Political History TV Dramas and the Representation of Confucian China

The Regulation, Emergence and Politics of a New Genre

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Abstract

In order to bridge the knowledge gap noted between Western and Chinese approaches to analysis of China's TV media, this thesis sets out to propose an alternative methodological framework for investigation of the emergence, development and significance of a distinctive television genre categorised as 'political history TV drama' (PHTD), produced in Mainland China since the 1980s. Situating the genre in its historical and political contexts of production, I make particular reference to the orchestrating role of the Chinese state, the political re-articulation of Confucian values, and the reinventing of Chinese national identity.

The thesis is composed of three parts. Part one includes the literature review of both Chinese and Western genre theory, followed by a discussion of further useful constructs to put in place the theoretical scaffolding for the study. In part two, the historical review concerns the production and political contexts of Chinese TV and TV drama in general. The third part applies this methodological framework to PHTD when contextualised in its Chinese setting, analysing its definitions, conventions, generic and cultural verisimilitudes, and hybridity. The third part is the core of the research, which investigates its rise to maturity, utilising a cultural and discursive account that encompasses: textual analysis; the study of its political and historical contexts; Chinese moral ideology and linguistics. A number of examples and case studies are examined as evidence for my perspective on questions of nationalism and Confucianism embedded in PHTD.

The significance of this genre is in its reconstructed portrayal of the revived concept of a 'patriarchal Confucian society'. Therefore, the thesis sets out the political, social and cultural landscape in which the genre is embedded in recognition of its representation of much more than just repackaged traditional narratives. In turn, this investigation helps to achieve a fuller understanding of the relation between political and intellectual forces, and the key role of nationalism combined with Confucianism in the media strategy of the Chinese authorities up until the first ten years of the 21st century.

Table of Contents

Table of Illustrations

Table of Illustrations

Introduction: Nostalgia for a Glorious China

This thesis begins by introducing and explaining my initial motivation for applying the Western theory of genre to the research and analysis of Chinese Political History TV Drama (PHTD). It is suggested that such research is called for due to the knowledge gap found in the literature between studies carried out by the scholarly community in China in the field of Chinese TV drama and Western genre theory and its discursive and analytical practices. Thus, my study is driven by the need to fill the academic gap noted above in putting forwards an alternative methodology for the analysis of Chinese television drama, a methodology that functions in ways that seek to deepen understanding of the richness and complexity of the PHTD genre in the unique context of its cultural, social and political setting.

To this end, I shall follow in this introductory chapter the structural stages below, and set out the rationale for undertaking such a study by briefly reviewing the existing body of research in the specific field of TV genre study and suggesting how constructs considered could be applied to the context of Chinese media. In order to establish the basis for my research, I will propose a series of research questions or hypotheses, the answers to which will provide guiding principles for the investigation. An overview of the thesis will also be given, chapter by chapter. My thesis covers the following research questions:

  1) what are the genre definitions of PHTD? (chapter IV)
  2) what are the genre conventions that these TV drama productions exhibit? (chapter V)
  3) what are generic verisimilitude and genre hybridity, and how do PHTDs interact and differentiate from other genres? (chapter VI)
  4) what is the cultural verisimilitude of PHTD, and how does it present itself? (chapter VII).

Following the above, objectives for this introductory chapter and beyond are as follows:

1. To establish the scope of my research into genre theory;
2. To review and summarise the existing body of literature both in the West and in China in the field of genre study;
3. To demonstrate the research and academic gap identified in the existing body of scholarly literature in China, raising a series of questions to guide and structure my current research;
4. To set out my investigation in detail, and state its purpose and aims;
5. To outline the thesis in its entirety.

The intent in the objectives listed above is to provide a logical progression of analysis from genre study in general to the specifics of the PHTD genre in the unique setting of the Chinese political and cultural context. In particular, the summary and review of previous research that follows will explore the knowledge gap identified above in current genre study in the field of Chinese TV drama.

1. Background to the Study: Existing Research in the Theory of Genre

In the context of this thesis, then, genre theory is selected as the core methodological approach, providing a theoretical scaffold for interpreting a complex cluster of political and cultural phenomena in Chinese contexts. It is noteworthy in this regard that research into such theory has a long history in the West, originating in ancient Greece. This was a theory treated as a series of absolutes in terms of the classification systems drawn up by Aristotle and Plato. Research in the past therefore took these systems as its starting point. Moreover, the early application of genre theory was practised in the academic field of literature, where (historically) individual genres were aligned to a particular and deliberately chosen style as well as related to a particular theme. During the 18th century, however, such formulaic approaches to the study of genre systems began to change in Europe. For example, the increasing use of genre as a dynamic tool in the field of art raised the need for greater flexibility in order to meet the new and constantly changing imperatives of different historical and cultural contexts. In other words, the existing cultural connotations of genre at that time had drained away, leaving the form itself empty for any given new cultural, political or historical input. In this sense, modern genre studies have transformed not only the processes and the structure of the genre system of categorisation, but also the ways in which particular genres have reflected their contexts of production.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the concept of genre was initially developed by Western cultural theory. The study of genre now functions therefore as a structural approach to literary theory, film theory and other cultural fields, which forms the fundamental basis of Western intellectual classification and analysis. For example, Creeber's edited volume entitled *The Television Genre Book*[1] and Allen's volume *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*[2] both heavily rely on the concept of genre. Specifically, studying a genre means to examine the structural elements that combine in the telling of a story, and to find patterns in collections of similar stories, as in its original methodological function. The point to be made therefore is that once these elements or codes begin to carry inherent information, a genre starts to emerge.[3] In this regard, Mittell (in his book entitled *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*)[4] further develops the field of genre study with an intriguing analysis which has (interestingly) thrown important trends in the history of American television into sharp relief. At the heart of this particular debate on the use of genre as a methodological tool is not only the normal science of textual analysis, but also a consideration of genres themselves as industry-based categories.

Thus, because this thesis mainly focuses on the methodological application of genre to the media as the industry base (especially television studies) it is necessary to briefly review the two stages of development in this field. Firstly, the early stage begins within historical-critical disciplines and humanities-based approaches. For example, the works of Newcomb, Williams or Thorburn were all closely connected to textual analysis, with research attention focused upon the definition, interpretation and history of a genre. At the same time, genre theory often combined with other constructs such as those of structuralism, psychoanalysis and cultural studies. This was a horizontal theoretical recombination that further evidenced the principle that a genre is often regarded as a framework which calls on other theories to examine the target cultural phenomena. The second stage of such developments began in the 1980s, when Western critics began to examine genres from new perspectives, including the evaluation of audience perceptions, contextual interpretation, and cultural studies.

The point to be made then, is that genre is now more often treated as a cultural product under media practices, and therefore subject to change. Moreover, it is important to note here that the second stage of genre study does not necessarily cancel out the first. Rather, the interest of different authors or critics will decide whether the first or the second approach is followed.

Before turning to a brief overview of the literature in Mainland China, a further point to make is that the concept of genre has a slightly different interpretation in that context. The literary translation of this term is 'leixing' in Chinese, for which there are two conceptual meanings. In the literature in particular, for Chinese scholars the traditional terminology of 'leixing' has expanded and overshadowed the Western notion of genre. Thus, while its modern conceptual meaning is often seen in film or television studies (attracting academic attention from the 1980s onwards), genre studies generally lag behind the West. This lag is especially apparent in the field of television studies, which is still largely adopted from Western studies in film genre, thus perpetuating the gap observed above. This is a gap therefore which calls for more research than is possible within the scope of the present study, as will be expanded below.

2. Proposed Methodological Framework

As seen, then, the intent in this investigation is to concentrate on the powerful role of the mass media in China (popular television in particular) with specific research attention to the genre of PHTD. Before beginning the study, however, it is worth stepping back to examine the term 'Chinese Political History TV Drama', and to unpack this seemingly straightforward term, known as 'lishi zhengju' in Chinese. Firstly, the word *history* means that the narratives of each episode are all set in the period before the foundation of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949. It is important to note, however, that opinions differ among Chinese television critics about what the historical 'cut-off date' should be,[5] and may differ also from those opinions held by the Chinese authorities.[6] Currently (especially in Mainland China under the governance of the Communist Party), most critics and even government agencies (such as the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, hereafter the SARFT) agree on 1911 as a historical demarcation line. This date is considered to be a milestone, by reason of the abolition of the Chinese imperial monarchy with its two-thousand year history. In other words, any TV drama set in the period before 1911 is categorised as a historical TV drama.[7] Specifically, according to the administrative regulations of the SARFT, any TV drama which is set in the period before 1911 is considered to be in the category of *TV Drama of Imperial China* ('gudai' in Chinese).[8] However, in the context of the present study, the time line will be extended to 1949, for reasons which have to do with the second term (*political*) in the name of the genre. It is telling that the meaning of *political* in this instance is at least twofold: firstly, the reference is to the narratives being political in content, for they often portray complex political power struggles within a historical event or among historical figures. Secondly, the word *political* refers to the political and historical contexts of programme production, which clearly engage to greater or lesser extents with the currently changing politics of Mainland China. In order to judge how far the narratives are political in content, I therefore propose to compare them with the genre of *Chinese TV Drama of Revolution*, in order to develop a four-principle model (family-nation, the nation of *Han* Chinese, Sage leadership and Neo-Confucianism) with which to assess political and ideological orientation, as will be seen in section 4 of Chapter IV.

My purpose in choosing PHTDs as the research target of the present study is motivated by their unique genre features and the political, discursive and ideological characteristics embedded within these features. The uniqueness of this genre does not, however, mean that it is the only one of its kind. The uniqueness refers rather to China's own experience implanted in the ideological and political orientations of each production, as well as the driving force of the economic profit motive. In this thesis, then, the concept of genre is regarded as a fundamental theoretical framework for analysing the genre of PHTD, which is a particularly Chinese cultural phenomenon. Tudor's note is telling in this regard, where he observes (with reference to film) that 'a genre…defines a moral and social world'.[9] In the present context, then, this concept of genre is itself taken to constitute a theoretical approach, as in the verb 'to define' in Tudor's observation. Further, an important factor in this approach is that (as identified earlier) the value certainties and ideological assumptions embedded in the moral and social world of western conventions must have drained away over centuries of change, thus leaving this 'world' empty and ready for infilling by the new ideological climate of Mainland China, as Miller implies: 'a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish.'[10] Altman's view is also relevant here, in that genres should be described 'not as formal patterns or as textual canons, but as system and process.'[11] In this regard, Mittell concurs that genre should be regarded as a universal tool, a tool that should not be limited or restricted only to western approaches, but instead function to allow for interpretation of any kind of cultural, ideological, political and economic cluster[12]. This is an argument which validates my intention in this thesis to use Western genre models and theories as an approach to creating a framework which removes any inherent orientalist ideology, thus freeing genre theory for application to a very different cultural and ideological context.

A thorough analysis of the concept of genre with a view to implementing it as a system or an approach is therefore a primary undertaking of this thesis. Furthermore, the research will centre on the close relationship between text, institution and genre, in line with Lacey's suggestion that the latter is aligned to specific textual features as a way of organising the elements within that text. Such elements include narrative, setting, types of characters, style, iconography, and the stars themselves. Furthermore, Lacey advocates the view that genre could be based on shared common sense; namely, those characteristics that producers of media understand and use to differentiate between genre to classify media texts. The new approach to be implemented here is thus in line with this view of shared common sense, which promotes looking at the ways in which genre is situated in society and culture. Specifically, this is an approach which opens up the potential for close scrutiny of the relationships between audience, industry and genre. This is not to say, however, that the later approach cancels out the traditional view of textual analysis. Rather, both approaches have contributed to the area of genre study.

An important point to be made here is that in my research, I propose to focus exclusively on the relationship between genre text and institution, although not from the perspective of audience, as being of reduced relevance in the present context. The focus of this thesis is specifically upon the PHTD product from the 1980s through to the first ten years of the 21st century. It would thus be difficult to identify an audience group dating back to that time in order to carry out meaningful interviews. Qualitative and quantitative audience research would not therefore yield satisfactory data, as certain TV dramas were shown almost ten years ago. The methodological

framework is hence adapted from two aspects of Lacey's tri-partite model; textual analysis and study of the institution of a genre, and the relationship between these two aspects. I shall consider: 1) how narrative works in television drama, and 2) the importance of the role of the authorities in shaping the genre of PHTD. It is noteworthy that this latter focus takes on a far greater significance in the unique Chinese context, in which the authorities play a much more influential part than audience in determining the nature of a certain genre. The proposed theoretical framework is thereby particularly fitting, in that using genre theory in the analysis of PHTD specifically targets political and cultural forces and their power to manipulate the media industry. Therefore, references to the analyses of Confucian thought throughout the study will be significant, as will literary tradition, and cultural verisimilitude between fictional texts and factional contexts. However, this is not to deny the importance of audience perception studies as being a key element in learning how genre forms and transforms. Rather, such studies will not be at the centre of the present investigation given the Chinese context, as unusually complex procedures would then be necessary, opening up prospective avenues for research which are beyond the scope of this thesis.

As noted earlier, applying the concept of genre as a fundamental theoretical framework will uncover deep-level implications when analysing Chinese traditional literature. As an example, when Chinese intellectuals exercise their force in shaping historical truth or reality to recreate the image of the nation of China, their interpretation of questions such as 'what is China' and 'what is Chineseness' can be scrutinised through the prism of political ideology and cultural heritage. Through the use of the theoretical framework above, then, analysis of the PHTD genre will reveal layer upon layer of meaning in terms of defining both Chinese nationalism and answering questions raised concerning Chinese national identity. The various answers to (and readings upon) such questions are thus embedded within the case study PHTDs to be examined, reflecting the changing political landscape of the Chinese state and the shifting roles of intellectuals. For example, this is a genre which questions the notion of nationalism, and the relation between the concepts of Han and non-Han in present-day China. From this perspective, questions proposed in this thesis additionally function as a response to 'the new nationalism in China', which addresses the 'gap between state and society that resulted from the failure to reform the political system in the 1980s.'[13] Specifically, it will be suggested that this new wave of nationalism signifies a way to 're-interpret Confucianism, not return to traditional Confucianism' and 'to take into account the government's economic performance and its socialist values.'[14] As will be seen, the case study TV drama *The Great General Shi Lang* in Chapter VII provides an interesting example of one aspect of how Chinese intellectuals interpret the concepts of 'China' and 'Chineseness' in terms of the new collectivism and Confucian nationalism. Through studying this genre, then, it will be seen that the successful reconstruction and encoding of this political message leads to a consideration of new Confucian nation, taking shape throughout the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the chosen methodological framework for scrutiny of the PHTD genre does have its limitations, displaying similar ills to any other classification system. For example, with regard to film, Stam identifies four key problems of defining genres: namely, extension, normativism, monolithic definitions and biologism, as expanded below.[15] In brief, then, it is difficult to absolutely classify any form of cultural production. Specifically, as a result of content and stylistic overlap, a single TV drama can encompass

elements of several genres. Indeed, the various classifications of Chinese TV dramas employed by the national media neatly illustrate such limitations, as will be expanded in the discussion of generic verisimilitude and genre hybridity in Chapter VI. There, I propose to compare a number of existing and popular TV genres with that of PHTD, as well as drawing parallels between the early and later stages. It will however be suggested that through such internal and external comparisons, the notion of genre convention is imposed (often arbitrarily) as a result of which the specific merits of the individual example are frequently lost. In other words, if genre as a system of classification is used to assign value judgements, we allow our preconceptions with the whole to influence our opinion of the individual example. Thus, we can understand why a certain individual TV drama can stand for multiple purposes and function as different genres or formats. Here, the understandings of generic verisimilitude and genre hybridity are particularly useful, as will be seen below.

3. Bridging the Research Gap between the West and China

The brief review of previous research above, then, confirms the research gap in genre theory noted earlier between the West and China, especially in the field of television genre, which in turn calls for a study of this kind in order to bridge that gap. Bridging this research gap thus becomes one of the principal aims in this thesis. My research will therefore begin with the generic questions of genre definition, norms and conventions, and so on. Inevitably, however, awareness among Chinese critics of the fact that genre studies were born and have been developed in the West raises suspicions that the discipline might be particularly susceptible to the intrusion of Western ideological values. A good example of such suspicions can be seen in the process of defining genre. Among the four key problems that Stam identifies with regard to generic labels, for instance, one such is what he terms 'normativism'.[16] This is a term that points to the potential problem that if a Chinese historical TV drama has been selected for research scrutiny, that research could lead to preconceived ideas of criteria for genre membership in similar categories to British historical TV drama. Conflicts are then set up between those criteria (such as feminism, realism and class structures) which are not really applicable to the study of Chinese media productions. Notably, current critics and scholars in China began to undertake such genre studies only in the 1980s, continuing through to the 21st century. In other words, this kind of study is a late development, which means in turn that Chinese critics are not yet up-to-date with current thinking or theories from western academic institutes. Rather, most domestic studies in China are still preoccupied with textual categorisation.[17]

Nevertheless, the writer-researcher Edward Said (whose seminal work has become foundational for the academic field of post-colonial studies) has pointed out that the concept of orientalism[18] is a constellation of the false assumptions that underlie Western attitudes toward the Middle East and Asia. Hence, the term *orientalism* describes the cultural prejudices that are derived from a long tradition of romanticised images of Asia, and the Middle East in particular. In practice, these prejudices have functioned as implicit justifications for the colonial and the imperial ambitions of the European powers and the US. Indeed (as Said rightly suggests), the danger of applying western theory to this study is that my research might then rest on just such unquestioned assumptions and unwittingly incorporate European and American ideological values. Thus, applying the methodological framework of genre theory might mean in turn that the start point of my research begins with western assumptions about the reality of the East. It is important to make the point therefore that in order to avoid any

such assumption, the application of genre theory is rigorously controlled by me as the researcher. In other words, the method is not ideology-based. Instead, the concept of genre is regarded as an outer theoretical framework, providing constructs with which to explore the political, discursive and ideological processes embedded within the unique genre of Chinese PHTD.

The potential problem, then, is one acknowledged by Chinese writer-researchers as 'rigid borrowing without self-reflection', and one which heightened awareness will enable me to avoid. My point is therefore that I recognise western theories and methodologies as helpful approaches to studying film and other texts in Chinese contexts as well as western. This is a recognition that also allows me to exercise existing western theories in ways that complement my Chinese intellectual upbringing. Further, this recognition means that I, as the researcher, will review and re-think any given cultural phenomena from different perspectives, allowing me to investigate Chinese culture and art from a totally different angle, particularly when the object of scrutiny is political or ideological. In employing such intellectual rigour, I have opened up new and helpful approaches by which to investigate contemporary Chinese society and culture.

In line with this view of applying genre as a theoretical approach or process, then, I shall list examples where this western perspective has been applied with success to the field of Chinese literary criticism, examples which provide evidence to strengthen my methodological argument above. Specifically, it is to be noted that certain Chinese scholars are accustomed to the application of Western narratological theory to the analysis of Chinese narrative. In other words, there is an existing body of those Chinese critics who have attempted to modify Western models to better account for specifically Chinese narrative phenomena, and to 'establish a truly "Chinese narratology", one rooted in Chinese culture and the Chinese literary tradition.'[19] This cross-cultural phenomenon can be seen in the book entitled *Selections of Literature*, for instance, as one of the earliest existing anthologies of Chinese poetry and literature, also considered as the best such collection over the 700 years from the Qing and Han dynasties to A.D. 500. The point to make here is that the way in which literary pieces are organised in this collection corresponds closely to the discipline of genre taxonomy, classically considered as the 'liupai' school of thought in Chinese literature. It is this school of thought which later combined with western genre, impacting on Modern Chinese literature in the early 20th century.[20] Hence, despite the differing terminologies used by Chinese and western scholarly communities (such as the 'action' to which Miller refers or the 'process', corresponding to 'define' in Tudor's terminology) the mode of enquiry is astonishingly similar in terms of academic discipline. Thus, importantly, this is an example which demonstrates that genre theory can function as a process for any given cultural production, as a frame for social action, and as a textual location. Apart from some overlap with its Western counterparts, therefore, the concept of genre constitutes a system both separate from, yet complementary to, that well-known in the West.

From this standpoint, then, the application of genre theory to the specific analysis of PHTD provides a practical case study in the use of Western genre theory in studying Chinese media. The present research investigation is therefore one which could hopefully bridge the methodological gap between the West and China, and provide Chinese critics with an alternative way of studying Chinese television. At the same time, there is awareness on my part that the focus of my study here is upon one type of Chinese TV drama. A point to make therefore is that

the analysis of TV drama differs greatly from that of other texts in view of its complexities as an audio-visual medium. Equally important to note is that my study has been strongly shaped by my background in film and TV genre, which (as seen) provides the key framework that structures this thesis, most notably in modes of connecting the roles played by the texts themselves and by cultural industries in making and remaking genre. From this perspective, my research attention is thereby explicitly devoted to the specific theoretical and historical questions of genre on the small screen and the importance of situating this particular genre within its cultural, historical, and political contexts. In this research, therefore, genre is not only a set of textual parameters, but also a cultural category formed through the complex interrelations between media texts, industries and historical contexts. Thus, particular case studies in this thesis provide evidence of how genre works from policy decisions to production techniques, at the same time detailing industrial practices within that process, including production, marketing, distribution and exhibition. In order to demonstrate how such tasks are achieved, administrative policy concerning Chinese TV drama is scrutinised, for example, as a way of examining the changing political circumstances, the power relations within the political hierarchy, the industrial motivations, and the relationship between the state and the intellectual class, which together contribute to and influence the development and mutation of the genre of PHTD.

In conclusion, the inspirational introduction to the work entitled *TV Drama in China*[21] (co-edited by a group of Chinese and Western scholars) is also acknowledged as a partial impetus for the present study. The writers involved in this work claim, for example, that current research on Chinese television drama mainly focuses on the context that it provides for social reform, or on its function as cultural discourse or anthropological text. Importantly, the authors then also note how little is known 'about Chinese television drama as a distinctive narrative form within the parameters of political economy and its role in sustaining Chinese television as a cultural institution.'[22] My research is therefore motivated by a view similar to that held by the editors of this work. A further important point is that this book demonstrates (alongside Zhu's individual work *Television in Post-reform China*)[23] that the study of generic Chinese television drama is growing.[24] Thus, my research in turn will hopefully provide a useful contribution to the scholarly debate in the West surrounding full understanding of the particular genre under study, showing in the form of case studies precisely how the specific methodological framework suggested can open up a window within these popular cultural phenomena through which to investigate contemporary Chinese politics and society. It is also my hope that the present study will contribute to the growing writer-researcher interest in analysing Chinese TV drama that is taking root in the West.

5. Outline of the Thesis

In this section, I shall give a brief overview of the structure of my thesis chapter by chapter. There are seven chapters in all, arranged in four main sections. The first section is composed of Chapters I and II, which aims to establish the theoretical framework for the research. To this end, the literature review will provide an analysis of research into genre theory in the two very different cultures of the West and China, in the fields of literature, film and TV. The second section opens with Chapter III, which details the general background to the development of Chinese television over half a century. In the second part of this chapter, I further focus my

study on Chinese TV drama, including the main stages of its development, current processes of production, and governmental censorship. By mapping the shifting landscape of Chinese television - and television drama in particular - from its birth to maturity, my study proposes nothing less than a map of the political and economic changes in China. In this way, the shaping factor of political forces will be revealed in instigating a shift in the direction of China's television industry. In other words, the history and development of Chinese television will be woven into the analysis of China's political fabric from the outset. Chapter IV and V then make up the third section of the thesis. The genre of PHTD is in particular highlighted in Chapter IV, through scrutiny of its definitions, patterns, and narrative structures, while the focus in chapter V is upon genre conventions, and analysis of codes of content. Last but not least is the final section, which investigates generic and cultural verisimilitude. Chapter VI examines the unique features of this specific genre, while chapter VII researches the detail of its cultural and political contexts.

For the sake of greater clarity, I also briefly summarise the research content of each chapter as follows:

In Chapter I, the literature review draws on the historical body of genre studies, including the development of this academic discipline in the West. Also scrutinised is the terminology of 'leixing' and the ways in which this Chinese concept parallels that of Western theory. The second part of the chapter focuses on a general study of genre definitions and conventions. Theories are also reviewed that set out principles for defining a genre, genre repertoire and conventions, repertoires of elements and verisimilitudes in media text. The last section investigates studies in Chinese television and historical TV drama, pointing out differing perspectives between the West and China in the current research focus on Chinese TV studies This is a comparison which will demonstrate the academic gap identified in terms of analysing Chinese TV drama, which in turn calls for research to bridge that gap.

Chapter II sets out the methodological framework for the research, detailing the constructs to be applied throughout the study. There are four foci, including: definition of the genre of PHTD; its repertoire of elements; genre conventions; and the generic and cultural verisimilitudes of this genre in practice. The first section examines the role of systems of orientation in defining genre, and discusses how specific theoretical constructs developed by Dunn and Plooy are to be applied in the study, while the second aims to establish a theoretical framework for genre conventions. Two questions are raised, concerning the purpose for which the PHTD genre is a mechanism, and the construction of meaning through conventions. The third section features an investigation of cultural verisimilitude which lays the foundation for later analysis of the role of cultural and political forces in driving the direction of the PHTD genre. The concluding part highlights the debate surrounding the most effective and most practical ways of studying Chinese media. The two perspectives of orientalism and sinology are scrutinised, in terms of specific contributions to this debate on the shaping influence upon the genre of PHTD of the forces discussed above.

