The Practice and Theory of China's National Image in Hong Kong Region: A Case Study of Film and Television

Zhu Guangyao\textsuperscript{1,a}, Wang Yandong\textsuperscript{2,b}

\textsuperscript{1}Faculty of Arts, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, Jiangsu
\textsuperscript{2}Faculty of Arts, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, Jiangsu

ABSTRACT: Since Hong Kong was once considered to be the front line of the Cold War against China in the Anglo-American world, its film and television productions have been a significant ideological battlefield. Especially at that time, the western digital film and television production had a strong impact on the construction of national ideology in Hong Kong. It is evident that the artistic strategy of China's national image formation in the region, as viewed through film and television productions, has a targeted cultural and strategic orientation value. In this regard, this paper presents the viewpoints from the perspective of the development history of Hong Kong's film and television productions as well as the successful experience of image construction in Europe and America since the mid-twentieth century.

1 Introduction

Being once at the forefront of the Cold War against China in the western world, Hong Kong's local film and television productions have been penetrated and manipulated by western ideologies to a greater or lesser extent. Consequently, it is necessary to address the ideology of Hong Kong's film and television productions as a starting point of the issue so as to pay attention to the national image construction of China in the region.

2 Western digital films changed Hong Kong's ideology during the Cold War

Hong Kong was under British colonial rule from 1842 to 1997. As a consequence of more than a century of British political administration, there has been a gradual drifting away of the public from the traditional culture of the Hong Kong region. The cultural foundation that once had folk culture, Republican culture, and Guangdong regional culture as its core was gradually replaced by Western colonial culture, which has led to increasingly difficult cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and even long-term isolation. After Hong Kong was occupied by the British in 1945, Western-style education was further promoted, where all Hong Kong people, being guided by the colonial government and the social elite, embarked on the path of "worshipping the British". Prior to the late twentieth century, the perceptions of Hong Kong people about Chinese and white identity had only existed in fantasy. This is particularly true for Hong Kong people who grew up during the "baby boom" of the 1970s and 1980s, as they were deeply rooted in the image of a backward and isolated Mainland China that the colonial government had been vigorously propagating from an early age, thereby reinforcing the rejection of Mainland China by this generation.

The political affinity between the Western world and Hong Kong also had an influence on the demand for public entertainment. Given the successful cooperation between the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Hollywood at that time, a wide range of American films with a Cold War mindset were introduced to Hong Kong audiences, many of whom were naturally inclined to reject Western ideology in the absence of a clear sense of national identity. Upon the release of David Lean's Lawrence of Arabia (1962), Western ideology took hold of Hong Kong people's spiritual landscape at the upper echelons of society, exacerbating their admiration for Britain and earning them the title of The Desert Lord. Against the background of the Turkish invasion of the Arabian Peninsula, the film features the heroic story of Lawrence, a British army intelligence officer known as "The Man Knows All about Arabia". In the film, Lawrence led the Arab guerrillas, restraining Turkish troops, attacking Aqaba, occupying Damascus, blowing up the railway, whose reputation has shaken the Middle East, and successfully integrated the Arab factional forces of various ethnic groups. The film's haunting music, coupled with the magnificent scenes and the heroic image of the heroic British soldier riding alone in the vast yellow sand desert are especially inspiring. By applying Jacques Lacan's "Mirror Stage Theory" and "Imagined Community", the filmmakers have positively infiltrated Hong Kong people with Western ideology, which enables them to tacitly abide by the existing political system in Hong Kong and consciously maintain the social order in which they live.
Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey has been described by Ang Lee as "like a hallucinatory experience after taking LSD". The film's psychedelic sound effects, unconventional visuals and philosophically provocative on-screen narrative have had a reoccurring effect on Hong Kong's ideology for half a century. Other examples are William Wyler's The Best Years of Our Lives and James Hill's Born Free, which were popular "Westerns" that sold the superiority of the American way of life to the people of Hong Kong in a very high-profile manner through the display of the glamour of consumerism, the quality of life of capitalism and its free spirit. In response to Hong Kong's unique geographical location and political environment during the Cold War, the colonialists utilized the art of film to facilitate the government and infiltrate local culture and ideology in a "Westernized" manner, which created a situation where Hong Kong people held Western culture in high esteem. In this regard, local Hong Kong scholar Poshek Fu argues that, although it was not recognized at first, his film-going experience had long been labelled as "Cold War". "Due to its proximity to 'Revolutionary China', Hong Kong which was under the rule of the British Empire became the primary site of ideological wrestling and competition for people's minds between the U.S.-led 'free world' and the communist camp in Asia." In spite of the massive migration of mainlanders to Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1980s, there was no denying Hong Kong people's preference for a "localized" identity. Hong Kong has always been a typical immigrant city, which is why Hong Kong was a city of immigrants and aborigines at that time. As a consequence of the colonialist's propaganda strategy, the British Hong Kong authorities were desperate to eliminate the terms "China", "Mainland" and "white people" from the lives of Hong Kong people through various channels, thereby solidifying the recognition of Hong Kong people towards them. This has resulted in Hong Kong people having little concept of the whites and China. As a result, genre films like Richard Quine's The World of Suzie Wong rose to the top of the Hong Kong people's spiritual mindsets. The genre is mostly about the backwardness and naivety of the Chinese through a Western perspective, while the so-called oriental love is nothing more than the complete conquest of the weak and vulnerable Chinese women by the heroic knights of the West. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, there had been a rapid development of Hong Kong's film and television industry, with a particular emphasis on low-budget Cantonese language productions. There were few Hong Kong films at that time devoted to social information or even local customs in mainland China, in line with the political and educational ideology of the Hong Kong British authorities. Of course, there were also exceptions, such as the TV series The Good, The Bad and The Ugly, in which Cheng Can, an obtuse, rustic and impetuous character, is portrayed. From 1970 to 1990, it was from this period that Hong Kong gave rise to "Ah Can", as immigrants from the Mainland were commonly called in Hong Kong. The overtly discriminatory portrayal of mainlanders has undoubtedly hindered Hong Kong people's proper understanding of the mainland. The Kid, starring the talented film actor Bruce Lee, is more iconic than any other film of its time for accurately capturing the class antagonism between the lower class and the upper class in Hong Kong. The ending of the film is a visually appealing scene of Xi Luxiang's family, dragging their luggage along the railway tracks, marching off into the distance, which is a scene that will haunt the audience for a long time, as they return to mainland China in anger at the injustices of colonial society.

