Bao</i> (newspaper)	<i>Tiantian Xin Bao</i>	《天天新報》
Tien Feng		田豐
<i>(The) Tien Kwong Po</i> (newspaper)		《天光報》
Tien Zhuang-zhuang		田壯壯
Tientsin Incident (aka the Tianjin Incident)		天津事變
Tin Yat Motion Picture Co.	<i>Tianyi</i>	天一片廠
To, Chapman		杜汶澤
To, Johnnie		杜琪峰
<i>To Live</i> (film)		《活著》
Toho Company Limited		東寶株式會社
Tong Cheuk-man		唐卓敏
Tong, Kent		湯鎮業
Tong Shu-shuen		唐書璇
Tong Yuejuan		童月娟
<i>Triads the Inside Story</i> (film)		《我在黑社會的日子》
‘traitors’ to the Chinese nation-race	<i>hanjian</i>	漢奸
<i>(The) Truth</i> (film)	<i>Fat Noi Ching</i>	《法內情》
Tse, Daniel		謝志偉
Tse Yik-chi		謝益之

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
Tsi Lo-lin		紫羅蓮
Tsui Hark		徐克
Tsui Siu-ming		徐小明
Tu Guangqi		屠光啟
Tung Chee Wah		董建華
(The) Tung Tau squatter area		東頭村木屋區
<i>Tungmenghui</i> (aka the Chinese United League or the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance)		同盟會
<i>(An) Unforgettable Night</i> (film)	<i>Yi Ye Fengliu</i>	《一夜風流》
(The) Union Film Enterprise Limited		中聯電影企業有限公司
Union Press	<i>You Lian</i>	友聯出版社
<i>(The) Untold Story</i> (film)		《八仙飯店之人肉叉燒飽》
<i>Vanguards of the Times</i> (film)	<i>Si Doi Sin Fung</i>	《時代先鋒》
Vernacular Movement	<i>Baihuawen Yundong</i>	白話文運動
<i>Victory on Road 9-Southern Laos</i> (film)		《下寮九號公路大捷》
<i>(The) Voice of Free Front</i> (film)	<i>Zi You Zhen Xian Zhi Sheng</i>	《自由陣線之聲》
<i>Wah Kiu Man Pao</i> (newspaper)		《華僑晚報》
<i>Wah Kiu Yat Pao</i> (newspaper)		《華僑日報》
Wang Bin		王濱
Wang Canzhi		王燦芝
Wang Chu Chin (aka Wang Jujing)		王菊金
Wang Hao		王豪
Wang Jiadong		王家棟
Wang Jialiang		王家梁
Wang Tingjun		王廷鈞
Wang Tung		王童
Wang Weici		王慰慈
Wang Weiyi		王為一
Wang Xiaomin		王孝敏
Wang Yanhua		王焱華
Wang Yuande		王沅德
Wang Yulin		王玉琳
War of Jiawu		甲午戰爭
<i>War of the Underworld</i> (film)		《洪興仔之江湖大風暴》
<i>Waving the Red Ribbon</i> (film)	<i>Foon Baai Hung Ling Daai,</i>	《款擺紅綾帶》
Wen Jiabao		溫家寶
Wen Tianxiang (aka Man Tin-cheung)		文天祥
<i>Wen Wei Po</i> (newspaper)		《文匯報》
<i>When the Grape is Ripe</i> (film)	<i>Putao Shouliao de Shi Hou</i>	《葡萄熟了的時候》
<i>White Gold Dragon</i> (film)	<i>Bak Kam Lung or Baijin Loong</i>	《白金龍》