Chapter III provides a detailed contextualisation of the genre of historical TV drama, beginning with a brief comparative study on the rise of Chinese television in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In this, the aim is to identify the political forces embedded in the early stages of the Mainland TV industry. The second section

further draws attention to the evolution of the television industry in Mainland China after the 1980s, across aspects of the political and economic shift after the Cultural Revolution. The analysis includes the restrictions imposed by the state administrative system and the challenges faced as a result of this new system, and the ideological engagement and monopoly of cultural policy in the pluralised cultural environment of contemporary China. The third section includes a detailed review of the Chinese TV drama industry extending from its three stages of development to current industry and administrative policies. The final section of this chapter demonstrates from the historical review of Chinese television and the TV drama industry that the renaissance of Confucianism has a growing impact on the strength of political forces.

Chapter IV gives a strong sense of the unique Chinese context, and of how this context has helped to shape the production methods and formats of the PHD genre. The first part of three generic definitions in Chinese TV drama approaches the question of how the concept of genre is used in relation to each production. This analysis leads into the next section in terms of defining the genre of PHTD from both a linguistic approach and historical considerations. The last section then proposes a new model for defining this genre in contrast to the well-established Chinese TV Drama genre of Revolution. By means of the new model, four theoretical constructs are found to emerge, pointing to the notions of *family nation*, *the nation of Han China*, *Sage leadership* and *neo-Confucianism.*

Chapter V builds on the new model with a more detailed analysis of the specific conventions and codes utilised, bringing out the ideological aspects for discussion and scrutiny. The first section focuses on the narrative structure of the PHTD and its literary and aesthetic tradition. Following this, a detailed analysis draws on genre conventions including the purpose of this genre and its strategic content. Based on the four constructs discussed in the previous chapter, I further test the language spoken in this genre from the perspectives of cultural heritage, male-oriented society, the anti-corruption campaign, the culture of political tactics, and the moral value of sacrifice. The final section scrutinises codes of content in the three areas of big-budget features, star icons and poster design, which pinpoint the core elements in narrative that constitute this given genre, and project the genre of PHTD into the historical, political and cultural practice of China.

Chapter VI defines the generic verisimilitude and hybridity of the PHTD genre. This is crucial to Altman's approach and will also lead into the discussion in Chapter VII, when the whole notion of 'difference' and change is investigated. Here, generic variations are related to the wider social discourse. This chapter begins with a study of the evolution of the PHTD genre in its early stages, which further demonstrates its hybridity across Costume Drama, Historical Parody and Biopic/Epic. This significant feature of hybridity is examined through the lens of narrative, definition, convention, and genre purpose. In order to scrutinise generic verisimilitude, I then apply the new model developed above to a case study of *The Great Revival* and *King Guojian of Yue*. Both these TV dramas are identified respectively as being classifiable within the genre of PHTD, while the study of the codes of content and individual purpose will distinguish the textual component of this genre from the textual category.

Last but not least, Chapter VII focuses on cultural verisimilitude through a further TV drama case study entitled *The Great General Shi Lang*. In this chapter, I analyse in detail the cultural variation in reconstructing the shared memory of history, which (as shown) can be dramatically shaped and re-shaped by the orchestrating forces of contemporary politics, while the power of intellectual forces plays an equally vital role in directing the historical and political message. The chapter also takes the next step towards answering two significant questions: namely, the difference between fictional text and factional context, and how to achieve an accurate reading of Chinese nationalism under the impact of cultural verisimilitude. These two questions lead to the final conclusion that a specific cultural context is in fact driven by political ideology in contemporary China. In other words, the nationwide fondness for neo-Confucianism is choreographed by the One-Party State. As I pinpoint in the concluding chapter, there is no totally new thing, but a re-totalling, the totalitarian overcoding of political and social life.[25]

To summarise, the four sections and seven chapters of my thesis come together in a rhetorical pyramid structure. The first two chapters build a foundation for the use of the methodology of genre theory. The third chapter pictures the contemporary Chinese media, television drama in particular, and the power net between political and intellectual forces. The fourth and fifth chapters narrow my area of study to focus on the specific genre of PHTD, which is investigated through textual analysis and examination of the complex interrelations between the texts and the prevailing political economy. Chapters VI and VII investigate this genre in more microscopic detail. Through a group of notable case studies, I demonstrate how PHTD works from policy decisions to textual discourse and industry practice, which finally lead to firm conclusions as to what this genre can teach us about the new image of Confucian China and how it is being constructed politically, morally, visually, and through literature in the twenty-first century. In brief, my work therefore develops these questions through the systematic application of genre theory to probe the motivation behind the popularisation of the PHTD and its possible consequences. My conclusion is that the notion of nationhood is very much like the genre itself. Neither of them is stable; they are constantly shifting and adapting their landscape according to the conditions of the day. Accordingly, while the genre of PHTD has certainly embedded itself in the contemporary political context, it too will have to mutate along with the signification of Chinese nationhood.

By way of conclusion to this chapter, I would like to note my approach to the Romanisation of Chinese names in this thesis. For the most part, I use *pinyin*. Developed in the 1950s, *pinyin* is the official Romanisation system for standard Chinese. Where the *pinyin* system is used for Chinese names in this thesis, forename follows surname. So, for Wang Hui, Wang is the surname. In addition to *pinyin*, I occasionally use the Wade-Giles system, a form of Romanization commonly used in English language books published before 1979. Some Chinese names such as Chiang Kai-shek have become widely accepted and familiarised in their Wade-Giles format. Where this is the case, this thesis uses the Wade-Giles version.

As a final note to conclude the introduction to the study, in choosing the heading of *Nostalgia for a Glorious China*, my concern here is to examine how and why people in contemporary China engage with the history of their country and how they interpret it. An important point to make therefore is that during the Maoist period, the China of the past was discursively constructed as a backward and closed society, a discourse which helped

justify the need for a 'new society', which could then become the basis for (and drive forwards) a strong and advanced nation. However, this attitude towards Chinese history underwent a deep-level change in the wake of the 1989 Pro-democracy Movement. As a result, over the last four decades, the Chinese past has been transformed into a new symbol of a powerful and glorious nation, a nation that looks back proudly on its influential civilisation, a territorial state that has been in existence for more than 2000 years.

Chapter I
Literature Review: Genre Theory and Analysis

As noted in the Introduction, my thesis proposes a theory of genre which involves the integration of studies in both textual and contextual areas in order to fully analyse Chinese Political History TV Dramas (PHTD) as a distinct form. This is a theory of genre which further provides a platform to pull together other theories and methods to consolidate this specific media phenomenon.

This chapter contains four sections. In order to understand the significance of the term 'genre', the first section provides the necessary literature review of the history of genre studies in the very different media texts of literature, film and television. In addition to this historical review, comparison and contrasts are made between Western and Chinese perspectives in order to demonstrate an academic gap in genre studies which (it is proposed) needs to be bridged. This is an academic gap which provides one of the principal rationales for the present research. The second part of this chapter therefore takes a close look at the definition of genre across both of these perspectives, and at those elements that contribute to defining and differentiating a certain genre.

In the third section, three areas of genre conventions are considered – generic and cultural verisimilitude, and generic repertoire. This analysis of both genre conventions and generic repertoire will help me to set up a theoretical and conceptual framework for my research. If genre convention provides the stability for exploring PHTD as a distinct form, generic and cultural verisimilitude lays the foundation for its study as a drama-based television programme, and for defining this genre textually and contextually. Last but not least, the literature review incorporates studies of Chinese television and historical television drama. Such a study (comparing and contrasting Western and Chinese schools of thought) will thus not only bring together differing interests and perspectives of current research in this area, but also act as introduction (from the 'insider' position of a Chinese national) to the intricacies of PHTD.

1. Historical Review of Genre Studies

1.1. The Development of Genre Studies in the West

1.1.1. Genre in Western Literature

'Genre' from the linguistic perspective is a loan word from French, which literally translates into the meaning of 'a kind' in English. The term thus refers to 'a style or category of art, music or literature.'[1] Originally, in Western cultural theory, this is a term taken from the classification systems of Aristotle and Plato. These early stages where the term genre is used therefore provide the theoretical locus for the study of the literature. Considered as an intangible taxonomy, the term genre within this implies an idea of permanent stability. Tragedy, epic, comedy and parody, for example, are well-known genres in Western literature. During the 1950s, modern literary critics adopted this traditional acknowledgment of the definition, and further developed it into a

more complex classification system. For example, Frye develops the implications of terminological genre from this traditional classification into the modes of types and categories.[2]

1.1.2.   The Definition of Genre in Film Study

Given the broadness of such literary categories, Feuer suggests that we should distinguish between the uses of the term genre for literature, film and television rather than viewing its analysis as a whole. The reasoning here is that film and television (in contrast to the traditional literary view of genre) are 'culturally specific and temporally limited'.[3] For example, film study sees this term as a way of organizing films. The term genre primarily refers to type in relation to earliest Hollywood films. It is not until the 1960s that its use acts as more than mere cataloguing, when critics such as Ryall, Altman and Neale began to take an interest in these films. A more theoretical stance, such as the auteur policy, was then developed with regard to the definition of genre. Neale in the 1980s (for example) defines the term as pattern, form, style or structure, focusing on generic conventions as well as audience expectations.[4] From a semiotic perspective, Schatz refers to genre as language analogy, while the film genre itself represents a tacit contract between the motion picture industry and the audience.[5] Generally speaking, critics within this period recognize genre as a system of conventions, and perceive film genre as both a static and a dynamic system. In the late 1990s, Rick Altman (for the first time) fully connects the roles between industry critics and audiences in making and re-making genre in his masterly work entitled *Film/Genre* and *American Film Musical*[6], which represented a critical theoretical development in the study of genre. This is a genre theory based upon the concept of classifying films according to some principle of coherence, such as 'a common topic … and a common structure, a common way of configuring that topic,'[7] while recognizing that the very term genre has different meanings for different groups. The definition of genre in the area of film study refers to not only a film type, but also to its part in the tripartite process of production, marketing and consumption.

1.1.3.   Considering and Challenging the Term Genre in the Early Stages of Television Studies

Subsequent to the development of genre theory in film studies, definitions have been further expanded into the evolving discipline of television studies. This section therefore focuses on television genre readings and (in particular) the various stages of transition relating to the defining of genre in television studies. Gary Edgerton and Brian Rose claim (for example) that genre has now become a fundamental tool in analysing television in Western (or least in American) institutional scholarship.[8] This approach of applying genre to television studies starts from the publication of Newcomb's *TV: The Most Popular Art*[9] and the first edition of his follow-up and widely used anthology, *Television: The Critical View*[10].

Before Newcomb's seminal work, a traditional social science perspective reigned in American higher education, dominating academic territory in television studies, and focusing on analysis and criticism from the point of view of the industry itself. This focus included a general study to present an overview of the attitudes toward and uses of television in 1960s, as the approach in Glick and Levy's book *Living with Television* demonstrates. The intention was to provide 'the social and psychological meanings of television as medium for entertainment,

advertising and communication.'[11] The collection of papers entitled *TV as Art: Some Essays in Criticism*[12] edited in 1966 is a further instance of the very early academic discussions of television fiction.

In contrast, interest from historical-critical disciplines and humanities-based approaches were largely marginal. There were hardly any models drawing on the humanities in treating television seriously as a storytelling medium.[13] However, Newcomb's work (prior to the early books) is not in the same tradition, and is therefore regarded as a landmark in the development of academic television studies. Adopting and adapting traditions laid down in the literature, Newcomb's two TV studies (published in the 1970s) represent 'a discipline, encouraging a younger generation of scholars to approach TV from a decidedly humanistic approach rather than from the pre professional orientation that had gripped broadcasting as a field of study.'[14] Later in reviewing his own books, Newcomb points out himself that the weakness of early work on genre in television studies (at least in his case) was the result of a lack of appropriate models and guides.

In the meantime, theories of culture and communication, media and society became available from European scholars, but had not yet been thoroughly examined and applied in American studies.[15] The change takes place very quickly within the year of 1974, particularly in Britain with Raymond Williams' *Television; Technology and Cultural Form*[16]. This book challenges the early simple notion of genre by introducing the term 'flow', which Williams sees as embodying 'the central television experience'.[17] Television (in his view) is a programme or a sequence of time units marked clearly by intervals; it is also the incorporation of commercials and trailers that underscores real broadcasting as a flow of differently related units. Notably, this is a term which resists the determinism of McLuhan's dictum that 'the medium is the message'[18], and challenges the traditional critical perspective of the discrete event and the individual text.[19] Williams' concept of flow thus represents three remarkable contributions. First, his theory relates more to close textual analysis. Based on this highlighting of textual analysis, Adler and Cater go on to emphasise the importance of narratives and narrative theory,[20] pointing out that every narrative can be split into two parts: the story (what happens to whom) and the discourse (how the story is told).[21]

Second, the notion of flow acts as a response to mass communication studies of effects. Williams stresses the importance of viewers, for example, who have real power to disturb, disrupt and to distract the old logic of history and technology. Works from Fiske and Hartley[22], Kaplan[23] (both published in the same year of 1978) further study contemporary popular-cultural media from this point of view of the audience. Attention is thus drawn to media literacy in a period of social change and democratization. Rather than being rooted in the methodology of the social sciences, this focus on the study of audiences clearly presents a perspective of literary and textual techniques of analysis.

Third, Williams attacks empiricist mass communication research and technological determinism. In his view, invention itself does not cause cultural change; to understand any of the mass communication technologies, we must historicize, and consider its articulation within specific sets of interests and within a specific social order. In other words, social practices profoundly affect the reality of determination. He points out that we should think

of determination as a process in which real determining factors function, such as the distribution of power, or of capital, social and physical inheritance, or the relations of scale and size between groups.[24]

Equally, the term flow (along with genre) plays an important role in contemporary television criticism. For example, pages from the *Journal of Popular Film and Television* all contribute to the study of popular television genres. Among these, Thorburn's essay "Television Melodrama"[25] offers one of the most cogent explanations of television fiction in the late 1970s. In his view, this is a genre in itself, and should be analysed from its structure and considered in aesthetic terms with regard to its conventions. He believes that genre has been (and should be) focused upon as a cultural and political fact.

To summarize early research on television genre study, media scholars from Newcomb to Thorburn consider this genre much more from a textual perspective. Three main approaches to the study of this area throughout the 1970s are evident, focusing on the definition, interpretation or history of genre. The first of these (the definition approach) was to 'identify the core elements that constitute a given genre by examining texts to delimit the formal mechanisms that constitute the essence of a given genre.'[26] Good examples of this definition-based study include Neale and Krutnik's *Popular Film and Television Comedy*[27] and Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*[28]. Basing their work on recurring formulaic patterns, Kaminsky and Mahan's *American Television Genres*[29] and Rose's *TV Genre*[30] laid out TV programming as recognizable categories, such as soap operas, science fiction, police series, and so on.[31] In terms of textual matters, both further develop studies in setting, plot structure, characterisation, iconography, theme, technique and style.[32] Being a classical text-centred approach, this definition-based study conceptualizes television programmes as falling into distinctive and identifiable categories.

As for interpretation-based studies of genre, these were guided by specific theoretical orientations such as structuralism, psychoanalysis and cultural studies. This was an approach that explored the textual meanings of genres, situating them within larger social contexts. Key examples include Newcomb's two primary works discussed above, Marc's *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture*, and Kaplan's *Rocking around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture*.[33] The third type of approach (with a historical orientation) then tended 'to emphasize the evolutionary dynamics of genres, looking at how changing cultural circumstances bring about generic shifts'.[34] The most significant example of this kind of study was a paradigmatic historical genre analysis of the sitcom in Feuer's *Genre Study and Television*, who further pointed out how the distinctiveness of Television genre (its hybrid nature and its intertextuality) differentiates it from films. This type of horizontal recombination across television lines is an increasing tendency for studying genre.[35]

1.1.4.   New Perspectives in Studying Television Genre since the 1980s

With the development of television genre study in the mid-1980s, many critics began to look at genres from untried new perspectives. These new approaches included the practices of audience, scheduling decisions and habitual viewing.[36] Genre study was reinforced from the perspective of ideology in media studies, and examined

in an integrated relationship between industry, audience, text and context. In contrast to the traditional text-centred study of genre, this approach is drawn from D'Acci's work *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey*[37]. A most sophisticated and profound theory developed by Stuart Hall studied the different forms of communication, and examined a more complex structure between the producer and the audience via the mediated text of television programme itself.[38] Rather than believing the audience to be passive recipients, Hall pursued a notion of their more active role in general media, which attracted further attention to the study of audience influence.[39] Morley[40] and Bird,[41] for instance, followed in Hall's footsteps in this regard. This new trend also can be seen in the recent work from Edgerton and Rose, entitled *Thinking Outside the Box* in 2008.

Furthermore, cultural studies as an academic movement have impacted upon the theory of genre through their effects on disciplines such as the humanities and social sciences. An example is Johnson's masterpiece entitled 'What is Cultural Studies Anyway?' Even though his research puts no particular emphasis on television studies, this work later informed an influential outgrowth of several interdisciplinary projects in the Humanities during the 1980s. Johnson's rationale for applying the concept of cultural studies to genre study is (as he himself states) as follows; '[it] is now a movement or a network…It exercises a large influence on academic disciplines, especially on English studies, sociology, media and communication studies, linguistics and history.'[42]

Associated with wide critical-cultural theories, new approaches and redefinitions in current genre study focus on contextual interpretation rather than textual analysis. Jason Mittell's *Genre and Television* summarizes the current state of TV genre study, as an example. He challenges the view of genre in new ways by transcending the normal science of textual analysis to consider genres as industry-based and cultural categories, making a strong case for genre theory, history and criticism by using American television as examples. Mittell sets up a framework for understanding the production, distribution and reception of television programmes. His theory presents the importance of genre in terms of explaining how generic texts function within larger cultural contexts. Genres, as Mittell emphasizes, 'are cultural products, constituted by media practices and subject to ongoing change and redefinition.'[43] Thus, they are no longer only textual studies of the format, norms, static categories or conventions, but rather genre hybrids, global transitions, processes and deeper meanings 'from the interrelationship between an assortment of creative, technological, industrial, institutional, and reception-related practices'.[44] Of course, there still are a number of scholars who currently apply the traditional and classical approach to the study of genre. New ways or redefinitions are not therefore replacements for the traditional academic approach to genre study, as seen in the example of Meinhof and Smith's collective work entitled Intertextuality *and the Media: from Genre to Everyday Life,*[45] published in 2000.

1.2. An Expanded terminology of Chinese *'Leixing'* to Accommodate the Concept of Western Genre

The beginning of this chapter historically reviews the term genre and how it is applied into western literature, film and Television studies. In this section, I shall follow a similar route by revealing the application of Western genre to Chinese literature, film and television studies respectively.

1.2.1.   The Definition of 'Leixing' in Linguistic and Literary Studies

In contrast to the flourishing of genre study in Western criticism, Chinese scholars have only recently turned their academic attention to the theory of genre, for whom this is a relatively new subject. The notion of genre itself has been interpreted by the term 'leixing' by Chinese scholars. In linguistic terms, 'leixing' is composed of two morphemes. The first ('lei') has the meanings of 'kind', 'similar', 'friendly', 'model', 'worship', or 'not even'. Chinese literary studies define the term 'lei' as referring to 'category' or 'categorical analogy', in which 'a set of things belong to the same category or inherently share certain properties.'[46] This definition of 'lei' is thus very similar to the term 'analogy' in English. The second linguistic morpheme 'xing' originally meant 'mould', but later developed into the meaning of 'model' or 'type'.[47] Taken together, 'leixing' is not a new word in Chinese, linguistically meaning a category of objects that share similarities. It is often interpreted as referring to type, category or genre in English.

Currently, Chinese critics have adapted the Western term genre, and reinterpreted it in different linguistic senses relating to the natures of specific subject areas. In the study of literature, for example, the term genre is often examined through the concept of 'leixing', in contrast to the traditional term 'liupai' (school of thought). This traditional Chinese term has had considerable historical influence on Chinese literature. An update to *Classic of Poetry* written between the 10th and 7th centuries BC acknowledges that a similar category of literary composition had already been configured, for example. Thus, up until the early 20th century, Chinese scholars regarded 'liupai' as a method of dividing up Chinese literary categories. Genre and genre theory as found in Western literature were first introduced to Chinese scholars in the early 20th century, impacting to some extent upon the literature in modern China. Nevertheless, genre as a loan term (and its implications) has not challenged the foundation of traditional Chinese theory of 'liupai'. Instead (as Tong points out) the use of this term is expanded, and embedded into the Chinese context.[48] Nowadays, the term 'leixing' often features in studies that focus on modern Chinese literary theory. To examine the application of the term 'leixing' is therefore to re-examine Chinese traditional literature through a modern and Western perspective, such as that seen in Ma's *Genre Studies in Chinese Classical Literature*.[49]

1.2.2.   'Leixing' in Chinese film Studies

Being different from a consideration of both 'liupai' and 'leixing' in Chinese literary genre study, genre in Chinese film studies plays a distinct role. Historically, the technology of film was first introduced by the West to China in the late 19th Century, influencing the rise of Chinese cinema not only in the application of advanced film technology, but also of film theory. This theoretical influence from the West is often further evidence for those Chinese scholars who ideologically debate colonialism and the culturally imperialistic nature of Chinese film. The term 'leixing' when applied to Chinese film studies is thus closer to the implications of Western genre, by which it has been heavily influenced. After the Cultural Revolution, such studies attracted enormous attention in the 1980s, in particular concepts of film genre developed by famous Chinese scholars such as Shao, which focus on grouping films of similar types and models.[50] Notable also are Hao's 2002 studies, examining the relationship between genres and mass culture.[51] Later, Cai and You scrutinize American films through a practical perspective of genre within the film industry.[52] Li historically reviews the concept of film genre itself

and the development of genre film, focusing especially on the two examples of musicals and comedy in Chinese films of the early 1930s and 1940s. In particular, he highlights the theoretical principle of the 'cultural consenuses for applying Western genre theory'. [53]

1.2.3.   The Time Lag in Genre Study in Chinese Television Studies

Although Chinese film genre theory has been fully researched and studied in the 21st century, it seem that at least a two-decade academic gap exists in comparison with such studies in the West. When attention switches to television genre studies in China, this academic gap appears even wider. Before reviewing the latter type of study, two research traditions need to be considered. First, the academic tradition of Chinese scholars and critics is more likely to focus upon television *production* than theoretical studies. This focus results from their scholarly backgrounds in either production or other subject areas such as literature, film or history studies.

Second, Chinese scholars are more likely to focus on the individual case study at a micro-level, rather than approach television genre study at a macro-level. The tendency is thus to regard such a micro focus as a whole methodology or terminology. Recently, it is noteworthy that some Chinese scholars have developed an interest in the development of reality TV in China, and on what way and how western television programmes have impacted on Chinese television. A good example is Zhou's study on the currently popular television genre of the talent show in China, which he examines through the genre approach. In this, he reveals the generic verisimilitude of this genre to the western equivalent, pointing out that the way this genre operates in China will eventually fail, as it directly copies American form without considering the Chinese context. He further notes that too much pre-recorded interview overcomes the actual stage show, as well as the show itself being over commercialized.

The time lag in the development of genre study in Chinese television thus calls for Chinese critics to join this research area. Some (such as Yi, for example) have begun to study the textual structure of television genres and hybridity of some television programmes.[54] Moreover, although neither Zeng[55] nor Wang[56] explicitly highlight the term genre in their works, both evidently attempt to categorise Chinese television dramas in the manner of earlier genre studies, based on recurring formulaic patterns. Zhang, Wang, and Wu do however apply genre as an explicit means of textual categorisation, as suggested by the title of their collaborative book entitled *The Genres of Chinese Television Dramas*. The theoretical framework in this book is nevertheless based on the study and comparison of American television genres and Korean television dramas. The rationale for comparing and contrasting American and Korean television dramas is first and foremost that America produces the most successful commercial television dramas, and has the greatest impact on world TV dramas. Korea then shares a similar cultural heritage with China, as well as similar successes in developing domestic television dramas.[57]

Thus, currently, Chinese television genre study still seems to be largely preoccupied with the textual categorisation evident in western approaches of the 1970s. Most references made are to resources from classification in western film genre, rather than the body of work on television genres. As an example, in reviewing Zhang, Wang and Wu's collaborative work, the theoretical references are a Chinese translation of

Harry M. Geduld and Ronald Gottesman's *An Illustrated Glossary of Film Terms*, published in 1973[58], and Daniel Lopez's *Films by Genre: 755 Categories, Styles Trends and Movements Defined*[59]. Within this kind of theoretical framework, the authors devote great attention to the traditional textual study of generic narratives, rather than examining the industrial production, distribution of Chinese television programmes, and likewise how those genres engage with political and economic contexts.

2. Genre Definitions and Conventions

2.1. Principles for Defining Genre

Based on the literature review above of the historical development of genre studies across mass media, genres can be defined as 'patterns/forms/styles/structures'[60]. Lacey further suggests a tripartite relation between generic texts, their audiences, the artists and the institutions that produce them.