| Names                  | Director         | Time  | Production Company     | Country   |
|------------------------|------------------|-------|------------------------|-----------|
| 2001: A Space Odyssey  | Victor Lyndon    | 1968  | Warner Bros.           | American  |
| The Best Years of Our Lives | William Wyler  | 1946  | Samuel Goldwyn.        | American  |
| Born Free              | James Hill/ Tom McGowan | 1966  | Paramount Pictures.    | British/American |
| The World of Suzie Wong | Richard Quine    | 1960  | Columbia Pictures.     | American  |

Figure 1: American or British films shown in Hong Kong, China in the 1940s and 1960s

| Names                     | Director            | Time  | Production Company               | Region     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-------|----------------------------------|------------|
| The Bad and The Ugly      | Xu Yuan/ Wu Runquan/ Huo Yaoliang | 1979  | Television Broadcasts Hong Kong Limited | Hong Kong |
| The Kid                   | Feng Feng           | 1950  | Tatung company                   | Hong Kong |

Figure II: Films or television series produced in Hong Kong, China in the 1950s and 1970s about mainland China
3 The Construction of China's National Image after the "Anti-British Resistance"

At an earlier stage, there was no so-called freedom and democracy in Hong Kong under British colonial rule. Following the "Anti-British Resistance" in the 1960s and 1970s, the Hong Kong British Government gradually relaxed its control over Hong Kong with an openness of public opinion. In addition, mainland films gradually evolved from Chinese opera, romance and revolutionary heroism to national sentiments and began to construct the image of China, which in turn exerted a strong influence on the public in Hong Kong.

In 1956, the film "Goddess Marriage", a Chinese film produced by Shanghai Film Studio, was a big hit in Hong Kong. Hong Kong audiences were fascinated by the music of Huangmei Opera, encouraging them to become sensitive to traditional Chinese cultural elements. This phenomenon sparked the interest of some Hong Kong film and television personnel, so the Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Limited recruited director Li Hanxiang for a number of films in Huangmei Opera. Diao Chan, The Kingdom and the Beauty and Butterfly Lovers all emerged in the same vein. After their release in Hong Kong, the films presented a picture for overseas Chinese to imagine their cultural heritage and allowed them to have a proud homeland-nation identity. These Mandarin films varied in theme and aesthetics from the previously well-known Cantonese films, and thus marked a glorious chapter in the history of Hong Kong film industry.