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
<i>White-Haired Girl</i> (film)	<i>Bai Mao Nu</i>	《白毛女》
<i>White Vengeance</i> (film)	<i>Hong Men Yan</i>	《鴻門宴》
<i>Witch, Devil, Man</i> (film)	<i>Shen Gui Ren</i>	《神鬼人》
<i>(The) Witty Sorcerer</i> (film)	<i>Joh Chi Hei Cho</i> or <i>Zuo Ci Xi Cao</i>	《左慈戲曹》
<i>(The) Woman Knight of Mirror Lake</i> (film)	<i>Jing Xiong Nu xia –</i> <i>Qiu Jin</i>	《競雄女俠 – 秋瑾》
Wong, Barbara		黃真真
Wong, Cheuk-hon		黃卓漢
Wong, James Howe		黃宗霑
Wong Man-lei	<i>Wong Man-lei</i>	黃曼梨
Wong, Taylor		黃泰來
Wong Toi	<i>Wong Toi</i>	黃岱
Wong Yan Lung		黃仁龍
<i>Won't Face the Dark Again</i> (literal translation) (song)	<i>Chat Hak Jeung Bat Joi</i> <i>Min Dui</i>	《漆黑將不再面對》
(The) World Theatre		新世界戲院
<i>World Today</i> (magazine)	<i>Jin Ri Shi Jie</i>	《今日世界》
Wu, Dip-ying (aka Hu Dieying)		胡蝶影
Wu Pang		胡鵬
Wu Xingzai		吳性栽
Wu Zhiying		吳芝瑛
Wu Zuguang		吳祖光
Xi Jinping		習近平
Xia Yan (aka Hsia Yen)		夏衍
Xian Mei-Ya Culture Communication Limited		西安美亞 文化傳播有限公司
<i>Xiao</i> comes first among all the moral behaviors (literal translation)	<i>baixing yi xiao wei xian</i>	百行以孝為先
<i>Xiao</i> is the fundamental of Chinese culture	<i>Zhongguo wenhua</i> <i>yi xiao wei ben</i>	中國文化以孝為本
<i>Xiao Wu</i> (aka <i>The Pickpocket</i>) (film)		《小武》
Xie Jin		謝晉
Xing Zuwen		刑祖文
Xinhai Revolution (aka The Revolution of 1911)	<i>Xinhai Gemin</i>	辛亥革命
Xinhua (aka Hsin Hua) News Agency (aka New China News Agency)		新華通訊社 (「新華社」 in short)
Xu Kailei		徐開壘
Xu Zihua		徐自華
Xunzi		荀子
Yamaguchi, Yoshiko (widely known as Li Xianglan)	<i>Li Xianglan</i>	山口淑子 aka 李香蘭
Yan Jiaqi		嚴家其 aka 嚴家祺
<i>yang</i>		陽
Yang, Evan (aka Yieh Veng)	<i>Yi Wen</i>	易文

English (in alphabetical order)	Chinese Romanization	Original Chinese
Yang Hansheng		陽翰笙
Yang Wen		楊文
<i>Yangcheng Wan Bao</i> (newspaper)	<i>Yangcheng Wan Bao</i>	《羊城晚報》
<i>Yantai Ri Bao</i> (newspaper)	<i>Yantai Ri Bao</i>	《烟台日報》
Yao Ke		姚克
<i>yat</i>		日（指日本）
Yau, Herman	<i>Yau Lai-to</i>	邱禮濤
Yee, Derek		爾冬陞
<i>Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow</i> (aka <i>The Plague</i>) (film)	<i>Jok Tin Kam Tin Ming Tin</i> (aka <i>Wan Yik</i>)	《昨天今天明天》 aka 《瘟疫》
Yeung Chi-hsiao		楊吉爻
Yeung Tin-lok		仰天樂
Yim Ho		嚴浩
Yim Shan-shan (aka Yan Shanshan)		嚴珊珊
<i>yin</i>		陰
Ying Liang		應亮
Yip, Cecilia		葉童
Yonghua (aka Yong Hwa) Motion Picture Industries Limited		永華影業公司
<i>Young and Dangerous</i> series (film)		《古惑仔》系列
Yu Ling		于伶
Yu Mo-wan		余慕雲
Yu, Ronny		于仁泰
Yue, Griffin (aka Yue Feng)		岳楓
<i>Yue Opera</i>		越劇
Yuen, Corey		元奎
Yuen Yang-an		袁仰安
Yung Hwa Motion Picture Industries Limited		永華影業公司
Zen, Rachel		單慧珠
Zhai Qiang		翟強
Zhang Haipeng		張海鵬
Zhang Shankun		張善琨
Zhang Weiping		張偉平
Zhang Yimou		張藝謀
Zhang Zautang		張照堂
Zhejiang Yue Opera Troupe	<i>Zhejiang Yue Ju Tuan</i>	浙江越劇團
Zeng Zi		曾子
Zhou Chengren		周承人
Zhou Enlai		周恩來
Zhou Xuan		周璇
Zhu Shilin		朱石麟

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