Table 1.1 Lacey's tripartite relation for defining a genre[61]

institution

genre

audience   text
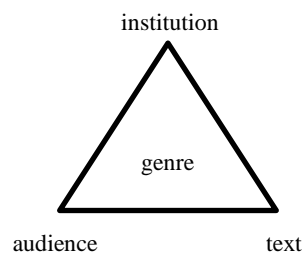
Within this tripartite relation, Lacey highlights the importance of media institution, and characterises the text's producers as institutions. Lacey's theory thus provides three distinct study areas. The first approach is to study artists, who work within an institutional context, and produce a generic media text in line with their knowledge of conventions and awareness of audiences' expectations. The second focuses on audiences themselves, using genre to categorise texts. The last is the function of institutional influence upon the texts to ensure that a specific genre label is applied in order to sell the concept to the potential audience. Lacey's three distinct areas can further be summarised by Plooy's conceptual framework to the identification of a genre. When applied to researching mass-genre text, this conceptual framework includes - first 'the purposes or functions of a text as a media', followed (secondly) by 'the construction of meaning by the form and/or content of a text'.[62]

To summarize, the current principles in defining genre are as follows:

- an agreed code between the communication and audience
- systems of orientation
- a development and preservation of textual forms
- a double-layered set of expectations that are - text has to meet a set of basic conventional requirements to which an audience has become accustomed; and text has to contain novelty and difference in order to lure the audience to return to the same genre in future
- A text can be demarcated as a genre when it adheres to specific conventions.

2.2. Genre Repertoire in Relation to Television Drama Study

Building on the above analysis of the definition of genre, conventions, verisimilitude and repertoire of elements, this research particularly focuses on the study of television dramas and genre. However, although, Chinese PHTD forms the centre of this study, it is still necessary to first look at the broad picture of genres in television drama. In this regard, Glen Creeber (in his book entitled *The Television Genre Book*) briefly touches upon the various popular genres of television drama in the west, including the single play, the Western, the action series, the police series, hospital drama, science fiction, drama-documentary, the min-series, costume drama, the teen series, and post-modern drama.[63] As a result of the time lag in genre study in the fields of Chinese television and television dramas, there is no clear-cut application of genre repertoires. But there is nevertheless a consciousness of grouping Chinese television dramas by different methodologies, as will be further discussed in the next chapter.

2.3. Genre Conventions, Repertoires of Elements, and the Thinking of Verisimilitude in Media Text

Plooy divides genre conventions by looking at fictional or factional content. Fictional content offers an 'imaginary content' and deals with 'a (re-)presentation of a reality that doesn't exist in real life', while factional content offers a so-called 'window on the world', and deals with 'the presentation of reality, as it exists in real life'.[64] Examples in the first group are television sitcoms, soap operas and printed comics, while those with factional content are often seen as news, television sports and documentary films. Irrespective of whether a certain genre contains fictional or factional content, each content shares a certain genre convention. For these reasons, it is necessary to take a close look at such conventions.

2.3.1. Genre Conventions in Media Text

The literature review above reveals long-standing debates on the question of genre definition. As part of the result of watching a television programme or other media text, a viewer is likely to recognise, predict and compare a similar pattern among others. Genre convention, then, is about identifying the type of genre form, and 'contribute to the development and preservation of textual forms'.[65] Genre conventional patterns are often found in the narrative structures, subject matter, thematic content, iconography, and visually perceptible objects and actions in visual and structural genre.

Table 1.2 Basic Narrative Structure found in film/fiction-based television programmes

exposition	development	resolution
The locality The era and time The main characters The cause and/or nature of underlying conflict	A plot developed through • The duration (the length of TV programmes/ a film) • The degree of character development required • The complexity of the story	Final climax • Actions • Denouement and catharsis

In this regard, Jonathan Bignell uses film as an example, pointing out that 'identifying a film's convention relies on identifying particular signs within a film, the relationship between signs, and their membership of one or more codes.'[66] Plooy provides a further case study of the definition of traditional Western (cowboy) film with reference to four similar properties (conventions) - the **setting** of the unknown Wild West, the **tension** expressed by maximising movement and physical action with limiting dialogue, **conflict** by means of physical violence, and **characterisation** of binary opposition of good versus bad.

Regarding film and/or television programmes as industrial products, and to ensure comprehensibility, a media text will repeat the signifying practices of others, their conventional signs and established codes, and conventional narrative structures of disequilibrium and resolution.[67] Connecting individual media text to that of the industrial commercial context genre allows it to be marketed in ways which repeat the formulas that have marked previous financial successes. Plooy makes an artificial distinction between external factors and internal factors, which influence the genre conventions of a particular type of television programme. Internal factors are the form and/or content discussed above. External factors are known as media institution and include the following,

- Economic factors in relation to production and distribution
- The relation between media text and the socio-ideological, political and economic reality in which they function
- In a historical sense, the influence of previous directors', producers' and relevance of presenters, or actors as celebrities[68]

External factors are often approached through posters or advertising, which contain coded signs which cue genre expectations. These signs and codes will relate to existing generic expectations to ensure comprehensibility.

Despite differential interpretations of different genres, a common reorganization is reached to explore the ideological model of genre. Structural and ideological approaches have been widely applied in the study of

genre definition. These approaches aim to look at 'how genres play out particular themes, oppositions and concerns that reflect back on the "collective unconscious" of a society at any one time.'[69]

2.3.2.   <u>Genre Repertoires of Elements</u>

An important development in thinking about mass-media genres is no longer seeing them 'as sets of fixed elements, constantly repeated, but as working with "repertoires of elements" of fluid systems of learnt conventions and expectations.'[70] Both makers and audiences share these repertoires of elements, and maintain the stabilities of genres. But even so there is a 'tricky conceptual relationship at work between the "generic repertoire" and the texts themselves'.[71] From this perspective, Lacey explains the procedure of constituting genre by a repertoire of elements, which includes considerations of setting, iconography, character types, narrative and style and so on.[72] Practically, the generic repertoire acts variously due to the nature of specific TV programmes. Examples can be seen in Holmes' study of Western quiz shows as well as that of Lacey's game shows. Both apply the genre's repertoire of elements and consider this framework to be present in quiz or game shows, as illustrated in the following table.

Table 1.3 A Comparison of the Genre's Repertoire of Elements in quiz/game show and drama-based television programmes

Genre	Quiz/game show	Drama-based television programmes[73]
Repertoire of elements	• 'Setting • Characters • Narrative • Iconography • Style'[74]	• Setting • Characterization • Narrative • Iconography • Filmic techniques • Recurrent 'patterns of meaning'[75]

Steve Neale[76] hints however that the generic repertoire might differ markedly in non-fiction entertainment programming with authored–like drama. Focusing on the genre study of film and drama-based television programmes, Daniel Chandler lists the distinctive textual properties of this genre as used by film and television theorists. Three issues are thus brought to light in comparing and contrasting elements in the table above. First, although quiz show and drama-based television programmes share some genre elements of setting, characters, narrative, and iconography (as indicated in the table above) there is still considerable distinction in terms of detailed interpretation of each genre's repertoire of elements. For example, the narrative of the quiz show genre highlights the importance of questions or tasks, while drama-based television grammar emphasises, formulaic plots and structure with 'predictable situations, sequences, episodes, obstacles, conflicts and resolutions'.[77] Second, there is a tendency to see visual style in a less clear-cut fiction based genre. The visual style in quiz/game show refers to 'basic "live" television, for instance, including a focus on the host, audience and contestant reaction shots, and segmented structure.'[78] Audiences are very important to the genre's repertoire of elements in the quiz show, but less so in drama-based television programmes, as acknowledged by Chandler. He goes on to point out that 'viewers are often less conscious of such conventions than of those relating to content.'[79] The third issue is the emphasis on recurrent patterns of meaning in drama-based television programmes. In this regard, Stanley Solomon refers to the recurrent patterns of meaning that basic themes,

topics, values and subject matters need to consider social, cultural, psychological, professional, political, sexual and moral dimensions.[80] This emphasis is intended to reflect a relationship to the rest of the real world. It includes 'perceptions of how realistic the genre is seen to be, and how it handles the ideological values of the area it covers.'[81] In order to further understand this relationship between genre and realism, it is necessary to next bring in a consideration of verisimilitude to the study.

2.3.3.   The Distinction between Generic Verisimilitude and Cultural Verisimilitude

The study of genre conventions in media text provides a generic principle of identifying a film and/or television genre. But within the broad lines of a certain genre, every film or television programme also needs to be different, 'to find new ways of using existing signs and codes in order to offer the pleasure of the new'.[82] In order to further understand the genre conventions of the referent in genre films, Todorov and Steve Neale make a distinction between cultural verisimilitude and generic verisimilitude.[83] In this regard, Gledhill concludes that Neale's use of the term verisimilitude 'refers not to what may or may not actually be the case, but rather to what the dominant culture believes to be the case to what is generally accepted as credible, suitable, proper.'[84] Thus, under such a hypothesis, generic verisimilitude 'allows for considerable play with fantasy inside the bounds of generic credibility', while cultural verisimilitude 'refers us to the norms, mores, and common sense of social world outside the fiction'[85].

Referring back to Plooy's four conventions for defining Western film, she agrees that nowadays 'typical' Westerns are no longer produced. Following on from this fact , Plooy points out that a mass-genre text can only be identified and defined as a media in relation to how it 'differs from other texts that belong to different genre paradigms' and 'corresponds with other texts that belong to the same genre paradigm'.[86] In other words, genre conventions produce a second order verisimilitude by which the credibility or truth of the fictional world we associate with a particular genre is guaranteed. From this perspective, generic verisimilitude and cultural verisimilitude function as a way of recognizing a film/television programme which belongs to a particular genre, as well as verifying compliance with the rules of that genre.

At a micro-level of analysing a certain film or television programme, the practical approach involves (as Jonathan Bignell suggests) 'comparing and contrasting the signification' in a film/television programme with that of other film/television programmes and with texts in other media.' A media text should be not only seen as a self-contained structure by imposing upon a generic convention, but also as a study of the media text within its broader social context. Media text exists 'in relation to two contradictory impulses, repetition and difference.'[87]

Based on an understanding of Plooy and Bignell's suggestions on the analysis of film, the study of generic verisimilitude can be interpreted as an approach from one text to others within a certain genre. Also, this approach needs to be considered within the concept of intertextuality, where a text needs to be examined and tested in relation to those in other genres from contemporary and other media culture. Along with Plooy's example of modern Western film, the generic verisimilitude of contemporary action-adventure films abandons classical narrative structure in favour of a series of plot climaxes. Nowadays, action-adventure films are plotted

in quick succession, and their stories organized in terms of progression from one level of story to another. Jonathan Bignell believes that this generic verisimilitude can be attributed to the influence of graphic novels and modern computer games. Reflecting in turn upon television studies, there is blurring of the boundaries between television drama and other media in contemporary culture. Evidence can be seen from a range of contemporary television dramas which are based on film, including the American TV series *Fargo* (2014) and the Chinese TV drama *Red Sorghum* (2014), both of which are inspired by the films with the same names respectively.

The relationship between generic and cultural verisimilitude reflects variously in different genres. For example, the generic verisimilitude of Chinese revolution television drama draws heavily on cultural verisimilitude. These are generic narratives that draw on the discourse of Sino-Japanese War in WWII, and civil war, which audiences might identify with, if not from their experience, then from other cultural sources such as fiction, historical record and textbooks. Being different from horror film, comedy, or sitcom, these are narratives 'operating under an ideology of realism', given that 'adherence to cultural verisimilitude is a necessary condition of "serious" film, television or literature.' Last but not least, Steve Neil underlines the fact that 'generic regimes of verisimilitude are almost as "public", as widely known as "public opinion" itself.'[88] In this sense, generic and cultural regimes merge in public discourse, where 'generic knowledge' becomes 'a form of cultural knowledge, a component of "public opinion".'[89]

3. Literature Review of Studies in Chinese Television and Historical Television Drama

3.1. Current Focus on Chinese Television Studies

Before studying the genre of political history drama, it is necessary to carry out a literature review of this genre. In this section, I shall divide my analysis into two academic geographical areas: domestic literary research on political history dramas and academic studies outside China.

In domestic China, current research and criticism of Chinese television dramas generally focus on three fields. The first area is the political and economic study of contemporary Chinese television and its production. Yin Hong is considered as the leading researcher in this field. His study is carried out from a historical and political perspective, and projects a panorama of the history and development of Chinese television in general.

The second area is the study of contemporary Chinese television including its role within the mass-media and its commercial strategies in developing the Chinese television industry. These scholars tend to be more practical and devote their research attention to the study of production, the reception of audiences, the structural development of the Chinese television network, and management skills. For example, CVSC-SOFRES MEDIA (CSM), the media research corporation, was set up as a joint venture between CCTV's China Viewership Survey Centre (CVSC) and the French company TN SOFRES Inc. It supplies TV ratings and relative analysis for Chinese television researchers.[90] Annually, a series of books such as the *Blue Book of China's Media*[91] and *Survey on the Development of Chinese Media* provide detail on the development of Chinese television and other

media industries. For management skills, some scholars (such as Xie Yuexuan, for example) provide a detailed interpretation of the management of the Chinese television drama industry. [92]

Last but not least, current academic and professional research exercises now focus on a specific study of certain types or phenomena within Chinese television, ranging from a genre like pink drama to a one-off study like the TV programme *Super Girl*, a singing competition which is similar to the programme *X Factor* in Britain. Among these, television drama draws most of the attention in this academic and research exercise.

3.2. Current Study of Historical Television Drama in Domestic China

Within Mainland China, the rise of academic research on the study of historical TV dramas can be traced back to the 1980s. In October 1984, Shanxi TV station held a conference in relation to researching Chinese classical and historical TV dramas, followed by the issue of a new journal entitled *Chinese Broadcasting and Television*. Gradually, a group of famous Chinese TV producers and directors began to join in this study project.[93] During this period of time, critics often focused their attention on case study reports on historical TV dramas, such as the talk on the TV drama *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (*Taiping Tianguo*, dir. Chen Jialin, 2000). The majority of these maintained their research focus upon (and interest in) their study of the generic texts/narratives, propaganda and pedagogical functions of political history dramas.

The general research or study interest in Chinese historical television drama is in textual analysis from the perspectives of official, ideological, historical, or social science. In relation to historical study, Li and Xiao give a detailed study of the concept of historical TV dramas, their narrative tradition, and audience reception in contemporary China. In relation to narrative structure and subject matter, Wang Junqiu's study on Qing drama focuses on classical literary adaptations, cultural verisimilitude, and the acknowledgement of artists (auteur). Regarding the ideological and official relationship, some Chinese historians such as Wang Qingxiang, Yan Aimin, Feng Zuozhe, Ge Jianxiong and Zhou Youbin[94] formed into a group discussing the producer's obligation to the mass media and the state in contemporary China.

3.3. Current Studies of Chinese Television and Historical Television Drama in the West

In contrast with the flourishing of domestic academic research, the study of Chinese television in the West projects a different picture. Such Chinese television critics are either Chinese scholars working in Western academic institutes, or Western researchers with a long history of studying Chinese media. For example, Michael Keane studies Chinese television from a political perspective on its position in global industry. Chris Berry, the expert on Chinese film, has developed a new interest in Chinese television studies. Chinese scholars like Zhu Ying, Yik-chan Chin and Wang Yi focus on the political and cultural consciousness of the Chinese television industry. The first influential book written in English on Chinese television was James Lull's *China Turned On: Television, Reform, and Resistance*.[95] Lull's ethnographic study gives an in-depth view of Chinese television and presents a broad map of its official ideologies, expectations and lifestyles in the 1980s.

3.3.1. The Three Main Research Areas of Chinese Television Studies

In general, research in the West particularly addresses political, cultural and economic significance. They contribute to Chinese television studies through introducing and presenting the prism of newly imported Western theories and methodologies. Chinese television is approached from a variety of perspectives in history, ideology, genre, style, aesthetics and viewership. According to the current English-speaking research on Chinese television study, Zhu[96] distinguishes three main research areas. The first area originates from international communication studies, and examines the political and institutional structure of Chinese television as well as the democratization, marketization and trans-nationalization of its industry. This area combines the first and second research areas in domestic China, but English-speaking researchers tend to focus more on the political connotations of the history and evolution of the Chinese television industry, as in (for example) Hong's *The Internationalization of Television in China*[97]. Zhu Ying's *Two Billion Eyes* carefully examine in specific detail 30 years of the history of Chinese Central Television (hereafter CCTV) as an industry, a propaganda outlet, an art form, a business, and an educator. Bai Ruoyun and Song Geng's collaborative book entitled *Chinese Television in the Twenty-First Century*[98] is an interdisciplinary study of Chinese television industry, revealing the ideological landscape of current Chinese television programmes, and providing an opportunity to understand the tension-fraught and paradox-permeated conditions of Chinese post-socialism.

The second area encompasses perspectives on Chinese television from diverse disciplines including area studies, media studies, anthropology and literature. In other words, the changing Chinese political, economic and cultural landscape is viewed through western methodologies such as public sphere or popular culture theory. An example can be seen in Schneider's *Visual Political Communication in Popular Chinese Television Series*[99], in which various Western theories and methodologies are applied to the scrutiny of Chinese television series, including a semiotic approach, or public sphere, audience, and genre analysis.

The third approach focuses on Chinese prime-time television dramas.[100] Individual cases, especially Chinese television dramas, are brought under the spotlight for examination, such as (for instance) Wang's case study on the television drama *Expectations* (*Kewang*, 1990);[101] Zhu's study of prime-time television dramas, explored through the interplay of political, economic, cultural and generic forces both locally and globally;[102] and Bai Ruoyun's *Anticorruption Television Drama* studies,[103] which examines the narrative of this genre under an ideological and political lens. Further examples include Zhu and Berry, who recently edited a new book entitled *TV China*,[104] and *TV Drama in China*, co-edited by Zhu, Keane and Bai.[105]

3.3.2. Current Studies in Chinese Historical TV Drama

There are a series of research projects and studies in relation to Chinese historical TV drama. One such is German scholar Gotelind Müller's *Representing History in Chinese Media*,[106] a case study of one 60-episode historical TV drama *Toward the Republic* (*Zouxiang gonghe*, 2003), ultimately shown in fifty-nine instalments on CCTV in 2003. This historical TV drama is based on historical records from the late Qing Dynasty of 1890 to the founding of the Republic of China up to 1917, at the turn of the twentieth century. During its debut, this

TV drama caused heated debate across nearly every aspect of the media, from newspapers to the internet. The series was eventually cancelled regionally as well as nationally. In the context of this cancellation, Müller presents a synopsis of this television drama, along with a brief analysis of its background and impact on its viewers? Müller provides a solid overview of the debate surrounding this television drama. A substantial number of books, articles, and audience surveys in China support his analysis of this particular programme. Alongside Müller's study, Zhu also devotes his attention to an analysis of this TV drama.

Müller especially devotes considerable space to the issue of viewership (assessing expectations and responses amongst 'normal' viewers, professional historians, and those who participated in making this televised drama)[107] in order to determine whether or not it was representative of a genre.[108] The critical discourse regarding *Toward the Republic* certainly provides a wealth of rich material to deepen understanding of this television drama. However, several significant questions are touched upon in his discussion, such as the motivation for its production; the role played by current authorities from production to exhibition; and its ideological significance.

It is of interest in this regard that Bai (in her book entitled *Anticorruption Television Dramas*) devotes an entire chapter to the study of the structural conditions of Chinese television dramas through the perspective of genre. Significantly, she notes that historical dramas as a genre played an essential role in the first decade of the process of television commercialization. An appreciable number of popular historical TV dramas produced in Mainland China since 1996 are examined, along with percentage share of the total production of Chinese domestic TV drama in 1999. Bai further accounts for factors that contribute to the prominence of historical drama from censorship, narrative, ideological and political perspectives.

Further, Zhu's book of *Television in Post-reform China* discusses the political, economic and cultural forces which are channelled through the narrative of China's most popular dynasty TV drama. In redefining political history drama, this is a work that focuses on Neale's cultural and generic verisimilitude, comparing Chinese dynasty TV drama with three leading centres of transnational TV productions of the U.S., Brazil and Mexico in South America, and the Korean-led East Asia region. Zhu's study thus presents a new relationship between the Chinese state and society in the post-reform period. The proposition is therefore that historical TV dramas from production to narrative mirror major intellectual and policy trends. This means, on the one hand, that Chinese elites assess the proper course of economic and political modernization; on the other hand, these dynastic dramas reflect state-sanctioned values. Further stressing her argument, Zhu (in her article of "Transnational Circulation of Chinese-Language Television Dramas") discusses the genre dynasty drama within a pan-Chinese media in the world. In this regard, Zhu thus points out that 'the only genre from China that is able to compete in the transborder market with series from Hong Kong and Taiwan is dynasty drama.'[109]

A significant contributor in this area is Michael Keane, who has a comparatively long research history of studying Chinese television drama. In his recent article entitled 'From National Preoccupation to Overseas Aspiration', he again brings historical television dramas under the spotlight, recognizing these TV dramas as the most successful genre in tapping the overseas market. Keane gives a detail account of the successful historical TV dramas from the 1980s, but also compares this genre with the rising popularity of Korean TV drama in East

Asia since 2000. In order to answer the question raised in his paper of how Chinese producers make TV drama that sits well with Chinese censors while retaining appeal for overseas audiences, his belief is that good content and the pan-Asia marketplace play the key role in their success.[110]

This section has provided a panoramic view of the current research field in the West in the study of the Chinese TV drama industry and historical TV drama. This academic trend gains the full heat when the time turns into the first decade in the 21st century. The current research broadly covers from the narrative study of a certain genre to ideological, political and transnational forces and features of Chinese TV drama. The literature review lays a theoretical foundation for my thesis, and further supports the rationale for research into historical TV drama in the Chinese context, from the insider perspective of a Chinese national.

4. Chapter Conclusion

The literature review of genre in this chapter suggests approaches to reading a media text. It will be seen that there are numerous interpretations of the definition of genre, and considerable debate on ways of approaching a genre. Through reviewing generic conventions and verisimilitude, we may find therefore that genre does not always fit into neat and tidy categorisations. The focus in this thesis, however, is on genre as an organiser of textual components. This is a focus that can be referred back to Lacey's tripartite relation for defining a genre discussed in the section devoted to its definitions above. It will also be seen that my study stresses a relationship between 'institution' and 'text'. This organisation is proposed as a crucial part of the dynamic process of reading. First, I have considered the genre of PHTD in text, as 'narrative prediction based on clues offered by the text'.[111] Because of generic verisimilitude, genres 'continually change, modulate and redefine themselves.'[112] Thus, I have examined how this genre develops through time, and noted the existence of generic cycles. In addition, it will be seen that genre texts cannot offer everything that constitutes the genre to which they belong. It is for this reason that my assessment has been within political and ideological contexts.

Clearly, Lacey's tripartite relation also indicates the importance of audiences and their expectations from a particular form of genre. In this regard, the study has demonstrated that the repertoire of elements by which genre may be defined differs from one to the other. Here, I acknowledge the important part that audience plays in the study of PHTD. However, as Chandler points out, its importance is lessened in the drama-based television programme because of the nature of the traditional auteur. It is also relevant here that (as Bai sharply observes) 'unlike in the US, scientifically designed audience testing prior to production or screening is almost non-existent in China.' It has to be said therefore that even Chinese producers and television station staff are unclear about the significance of such prior audience research, to the extent that they often 'fall on previous hits that contain tried-and-proven formulas as a barometer of audience preferences.'[113] Bai further states the two main rationales in the Chinese context for investing in or purchasing a drama serial, which are: 'what is the subject matter/genre?' and 'Are there star actors or actresses in it?' It is important to note therefore that Bai's analysis of the features of historical TV drama resonates with my study in its focus on the relationship between 'institution' and 'text', which is certainly a vast enough subject in its own right. As discussed in the early part of the chapter, there are still a number of scholars who continue to focus on textual dimensions, such as Meinhof and Simith,

Feuer, and Kaplan. Moreover, Lacey, although though he points out the significance of audience, nevertheless maintains a focus in his work *Narrative and Genre* on narrative study and its relationship to genre. Thus, the consideration of audience as interpreter will be not included in this thesis, but we should nevertheless be aware of this dimension. This will hopefully be an avenue for future research into genre studies of PHTD.

Chapter II
Methodology

As seen, the literature review of genre theory in the previous chapter provides general theoretical fundamentals in relation to studying the genre of PHTD in the Chinese context. Within this theoretical framework, chapter two now focuses on the methodology itself, and how it is be applied and integrated into the study of this specific genre.

The main methodology to be applied is (importantly) the concept of genre as an approach to the study, in accordance with Feuer's perspective. Feuer's point is that 'genres are made, not born ... and a genre is ultimately an abstract conception rather than something that exists empirically in the world'.[1] It is therefore recognized (as Altman further suggests) that every corpus reflects a particular methodology; the constitution of a generic corpus is not (as a consequence) isolated from its methodological development.[2] Altman also proposes the following series of questions to be asked in the process of defining the genre itself, as follows: What is a genre? Which films are genre films? How do we know to which genre they belong? The thesis further integrates Altman's genre theory into two research questions: How does the genre of political history TV drama tells its stories? What is the relation of its stories to current and changing Chinese political and cultural forces? Hence, the first question involves the close scrutiny of the actual corpus of the genre of PHTD, while the second involves reflecting the social and political context of this particular genre. These two research questions are also in line with Lacey's principles, but defining a genre from two of his perspectives: its narrative (text) and its context (institution).