Butterfly Lovers is inspired by traditional Chinese folk tales with colorful cultural and traditional elements, narrating the tragic love story of purity and fidelity between a poor scholar and a beautiful woman. The film had a sensational impact on Hong Kong people by evoking an idealized and colorful image of China. The film of Diao Chan even shattered box office records for Hong Kong's Mandarin films. Subsequently, in 1958, with the release of the first film adaptation of Louis Cha's full-length martial arts novel "Legend of the Condor Heroes" the protagonist Guo Jing, who is honest, trustworthy, loyal, but also righteous, was widely praised by the Hong Kong public. Which allowed the "heroic epic" style of martial arts movies became very popular in Hong Kong.

| Names                | Director     | Time  | Production Company              | Region   |
|----------------------|--------------|-------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Diao Chan            | Li Hanxiang  | 1958  | Shaw Brothers Films             | Hong Kong|
| The Kingdom and the  | Li Hanxiang  | 1959  | Shaw Brothers Films             | Hong Kong|
| Beauty               |              |       |                                 |          |
| Butterfly Lovers     | Li Hanxiang  | 1963  | Shaw Brothers Films             | Hong Kong|
| Legend of the Condor | Hu Peng      | 1958  | Emei Film Company               | Sichuan  |
| Heroes               |              |       |                                 |          |

Figure III: Films or television series produced in China in the 1950s and 1960s about mainland China

In the late 1960s, “the Hong Kong May Movement”, which is a months-long protest movement against the Hong Kong British government, took place in Hong Kong. Under this influence, Mandarin production companies started to focus on martial arts films with more violent and bloody struggle scenes, offering an outlet for enraged young people who were dissatisfied with the reality. The most representative works are two classic martial arts films starring Bruce Lee, who returned to Hong Kong from the U.S., being Fists of Fury and Way of the Dragon, which were probably the first two Hong Kong films to feature the white characters. Set against the backdrop of semi-colonial Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s, Fists of Fury is still vividly remembered by older generation audiences for the classic scene in which Bruce Lee, as national hero Chen Zhen, jumps up in the air to the applause of the spectators and kicks a sign that reads, "No Chinese or dogs allowed" to smithereens. This is the first Hong Kong film with a clear anti-imperialist sentiment. Way of the Dragon depicts the story of two American triadist karate masters were beaten up by a Hong Kong youth and willingly defeated, which also shapes the image of Hong Kong youth as a righteous and courageous hero. The two films have achieved phenomenal box office success as they both resonate with the public with their sense of national identity and sentiment.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Hong Kong film and television industry made a series of heroic films based on the experiences of famous patriotic martial artists in mainland China, such as Death Kick, Return of The Condor Heroes, Lin Shi Rong, The Shaolin Temple, Warrior Fearless, Kids from Shaolin, Born to Defense, etc., which positively guided the construction of China's national image.

| Names          | Director | Time  | Production Company              | Region   |
|----------------|----------|-------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Fists of Fury  | Lao Wei  | 1971  | Golden Harvest Film Company     | Hong Kong|
| Way of the Dragon | Li Xiaolong | 1972  | Golden Harvest Film Company     | Hong Kong|
| Death Kick     | He Menghua | 1973  | Tian Ying Entertainment Co., LTD | Hong Kong|
| Return of The Condor Heroes | Xiao Sheng | 1976  | Good Vision TV station          | Hong Kong|
4 The "Missing Scope of Common Experience" and Artistic Interventions

After Hong Kong's reunification with China in 1997, there was a blurring of Hong Kong people's sense of nationhood resulting from many previous influences, especially in the confusion of "having no roots" in the issue of identity. Consequently, the cultural authorities and artists concerned became aware of the issue of artistic intervention in the shaping of China's national image in Hong Kong. In the films like Made in Hong Kong, Who Am I?, 72 Family Tenant, and Ten Years, after the handover of Hong Kong to China, the reality of the miserable life of the grassroots has been carefully portrayed. The increasing number of Hong Kong people's quest for identity, or films that reinforce the identity of "Hong Kong people", has become a stumbling block in the way for Hong Kong people to abandon "localization" and promote a "nationalized" identity. From this perspective, it is apparent that we should help Hong Kong people to successfully complete their identity confirmation from the perspective of cultural value system. The new generation of Hong Kong youths should be compensated for their lack of political ideas, thinking habits, values, political education and political experience through art. It is also desirable to transform the political and social ecology through art so that Hong Kong will have a unified sense of national identity. Since the handover in 1997, there have been films in Mainland China that have won box office successes through artistic channels, such as Black and white heroes (1997, a war film), Deng xiaoping's 1928 (2004, a biographical film), The great enterprise of building a nation (2009, a historical movie), Operation Mekong (2016, a police procedural), Operation Red Sea (2018, a war film), The captain of the Chinese (2019, a disaster movie), Me and my country (2019, a realistic movie), The eight leagues (2020, a war film) and Me and my hometown (2020, a realistic movie) with the intention of shaping China's national image. However, it is difficult to determine how much of an impact it has generated in Hong Kong, in which the "lack of a common experience range" is the root cause. The "common range of experience" was first proposed by Wilbur Schramm, a leading American communicator, which indicates that there should be a common language, common experiences and common interests between communicators and their targets in order to achieve the expected communication goals. Schramm's idea comes from "practical problem solving, rather than the systematic research and development of an integrated body of knowledge that results from pre-defined communication problems". It is obvious that it is effective to rely on the arts to solve the problem of "missing scope of common experience".