Following the discussion in the previous chapter, the analysis of narrative operates as the main approach for studying the genre of PHTD in this thesis. The analytical emphasis is as follows:

- Defining the genre of PHTD
- The genre repertoire of PHTD
- The genre conventions of PHTD
- Generic and cultural verisimilitude of PHTD in practice

This approach focuses on the consideration and discussion of the recognizable strategies, structure, characterization, theme, style and political and cultural implications of the narratives, which contribute to the formulaic patterns of this genre. Next, I specifically examine the genre of PHTD within these established similarities as well as noting the differences and continuing changes. Equating to the generic features of similarities and differences, further analysis opens out into ideological areas, investigating the balance between conservative and radical aspects of genre conventions and verisimilitude.

This approach thus combines Plooy's research questions with the study of genre as a creation to maintain and support the exchanges of influence in the wider context. The research questions within this approach are:

- How are the norms of PHTD in society expressed, supported or criticised?

- What is the extent of social control and how is it shown to be exerted?

- How social roles are defined, allocated or rejected?

- Who are the intellectuals of today?

- How are socio-political coordination and cooperation obtained and secured, as reflected in PHTD?

- Which current topics and events define Chinese social interests in the twenty-first century society?

- What social, moral or ideological values are being sold in PHTD?

1. Systems of Orientation in Defining Genre

The use of the term 'orientation' in this thesis refers to the awareness of similarities between a specific text and other similar texts, following a particular cycle between the Chinese TV industry and the texts of TV dramas. Lacey suggests that a genre has specific textual features, and that these features are a way of organising the elements within the text.[3] The elements organised by a genre and considered here are: narrative, setting, types of characters, style, visual and aural signs of iconography, mode of address, and the stars themselves. Further expanding the function of textual elements, Anne Dunn points out that 'there are generic narrative structures in the sense that they identify a text as belonging to a particular genre.'[4] The awareness of studying such textual similarities therefore contributes to the genre definition in relation to development and preservation of textual forms. The argument is that communication consciously works within certain established genre conventions by repeating the formulas that have marked previous financial successes.[5]

From a different perspective, this development and preservation of generic elements can also be interpreted as genres representing expectations. Plooy highlights the existence of a double layer of such expectations. One is that the text has to meet a set of basic conventional requirements. On the other hand, the text has to contain novelty and difference.[6] Identifying and classifying media texts are thus the fundamental aspect of genre analysis, but this (it is proposed) should not be the only view: 'One way it can do this is through deeper and more detailed considerations of the symbolic and technical elements of genres, the relationships between them and their history and development.'[7] In line with Dunn's pointers, a historical review of the development of Chinese PHTD will therefore first be carried out. Through this historical approach, established genre parameters can be observed in terms of repeating formulas that have marked previous financial and political successes. Conventional patterns as well as novelties can be found in narrative structures, subject matter, and thematic content.

Another approach to be applied in the thesis (with the study of generic elements, both can be used together) is the result of two facts, which cannot be separated from the above orientations. One such fact is that genres are determined by economic factors involved in the production, distribution and reception. The second fact is that genre as an integral part of a media industry cannot be separated from a broader consideration of the historical realities of the Chinese context – including its economic, sociocultural, ideological, political, linguistic, religious and/or technological milieu. Within the guideline of orientations, the methodological approach to defining

Chinese PHTD consequently starts from a historical study of the Chinese TV drama industry and of the economic, political and ideological forces behind that history. This broader consideration of the historical realities shaping China media will thus provide a fundamental understanding of the particular genre of PHTD within this context. This consideration then leads to a more controversial contrast and comparison across differential principles involved in defining genre. The rationale in this exercise is to draw up a power map of the economic, sociocultural and political/ideological interaction in shaping genres of Chinese TV dramas. This approach will enable an understanding of the complex relations of meaning between producers, the state and iconography.

2. A Theoretical Framework of Genre Conventions

Through the consideration of genre definition, the assumptions mentioned above are re-evaluated within a conceptual framework of conventions which are constantly repeated in texts as genre. The thesis concentrates on two groups of variables that contribute to the identification or demarcation of the genre of PHTD. The aim here is to apply a conceptual framework for this particular mass-media. These two topics are considered:

- The purposes or functions of a text as a genre
- The construction of meaning by the form and/or content of a text.

2.1. The Purpose of a Genre

In the previous chapter, the historical review of genre films (such as Westerns, musicals, comedies, gangster films or thrillers) differs from so-called auteur films, examples of which can be seen in Alfred Hitchcock productions. It is notable that such films do not necessarily follow a predictable style. Nevertheless, aesthetics, political and economic advantages as the three main purposes motivate the producers. Plooy exclaims, however, that applying such considerations to television genres is 'a frustrating exercise', because of its 'multiplicity of types and forms.'[8] The interest in this thesis is therefore upon the conventions that unify certain groups or classes, as well as differentiating them from other television programmes. This (in Plooy's view) is 'a worthwhile exercise', having the purpose of scrutinizing 'examples of conventions that relate to the form and/or content of filmic and televised narratives.'[9] The thesis thus aims to strengthen the importance of the narrative and focus 'on the media texts' rather than the genre critic's focus 'on the active involvement or interpretation process of the audience.'[10] Further to this research focus, a societal viewpoint from the media industry is provided. In other words, while the awareness of the importance of audiences should be acknowledged, one of the significant purposes in applying the approach of genre theory is nevertheless 'to minimise economic risk on the part of media owners, producers, authors, advertisers and other stakeholders.'[11] It will be seen that the role of the state (represented through the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television [SARFT]) is paramount as stakeholder in the context of this thesis, a unique political and social phenomenon which is unseen in Western media.

From this social and political perspective, Lasswell lists a model of the Five Ws in relation to the theory of mass-communication texts, namely: **who**, says **what**, in **which** channel, to **whom**, and to **what** effect. [12] Further combined with functional analysis in mass communication from Charles Wright[13], Plooy has (in this regard) developed four classes of purposes in relation to defining the conceptual framework of genre conventions. The first of these is 'surveillance of the environment' from a socio-political point of view. This surveillance includes 'information conveyed by politicians, diplomats and foreign correspondents as well as information related to the acceptance or rejection of certain social roles and norms.' The second is 'correlation or coordination of different subgroups in society'. Here, 'coordination involves the interpretation, dissemination, enforcement and/or operation of economic and political policies to promote public understanding and socio-economic control'. The exercise of coordination is specifically considered through the roles of editors, producers, politicians, journalists. The third is (significantly) 'the transmission of a social-economic heritage'. Thus (as reflected in the present thesis), this transmission focuses on initiating and transferring social behaviour, heritage and customs from one generation to the next, for example, through informal education by means of the mass media. Last but not least, the term 'entertainment' signifies that 'media texts fulfil the main purpose of play or pleasure rather than to inform or enlighten, offer audiences relief from problems and represent leisure activities.'[14]

2.2. The Construction of Meaning through Conventions

As seen in the literature review, Lacey has developed a tripartite relation in order to define a genre, one of which is the relations between institution and text. In other words, television programmes as industrial products work within an institutional context. Based on a capitalist mode of production, it is necessary to require standardisation; in other words, a generic convention. Genre and genre convention can contribute to (and make provision for) original expression.

Plooy makes a distinction between two groups of factors (the external and the internal), when he studies various influences on the genre conventions of a particular type of television programme. The external factors are from the perspective of media institutions and include the following: economic factors, the relation between TV programmes and socio-ideological political and economic reality, and generic verisimilitude. Referring back to section 1 in this chapter (under the heading 'systems of orientations in defining genre'), a successful genre can further be assessed for a number of factors, including critical reviews, trade advertising, box-office results, and the season of the year, as well as the quality and number of similar TV dramas competing in the area.

Lacey's theory of genre's tripartite relations is therefore especially significant in highlighting one of the principal considerations in defining genre as the text itself. Plooy also believes the form and/or content to be the internal factor of influence on the genre convention. The essence of the fictional stories in PHTD is told through visual symbolism, but is structured in a narrative form. The study of the visual and structural conventions of PHTD in this thesis thus includes: the theme of the story, the narrative structure, the difference (and the hybrid nature) of PHTD from other genres, characters, cultural verisimilitude, and visually perceptible objects and actions.

<u>2.2.1. Television Drama, Genre and Narrative Structure</u>

The theme of the story in PHTD as one of the internal factors starts from the actual language used in this genre. Heroism, villainy, love, hate, desperation, and patriotism are examples of the emotional elements which form the basis of the theme and appeal conventionally found in the genre of PHTD. Further to these elements, the universal themes or motifs of human existence (such as birth, death, hope, fear, illness, or failure) underlie the symbols that also form this genre.

The following basic narrative structure in this thesis is inspired by the traditional model of a fiction: **exposition**, **development** and **resolution**. In the **exposition**, the theme follows the elements of the locality, the era and time, the main characters and the cause and nature of underlying conflicts. By studying this exposition, discussion of the generic pattern (by examining the structure of episodes) includes:

- Highlighting events that occurred prior to the particular episode,
- Reminders of one or more subplots,
- Summary of the essence of unresolved conflicts in the previous part of the story
- A historical reminder of who the protagonist and villain are
- Reintroduction of one of the themes in the story[15]

In consideration of the **development** of the plot, elements include: the duration, such as the total amount of episodes, the degree of character development required, and the complexity of the story. The narrative focuses on the identification and intensification of themes, values and attitudes towards abstract issues in a particular society. At the same time, denotative, connotative and symbolic meanings are conveyed by raising social, political, intellectual or moral issues. During this exposition, a plot has been developed through the themes and characterisation in a particular setting or circumstances, with elements of friction, mystery, tension and contradiction.[16] The **resolution** contains the final climax, which is the action that determines the decisive moment in the dramatic conflict. The model of fiction (**exposition**, **development** and **resolution)** thus provides the theoretical scaffolding for the narrative prediction in the genre of PHTD.

Furthermore, as the medium for PHTD is a visual one and (in this) differing from traditional fiction, the term of 'basic unit' or segment are both applied to describe its narrative organisation on television. The theory of segments is (in this sense) applied to the anatomical study of the micro-structure among narrative units. This type of study leads into examining the segments within a coherent group. In other words, this examination tests how the narrative units are accompanied by other similar segments, such as sounds and images. [17] It is in this way (because of the nature of segments in television) that a television programme can disconnect at identified points by the intervention of commercial breaks and reconnect to the next segment. Thus, as observed by Dunn, '[T]he television narrative has developed its segmented episodic nature in response to the institutional character of the medium and the cultural setting in which it is used.'[18]

This remarkable feature of interruption and continuation recalls Raymond Williams' theory of flow, as discussed in the previous chapter (section 1.1.3). Three remarkable contributions to mass communication study were noted, as follows. First, this is a theory that links closely with textual analysis. Second, it is a theory that actively responds to mass communication studies of effects. Lastly, Williams' notion of flow emphasises the importance of considering the articulation of specific sets of vested interests, and locating mass communication within a specific social order. As a singular, continuous, live experience of flow, the conventional mode is that 'television organises its segmented, loosely knit narratives, the combination of interruption and continuation, as combining flow and segmentation to create a sense of continuity despite the actual discontinuity of its elements.'[19] In other words, definition of the generic features of each segment distinguishes between advertisements and the programme itself, and supports the experience of the whole sequence as a continuous audio-visual event.

2.2.2. The Codes of Content

As well as focusing on the structure and specific feature of narrative in PHTD, the codes of content are highlighted, including: the discussion of décor, style of clothes, buildings, location or settings. This iconography can be created by camera shots, camera angles and different types of editing techniques; these input and techniques are also constantly repeated as conventions. The thesis will additionally examine the use of stars and poster design as samples for better understanding the codes of content. For example, in studying the design of the posters, the visual symbols of PHTD focus on the imperial palace, royal life, and the battle field. These visually perceptible objects and actions can thus be used by genre critics to analyse how sociocultural meanings are expressed, reflected, unified, contradicted and created. Further, at a covert level, study of the codes of content can reveal a second-order level of meaning, or ideological meaning.

3. Cultural Verisimilitude in the Genre of PHTD

It will be seen that the literature review (see section 2.3.3) discusses two types of verisimilitude, brought out by Todorov and developed by Neale. Generic verisimilitude refers to the codes and rules of a genre that a text has to follow in order to be novel as well as conventional. Generic verisimilitude in studying the genre of PHTD thus acts as a method and demonstrates (through the discussion on genre) definition and conventions, especially focusing on narrative structure and generic elements. In this section, the notion of cultural verisimilitude is centred on how its function works as a methodological approach.

Steve Neale is a writer-researcher who (as seen earlier) studies the extent to which both regimes of generic and cultural verisimilitude can reside (or transgress each other) in a film.[20] As the research focus of this thesis is upon historical TV drama, the theme of the story in the genre of PHTD is often centred upon historical figures and events. This genre (based on cultural verisimilitude) utilises authentic locations, period costumes and well-known historical stories. However because of the nature of television drama, PHTD is controversially considered to be fictional. Cultural verisimilitude, which 'is connected to public opinion, in that it is achieved wherever people believe a text to be true'[21], here becomes one of the central considerations and methods. This

does not mean, as Todorov argues, that cultural verisimilitude is the same as being true or real. The argument surrounding fictional content thus in fact concerns a representation of a reality that does not exist in real life, but that incorporates discourses considered as being true. In other words, although the ostensible purpose of this genre is to entertain, it is a genre which could simultaneously fulfil other purposes, such as to convey acceptance or rejection of certain social behaviour. This thesis thus attempts to create understanding by means of comparison, which includes cultural verisimilitude of historical record and historical fiction in traditional literature, historical memory and reality. Further clarifying issues, such as the cause-and-effect of social-political relationships, are also brought into consideration.

In considering the cultural regime of verisimilitude, the thesis targets a comprehensive study of narration in the genre of PHTD, in terms of a case study. By applying case study methodology to the television drama *Great General Shi Lang* in a later chapter, three narratological features will be examined: the visual construction of the protagonist, the re-interpretation of the theme from real life, and the multi-readings of the life story constructed in this TV drama. However, in order to be categorised within the genre of PHTD, a certain television drama has to exhibit certain culturally verisimilar elements. Being parallel to a historical recoding, a comparison with the name of the real person, recognisable events or the traits of the person will therefore be carried out. This study (as will be seen in a later chapter) seeks to demonstrate that 'cultural verisimilitude can be achieved through characterisation, dialogue, certain details of the plot or achieved at the thematic level.'[22]

The generic aspect of the narrative content of PHTD operates between fact and fiction, which are opposites defined by each other. Lethtisalo suggests that this opposition embodies the modern hierarchy of values, where fact is ranked at the top. She continues that a 'hierarchy' has appeared in the 'ranking of genres', in which 'the more cultural regimes of verisimilitude are emphasised, the more a genre is appreciated.'[23] In addition, cultural verisimilitude in a certain genre is often connected with pleasure,[24] or (in other words): 'Factual does not mean non-entertaining.'[25] Instead, the distinction between fictional and factual content is based on the understanding that 'factional content offers a so-called window on the world – that is, it reflects reality by presenting the audience a view of the outside (real) word, whereas fictional texts deal with imaginary content.'[26] This opposition between fact and fiction is an historical, constructed phenomenon in genre study. It is therefore essential to make clear at this point that cultural verisimilitude is in fact an ingredient of generic verisimilitude as offered in the genre of PHTD. The later chapter will hence elaborate on the idea of the pleasure of cultural verisimilitude, and examine how cultural and generic verisimilitude interact with each other in this particular genre through the means of Chinese aesthetics.

The conceptual framework above demonstrates that genres are characterised by their own narrative structures, themes, formats and iconography. The focus of the thesis is on the narrative (text) itself, but also on its relation to institute, as suggested above. From this perspective, the theory of genre acts as the fundamental approach to the study of this specific type of Chinese PHTD. However, we need to be aware that the theory of genre was born in the West. Though the writer of this thesis intends to bridge the academic gap between China and the West, we also need to consider the specific circumstances of Chinese media, especially the role of television drama in the whole current political map. Again, the theory of genre is proposed in order to provide scaffolding

for the whole thesis, but from what point of view should this phenomenon be studied - Orientalism or Sinology? In the next section, the writer sets out to explore the question of an adequate method or approach to examine the culture and heritage in which Chinese PHTD is rooted. In so doing, the writer aims to work within the Chinese cultural heritage (including its traditional Confucian moral values) from the standpoint of a Chinese national, so as to bring a different aesthetic and literal view to studying Chinese media, particularly the genre of political history drama.

4. Orientalism or Sinology: the Question of Adequate Method in Studying Chinese Cultures

Hence, although the methodology of genre is the principal approach to studying Chinese political history dramas, the fact that genre as a term or concept was born in the West raises a certain question or doubt when western methodology is brought to bear on Chinese studies. The specific question is this: Is this method of genre adequate for studying Chinese media, or (if not) what is the 'proper' approach for studying PHTD, Orientalism or Sinology?

4.1. Orientalism or Sinology: an Alternative Approach

Notably, Edward Said expresses his concern about the concept of Orientalism, believing that the scholar's own national, cultural, political and social prejudices are bound to be reflected in his/her work. Said's argument can be seen clearly in cases where a group of western scholars apply western theory of social structure in an attempt to understand the society of China and interpret Chinese culture. For example, western critics such as Link, Madsen and Pickowicz[27] define the term 'popular' as 'unofficial', believing 'the popular' to refer to 'realms of life that grew up outside of the formal structures of the Party and the state.'[28] They go on to argue that a tension previously existed between state and society that centrally defined China, with a shift to a new central tension between different aspects of globalization. This convenient way of defining the two cultures thus opposes Chinese popular culture to the official culture. Such critics exclaim that 'state market reforms' have given citizens 'unprecedented levels' of economic participation and that '[t]he emergence of a consumer culture has given people paths other than the political through which to see social status'.[29] They believe the 'new media of communication' to 'have broken the government's monopoly over information.'[30] This consumer culture leads (in their opinion) to over flooding of commercial advertising and pleasure seeking entertainment.

Following the well-known Habermasian theory[31], many Chinese critics recognize that a **society** exists between state and market. One of the major concerns in modern political thought is thus often a focus on the relationship between state and society, where either state or society is seemingly a self-contained sphere. Habermas recognises a concept of the public sphere in early liberalism which stands between civil society and the state, steers political action, and exercises supervision over both.[32] In studying the relation between the state and the public in Chinese media, some western scholars and Chinese intellectuals have attempted to apply this well-known theory to scrutiny of the public sphere. Key examples include Stephanie Hemelryk Donald's *Public*

Secrets, Public Spaces: Cinema and Civility in China[33] and Wang Yi's article *Intellectuals and Popular Television in China: Expectations as a cultural phenomenon*[34].

Habermas' historical account, as Dahlgren points out, bears the imprint of Western theory and is deeply influenced by the original Frankfurt School of critical theory, including a critique of 'mass society' and 'a neo-Marxian perspective of advanced capitalism and cultural industries.'[35] Dahlgren sharply questions whether 'it is meaningful to speak about a public sphere that does exist today', moving on to comment that 'by any standard of evaluation it is in a dismal state.'[36] Thus, when the famous Habermasian theory is applied to the Chinese context, it (to an extent) parallels Said's theory of Orientalism. Society as a middle force, therefore (according to Habermas' view) should maintain the balance of power between the state and the market. Consequently, as a result of the new marketized social mode, and the appearance of economic democracy in contemporary China, scrutiny of Western-style civil society and its corresponding theory of the public sphere has become a popular academic topic for some Chinese scholars. However, others have expressed their concern. Sparks points out (for example) that the recent term 'global public sphere' should be abandoned because it is 'manifestly inadequate' in capturing central characteristics of the world communication order.[37]

With regard to the notion of the public sphere, Chinese sceptics also express their doubts as to how adequate it is to apply such western theories to the intricacies of the Chinese context.[38] The reason for such concern is that (on the one hand) society is facilitated by free market influences such as overseas or domestic financial investment, and (on the other hand) by the needs or requirements of the state. Chinese economic reform has been initiated by a strong state from the very beginning. The best example is that reform provides opportunities for those members of the political elite or their families to directly participate in economic activity, and has become the agent for large corporations and industries. This means that a state-sponsored civil society could not effectively counterbalance the state/civil society dichotomy. As the state is clearly governed by the Party, the public sphere is therefore very much within the state apparatus. The relation between the public sphere and civil society consequently needs to be seen as 'enabling as well as restricting'.[39] Thus, Crack suggests 'an alternative multiple sphere model' in order to capture the diversity and plurality of discourses in a complex society.[40]

It is of interest for the study therefore that famous Sinologist Wang Hui suggests a totally different structure within contemporary China in contrast to this notion of the public sphere. As he explains, the reason for the different status of the public sphere in China is not that it is 'a mediating space between state and society', 'but rather the result of the interpenetration of society and part of the internal structure of the state'.[41] Further, he goes on to make the significant point that '[I]n China, […] those who control domestic capital are in fact the same as those who control political power'.[42] The current economic and political situation in China may thus be the result of the absence of a stable, impartial rule of law; however, of most importance is the fact that Chinese business is carried out through personal connections. Party leaders at all levels of society have become indistinguishable from the new 'capitalists' in China. Therefore, such economic elites can hardly be regarded as the representatives of civil society. The fundamental meaning of economic democracy in the West does not consequently reflect the realities of Chinese society.

The perception of the relation between television broadcasting and the public sphere in the West, then, is this: the media has a close relationship with civil society, standing between that society and the state, and exercising supervision over both. In other words, media here means that television dominates the agenda of the public sphere in western societies.[43] In contrast, the position of the media within its surrounding social structures points to great differences between China's public sphere and that in the West. Even a group of critics such as Link, Madsen and Pickowicz admit (and explore) these differences, as seen in an example from their collaborative book concerning the study of Chinese tabloid newspapers. Holding a similar profit motive to Western tabloids, Chinese tabloid newspapers are also geared to commercial success, catering to popular demands for the sensational, scandalous and bizarre. However, these critics have to agree that

> [a]lthough at first glance they seem to represent the populist sentiments of the lower classes, in reality they cater to the tastes of "the beneficiaries of the economic reforms, the professional and managerial elite and pleasure of consumption and relate themselves horizontally to middle-class life styles in the West".[44]

Thus, because the term (and concept of) genre is created and developed by Westerners, to what extent can this kind of analysis (which is empirically exercised in line with the historical, cultural, political and social perceptions of the West) demonstrate cultural and social differences in China? In order to answer this question (as justification for the fundamental method to be applied in this thesis), I shall come back to Jonathan Bignell's interpretation of the term genre. He points out that we should not only study a media text as a self-contained structure and impose onto it a generic convention, but also examine the media text within its broader social and political contexts. This means a certain genre might act variously within different cultural, historical and political contexts. Referring back to the question of defining genre above (section 1), then, the two factors for determining genre are *economic factors* and *a consideration of a historical reality*. In other words, the definition of a genre cannot be separated from determinants such as the surrounding sociocultural, ideological, political, linguistic, and religious milieu and so on. Put another way, genre is here regarded (importantly) as a methodology and a theoretical framework, not an ideology.

Genre is moreover a device which suggests to critics what to look at and consider, and which ensures a complete view across a media phenomenon through the coherence of different generic elements. In other words, the scrutiny of a sociocultural, ideological, political, linguistic milieu is not a critical tool confined to the West, but one which can engage with different cultural practices. If I may be permitted to apply a metaphor to aid visual understanding, the work of genre is like that of automobile manufacturers. The framework is consistently the same in terms of where the wheels are, what the engine is, and where the mirrors and lights are placed. However, when the automobile is assembled by different companies or different countries, the way that a system works within a company has been embedded into (and infused with) the local culture and politics, resulting in brands such as Toyota, Land Rover or Ford. With the help of this metaphor, it will be seen that the concept of genre is neutral and devoid of cultural assumptions; what make genre cultural, ideological or political is how we assemble the generic elements, and represent those elements through a convention.

The significance of using this method in my research therefore lies in applying to it the model of western genre study, but (at the same time) recognizing the specific cultural, social and economic context of China. In other

words, the ideological and productive system must be decoded in its own terms, not obscured by the imposition of a foreign thought tradition. Genre is the theoretical foundation of this thesis; it is used to study how a specific national culture, the thought system and governmental system reflect the generic condition, at the same time throwing off the limitations of western cultural and political misunderstandings. Thus, in applying this essentially western research tool to my study, I will be able (importantly) to study Chinese television drama and the culture with which it engages and exhibits. Such a method of analysis will in turn lead us to an authentic Sinological study of Chinese TV dramas.

4.2. The Perspective of National, Political and Cultural Study in the Genre of PHTD

Curran is a writer-researcher who calls for such new perspectives and approaches to the study of world media, instead of traditional English language-based media theory, commenting that this is a theory typified by 'self-absorbtion' and 'parochialism'.[45] Sibert likewise believes that the philosophical and political rationales of theories lying behind different versions of the geo-political press in the world today were also often written by western theorists.[46] Hence, critics are beginning to defend 'Asian values' and Eastern essentialism against Western imperialism. Thus, it is necessary for me to call for an adequate approach or methodology in order to focus world communication systems upon the study of study of each nation's own schools of thought.

Besides Habermasian theory, other approaches have been exercised since the 1950s, such as the geo-political perspective, theories of modernization, and media imperialism from the later 1960s. In the 1980s and 1990s, the theory of globalization (including cultural globalization and global capitalism) was also applied to the study of world media. In the initial stages of this theory, the concept of globalization is regarded as extending the basis of communication and cultural exchange. People are better connected to each other through international channels of communication, as explained through Mcluhan's term of 'the global village'. This means in turn that the process of globalization is reducing national division, and enhancing international understanding and empathy. Yet, at the same time, this theory (especially cultural globalization) promotes ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity within nation-states themselves.[47] 'Globalization also selects elements of neatly partitioned national culture, and remixes them in new ways for an international public.'[48] In supporting the theory of cultural globalization, some scholars like Eric Hobsbawm and Anthony Giddens believes that the nation has lost its ability to shape its own destiny and the reign of the nation state is over.[49]

It is of interest therefore that Park and Curran in their collaborative book suggest a de-westernizing of media studies, an 'understanding in a way that takes account of the experience of countries outside the Anglo-American orbit'[50]. One of their most important arguments is the significance of the nation in terms of responding to rival globalization theories. Agreement with this argument thus in turn partly underpins the approach of this thesis – to study a specific genre of Chinese PHTD through the perspective of **nation**, which (in my view) remains centrally important, even though its 'continuing significance tends to be underplayed by globalization theory'[51]. Park and Curran point out three important factors in applying the analytical significance of the concept of nation in studying media:

- Communications systems are still in significant respects national.
- Nation states are influential in shaping media systems.
- The national is still a very important marker of difference.[52]

Ben *et al* have used the medium of communication of television as an example, pointing out that most television programmes on mass channels today are not imported, but produced nationally.[53] Nations are thus still the licensing authority of national television. They control television by the means of framing laws and regulations, for example, or even in informal ways such as information management to the provision of loans.

As television genre matters as cultural categories, studying the genre of PHTD in this thesis is also combined with a national approach in the context of Chinese culture and politics. This is an approach which considers the purely national contexts of language, political systems, power structure, cultural tradition, economy, international links and history. As seen, it is proposed that textual and contextual studies make a particular genre stand out as distinct from others. 'Genres work within nearly every facet of television – corporate organizations, policy decisions, critical discourses, audience practices, production techniques, textual aesthetics, and historical trends.'[54] Thus, following the discussion above, the questions proposed through this national approach and in relation to the genre of PHTD are:

- How does the genre of PHTD relate to the power structures of China?
- What influences this genre?
- What factors might impact on cultural verisimilitude?

These, then, are the core questions addressed in this thesis. In particular, the study of generic and cultural verisimilitude offers a historical and political perspective on the developing genre of PHTD since 1958, and illustrates how administrative evolution has impacted upon that development, geared to changing political forces and Chinese central government. This historical review of the infrastructure of Chinese TV and TV drama demonstrates where the genre of PHTD is rooted. Following this historical line of scrutiny, power structures of authoritarian China are examined. The study of narrative and its context then further demonstrates that the political implications of the genre of PHTD calls for a new consideration of changing contemporary Chinese ideology, and analyses how this genre struggles with its generic and cultural shifting.

5. Chapter Conclusion with a Comparative Perspective

In brief, then, it is argued that in order to adequately define a genre, a comparative perspective needs to be considered. Notably, therefore, the thesis seeks (from the insider perspective of a Chinese national) to introduce the cultural and media phenomenon of China to the West, as well as to bridge the gap between Western genre theory and the academic study of genre in China. It will be seen, for example, that, at the stage of the literature review, a series of comparative studies has been initiated, such as an examination of the term genre in the West and 'leixing' in China, together with academic traditions across TV studies by both Western and Chinese scholars.

This comparative perspective continues into the study of genre definition, as shown. The various approaches to genre definition are compared in systems of orientation as one of the principles that Plooy suggests, for instance, given that these are systems which 'develop and preserve textual forms through repetitive conventions'.[55] Again, being the fundamental methodology employed in this thesis, accordingly, the research begins by first defining genre. The method of genre definition should not be controversial (as Plooy goes on to argue) 'if both communicator (media producers) and the audience (readers, listeners, viewers and/or consumers) recognise its identity and its correspondence with other similar content and forms.'[56] Genre, then, can be defined through an agreed code by considering the patterns, forms, styles, structures, narrative and content. Importantly, however, in the context of China mass media this agreed code has not been fully settled, but encoded differently. Genre definition then becomes rather controversial. Details of this controversy will be seen in chapter four, through comparative case studies across the different approach of grouping Chinese TV dramas within Chinese media (the state, the market and the critics).

Chapter III
Historical Review of Chinese TV and TV Drama

As seen in the previous chapter, then, a theoretical and methodological framework is now in place for the study of the specific genre of PHTD. The fundamental point has been made that the selected approach of using genre as a methodological tool requires systems of orientations that fully define the textual features of PHTD, and analyse how these features are organised within the text. Further structuring this approach, Lacey's two constructs of text and institution will be employed, drawing on his tripartite model. Thus, a main pillar of the research rests on the genre of PHTD as an integral part of the Chinese media industry that cannot be separated from a broader consideration of the historical realities of China, as well as the economic factors involved in production and distribution. In order to begin the process of defining this genre, then, this chapter will take as its starting point the economic, political and ideological forces at work within the Chinese TV and TV drama industry as a means of situating the PHTD genre within its broader historical and political context. This is a method which cross-references with applying the lens of national, political and cultural studies to Chinese media as discussed previously.

The analysis below centres upon four main areas, beginning firstly with the rise of Chinese television in Mainland China, which (like Hong Kong and Taiwan, as will be seen) is found to have its early roots in political complexities. Attention then shifts in the second section to the development of the television industry after the 1980s, where we can see that both the evolution of the Chinese television industry and the restructuring of administrative systems take place within the changing infrastructure of Chinese economics, directed by the state. In the third part of the chapter, the historical review carried out is specifically focused on the three developing stages of the Chinese TV drama industry. This historical review will be followed in section four by an investigation of the rise of Confucianism together with the growing impact of political forces, focusing on how these two factors combine to influence the media. In particular, the point is made that the renaissance of Confucianism in the late 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century has impacted strongly in ideological, political and economic terms upon the industry of Chinese TV drama. A historical review is therefore necessary in order to demonstrate how neo-Confucianism has regained political attention, sealing its orthodoxy once again in contemporary China. A historical review of this Confucian renaissance will hence provide a fundamental understanding of the genre definition and conventions of PHTD, along with generic and cultural verisimilitude as discussed in later chapters.

The four main propositions to be addressed are set out below:

- That political and economic reforms since the 1980s continue to influence the media industry of China;
- That China as a nation state has been influential in directing media systems, as evidence provided demonstrates;
- That Chinese communication systems, especially the TV industry, are still in significant respects under political control;

- That the rise of Confucianism and the growing impact of political forces upon Chinese media will combine to form the backbone of PHTD as a genre, as expanded in chapter IV;

1. The Rise of Chinese Television in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan[1]

It is to be noted firstly that the People's Republic of China (PRC) has seen a huge transformation. In the 1950s, for example, the nation had no television station, nor did anyone possess a single television set. Yet the 21st century has witnessed a complete digital switchover, and an explosion in Chinese television that represents a truly remarkable phenomenon of national media production, exhibition and consumption. Moreover, in its short 60-year history, television has arguably played a more significant role than any other form of mass media in contributing to the fabric of Chinese daily life as the key source of news and entertainment for the country's enormous and widely dispersed population. Statistically speaking, by 2005 China had become the world's largest television market, with 368 million terrestrial TV households, 125.69 million cable households, and 4.13 million receivers of digital programmes. Indeed, by the end of that same year, the national China Central Television (hereafter CCTV) had already developed some 16 free channels, 12 digital and 28 internet television channels, producing a total of 23 thousand programme hours annually.[2] Across the whole of Mainland China, there are now 302 television stations and 50 Educational Television Stations (hereafter ETV)[3], with (in total) a television broadcast coverage of 95.8%.[4] These are headline figures that give us insight into (among other things) the economic development of China's television industry, the changing life of its people, and its changing political landscape, all of which in turn creates the context for my analysis below.

1.1. The Indigenous Phenomenon of the Television Industry in Mainland China

At seven o'clock on the evening of May 1st 1958, Beijing Television Station began its broadcasting venture in Beijing, the capital of the PRC.[5] Thus, critics such as Yin Hong, Zhong Yibin and Huang Wangna often compare this historic event (demonstrating as it does China's unique political status[6]) with the history of Chinese film under colonialism and cultural imperialism. That is, by contrast, the medium of television is described as an 'indigenous phenomenon',[7] a phenomenon inextricably linked with the founding of the PRC on 1st October 1949. Since that time the country has been under the umbrella of the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter the CCP or the Party), signifying that the rise of the national television industry is firmly embedded in the Socialist era.

A further point to be made is that in the early years of the PRC, television was an unaffordable luxury for most, while (at the same time) progress in developing the national TV production and broadcasting infrastructure was very slow, with only three television stations by the end of 1958.[8] Indeed, the main impetus for establishing the Beijing Television Station was, apparently, competition with Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang[9] which (it was hinted) would begin broadcasting on Taiwan's National Day (10 October 1958).[10] Fully aware of the political implications of losing such a race, Yi Mei, the previous general director of China's Central Broadcasting Bureau from 1949 to 1967, recalled that the Party simply ignored suggestions by the Soviet adviser Cheranko that this

target could not be accomplished as basic expertise and equipment was still lacking, and decided to launch television service ahead of Taiwan's schedule.[11]

Later, the devastating political and economic break in relations with the Soviet Union in 1960 halted the supply of technology and expertise in all Chinese industrial and technical fields, including the television industry. The developing Chinese television industry was then in turn further disrupted (and brought to a virtual halt) by the 10-year Cultural Revolution up until 1978. A few thousand television sets were produced domestically and sold from 1967 to 1970, increasing rapidly in number after the Cultural Revolution, so that roughly half a million sets were sold per year by 1987. However, this was still a relatively small figure for such a large country.[12] As a consequence, Chinese television had very little impact on the Chinese masses during this period. Specifically, while it may have been a so-called 'indigenous phenomenon', national television's early role was dominated by providing a political service to the high-ranking party members. The target audience was thus more or less restricted to senior government officials and elite figures who could afford this luxury technology. Indeed, it is suggested that some top leaders, including Mao Zedong himself, used to request Beijing TV to repeat programmes they had missed. Such requests were said to be quite common in the early days of Chinese television.[13]

In confirmation of the close links between politics and the mass media, Beijing Television Station initially had three main targets set for it by the Central Broadcasting Bureau: political propaganda, education and cultural enrichment. Consequently, the programmes of Beijing Television Station in 1958 were mainly propaganda-oriented news, entertainment and educational documentaries,[14] with other regional stations later developing programming specific to their geographic areas. Presentations of Chinese operas featuring traditional local stories spoken and sung in regional dialects were, for instance, main staples of the programming schedules[15].

A notable political and economic feature of the national television industry at that time was that all stations were state-owned and non-profit. As a part of the unified economic system, all aspects of the budget - from staff wages to the production, distribution and exchange of television programmes between stations - were directly arranged by the state. Within this socialist system, Chinese television was virtually divorced from economic concerns. Commercial motivation and monetary incentives were negligible.[16] On the other hand, the Party's monopoly in the Mao era meant that Chinese television from its very beginnings was woven into the fabric of political power.

1.2. The Development of the Taiwanese and Hong Kong Television Industry

It is worth noting the parallel developments of the Taiwanese television industry, which were closely followed in Beijing. In April 1962, the Taiwan Television Enterprise Ltd (TTV) was established. The China Television Company (CTV) and Chinese Television Systems (CTS) were then established in 1969 and 1971 respectively. These three television stations were privately owned with a strong culture of competition, mostly dictated by the explicitly commercial context of Taiwan. The programming schedules of these three television stations mainly

featured news, educational programmes, and entertainment.[17] Later (in the 1980s) the addition of satellite and cable television stations provided an even wider choice of programming for viewers all over Taiwan.

In Hong Kong, the first television station was founded by British Associated-Rediffusion in 1957 (which became Asia Television Ltd [ATV] in 1982), while the Television Broadcasting Co. Ltd (TVB, 1967), Wharf Cable (1993), Star TV (1990) and Phoenix TV (1996) also contributed to the development of its television industry.[18] It is of interest here that Chinese scholar Xiu Xiaogui claims Hong Kong television to be more open and international because of its status as a global metropolis.[19] Indeed, it is seemingly the case that as a commercial society, Hong Kong television pays closer attention to public affairs and commercial rewards. This brief comparison with the other two regional television industries of greater China would suggest, therefore, that the development of the Hong Kong and Taiwanese television industries has been dictated more by commercial circumstances rather than by political imperatives. As such, the function and motivation of both these national TV industries is guided by the expectations of the general public as consumers rather than considerations of ideological propaganda at government level.[20]

2.   The Evolution of Television Industry in Mainland China after the 1980s

2.1. The Political and Economic Shift after the Cultural Revolution

Along with social and economic growth, then, it will be seen that the television industry in Mainland China has developed significantly over the last three decades. Indeed, after the ten-year disruption of the Cultural Revolution, the country has seen dramatic economic growth since the early 1980s. Specifically, in order to rebuild the political, economic and social order destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, President Deng Xiaoping initiated a programme of economic reforms under the now infamous umbrella of 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'. Within this programme, he proposed to transfer economic power to local levels, moving away from a planned economy towards a market economy, albeit with unique Chinese features.

The overall target of these economic reforms was thus to generate sufficient surplus to finance the modernization of the Mainland Chinese economy. The point to be made therefore is that politically this programme marks a significant shift, as the aim was to increase not only the productivity of state and local enterprises but that of private individuals as well. As such, this transformation can be characterised as the discourse of decentralisation. In explicit terms, national economic policy before the 1980s featured a superstructure of socialist ideological and political influence built on the economic base. In contrast, the post-Cultural Revolution reforms introduced a focus on economic determinism, albeit qualified by the ideology and political reality of a one-party state. Here, central intervention would be, in theory at least, a more subtle process with the government at each progressively localised level responsible for its own fiscal surplus or deficit. However, such a transition required a special relationship between infrastructure and superstructure, as Strinati suggests: 'economic determinism never exists in a pure form, so its existence and effects are always difficult to decide upon and to disentangle from other influence.'[21] Thus, this autonomous superstructure of policy and ideology at central government level unavoidably affects the economic base.

2.2. The effects of China's Political and Economic Reforms on a changing TV Industry

It therefore follows then, that as a state-owned enterprise, China's media had to play its part under this climate of political and economic reform. In practice, however, the direct state funding to cultural production common in the Maoist era largely no longer existed. Instead, the government decentralised financial power to different administrative levels, as seen above. Thus, the original subsidy shifted to requiring enterprises and local governments to take responsibility for the development of their own respective regional television industries. Local governments in turn continued this process of decentralisation by giving more autonomy to the individual television stations/channels. Chinese television stations therefore had to raise income through advertising revenue and sponsorship, rather than relying on the previous state funding. In other words, all television stations, even CCTV, were responsible for their own profits and losses. The best example found is the very first advertisement (featuring a wine product) shown on the state-owned channel of Shanghai Television station on 28th January 1979. Lasting for 1.5 minutes, this advertisement represents a watershed in China's history, given that it marked the first step for national television stations in moving towards a commercial market.[22] In the early 1980s, CCTV's channels even featured a daily eight-minute advertising programme, a commercial slot which later ran for as long as 160 minutes. This was a change that demonstrated in no uncertain terms official government approval of advertising as a way to stimulate China's economic development after the Cultural Revolution.

Table 3.1 Chart 1 (TV penetration in China) and Chart 2 (TV penetration in urban China)[23]
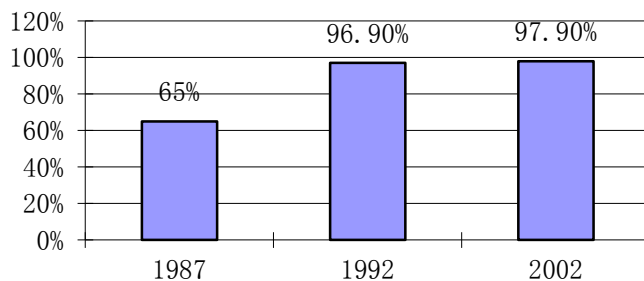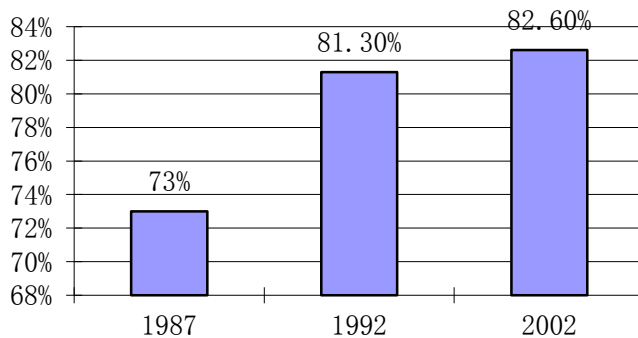
Moreover, in order to cope with increasing financial pressure and supplement available funds with more income, individual television stations further encouraged the development of their own regional channels. This encouragement has in turn resulted in a striking expansion of the Chinese television industry since the 1980s, with the number of stations increasing dramatically from 3 in 1958 to 923 in 1997.[24] As seen in chart 2 in table 2.1 above, a sharp increase in household television sets in urban China occurred between 1987 and 2002, jumping from 116 million televisions sets in 1987 (a take-up of 73%) across Mainland China, to 1094 million sets in 2002 (a take-up of 82.6%) across the whole of China.

In brief, then, the two significant features in relation to the growing number of Chinese television stations and technical advancement in the 1980s are found to be the number and quality of programmes transmitted by regional stations and networks. With the later help of telecommunications satellites as well as the repeater/booster stations covering many remote areas, more than three-quarters of China's population were able to receive the signal for CCTV's Channel One by 1991. [25] By 2009, therefore, the coverage of telecommunications satellites had expanded to 68% of the whole territory of Mainland China. Hence, a further important finding demonstrated through the figures above shows a rapidly growing market for television consumption. For example, the ownership of television sets had jumped from 2.5 million in 1978 to 228.43

million sets by 1992.[26] The maturation of the Chinese television system has thus caused great strides to be made on the road for China to become an 'information-intensive society'[27].

Like many countries around the world, it will be seen therefore that television plays an important role in the daily life of the Chinese people. This fact can even be demonstrated through the architectural structure inside a normal Chinese house. For example, Hong Zhang, a professor from Shanghai Normal University, points out that the traditional centre of a Chinese household used to be a shrine or incense table for worshipping family ancestors. However, this centre has been replaced by television in modern China. From this perspective, television has itself become a shrine for the Chinese in contemporary life,[28] with the modern central living space tending to be arranged around the TV set. The phenomenon of the national fever for purchasing television sets is beautifully satirised in the Chinese film *Ermo* (dir. Zhao Xiaowen, 1994), where the narrative concerns a village woman in the northern province of Hebei, who becomes obsessive in her desire to own a brand new television.

2.3. Restructuring of the State Administrative System for TV Stations and its New Power Nexus

Underpinning the rapid growth of the Chinese television industry in the 1980s were four basic categories of stations and channels. In order to encourage this growth and development, in 1983 the Eleventh National Work Meeting on Radio and Television legally issued a business policy laying out a four-level administrative structure covering the central government, provinces and cities, to local counties. Within this structure, the most important components were the national network channels.[29] The everyday significance of these networks could be seen throughout the country with the hundreds of stations that receive signals from Beijing via satellite links and retransmission facilities or so-called repeater stations, the majority of which were not allowed to originate their own programming.

In addition to channels at the national level, by the late 1980s, there were 30 province-level (regional) stations and more than 200 city-level stations. Some (like the stations in Shanghai, Beijing and Nanjing) also had two separate stations, one at the province-level and the other at the city level, because of geographical size and political implications. Stations at both provincial level and city level produced and aired their own programmes locally and/or received programmes from other sources.[30] As the result of the economic lag discussed, television stations in local counties during this period did not possess the technology or budget to produce programmes, and therefore acted mainly as repeater stations.

A significant turning point in infrastructural change led by the government was the re-naming of Beijing Television Station as 'Zhongyang Dianshi Tai' (CCTV) on 1st May 1978. At a stroke, this re-naming increased the political authority and cultural significance of the previously termed Beijing Station, given that the Chinese word 'zhongyang' is linguistically and politically recognised as a short form of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party ('dang zhongyang'), and the Central People's Government ('zhongyang renmin zhengfu'). The expression of 'zhongyang' is thus effectively a synecdoche denoting centralised power and, through association, the power of the Beijing authorities as a whole. CCTV is, by extension, designed to unify the country through presentation of official news, information, and culturally-appropriate entertainment by using

the official dialect – 'putonghua' (Mandarin) – which is promoted as the national language.[31] CCTV, as the most powerful national television medium, has therefore been transformed into the key normative source of national and ideological significance, and is thus the chief propagandist tool for the dissemination of social, political and cultural values.

Following the establishment of CCTV, the Ministry of Radio Film and Television (hereafter the MRFT) was established in Beijing in 1982 as an integral part of the bureaucratic reorganization. Specifically, the establishment of the MRFT signalled the rising importance of telecommunications in general, and was also an important organ of the political machinery overseeing and managing the decentralisation process during the 1980s. As the first-line administration of television, the MRFT held key decision-making powers in relation to the development of the national broadcasting system. Local television stations were not only under this administrative system, but were also obligated to respond to local parties and governmental authorities. Thus, television producers and directors, from the top of CCTV to the regional, city and local stations, effectively worked in the shadow of the MRFT's administrative umbrella.

Under this MRFT leadership, the relationship between regional television stations and CCTV initially appeared to be one of subservience, although things were somewhat more complicated in practice. This relationship might be better characterised as a form of brotherhood which has often been more competitive than it has been subservient. This competition might not have been immediately obvious in the early stages of the 1980s, since (apart from simultaneously airing the national news made by CCTV at 7:00pm as required by the MRFT), regional stations were able to exercise a great degree of autonomy in their day-to-day operations, leading Lull to state that: 'stations … regularly develop programs without having to clear the ideas or the finished products with the authorities in Beijing.'[32] For example, regional stations routinely signed contracts to import foreign shows without observing the strict standards employed by CCTV to evaluate such programming. Such a case occurred in 1989, for instance, when the American series *Hunter* was being aired by the Beijing regional television station. Thus, while CCTV officials have commented that this kind of programme would not have been acceptable at national network level, it has often been the case that much more adventurous programming, both domestic and foreign, was transmitted by regional stations and occasionally picked up by CCTV at a later stage.

The point to be made therefore is that with the rapid growth of the television industry across the whole of China, the loss of control at the regional level posed (and continues to pose) a considerable management challenge to the central government. As a consequence, the Chinese authorities have had to reappraise their role in the realm of culture and the importance of the cultural industries in programmes of government. However, the situation was complicated by the infrastructure of the administrative and governance structures established by Communist rule. In other words, the central government, local authority, and individual television stations could all exercise their powers of decision-making in the development of Chinese television either nationally or locally, but this was an administration system that lacked clarity, and that made effective coordination nearly impossible. In this regard, Chinese scholar Sun Wusan has carried out a useful case study of a town television station in north China, to demonstrate how new relationships and conflicts occurred between the city Broadcasting and Television Bureaus (hereafter BTB) and the town government between the power of administrative rights of

each during this new transition period.[33] The case study conclusion reached by its researcher therefore was that the new broadcasting system in China was 'not a homogeneous entity', but an entity 'with multiple interests.'[34] Economic reform of the television industry, led, therefore, to accompanying reform of the political framework for managing cultural production on such a vast scale.

Thus, under the unrelenting pressure caused by continuous economic reform in the 1990s, it became clear that the previous rigid political framework was no longer suitable for Chinese media in the new circumstances. Regional channels demanded the opportunity to show more foreign programmes despite the government restrictions on importing television programme, for example. As a result, an enormous number of Hong Kong martial arts home-videos were illegally shown on local cable channels. Hence, (as Hong argues), in a centralised communication system, China's central policies were the most critical factor in any changes[35] and it was these that needed to be reconsidered. But this change or reconsideration was complex as the state needed to express its sovereignty, while remaining responsive to global challenges.[36] In 1998, the MRFT was therefore reconstituted as the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (hereafter the SARFT). The SARFT is now an executive branch of the State Council of the People's Republic of China,[37] the function of which is the administration and supervision of the state-owned enterprises involving any business with television, radio and film. In other words, the SARFT directly controls state-owned enterprises at the national level, such as CCTV, China National Radio, as well as other film and television studios and their administrative organizations.[38]

Here, the most important function of the SARFT is to censor the media content in order to prevent any factor contrary to the Chinese political authority line, and its cultural monopoly. Often, the organisation creates broadcasting regulations in line with orders from other senior bodies, most notably the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and its two sub-sections - the Secretariat and Propaganda (Publicity) Department.[39] The broadcasting regulations carried out by the SARFT generally fall into three categories:

1) administrative regulations ('xingzheng fagui') issued or endorsed by the State Council
2) departmental rules ('bumen guizhang') enacted by the SARFT
3) normative documents ('guifanxing weijian') including decisions, notices, orders and directives issued by State Council or the SARFT[40]

Based on these three regulatory categories, the SARFT appears from the outside to work by setting a legal framework for the Chinese media industries, rather than by previous direct orders from senior authorities. But, nevertheless, these new regulations still allow the central authority to keep a close eye on Chinese television and other mass media. On top of these protocols, senior officials and Party leaders continue to influence the direction of the Chinese media on occasion by their speeches and written comments. The development of the genre of PHTD which is the central research focus of my thesis will particularly witness the individual powers that shape the direction of Chinese television drama, as will be seen.