| Names                  | Director                  | Time  | Production Company                                      | Region   |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Made in Hong Kong      | Chen Guo                  | 1997  | Skycurtain Production Co. LTD                          | Hong Kong|
| Who Am I?              | Chen Musheng/ Cheng Long  | 1998  | Golden Harvest Film Company                             | Hong Kong|
| 72 Family Tenants      | Gu Wuming/ Ling Shujing/ Ling Xingyun | 2008 | Guangdong Broadcasting and Television Station/Pearl River Film Group | Guangdong |
| Ten Years              | Guo Zhen/ Huang Feipeng/ Ou Wenjie/ Zhou Guanwei/ Wu Jialiang | 2015 | Ten Years Film Studio LTD                               | Hong Kong|

Figure V: Films or television series produced in China, after 1997 that describes the identity of "Hong Kongers"

| Names                        | Director      | Time  | Production Company                    | Region   |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Black and white heroes        | Xie Mingxiao  | 1997  | Shanghai Film Studio                  | Shanghai |
| Deng xiaoping's 1928          | Li Xiepu      | 2004  | Shanghai Film Group/Shanghai Zhou Company | Shanghai |
The great enterprise of building a nation

| The great enterprise of building a nation | Han Sanping/ Huang Jianxin | 2009 | Bona Film Group/China Film Group Corporation | Beijing |
| Operation Mekong | Lin Chaoxian | 2016 | Flaming Red Film Co. LTD | Hong Kong |
| Operation Red Sea | Lin Chaoxian | 2018 | Chana Film Administration | Beijing |
| The captain of the Chinese | Liu Weiqiang | 2019 | Chana Film Administration | Beijing |
| Me and my country | Chen Kaige | 2019 | Chana Film Administration | Beijing |
| The eight leagues | Guan Hu | 2020 | Chana Film Administration | Beijing |
| Me and my hometown | Ning Hao | 2020 | Beijing Culture Film Company | Beijing |

Figure VI: Films made in China after 1997 with the purpose of shaping China's national image

After 2003, the Central Government signed the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) in an effort to bring the economic and trade ties between the Mainland and Hong Kong closer. Among the provisions, the conditions for Hong Kong films to enter the mainland have been relaxed. As a result, with a view to capturing the huge potential of the Mainland market, sufficient human and material resources and a large amount of raw resources for film production, Hong Kong has increasingly integrated the Mainland culture into its film industry on the basis of catering to the artistic needs of the Mainland and using film as a communication channel. While providing a mature business model for film production, it has also started to cooperate with mainland films, and a large number of films have embarked on the strategy of "going north", opening up a new era for Hong Kong films. A large number of Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions have ranked among the top 10 box office hits in the Mainland, which has revived the declining market for Hong Kong films. Therefore, it offers an opportunity to bridge the "missing scope of common experience" in Hong Kong. In fact, both Hong Kong culture and Mainland culture are rooted in traditional Chinese culture, it is therefore particularly significant to intervene through art to narrow the difference in cultural identity between Hong Kong people and Mainlanders. However, the government lacks further thematic guidance on popular culture in Hong Kong society. That is why the activities held in Hong Kong in recent years are all approached from the perspective of Mainland society and culture, without integrating Hong Kong's unique culture and history. There are also few links with issues of concern to the people of Hong Kong, which has made it difficult to arouse Hong Kong people's recognition and empathy of their national identity.