Table 2.2 below visually presents the current four-administrative-level system of Chinese television, demonstrating its top-down approach. It will be noted that the leading level of this structure is the state-run

national CCTV as a vice-portfolio of the SARFT and China Educational Television (hereafter CETV), directly governed by the Ministry of Education. Local/regional television stations transform the signals and broadcast the programmes of both national networks. The second and third levels are provincial and city broadcast stations, while the final one is that of relay stations, also known as county television stations. Each of these (including county television stations) has been permitted to operate its own channels since the 1990s. Specifically, the rationale for this four-administrative-level system is (in addition to central and provincial governments) to encourage local regions, such as cities and counties to boost the television industry within their respective jurisdictions. A new component linking into the chain of this administrative system is the local BTB. The BTBs are both subordinate to the local government as a part of the regional administration structure, and subject to direction by the SARFT as an operator and supervisor of the local television station. Thus, the central and regional authorities are able to acknowledge and support each other in an integrated management system.[41] In comparison with the previous administrative system in Mao's era, the new four-level-administrative system therefore provides evidence that 'the state has been shifting its control over the media from an authoritarian model to a bureaucratic-authoritarian one'[42].

Table 3.2 Diagram of the contemporary structure of Chinese television systems[43]
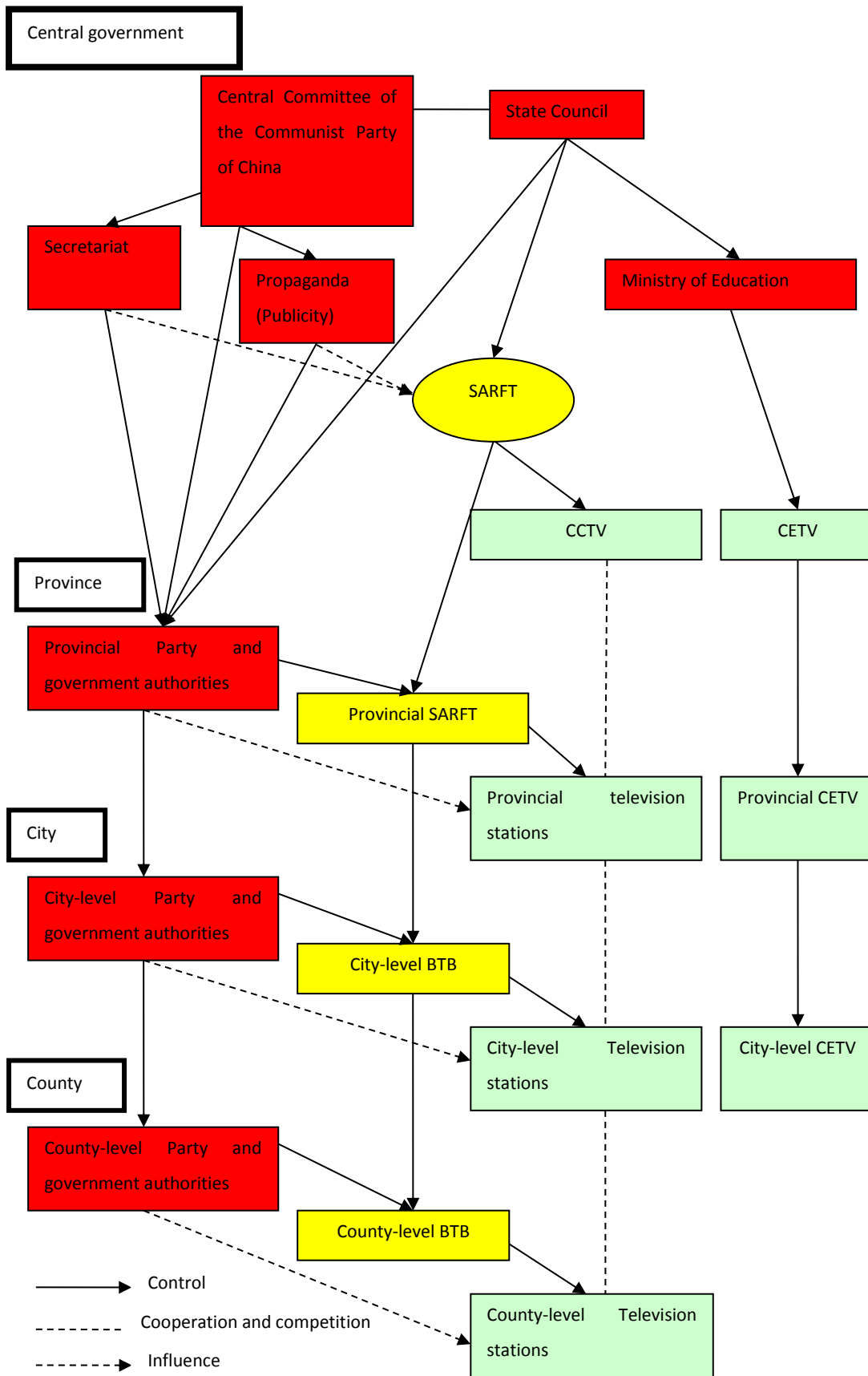
2.4. New Challenges to the Administration of Chinese Television in the Twenty-first Century

It can be seen, then, that coming into the 21st century, the Chinese media landscape has changed in a number of significant ways. With the introduction of cable services in the 1990s, and especially after joining the WTO in the present century, new developments such as digital services, mobile TV, and online TV bring fresh challenges to the SARFT. These changes require the SARFT to react and update the regulations accordingly, as set out below.

2.4.1. The Development of the Chinese Cable Network in the 1990s

The four-level administrative system in governing television stations began to show its limited impact on the business growth of television cable networks which first commenced in the early 1990s. These channels were operated by provincial, city-level, and county-level television stations separately, meaning that (theoretically) the television cable network sector is still under the administration of the SARFT. However, these are networks that have been developed under the jurisdiction of each level of local government, with each county, for instance, having its own local cable operator. Above the county operator, there is a city-wide cable operator, which in turn forms part of the provincial system. From this perspective, China's television cable network structure has been described as 'more of a bottom-up phenomenon'[44], which (interestingly) is at odds with the top-down approach of the national administrative system. With the rapid expansion of cable network in the later 1990s, local authorities therefore played a far more significant role in managing the work generated, with the result that a conflict of interest arose between local and central government.

In facing this new challenge, the Chinese cable network was therefore restructured and modified by the formerly named MRTF in 1997, so as to control what was perceived by central government as an overexpansion of local broadcasting, including cable operators, local radio and television stations. This reorganisation ultimately led to two thirds of broadcasting entities being merged or closed, with only 223 TV stations and 352 licensed cable operators remaining. In 1998, as a consequence, just 8 channels were received in rural China on average, in contrast to an average of 15 channels in urban China. In Beijing, for example, a common television household was able to receive 30 channels including eight CCTV channels, three Beijing local channels, four Beijing cables, three CETV and other Chinese regional channels.[45]

2.4.2. The Growth and Decline of Media Conglomerates after WTO

It is important to note that the Chinese economic system faced a considerable threat when the nation became a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in December of 2001. Specifically, although WTO membership was a major step in China's integration into global economics, part of the requirements of this membership committed the Chinese government to opening up certain sectors of the audio-visual industry to foreign investment. These areas include the markets for compact disc, video cassette hardware and software. Thus, even though broadcasting was not a part of this liberalisation, the WTO agreement indirectly led Chinese television producers and broadcasters into future competition with foreign companies.

Hence, the Chinese government initially agreed to the development of conglomerates, which grew from the integration of numerous small media enterprises so as to compete with national television stations in the media market. Although these conglomerates were not allowed to own any television stations, they were nevertheless permitted to produce TV programmes and sell to the national and regional channels. They could also rent a certain time slot from channels to broadcast their programmes. For example, the privately owned and Hong Kong based Phoenix TV set up a joint venture with the Guangdong Television Broadcasting Development Centre, a venture which in turn provides a platform for Phoenix TV to sell advertisements and programmes to other Chinese TV stations or channels.[46]

Following the relaxation of governmental rules and economic encouragement around 2001, twenty such broadcasting groups were established, and thirty overseas media companies were permitted to operate in China. Soon, however, the Chinese authorities realised that the development of such conglomerates could threaten the domestic television market, together with the added threat that it was impossible to censor foreign media content, especially news. As a result, this process was halted by the SARFT in 2003.[47] Moreover, although Phoenix television station has had a good relationship with the Chinese government in past years, certain programmes have still been restricted, such as News Corp's own Star TV.[48] Hence, in 2004 the SARFT further introduced 'departmental rule *No. 33*' to cover a wide range of areas, from political, administrative, ideological, or economic to technological, in order to manage unforeseen factors raised during economic and political reform, and to enshrine political and ideological powers of reorganisation and intervention.

2.4.3. Challenges posed by the Integration of Three Networks

As the first decade of the twenty-first century progressed, the administrative structure established by the SARFT again faced new challenges with the popularity of online video, 3G and mobile TV, along with the proliferation of new technologies. In 2008, China officially launched its 3G service, with over 13.25 million users across the nation by the end of 2009.[49] In reaction to this new challenge, the State Council issued *The Proposal for Further Reform of the Economic System* (state issued 2009 [26]) ('Guanyu 2009nian shenhua jingjitixigaige gongzuoyijian') on May 2009.[50] Specifically, this was a proposal that suggested integration across the three networks of SARFT, the Chinese telecommunications network and television stations with cable networks across China ('san wang ronghe').

However, this proposed integration faced several crucial challenges. Firstly, while the television cable network had introduced a digital service, the programming and audience development strategies were not in place to match the updated technology. The quality of the programmes had not been improved, and had therefore failed to attract audiences. Further than this, the cost of installing digital services became the burden of each cable television station, even though the number of cable TV licences issued for receiving this digital service had not increased because they were tightly controlled by local governments.[51] Such potential tensions, then, were the result of a 'free-market economy with Chinese characteristics'. For example, the process of integrating the three networks in the city of Mianyang (Sichuan province) was in its experimental period and developing slowly. The

local government, however, had exaggerated the extent of the proposed achievement, and had put in a bid for the investment of 4 billion RMB (0.4 billion pounds).[52]

Secondly, Chinese Telecom[53] had become a strong competitor for the role of SARFT in the digital market, especially when the 3G service had been introduced at the beginning of 2009. A total figure of 68.57% Chinese users joined the SARFT network through the pathways of the three networks in 2007 – SARFT itself, the television cable network, and (in particular) the telecommunications network. The entire income generated by the three networks increased by 20.4%, but the proportion of SARFT's share of the total profit had increased by only 0.4% by the end of 2008.[54] Thus, SARFT's 2009 proposal ensured that greater political powers were retained over other television networks, introducing (in April of 2009) the new *Regulation on the Penalty for the Illegal Administration of Radio or Television Stations.*[55] This regulation detailed new administration functions and political power over the emerging media sector of online TV (also known as IPTV) and mobile TV. Interestingly, this document was issued before the State Council's Proposal of 2009 on May, evidently indicating the delicate relationship and power of decision-making between the SARFT and the state authority.

2.5. Ideological Engagement and Monopoly of Cultural Policy in a Pluralised Cultural Environment

It will be seen, then, that the three main characteristics of contemporary Chinese television are as follows: the rapid expansion of the Chinese television network; the reconstruction of the administration framework; and financial reform. It will also be seen that decentralisation processes introduced from 1983 onwards required government at each level to be responsible for its own fiscal surplus or deficit. A contrast can be seen as local governments in theory take responsible for the financial management of regional television stations and local BTBs, but the state nevertheless holds all the political decision-making power.

The figures below demonstrate capital flows at the four levels of Chinese television, while the above studies on the reconfiguration of administrative structure reveal the monopolistic nature of the Chinese government's cultural policy. By looking at advertising revenue generated here, it becomes apparent that current national television stations are also subject to demanding commercial expectations. As an example, in 1998, CCTV's income from advertising had reached 1.3 billion RMB (approximately 0.13 billion British pounds), compared to 27 million RMB (2.7 million British pounds) in 1987.[56] More recently CCTV has come to depend almost entirely for its income on its advertising revenue, receiving 5.9 billion RMB (0.59 billion British pounds) from external sources for advertising in 2006, while only 0.5% of the total budget came from government sources. Table 2.3 below further indicates the advertising revenue flows among the four administrative levels across China in 2009.

Table 3.3 Report on advertising revenue in 2009[57]

	Advertising revenue (in billion RMB)	Percentage (%)
Central television stations (CCTV and CETV)	19.052	24.3
Provincial television stations	36.543	46.74
City-level television stations	17.606	22.52
County-level television stations	4.976	6.36
Total	78.178	100

It is suggested therefore that in reality, economic and political reforms are two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, the liberalisation of central state-controlled economics has boosted the development of regional and local economies. On the other hand, this economic 'freedom' has naturally fostered regional and local interest, often causing tension between central and local government.[58] BTBs, in particular, face a dilemma when it comes to balancing compliance with the regulatory framework required by the central Party and generating the income required by regional authorities. For instance, according to *the Censorship Regulations for Television Dramas* (SARFT Regulations No. 40) SARFT criticised the television drama *Red Question Mark* (Gui [2003] No. 3), produced by Guangxi Film Studio, for exaggerating numbers of female criminals. As a result, showings were taken off air in September 2007, even though the local SARFT of Guangxi Province had already issued the necessary licence.[59] Equally, local television stations face their own dilemma; they are required to be affiliates to the two leading national authorities of the BTB and local authority, but must also act as their competitors when it comes to generating advertising revenue. These dilemmas (faced by BTBs or regional television stations) do not mean the end of government supervision, however. TV stations must satisfy both central and regional government demands as well as attracting audiences.

Table 3.4 Number of television dramas produced in China, 2005-2009

Table 3.5 The domestic sales of Chinese television dramas, 2005-2009, unit: billion (RMB)

In tracing the development of the Chinese television industry, then, it is apparent that the new rising commercial culture caused by economic and political reforms presents an unavoidable challenge to the traditional hegemony

of official culture. According to Keane, the traditional 'spiritual' function of culture proclaimed by the Communist Party and the realities of the marketplace have to be forced to coexist (and to compromise) within a new relationship. Moreover, the evolution of decentralisation as part of political and economic reform has contributed to the 'diversification of cultural forms' and 'a more pluralized cultural environment… (introduced) by the regime under the slogan of diversity ('douyanghua').'[60] In fact the interface between market and culture in contemporary China often appears to be a straightforward tension between commercialism and propaganda, and between the realities of cultural activity and official cultural policy. Cultural policy statements continue to ambiguously re-define the relations between officials and producers, with the authorities claiming that Chinese television has been moving away from government monopoly and towards pluralism 'with Chinese characteristics'. In practice, the Chinese government maintains control over the media increasingly through legislative measures, as we have seen above, but the Party also has other 'softer' means of ensuring that media organisations adhere to its expectations. In 2005, for example, there was an input of some 4317 communist party members into nearly ten thousand staff working for CCTV and its subordinate units.[61]

3. A Historical Review of the Chinese Television Drama Industry

Thus, the historical review of the Chinese television industry above clearly reveals that political forces have played a far more significant role in the one-party society of China than in most major media cultures in the world. In particular, the media in China (along with party politics and the state education system) still acts as an ideological force defending the party leadership. In order to ensure that the ideological messages presented on television are appropriate and that all programmes shown on the main channels 'sing the national tune',[62] the state assures its guardianship and censorship of production and management through the administration of SARFT's decrees and regulations, as seen. Bringing with them challenges to such political and ideological forces, the reforms and open-door policies in the 1980s ushered economic forces into this political monopoly of Chinese society. Hence, economic reform continues to impact upon the superstructure of Chinese government. At the same time, Chinese television is coming to terms with rapid industrial developments and increasing global influences. Perhaps unavoidably, then, contemporary Chinese television often appears to present a double face. While the news comes across as propaganda, the numerous entertainment genres satisfy the leisure demands of Chinese audiences whose lifestyles would be unrecognisable to Mao. It is within this context, therefore, that I further focus my investigation of the development of the Chinese TV drama industry.

At first sight, the Chinese TV drama industry appears to be a heavily commercialised genre and (furthermore) seems to be a perfect example of the new economic market when it comes to distribution and exhibition. As we can see from tables 2.4 and 2.5, the number of television dramas produced from 2005 to 2009 appears to be manufactured by market demand, while the profit made is valued according to the reception. However, being one of the important carriers of ideology, the two pre-production and post-production stages of Chinese TV drama are significant in ways unseen through the figures above. As the effective result of these two stages, the SARFT is able to tightly control the market of TV drama through its censorship framework and fulfil the role of TV drama industry as 'zhu xuanlü'. As such, the following account of the development of the Chinese TV

drama industry and changing administrative policy provides a useful political, historical, ideological backdrop to a fuller understanding of the PHTD genre.

3.1. The Three Developing Stages of Chinese TV Drama Industry

According to Yin Hong, there are three main stages of development in the Chinese TV drama industry.[63] In brief these are:

- Experimental period (1958-1978)
- Transitional period (1978-1987)
- Commercial period (1990 onwards)

3.1.1. The First Stage of the Experimental Period

In the experimental period (1958 -1978), the role of television drama was not so important in the development of Chinese television because of the lack of adequate facilities. In order to cope with the shortage of TV programmes, most television channels often showed theatrical or arts performances, operas, sport events, and old or newly released films. As a case in point, Huang Yu and Yu Xu provide the example of a new film occasionally being shown on television a few weeks ahead of its theatrical premiere.[64]

The first Chinese television drama during this period of time was a thirty-minute one-off drama entitled *A Veggie Cake* ('*Yikou caibingzi*'), produced by Beijing Television Station and shown on screen on the 15th June 1958. This one-off drama recalls the starvation encountered in the Republican era (1912-1949), which is now referred to by the Communist party as 'old China'. The main protagonist is a sister who educates her younger brother to cherish food in the new China of the Communists. In doing so, this television drama incorporates well-known Party propaganda slogans such as 'yiku sitian' (literally contrast past misery with present happiness). In the same year of 1958, China initiated the infamous Great Leap Forward (1958-1961). This political campaign aimed to rapidly transform China from an agrarian economy into a modern communist society through the processes of agriculturalisation, industrialisation and collectivisation. Thus, it is not surprising to note that the narrative of this one-off drama reflects this political intent, or that the production took only one month to translate from its written form to its primary showing.

Image 3.1 Photo of *A Veggie Cake* (*Yikou caipingzi*, Dir. Hu Xu, 1958)

Later, Hu, the director of *A Veggie Cake*, named this new medium with the Chinese term 'diashiju' (television drama) as a parallel to the popular 'guangboju' ('radio drama' or 'radio play').[65] A group of similar television dramas at that time largely follow the style of *A Veggie Cake*, and appear to visually explain Party policy, but heavily tinted with what Mao called

'revolutionary spirit'[66]. However, due to the rather basic production values - especially when compared to the cinema of the day – and the relatively small audience for television except for the political elites, the early Chinese television drama had very little impact on the masses. Indeed, before the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, only 180 television dramas had been produced in China. All of these programmes featured indoor sets only, and were characterised by live shows, due to the lack of adequate recording facilities. This problem was not solved until the mid-1970s. Moreover, during the Cultural Revolution, the production of television drama suffered enormously, and almost came to a complete halt, as the culture of 'politics-in-command' became 'politics-as-everything'. Culture and entertainment-oriented programmes therefore almost disappeared from Chinese television screens. Instead, the only so-called 'entertainment' programmes produced at that time were the eight revolutionary model operas overseen by Madam Mao to propagate 'Mao Zedong's revolutionary line'.[67]

3.1.2. The Second Stage of the Transitional Period

After the Cultural Revolution, the production of Chinese television drama resumed with its traditional format of the one-off play, and entered into the second stage of its transitional period. During this period (between 1978 and 1987), the Chinese government's open-door policy was intended to create a good relationship with any country who could help Chinese economic development. China again looked to the modernisation of the West. Western culture along with its advanced technologies and managements therefore began to flood into China's domestic market and society. Chin suggests that the rapid growth in the market for 'outside border' television dramas can be attributed to 'the sophisticated production techniques' and 'high entertainment orientation' possessed by the western programmes when compared to 'the lack of quality domestic products'. [68] The first notable imported television drama was the American programme *Man from Atlantis*[69]. Other imports from America such as *Hunter, Falcon Crest, Remington Steel* and *Dynasty* (along with television dramas from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau) all achieved great success in Mainland China. Likewise, the Japanese serial *Oshin* was extremely popular when it was first shown on CCTV in 1986.[70] As such, the open-door policy situates the Chinese television drama industry in a much broader media ecology, which remained relatively unfettered until the Tiananmen Movement in 1989.
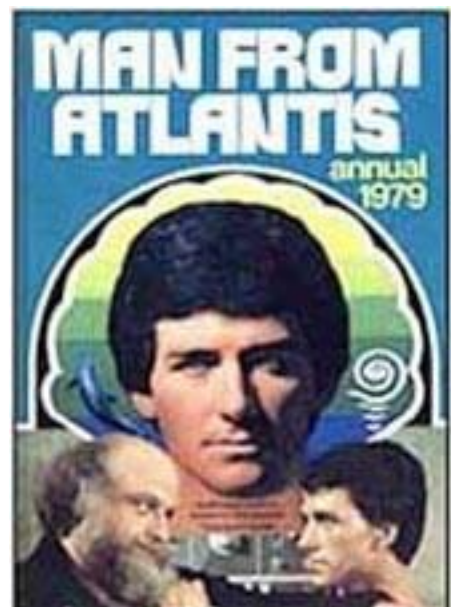

Image 3.2 Poster of TV drama / Science Fiction *Man from Atlantis* (Dir. Lee H. Katzin, 1977-1978)

3.1.3. The Commercial Period in the Post-1989 Era

The honeymoon period of imported TV drama along with the cultural policy of the Chinese government at that time eventually reached its end after the 1989 Tiananmen Movement. At the same time, the government had

adjusted its cultural policy, with the result that the overt propaganda of socialist orthodoxy became less visible. Continuing economic and political reform then pushed the Chinese TV drama industry into a whole new era – the commercial period. The production of television drama thus had to develop under a commercial market, albeit one with 'Chinese characteristics'. Indeed, to ensure that domestic television dramas could compete with foreign imports, the government itself intervened into the 'free market' in order to provide the core funding for domestic production units. In the early 1990s, the MRFT annually allocated the subsidy of 10,000 RMB (£1000) for every episode of each television piece produced by any domestic TV drama production unit.[71] This subsidy made possible the initiation of China's first domestic television serial *Expectations* (*Kewang*, 1990), demonstrating that Chinese TV drama had finally become a mainstream genre. This strategic investment paid off to the extent that (by the end of the century) Lu was able to state confidently that 'television drama has experienced unprecedented growth and popularity, so that it now occupies the pre-eminent place in contemporary cultural entertainment.'[72]

This growth continued in a spectacular fashion, with the production of 514 drama serials with 12447 episodes in 2005,[73] according to SARFT records. Indeed, China has now become one of the biggest producers of television dramas across the entire globe. Nevertheless, SARFT's Annual Report of 2009 also has it on record that although annual production of domestic television dramas satisfied the consumption demand in general, the market still urgently needed television drama of high quality,[74] despite the enormous number of productions each year. For example, as different television channels regularly exchange programmes with one another to fill up airtime, it has become common for Chinese audiences to discover the same popular television drama being shown on several channels at the same time. For example, the famous television drama *Returning Princess Pearl* (*Huanzhu gege*, dir. Sun Shunpei, 1998) was screened at Hunan, Qinghai, Jilin, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Tianjing television stations successively.

This grand state offering to domestic TV drama production in the early 1990s did not, however, last very long when economic and political reform gathered pace. Financially speaking, the very large number of home-grown television dramas being produced made it virtually impossible for the government to provide subsidies to all of them. This burgeoning industry has therefore had to develop new strategies for financing production by attracting investors, cultivating official support and promoting audience growth. At present, there are three main funding sources for domestic TV drama production, as follows:

- Discretionary support from the government;
- Cooperation between state-run television stations and private enterprises
- Loans from banks

On the other hand, both central and local government agencies do continue to invest in selected TV drama pieces, with criteria for selection often being decided according to subject matter, and in cooperation with CCTV. Those pieces selected will therefore be accorded the privilege of reserved viewing on CCTV national channels. Here, financial profit is clearly not the issue, but rather the propaganda value in the narratives selected. Hence, the point to be made is that although China has developed a free market economy, its political and

ideological superstructure remains relatively autonomous in certain circumstances. More precisely, as selective governmental investment in Chinese TV drama production demonstrates, we can still see the continuing influence of political ideology on the economic base, and a deliberate attempt from the state to shape the direction of social media.

In the second form of funding available to television drama producers, financial concerns are geared to cooperation between state-run television stations and private enterprises. From this perspective, the role of private enterprises is effectively to act as a kind of sponsor, providing full or partial investment during the production. However, besides the direct financial rewards, these companies are also interested in promoting their brands and/or products through national or regional television, as Zhang and Harwood confirm: 'some Chinese corporations and organizations (private or government owned)' are willing to directly involve themselves 'in the production and distribution of Chinese TV shows in exchange for promotional considerations.'[75] For example, the television drama *Stories from an Editorial Office* (*Bianjibu de gushi*, dir. Zhao Baogong and Jin Yan, 1991) was financed through sponsors. Sometimes, the TV serial features a product placement, which is also named by some Chinese scholars as soft-sale advertising,[76] a type of sponsorship particularly popular in the 1990s. More recently, producers tend to seek straightforward loans from banks or other companies, paying a dividend on the investment once their TV drama returns a profit. For example, the production company Beijing Television Art Centre borrowed 1.5 million US dollars to produce the television drama *A Native of Beijing in New York* (*Beijingren zai Niuyue*, dir. Feng Xiaogang, 1994) in 1992.[77]

Thus, it emerges through scrutinising TV drama production in the commercial period that producers were faced with a double challenge. First, their programmes had to be sufficiently popular in nature in order to attract advertising revenue, and increase the likelihood of being purchased by television channels. Second, the programmes had to demonstrate a heightened awareness of political and sensitive issues. It is arguably for this reason that producers deliberately avoided controversial themes, like the decadent morality often associated with contemporary urban culture drama. As a consequence, so-called safe historical subject matter – practically every significant event in China's 5000 years of history – has become the staple of Chinese television drama.

3.2. The Current Chinese TV Drama Industry and its Administrative Policy

As seen above, then, the development of Chinese TV drama industry has experienced three stages since 1958. Thus, when considering financial structure and business approach, contemporary television drama appears more market-oriented than political, as it was in Mao's era, for instance. However, the development and direction of this current industry are still effectively controlled by the hand of the authorities and their representative SARFT. In this section, therefore, close attention is given to the administrative regulations of the SARFT itself in order to examine the role of the state in current Chinese media.

3.2.1. The Three Main Sources of Supplying Television Drama in China

There are currently three sources that supply television drama to various channels:

- domestic productions;
- foreign imports;
- co-productions with foreign producers/companies.

Most important of all are those produced by the domestic TV drama industry, as will be examined in detail at a later stage of my thesis. This section will, however, concentrate on the sources of foreign imports and co-productions of TV dramas.

Where imported television dramas are concerned, the initial free market has seen some significant changes, as the Chinese government has constantly re-defined its approach to foreign policy. These changes can be illustrated both by an examination of Chinese television schedules and SARFT policy. For example, in 2001, China imported 101 television dramas (some 340 episodes) from the USA. However, in the same year, Sino-US political relations faced a number of challenges as the Bush administration adopted a harder line towards Beijing.[78] Moreover, the aerial clash in April 2001 between a US surveillance plane and a Chinese fighter added heat to this particularly delicate moment, which increased the existing tension yet further in US-China relations.[79]

At around the same time, the SARFT conspicuously stressed the importance of looking to South-East Asia as a region of shared cultural and philosophical values when importing television programmes.[80] This strategy was supported by intellectual observers, including Zhu Shida, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who explains the issue in this way:

> [t]he aggressive American culture with a short history of a little more than 200 years is built on the basis of individualism and liberalism, while the introversive Chinese culture with a 5000 years' tradition lays stress on collectivism and cultural consensus at the expense of individual voices. Obviously, the essences of these two cultures are contradictory.[81]

Because of the tensions in international relations with America, then, the number of imported American TV dramas dropped dramatically to 55 (164 episodes) in 2002,[82] roughly half the figure for the previous year, with the number of European of drama productions on Chinese screens also being reduced. Hence, as a result of SARFT's steering strategies, TV dramas made by Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea flooded in, counterbalancing the media market. For example, Korean TV programmes imported into China increased from 2487 in 2001 to 3663 in 2002, with, the number jumping to 6149 in 2003.[83] It is telling in this regard that Korean TV productions appear to offer a more acceptable cultural morality based on family affection and dignity, where any individual behaviour against family honour or national collectivism is strongly discouraged. One such instance is seen in the Korean TV drama *Jewel in the Palace* (*Daejanggeum*, dir. Lee Byeong-Hoon, 2003) which has been shown in China and warmly welcomed.[84]

However, even though these imported TV programmes from the regions of East Asia are welcomed and encouraged by the SARFT, this does not mean that Chinese TV channels have total freedom in scheduling such programmes. Rather, it is SARFT regulations that carry weight: imported television drama should be sympathetic to 'Chinese national virtue', for example, and offer the positive and bright side of humanity.[85]

Further, in relation to time taken up, imported TV dramas cannot be allocated any more than 25% of a channel's overall schedule, and no more than 15% at peak times (from 18:00pm to 22:00pm).[86]

The third source of supply for China's domestic TV channels comes from drama programmes co-produced with Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and (occasionally) Europe or America.[87] This is a trend that has become increasingly significant for the market of Chinese media production. One of the rationales for encouraging such cooperation is SARFT's intention to explore the potential of markets outside China through a second party's established promotion and publicity operations overseas. For instance, the TV series *Returning Princess Pearl* (*Huanzhu gege*, dir. Sun Shunpei, 1998), is a co-production with Taiwan which premiered on Hunan TV. This was a TV series that achieved huge success rates not only in the rest of China, but also in markets such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand, through the market promoted (interestingly) by the Taiwan co-production company.

Following the success of such co-productions in terms of overseas sales and publicity, the SARFT routinely establishes a set of regulations to govern Chinese participation in the name of protecting national interests and boosting the domestic television drama industry. These regulations include the following:

- For every 60 episodes of co-produced TV drama, the domestic company must complete 20 episodes of entirely domestic productions.
- The proportion of domestic staff members must not be less than one third of the co-production team.
- Domestic capital must contribute at least one third of the total budget.
- Copyright for the finished programme in Mainland China must be issued to the Chinese partnership.[88]

Thus, the point being made is that even though China as the domestic partner is heavily involved in the practical procedures of co-production, the SARFT still regards these TV dramas as outside border programmes, the same label given to those that are imported.[89] Hence, no matter what the cultural heritage among these regions may be, the SARFT nevertheless carefully regards Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea as the representatives of Western culture because of their explicitly capitalist base. Producers from these territories are therefore still treated with a degree of caution because of their very different political and economic ideologies. It is claimed, for example, that these 'outside border' dramas 'represent a commercialised modern mass culture, which is intricately connected with the Western cultural industries.' The growth in co-productions and imports therefore increases the impact of Western culture on the domestic media in China, which differs considerably from the 'official culture promoted by the government, the elite culture promoted by intellectuals.'[90] For example, the famous Taiwanese idol drama *Meteor Garden* (*Liuxing huayuan*, dir. Cai Yuexun, 2001) has drawn large youth audiences on Mainland China. However, at the same time, the programme generated a great number of complaints from some parents, accusing the producers of presenting a 'fantasy of exaggerated personalities, threatening sexual violence, reconciled class relations, and progressive gender and economic outlooks'[91], and including furthermore 'unrealistic ideas about relations between people and society'[92]. However, the demand for capital investment, new technologies and sophisticated business skills (which are all seen as key factors in the

modernisation of the Chinese media) ultimately outweighs the state's ideological concerns about capital and cultural flows from the outside world.[93]

3.2.2. The SARFT Regulatory Framework for Supervising the Development of China's TV Drama Industry

It will be seen, then, that the intervention of SARFT's regulatory framework has the aim of controlling the developmental direction of the Chinese TV drama industry. Firstly, there are three main legal instruments employed to control the industry's expansion in its domestic and international contexts. These are as follows:

- A licensing system for Chinese television production companies;
- Censorship at the pre-stage of production
- Post-production censorship

3.2.2.1. Licensing System for Chinese TV Drama Production

The SARFT created its system for licensing Chinese television production companies in 1986, with the power to enforce its ruling that only units in receipt of the requisite SARFT (and previously the MRFT) license could produce television dramas domestically or work in partnership with international companies. In practice, there are two types of permanent (*dianshiju zhizuo xukezheng* [*jiazhong*]) and provisional (*guangbo dianshiju zhizuo jingying xukezheng*) licenses[94]. In theory, all units with legal licenses should be national companies or government institutes under the effective control of the Party, such as China International TV CORP and the Centre for Chinese Television Drama Production (*zhongguo dianshiju zhizuo zhongxin*) established in 1984 and 1983 respectively, but (interestingly) both are directed by national CCTV.

In 2007, there were some 117 production units with a permanent license, and 2442 units with a provisional license, including 10 military units.[95] Perhaps most significantly, if private media companies wished to produce a television drama, they would have to collaborate with a licensed production unit. A good example of this phenomenon is the famous PHTD *Yongzheng Dynasty* (*Yongzheng Wangshao*, dir. Hu Mei, 1997). This TV drama was a co-production between CCTV and the private media company *Beijing Tongdao Culture and Development Ltd*. Similar examples can be seen in *Qin Shi Huang* (*Qinshihuang*, dir. Yang Jiangang, 2001), *King Guojian of Yue* (*Yuewangguojian*, dirs. Huang Jianzhong, Yuan Bin, and Yan Yi, 2007), and *The Great Revival* (*Woxinchangdan*, dir. Hou Yong, 2007).

3.2.2.2 .The SARFT's Censorship at the Pre-production Stage

In addition to the licensing system, it is important to note that the SARFT employs a strict censorship code to control domestic television productions. At the pre-production stage, licensed production units must provide a suite of required documents to the SARFT, including an application form and a proposal outlining the programme's subject matter and major plot. Regional production units also have to gain approval from their local authority before applying to the SARFT. If the subject of a proposed television drama involves important

political or military events, foreign affairs, ethnic groups, or famous historical figures, then the production unit must also have legal agreement from the related government bodies, such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Security, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and so on. According to the SARFT's regulations, any television drama which falls into any of the following categories will not be approved:

Table 3.6 Decree No. 40 issued by the SARFT, 2004[96]

1. being against the constitution of the P R China.
2. harming the unity of China and Chinese territory.
3. divulging national secrets, or harming the safety, interest or honour of the Chinese nation.
4. instigating ethical hostility against others or racism.
5. advocating superstition or heresy.
6. harming the safety and order of society.
7. advocating violence, pornography, gambling, or encouraging criminal behaviour.
8. slandering others or infringing the legal rights of others.
9. harming the social, moral or traditional culture of China.
10. any other issues not allowed by law or administrative regulations.

When compared with the previous State Council Decree No. 2 issued in 2000, a significant finding is that further rules (the first, fifth, sixth and ninth items) have been added to the new Decree No.40 above, while the previous clauses of forbidding sexism and regional discrimination have disappeared. In my opinion, the explanation for this discrepancy may be that the social problems of sexism and regional discrimination have become more common since 2000. Hence, they have become (to some extent) unavoidable topics, and therefore impossible to censor.

Table 2.7 below, which shows the official approval form, further demonstrates the criteria of the SARFT for censoring Chinese TV dramas. In this table, the proposed television drama of *The Sunrise from the Desert* (*Damo zhaoyang*, dirs. Hantao Wei and Guoxing Zhang, 2006) is used as an example to clarify the means of scrutiny.[97] The TV drama *Sunrise* was a coproduction between the state-owned Central Broadcasting and Television of Shanxi Province, and the Datong Film and Television Production Centre. As approval procedure was being carried out at the regional level of province, permission for this production is required from both the local administration and the SARFT[98].

Unusually, this official form does not require the details of the director but the screenwriter. This specific requirement indicates that the role of scriptwriter is deemed to be more important at the pre-production stage. In other words, subject matter and narrative are the focal points that indicate the appropriate ideological direction of this proposed TV drama within the broader political and cultural contexts. Where subject matter is concerned, it is also worth noting that the SARFT does not use set criteria. Decisions are often made according to current political circumstances. Thus, in order to explain the rationale for SARFT's approval of the TV drama *Sunrise,* it is necessary to examine the contemporary political landscape of 2004, where Chinese president Hu first brought out his signature ideology of a socio-economic vision that seeks the construction of a harmonious society. It is of interest here that this same slogan was further proposed by the Chinese government under the Hu-Wen administration during the 2005 National People's Congress. My view is therefore that one of the motivations was to focus attention upon achieving such overall societal balance and harmony in current Chinese society. This is a concept which was clearly visible on banners all over China, recently described as resembling

characteristics of Neo Confucianism in some aspects.[99] Certainly it is the case that under the administration of Chinese president Hu, the Chinese authorities regularly employed propaganda to support this recurring key theme of building a harmonious society.[100] The point to note is thus (as we can see from the proposal for the TV drama *Sunrise* as shown in table 3.7 below) that the piece attempted to directly engage with this contemporary political discourse, even though the story-line begins in 398 B.C., and features the rise of the little Toba kingdom.[101] Specifically, the proposal highlights this politicised theme of contributing to a harmonious society, further embedding into the narrative the unification of various Chinese ethnic minorities. Very importantly, therefore, this is an example of TV drama which demonstrates that the ability of Chinese producers to recognise the importance of hitting the right political resonances is paramount in the twenty-first century.

Table 3.7 Preliminary Response on Agreed Important Historical or Revolution TV dramas, May 2006

The Production Unit: Central Broadcast and Television Station of Shanxi Province   **May 2006**   **Permanent Licence: No.A066**

No.	Name	Screenwriter	Director	Subject	Theme			Episode(s)	Coproduction unit	Note
					normal	comic	opera			
1	*Damo zhaoyang* (*The sunrise on the desert*)	Yang, Ming	N/A	Important historical event	Yes			40	Datong Film and Television Production Centre	

Synopsis

In 398 BC, the original nomadic *Tabgatch* (Toba) of the Northern Wei reconstruct the political structure and unifies the Han and minority groups into a larger territory. Through this policy of national amalgamation, the Northern Wei dynasty successfully unites northern China, building a firm, unified foundation for the later Tang dynasty. This TV drama aims to focus on the essential and historical characteristics of the Chinese nation, these being amalgamation, harmony, and unity which carry forward as part of Chinese heritage.

Provincial administration	Agreed, but needing further approval from the SARFT	**The SARFT**	Agreed, but needing to provide the script and other related materials

As seen, then, even though the proposal for the TV drama *Sunrise* discussed above has been approved at the pre-production stage, this approval did not mean that the producers could enjoy complete freedom from that point onwards. There was still a decision to be made by the SARFT through examining the final product. In other words, this is the post-production stage, which begins from the time of the submission of the TV series.

Throughout this post-production stage, the process is guided by the regulations of *Provisions for the Administration of TV Plays* (*Dianshiju shencha guanli guiding*).[102] According to the current regulations issued in October 2004, there are two review centres directly under the SARFT administration - the Television Plays Review Committee and an equivalent Committee dealing with appeals. At the level of the provincial SARFT bureau, there are also 45 regional Review Panels of Television Plays in total. The central committee directly under SARFT's administration examines:

- all television dramas produced by CCTV or other central governmental units;
- any domestically produced television drama involving international team members such as screenwriter, director, actor, or cameraman;
- any script which is a coproduction with a company outside of the Mainland of China
- the completed television dramas.

Overall, the related documents required for the final approval at the post-production stage[103] include the permission form, and a copy of the production license, along with two samples of the programme including the closing titles.

However, when a TV drama narrative addresses itself to the historical revolutions involving the Chinese Communist Party, the process then is an alternative one – a different and specifically dedicated approach. More precisely, the SARFT has established a special central committee to oversee and censor all aspects of such productions.[104] In other words, any final decision regarding contemporary revolutionary TV drama has to be made directly by the SARFT committee. In addition, revolutionary dramas can only be proposed by national or provincial producers, such as CCTV, provincial television stations or national film studios.

This later stage of the censorship process presents a significant challenge to television drama producers. Every element of each programme is subject to detailed scrutiny, right down to the programme's subtitles. It is rather common for this final stage of the censorship process to take between six months and one full year – sometimes even longer. For example, the post-production censorship processed for the television drama *Qin Shi Huang* lasted five years, as significant changes were required for the entire series, finally shown on Chinese television screens in February 2007.[105]

Perhaps unsurprisingly within China's unique economic market, this censorship process is not a free service. The Review Committee or local Review Panel will charge as a standard cost ('shenpian fei' or 'zhuanjia

pingshen fei') the sum of 100 to 500 *yuan* (approximately 10 to 50 British pounds) per member for censoring one episode.

SARFT's censorship processes, then, mainly occur at the pre- or post-production stages, but can also disrupt programmes at the distribution and exhibition stages. For example, the Review Committee or Review Panel in addition supervises television dramas which are currently being shown, but which cause social debate and controversy. They then have the legal power to pause the exhibition of a particular TV drama. The committee and panel also decide if completed programmes can be sold to the wider television market, or shown only on specific television channels. For instance, the TV drama *Zeng Guofan* (*Zeng Guofan*, dir. Zhang Hanying, 2001) was stopped from transmitting on any TV channel, but permitted to trade in the media market. In other instances, television dramas can be shown only on certain channels, as in the example of the historical TV drama *Great Ming Dynasty 1566* (*Damingwangshao 1566 jiajqing yu hairui,* dir. Zhang Li, 2007). Permission was not given to exhibit this TV production on any CCTV channel, but showings were allowed on regional channels.[106] The reason given by the SARFT for such decisions relates to the likely social impact of particular programmes and the different expectations that audiences may have of different channels. The *Great Ming Dynasty 1566* illustrates how the story-line between the Emperor Jiaqing[107] and his minister Hai Rui might resonate in unacceptable ways, for example,[108] since the sensitive historical figure of Hai Rui potentially recalls the memory of the Cultural Revolution in contemporary Chinese history.[109] Thus, such sensitive content was not approved as suitable for national CCTV, as the Chinese government intends to dismiss the memory of the Cultural Revolution and re-establish the image of Mao in the new century.

The principal finding to emerge from the study above, then, is that the state-owned system of Chinese television production and broadcasting allows the government to exercise censorship at every level. The constant monitoring of TV drama from pre- to post-production demonstrates that political intervention occurs in certain circumstances and affects the content and narratives of an individual programme. Under this highly effective regulatory framework, all TV dramas shown on Chinese television should in theory meet ideological requirements and accomplish the social and political impact expected by the Party.

3.2.3. The Current Television Drama Market in China

Despite the strict administrative system, censorship and provision for political intervention at every stage of the process from pre-production to exhibition, the total exhibition hours for TV drama produced in the year of 2008, for example, still accounted for 24.7% of television screenings, making this genre a key one in the popular media.[110] Production capacity has also come a long way since the first faltering steps taken by the industry before the Cultural Revolution; the number of TV dramas now totals 502, with 14498 episodes produced within the single year of 2008.

Perhaps most significantly, television drama accounts for nearly one third of national viewing figures. Also, interestingly, those productions shown by CCTV's drama channel rarely fare as well as those shown on regional channels. According to the figures in 2008, CCTV attracted only 37.73% of the national audience for television

dramas, with regional channels seeming to be more successful at 61.53%.[111] Arguably, this discrepancy might partly be because CCTV has not given priority to developing the TV drama market, thus offering an opportunity to regional channels to fill the gap. It seems that SARFT's priority is instead is to regard CCTV as a display window for China's politics, economy and society. The programmes developed and made by CCTV thus place more emphasis upon political and ideological 'fast food', such as news programmes, politically-orientated entertainment such as the Spring Festival Gala, and high-budget documentaries.[112]

By contrast, local and regional television channels highlight both the significant capital value of TV drama and reaping the financial rewards. In this regard, He Xiaoting[113] singles out three main strategies for promoting such dramatic pieces. The first way is to cross-promote the drama in conjunction with other popular programmes, as seen, for example, when Jiangsu TV invited the main crew team of the upcoming TV drama *Soldiers and Their Commander* (*Wode tuanzhang wode tuan*, dir. Kang Honglei, 2009) on the popular talk show *Renjian*. Although it is impossible to assume a direct correlation, it is noteworthy that this programme later achieved a high audience rating. The second strategy is to show a soap opera or sitcom, such as *Kids at Home* (*Jia you ernü*, dir. Lin Cong, 2004-Now) generating a loyal and stable audience which virtually guarantees a strong performance in the ratings, which (in turn) increases commercial value. The third strategy is to produce television dramas with similar subjects, as in the case where Jiangsu TV followed up the success of *Soldiers Sortie* (*Shibin tuji*, dir. Kang Honglei, 2006) with the related production of *Soldiers and Their Commander*. Both TV dramas choose a military theme as their central narrative, either portraying a soldier's life in modern China or the brotherhoods that are formed in times of war. Indeed, the director Kang invited the same cast and production team of the previous *Soldiers Sortie* to take part in the making of *Soldiers and Their Commander*. It is also worth noting that such trends are often geared to political factors. For example, throughout the year of 2009 (the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China) most channels show similar programmes in order to celebrate the success of the Communist Party, such as the television drama *Liberation* (*Jiefang*, dir. Tang Guoqiang, 2009) and *Green Mountain, Blue Water, Red Life* (*Qingshan lüshui hongrizi*, dir. Sun Yashu, 2009).

4. The Renaissance of Confucianism: its Growing Impact on Political Forces in the Chinese TV Drama Industry

It may appear from historically reviewing the development of China's TV and TV drama industry in the first three sections of this chapter, then, that its production systems experience no freedom economically and politically. It would be wrong, however, to draw such a conclusion. On the contrary, if nothing else, Chinese membership of the WTO has pushed the TV industry up to an international level. Indeed, benefiting from economic reform since the 1980s, WTO membership has opened up for China some unique opportunities for the continuing growth of its TV drama industry. For example, on February 1992, CCTV purchased the exclusive rights to the 40-episode Chinese television drama *I Love You Absolutely* (*Ai ni meishanglang*, dir. Zhang Yu, 1992) for 3.5 million RMB (0.35 million British pounds),[114] representing the first instance of copyright acquisition in the history of the nation's TV drama industry. This historic acquisition indicates that even CCTV, the symbol of national media power, has had to adapt to a commercial supply system, where actions have to be driven by free-market economics.

At the same time, it is also quite clear that the Chinese TV drama industry has been driven developmentally by political forces, monopolised by an authoritarian government. Thus, despite the development of some 'free market' principles, it remains the case that this industry in particular continues to be governed more by politics than economics. Once heavily under the political influence experienced in the Mao era, it is evident that (comparatively speaking) the Chinese media industry has changed as the result of economic reforms in the 1980s. Nevertheless, if we look more closely into these reforms, it becomes apparent how much remains a top-down, one-way system in relation to the cultural industries. Hence, although the realities of economic reform have to some extent also brought new challenges to the Party, the Chinese political system evolves quickly and acts upon these challenges. In other words, while attempting not to undermine the basis of the one-party system, political reactions are geared to address social tensions as they are caused by economic growth and the effects of globalisation. Scrutiny of the current administrative system that supervises the Chinese TV drama industry (as carried out in the previous section) therefore demonstrates clearly that political intervention has impacted on economic direction and decision-making.

Situated in the above political and economic context, then, China's expanding television and drama industry have in particular become a microcosm of these national changes. The point being made is that the landscape of Chinese media in the past 50 years has been constantly shaped in line with the reform policy of *Commercialised Social Mode*. Consumer culture has grown rapidly in China since the 1990s, leading to not just economic results, but also political action. Thus, while the promise of Chinese economic democracy has to some extent been fulfilled under the reform policy during the first ten years of the new century, this economic freedom does not, however, incorporate the political, judging by the degree of state interference in the economy. It emerges therefore that what we need to re-evaluate in fact is the question of who stands to benefit from this activity of the state.

4.1. A Division in Traditional Chinese Culture: its Impact upon Contemporary TV Drama

It will be important to note in the context of what follows that traditionally, Chinese culture is divided into two categories - general culture ('su wenhua') and arts culture ('ya wenhua').[115] As defined here, arts culture refers to the integration of intellectual and official culture through a group of artists, literary scholars, moralists, philosophers, theorists, and ideologists.[116] In contrast, general culture is often considered to be vulgar, usually referring to folk art, popular music, lowbrow literary works, and so on.[117] Interestingly, general culture is therefore often considered to be a 'devalued culture' by the state, and (as such) is discouraged by the authorities. The resulting tension between the two social strata thus appears as a conflict between the mainstream official culture and its devalued or popular counterpart.

Such historical realities within Chinese culture further strengthen the argument set out in the previous chapter that the Western theory of the public sphere (showing the actual relationship between popular culture and official culture) deals with differing complexities that do not match the intricacies of this opposition in China, as Wang's interpretation confirms: he observes, for example, that the so-called public sphere of China is in fact an

interpenetration of society, and is therefore an integral part of the internal structure of the state. The relationship between general culture and arts culture is consequently one of penetration and resistance to that penetration. This relationship signifies (in turn) that these two cultural levels are neither entirely separate nor opposite to each other; rather, they intersect, the one with the other. Within this relationship, then, state-controlled arts culture sometimes aims to reach a compromise with popular culture. Specifically, state authorities (through arts culture) plan to influence general culture throughout history, while that general culture in turn resists and boycotts explicit political propaganda or ideological orientation from the state. When this resistance occurs, the resulting interconnecting tensions might appear to operate in an opposite sphere to that set out by Western theories of the public sphere, where the latter role is seemingly one of buffer between society and the authorities.