Since the formal amendment of Hong Kong's Fugitive Offenders Ordinance was opposed by the local business and legal communities, violent conflicts have escalated in Hong Kong. For example, the "Tsuen Kwai Tsing parade" incident attempted to make the "one country, two systems" in name only "invalidates" Hong Kong rioters to kidnap young people for their own personal gain, which almost completely deviated from the peaceful demonstration track. This goes beyond the scope of popular appeal and the irrational anti-institutional ethos behind the riots, exposing the lack of effective political judgment of the new generation in Hong Kong, and the inadequacy of the construction of China's image in the region is even more prominent. Confronted with the tendency of the younger generation of "useless teenager" rebellious individuals and the "populist" orientation of Hong Kong people, it is a long way to go to shape China's national image through art. This is because many young generations in Hong Kong suffer from a lack of correct historical experience and a vague sense of nationalism. As a result, they are easily influenced by external voices, with their sense of national superiority and identity pushed to the margins of reality. In response to this situation, the practices of the relevant United States government departments are instructive. Hugh Wilford, in The Mighty Wurlitzer, argued that the CIA's interest in Hollywood during the Cold War was driven by the conviction that in countries with high illiteracy rates, films are the best medium for conveying a pro-democracy message. In fact, Hong Kong's low university enrollment rate contrasts sharply with its economic position on the international stage. In other words, there are relatively few people in Hong Kong who are able to reflect on national identity and national feelings from a historical perspective, many of whom are easy captives of the cultural cold war in the western world. During the Cold War, the CIA began to open its doors to Hollywood in the 1990s after getting "tired of being portrayed on the screen as an evil organization full of rogue agents". It established the "Government Coordination Office", the department responsible for corrupting Soviet ideology during the Cold War and rejecting communist attacks on the West through films. An ideology in favor of capitalism was spread through films without the public's conscious awareness, by collaborating with Hollywood to modify the plots of films that hindered the unfolding of national politics (e.g. The Immersed Foreigner (i.e. The Quiet American, 1958)). By the late 1950s, CIA had "become skilled at secretly financing the distribution of foreign-produced films in areas of the world vulnerable to communism". It has been extremely supportive of spy escapes, missions, etc. by consistently introducing public figures from the entertainment industry as its own

1 “The Mighty Wurlitzer” was a term used by the CIA for cultural propaganda during the Cold War. See by Tricia Jenkins, translated by Lan Yingqi, The CIA Inside Hollywood - How the CIA Shaped Film and Television [M], The Commercial Press, 2015 Edition, 10.
ambassadors. For all the political benefits Hollywood has brought to the CIA and the U.S. government, it has had a major impact around the world, in which America saves the world is its consistent propaganda discourse. In this regard, we may consider this as an alternative to solving our own problems. At least, in light of the national identity crisis in Hong Kong, there is still much room for improvement in China's national image strategy.

It is therefore particularly important for young audiences in Hong Kong to construct a national image of China in film and television productions. In the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, in which confidence in system, road, theory and culture is firmly established, the state has put forward higher requirements for the image building of the mainland in Hong Kong through art forms. From the post-1997 period of identity anxiety in Hong Kong films (1997-2003), to the post-CEPA period of nationalization (2003-2008) and the reconstruction of local identity (2008-), Hong Kong people's attitudes towards national identity have been transforming at every stage. From "Hong Kong people" in economic terms, to "Chinese" in national identification, to "Chinese" in political identification, all these are the result of the joint efforts of the country and its people. In particular, with the increasing portrayal of the relationship between the Mainland and Hong Kong in Hong Kong films and television productions, it is also the first step for Hong Kong people's national identity to be correctly positioned. Hong Kong people's identity will also embark on a new historical journey in reconstructing the "national image" of the new era.

| Name            | Director      | Time | Production Company       | Country  |
|-----------------|---------------|------|--------------------------|----------|
| The Quiet American | Phillip Noyce | 1958 | Lions Gate Pictures      | American |

*Figure VII:* During the Cold War, the CIA collaborated with Hollywood on films

**Acknowledgement**

This paper is the stage achievement of "Research on Ideological Issues in Teaching Contemporary Art History" (2019JGYB021) of Teaching, Research and Education Reform Topic in Jiangsu University and Senior Talent Project (07JDG012) of Jiangsu University.

**REFERENCES**

1. Poshek Fu, translated by Su Tao (2017). On the 'Cold War' and Hong Kong Films. Contemporary Cinema,7,9.
2. Wilbur Schramm; David Riesman; Ryamond A.Bauer, The State of Communication Research: Comment, The Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol.23,NO.1.(Spring, 1959), 9.
3. Tricia Jenkins, translated by Lan Yinqi. The CIA Inside Hollywood - How the CIA Shaped Film and Television. Bei Jing: The Commercial Press, 2015.
4. Xu Liang (2018). An Analysis of the causes of the populist Turn of young people in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Lingnan journal,6.
5. Li Juan. Chinese Film Memory and national Image Construction. Bei Jing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2017.
6. Fang Jieixin, Zhang Xue, Liu Da, (2017). The key decade of digitization and informatization of the film industry. Ying Bo·Impact,5.