In the same way, Chinese television drama, as a cultural production which enjoys freedom, seemingly operates independently and unofficially within the mechanisms of the free market. However, this freedom is not unconditional, as seen. As demonstrated in this chapter, for example, before the actual showing, any television drama must be produced under constant censorship, and requires permission from the authorities at the various stages discussed earlier. The most important prerequisite for the production team is they must have a production licence or work with state-owned institutes. In other words, even though freelance producers are involved in the making of some TV dramas, there are three regulatory conditions to fulfil:

- The licences must be obtained through negotiation between producers and state-owned institutes.
- A production must be administered through the SARFT.
- The final showing is on the state-owned channels.

Thus, Chinese TV dramas, although in the hands of independent producers, are still the product of a state ideology, as Wang confirms: 'the penetration of such culture into people's daily lives is carrying out the task of the reproduction of hegemonic ideology'.[118]

Even so, the production of Chinese TV drama is becoming more and more commercialised, despite the proliferation of lawful regulations and strict censorship from the authority. In line with state-controlled programming, the TV drama industry hence appears to be in the process of a cultural democratisation. However, this democratisation does not correlate with the theory of the public sphere (where people can freely discuss and identify social problems and through that discussion influence political action). Indeed, there is a forced balance between free market and state-controlled ideology. In other words, Chinese TV dramas are the result of a forced marriage between market demand and political decision. On the one hand, 'the state is completely involved in cultural production' and on the other hand, 'cultural production is limited by the activity of both capital and the market'.[119] The production of TV dramas therefore has no real power to resist state intervention, a measure of state control over cultural capital and the media production that demonstrates the orientation of hegemonic ideology.

4.2. Chinese Intellectuals of Arts Culture and People of General Culture

Historically, then Chinese arts culture has been formed through a group of intellectuals, while the ordinary masses are often considered to be the representatives of the nation's general culture. It will be important to note here that a deep and historically-based conflict exists between the two cultures, however, as will be expanded below. As a starting point for the analysis, Wang Yi (writing in the 1990s)[120] differentiates between the two groupings using linguistic terminology. Thus, while 'pinming baixing' signifies the ordinary Chinese populace, Chinese intellectual classes are defined by the phrase 'zhishi fenzi', (literally, 'knowledgeable elements'), a loan term from 'intelligentsia' (originally attributed to the Russian writer P. D. Boborykin in the 1860s). It will also be necessary at this point to clarify cross-cultural misunderstanding of the term 'intellectuals' as interpreted by Westerners (particularly the Americans), as noted by Huters, in translating Wang's text cited above. For Westerners, this is a term that tends to signify 'professor', which may render the focus odd and 'somewhat abstracted', as Wang confirms. For Chinese nationals, he goes on to observe, the main issue is rather 'the social situation itself'. [121]

In order to trace the long history of intense social engagement on the part of Chinese intellectuals, Wang Yi goes on to investigate the Chinese term for 'intellectuals' from two perspectives. Firstly, the Chinese traditionally define the term of 'intellectuals' as 'wenren' (men of letters, scholars, or *literati*). These people were educated and engaged in mental activity in readiness for the so-called Chinese Imperial Examination, a system of selecting the best administrative officials for the state's bureaucracy. This system had a huge influence on both society and culture in imperial China, and was directly responsible for the creation of a class of scholar-bureaucrats irrespective of their family pedigree. In other words, a man's status (including his qualification for government office) was determined by the rigorous imperial examination in the Chinese humanistic canon. This canon was designed not only to test knowledge, but to heavily emphasise personal moral conduct as the wherewithal to fit moral concerns into political discourse.

Secondly, after the Chinese imperial examination system was abolished in 1905, the notion of intellectuals then referred mainly to 'educated people' who received a modern education in the early twentieth century. Therefore, in modern Chinese history, 'intellectuals' are often called 'wenhua ren' (people with 'culture') by ordinary people, even though they refer to themselves as 'zhishi fenzi' (educated people). It is in the twentieth century, however, that the association of high levels of education with an ethical imperative to influence national policy starts to appear. Chinese intellectuals self-consciously from that point onwards considered themselves to be a united body, an augmented social role of which the Cultural Movement in the late 1910s was emblematic. In this regard, Huters argues (interestingly) that the historical and political factors of this self-consciousness among Chinese intellectuals resulted from the unfavourable terms inflicted on China after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, causing this elite group to search for new ideological aspirations to provide their nation with both moral and intellectual leadership, with the following result: 'this predilection for political and social engagement has led to a highly complicated relationship between intellectual and political power: at times they have stood in steadfast opposition to governmental abuse; at other times they have become deeply implicated in its works'. [122]

After the later 1980s, the notion of intellectuals expanded to additionally refer to university graduates as an occupational group. Thus Chinese intellectuals are defined as a group of 'degree holders in opposition to cadres, workers and peasants.'[123] Continuing his careful linguistic classification as above, Wang Yi incorporates this newest definition into the term of 'jingying' (elite, literally 'the cream of society'), to signify 'those literary intellectuals who use literature as a base to express their values and beliefs and therefore to influence other people.'[124] It is of interest historically (as Wang further points out) that this newest term became more popular after the failed rebellion led by intellectuals in the 1989 Tian'anmen Movement.

It is of interest also that in contrast to the clear definition of the Chinese intellectual class and culture, the term referring to the ordinary people is ambiguous without fixed or collective definitions, with its connotations being constantly changed and loosely defined. Besides 'pingmin baixing', for example, there are also descriptions such as 'dazhong' (the general public), 'remin' (people), 'qunzhong' (masses), and 'lao baixing' (ordinary people). Nevertheless, the group of ordinary Chinese citizens 'is understood as a social stratum with a common structurally based interest, as opposed to intellectuals in terms of education, political interests (power), and social and cultural privilege'.[125] This social level is noted to exhibit several features, such as 'a huge variety of social groups', 'relatively powerless', 'accommodating themselves with, or opposing themselves to, the dominant value system in a variety of ways', having 'cultural forms and interests of their own'; and (lastly) retaining '"material, as well as ideological, differences usually through devalued cultural forms" like television drama'.[126]

4.2.2. Chinese Intellectuals and the Ordinary Classes: the Cultural Barrier

Thus, as seen, these two social levels are represented through their different cultures, with the deep-rooted conflict between them having historical, political, and linguistic origins. Firstly, the linguistic features of Chinese language play a significant role in dividing these two classes. Historically, Chinese society during the imperial period is divided by the rationale of the Chinese literary language – those who could read and write Chinese, and those who could not. In contrast to those 'wenren' who displayed these skills, those who did not possess them were the ordinary people,[127] the reason being that the Chinese spoken language and written script are not identical.[128] Achieving the substantial task of memorising the thousands of characters that make up the Chinese script is thereby thought to confer privilege on those who have succeeded in this task. This privilege in turn offers a ladder to climb for those successful individuals to become intellectuals, and thus attain powerful status within the official society of the state through the imperial examination. In other words, the linguistic features of the Chinese language itself constitute a cultural barrier between intellectuals and ordinary people, which linguistically separates the fully literate from ordinary people.

4.3. The State and Chinese Intellectuals: the Historical Relationship

In modern China, the tension between intellectuals and the ordinary people has not changed significantly, in part due to the historical and linguistic features discussed above. Those changes that do occur, however, mainly do so in the context of the intricate relationship between the state (here 'the Party') and Chinese intellectuals, rather

than involving the general public. Again for a fuller understanding of this relationship, it is necessary for us to trace the historical line of its complexities.

This is a constantly changing relationship that often provokes astonishment when viewed through the lens of contemporary China. The turning point in what was the traditional interchange between the political powers and the intellectual elite – namely the transmutation from scholar-bureaucrats into the complex and fluctuating contemporary situation that now exists – resulted from the 1919 New Cultural Movement (May Fourth Movement). As briefly mentioned above, this social and cultural movement was a self-conscious process for Chinese intellectuals considering themselves to be a united body influencing national policy by virtue of their high levels of education. As a direct result of this movement, they had formed the core of the Communist Party at its founding in China in 1920-1921. Despite their assistance and support, however, the Party carried out an about-face, claiming themselves to be representatives of the working and peasant classes,[129] and as one with the ordinary people, while drawing out the previously accepted social stratum of intellectuals. After the Party seized political power in 1949, it further enforced hard line political directives in order to isolate the intellectual group. During the notorious Cultural Revolution, the remaining Chinese intellectuals were further labelled as 'objects of reform' and described as villains, while workers, peasants and soldiers were often depicted as conventional heroes.[130]

After the Cultural Revolution, however, intellectuals' social status rose dramatically again. The Party admitted its historical mistake, and claimed that political persecution of intellectuals would not be repeated. This political announcement made the intellectual classes confident once more in their asserted leadership role in society, recalling their leading role during the New Cultural Movements of 1911. On the other hand, Wang Hui argues (interestingly) that such political tactics in the 1980s were 'an anachronistic relic of a bygone era'. Moreover, he goes on to propose that the reason for this dramatic change in attitude on the part of the state was by virtue of its eagerness for 'intellectual' support for the 'economic reform programmes'[131] so as to fill the need for technocrats in the renewed modernisation effort. Even so, along with continuing political and economic reforms, the positive model for the role of intellectuals in the late 1980s changed yet again. During this period of time, the tension between Chinese intellectual class and the state gradually increased. After nearly a decade of openness and ideological liberation, the Party began to regard the 'bourgeois liberation and democratic ideas' advocated by intellectuals (especially towards the end of the 1980s) as a threat to the existing powers, finally leading to the notorious 1989 Tian'anmen Social Movement.

It is noteworthy that these tensions later pushed the government into a campaign of cultural integration between the state and the general public. Meanwhile, on the one hand, Chinese intellectuals were again going through a great cultural transformation, re-integrating and reconsidering their mission under the current political and global contexts. On the other hand, the Party to some extent cautiously shared political and economic power with some specific intellectuals, selected from those were in opposition to freedom or democracy.

4.4. Confucian Moral Values amongst Officials, Intellectuals and the Ordinary People: the Bond of Shared Culture

Despite the wide differences between the three spheres as analysed above, however, an important point to be made is that all three (the state, the intellectuals and the ordinary people) are nevertheless linked by a shared culture and by Confucian moral values. It is to noted therefore that this shared value system provides a fundamental base from which the three spheres can negotiate. Indeed, historically, Chinese intellectuals have through time shared this Confucian value system with ordinary people, who have in turn esteemed their role as cultural and moral advisors. Wang Yi puts it thus: 'intellectuals were respected and trusted (because they could read and write), and they were the cultural authority – the interpreters and judges of values and moral standards'[132] in imperial China.

At the present time, then, some Chinese intellectuals have become a cultural agency between the state[133] and the ordinary Chinese people. In other words, such intellectuals fall into the social role of interpreting official culture for the people, at the same time providing ideological and theoretical support for the economic and political reform proposed by the state. Indeed, these intellectual 'interpreters' are often described rhetorically as the 'tongue and throat' of the Party. Again, some have expressed the view that this social role is one that writers and artists should adopt, in order to: '… educate the people through their individual literary and artistic creation based on in-depth observation of life, and thereby produce a subtle influence on people's souls'.[134]

Thus, from this perspective, Chinese TV dramas become a practical educative device for encoding these shared values in a form that can be easily processed. In this sense, the role of the TV drama could be seen as providing the opportunity to link the three spheres, as a means of negotiating these values, beliefs and ideas between them, transforming the traditional shared value system of Confucius into a media reality.

5. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to map out the historical, political, and economic landscape of Chinese media, especially Chinese television and television drama since 1958. What we have in particular found is that the industry of Chinese TV drama has become not only market-oriented, but also internationalised and competition-based. As seen, however, we should also be aware that political forces have even so remained similar. The SARFT, for example (as the representative of the central government), has continued to maintain its political and ideological grip on political censorship, which still particularly intervenes at the pre/post-production stages as well as at the points of distribution and exhibition. It therefore emerges from the scrutiny of the Chinese TV drama industry that (as seen throughout the study) the PHTD genre 'is more like a mirror of politics'.[135] Despite the impact of political and economic changes, however, it will be seen that the industry of Chinese television drama has nevertheless begun to demonstrate a generic trend over the past 60 years. This generic trend not only addresses the generic narrative, but also harnesses the discursive contexts of production, literary reviews from Chinese intellectuals, and (importantly) the SARFT's regulatory directives. In the next chapter, I shall therefore study Chinese television drama through viewing the diversity of the narratives and the various methodologies for grouping. It is proposed that these methodologies have been motivated by different expectations, such as administrative management, market-oriented, and political ideology-based practices. By examining the different

ways of grouping Chinese TV dramas, a further power net between the state and the intellectual classes will be examined and mapped. Analysis of this power net will further enable me to investigate the signification of the particular genre of PHTD at a later stage in the thesis.

Chapter IV

The Genre Definitions of Political History TV Drama (PHTD)

As seen, chapter III has examined the historical development of the contemporary Chinese television and TV drama industry in the political context of China. In this, the aim has been to show how the television industry in Mainland China has been subject to the impact of strong political forces since its birth. Notably, economic and political reforms since the 1980s have powerfully impacted upon today's TV industry, even though it outwardly projects diversity in relation to its production and exhibition. Economic and ideological freedom is nevertheless still effectively controlled by the national authorities. The scrutiny of regulations laid down by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) in governing the different stages of production, distribution and exhibition (as part of the study of Chinese TV drama) thus provides an excellent opportunity to probe the structure and motivation of contemporary Chinese propaganda, and how it has been exercised practically.

With particular attention to the genre of PHTD, this scrutiny takes as its starting point two related issues in order to provide a suitable framework for analysis. In this, the first part of the chapter carries through (but in a more practical way) the questions of defining genre that have been theoretically studied via the literature review, as set out in the first two chapters of this thesis. In order to define the genre of TV drama in the Chinese media context, I will start from three common frameworks introduced as different constituents. Briefly, these are:

- SARFT administrative formats;
- Distribution and market-oriented methods;
- Political ideology-based practices of film/television drama critics.

The second part of the chapter is based on Lacey's tripartite relation in defining a genre, as discussed in chapter I. The study particularly draws on two significant perspectives emphasised by the theory of genre definition, so as to explore the relation between the institution and the text of a genre in the specific political and cultural context of China. This is an exploration which further helps me to probe the tripartite relation between the state, the Chinese intellectual classes and the public. The focus is particularly on the relation between the first two constituents of the state and Chinese intellectuals, as being critical to an understanding of the significance of contemporary TV drama.

1.   The Three Generic Definitions in Chinese TV drama

As seen, the first chapter of the study investigates the development of genre as the focus of western academic study in order to distinguish between the use of the term genre across literature, film and television. Also investigated is historical research into how Chinese scholars have applied western theories of genre to Chinese literary, film and television studies. In this, it emerges (as previously stated) that academic development of genre

studies remains on the fringes of Chinese TV studies. This section therefore examines the three existing methods of categorising Chinese TV drama, as follows:

- Legal and governmental materials
- Trade press coverage
- Critical reviews

These three common methods thus provide evidence for Feuer's viewpoint that 'genre is not born, but made'[1]. In other words, the definition of a genre is made to consider the purposes or functions of texts as media.[2] Further, a text (as Plooy suggests) can be defined as a genre when it adheres to specific conventions. Comparing the three ways of categorizing TV dramas in China above is therefore a means of evidencing an agreed code between the two perspectives. This is moreover a comparison that exercises Mittell's theory of examining genres through a series of questions concerning definition, explanation and evaluation within particular historical and social contexts.

1.1. The SARFT Regulatory Framework for Categorizing Chinese TV Dramas

In this regard, it is of interest that in 2007, SARFT issued a contemporary regulation in order to strengthen its administrative power over the management of the production of Chinese TV dramas industry.[3] Compliance with this regulation is compulsory for all production companies applying for permission or submission of television dramas from/to the SARFT or local BTBs.[4]. SARFT claims that this regulation will encourage a healthy and mature media market through encouraging the development of TV dramas in different genres, and effectively manage this ever growing market.[5] In fact, however, this regulation ensures SARFT's power to supervise the market as a whole and (in turn) shape Chinese TV drama output. The study of SARFT's regulatory framework thus helps us to understand the signification of current TV drama production, and to read government expectations in the contexts of Chinese politics and economics.

According to the SARFT framework, there are five categories in total.

- Contemporary ('dangdai', 1979 to now)
- Early period of PRC ('xiandai', 1949 -1979)
- The Republic of China ('jindai', 1911 to 1949)
- Imperial China ('gudai', before 1911)[6]
- Important subjects ('zhongda').

As we see above, the first four categories are based on a series of politically significant time period divisions.[7] These are divisions that correspond to political milestones in China's history, demonstrating SARFT's close attentiveness to managing television dramas under current ideological and political considerations. A further example of this attentiveness is SARFT's undertaking to act as an agency to perpetuate the doctrine of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in history. It will be seen therefore that the continuing power of Chinese

political authorities to regulate media systems through direct and indirect means is consistently upheld. In other words, the closer Chinese history gets to the present, the more political the representation of history becomes This political and ideological indoctrination can also be seen through the example of history text books at high school level, which present a mishmash of historical details that are highly selective and often provide a deeply distorted view. Notably, moreover, the history of the CCP has becomes a core element for students in the process of learning about modern and contemporary China.

Reading the monopolistic nature of SARFT's regulations for defining Chinese TV dramas, the fifth and final category of 'Important Subjects' is an exception to the political milestone divisions that shape the other four categories. 'Ticai' (literally subject matter) instead becomes the key benchmark of this definition, which also provides the foundation for sub-divisions within the first four categories. The rationale is thus to supervise particular subject matter in relation to CCP dogma so as to reinforce and feed current political and moral needs. Table 4.1 below visually presents SARFT regulations defining Chinese TV dramas in each time period category, followed by the sub-divisions of subject matter.

For example, it will be seen that in the category of Imperial China (before 1911), there are six more sub-categories of legend, imperial palaces, biography, martial arts, young viewers (audiences under 18 years old), and others. In the special category of Important Subjects, there are two further divisions of *important historical subjects* and *important revolutionary subjects*.[8]

Table 4.1 Administrative formats legalized by the SARFT[9]

Category	Periodical division	Sub-division of Subject Matters
Contemporary (*Dangdai*)	1979-now	Military
		Urban
		Rural
		Young viewers
		Detective
		Sci-fi
		Others
Early Period of PRC (*Xiandai*)	1949-1979	Military
		Urban
		Rural
		Youth
		Detective
		Biography
		Other
The Republic of China (*Jindai*)	1911-1949	Revolution
		Urban
		Rural
		Legend
		Biography
		Others
Imperial China (*Gudai*)	Before 1911	Legend
		Imperial Palaces
		Martial arts
		Young viewers
		Biography
		Others
Important Subject (*Zhongda*)		Revolutionary
		Historical

As seen earlier, the identification of a genre in Plooy's conceptual framework suggests that the priority is to define the purpose of the functions of a text as media.[10] In the Chinese context, however (in place of an agreed code between the communication itself and its audience) what shows through SARFT regulations is a coercive contract imposed by political forces. From this perspective, the purposes or functions of a TV drama instead

become an assisting tool with which SARFT is able to oversee TV channels and schedule the screening hours for each category across the whole of China. For example, 60% of annual exhibition hours is allocated to the category of contemporary television drama (from 1949 to now) for the whole of TV drama.[11] In addition to this directive, SARFT encourages and prioritises the production of young audience, rural, or military subjects.[12] This encouragement means in turn an implied advantage in subject matter for which permission is comparatively easily granted. SARFT's determination to schedule quotas for all TV channels thus points to direct intervention in the development and preservation of genres, as well as effectively controlling their propaganda and mass media value. In turn, the SARFT directive above impacts powerfully on production companies and their work, as expanded below.

Table 4.2 TV Dramas Produced for Feb 2008[13]

- ■ **Contemporary (after 1979)**
- ■ **Early Period of PRC (1949-1979)**
- □ **The Republic China (1911-1912)**
- □ **Imperial China (before 1911)**
- ■ **Important Subject**
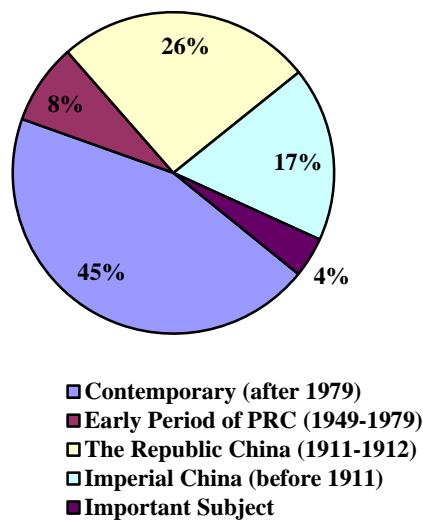
In accordance with the political milestone references that shape the regulatory framework, monthly statistics provided by SARFT are issued to give both producers and the government a clear picture of the current production market of Chinese TV drama. For example, the chart above shows the production share of different period divisions for February 2008, where contemporary subjects take up 45% of the market.[14] This monthly statistic is also intended to pass an administrative message to those producers whose role it is to strategically react to political change. Again, if we compare the figures in the chart above with SARFT's scheduling target of 60%, the statistical gap between these two figures demonstrates that the reality of the real market may not match artificial demand on the market from the state. In order to feed purely political demand, one of the consequences is that television channels have to release more screen hours to those TV dramas with contemporary themes. This means that some television dramas will end up being repeated several times across the different TV channels.

Table 4.3 Seven Sub-categories with Contemporary Themes Produced in Feb 2008[15]
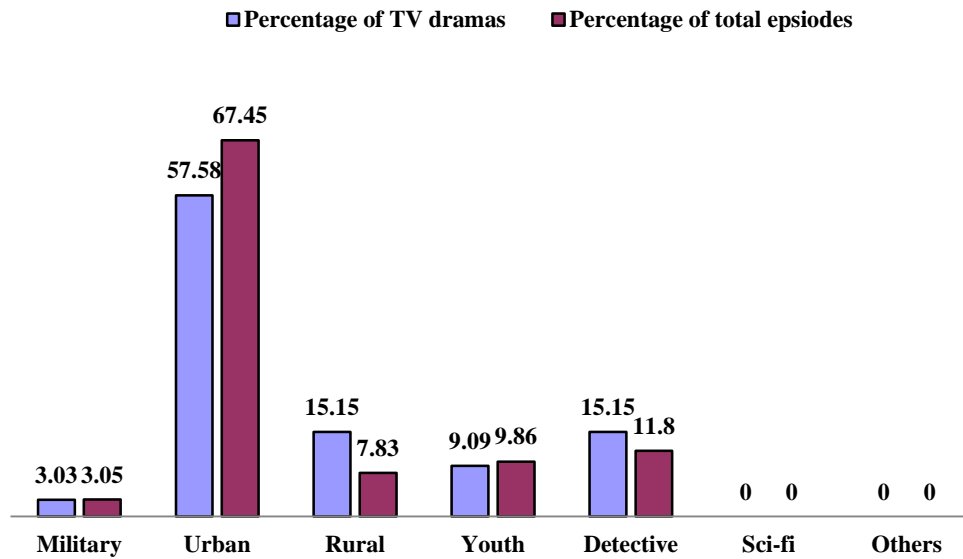
As seen from the table above, only five detective TV dramas (with a total of 116 episodes) were licensed in the month of February 2008. Compared with the significant number of urban themes, the detective genre thus accounts for a relatively small percentage of the programmes approved. However, SARFT has announced an increase in the volume of applications for producing such TV dramas. Further, in order to regulate the moral attitude of TV producers and to ensure the proper development of TV drama production, lowbrow genre is boycotted, so as to create a healthy and friendly social environment for young viewers. In line with this policy, SARFT has issued a three-pronged discouragement scheme, as seen below:

1) to discourage criminal acts in TV dramas;

2) to discourage a documentary style;

3) to discourage any script based on real-life crimes.[16]

Table 4.3 thus demonstrates powerfully to us how SARFT influences and regulates the landscape of different genres in Chinese TV drama production.

In brief, then, SARFT regulations define Chinese TV dramas by format, by focusing on political time period divisions, and on the subject matter of the narrative. However, Turner explains that format 'is a production category with relatively rigid boundaries that are difficult to transgress without coming up with a new format.'[17] Subject matter in SARFT's regulatory framework has thus been heavily weighted, even though format is itself one of the genre's repertoires of elements. As such, there is no other consideration from the SARFT as to how genre handles the ideological, social, cultural, psychological, professional, political and moral values of the area it covers. In other words, the fact that certain TV dramas share the same historical period does not mean that they will necessarily carry recurrent patterns of meaning.

Although SARFT claims to encourage a healthy and mature media market, in fact a text in the Chinese context has to meet a set of basic conventional requirements and expectations to which the authorities themselves have become accustomed, in addition to which there must also be novelty and difference. SARFT's regulatory framework is consequently a convenient way to tailor in the structure of governmental censorship and administration. Thus, the state politically directs the developing market of TV drama production so as to match the cultural policy determined by the central authority. Commercial production is hence forcefully and artificially controlled. The SARFT regulatory framework thus neglects (and goes against) decisions from commercial markets, with (instead) political forces playing a decisive role. Chinese TV drama production therefore has to reach a compromise between market driven and political demands. In other words, producers aim to negotiate both political demands and the fact that they are working in a competitive marketplace. The first (political demand) does not cancel the need for the second.

As both market and economic structures in China are heavily influenced by politics, when it comes to the next stage of distribution and consumption, TV drama producers/companies then have to face a new challenge. For instance, those detective and crime television dramas which are discouraged are generally popular on the exhibition stage, although difficulties may occur at the point of production. By contrast, those with a focus on rural or military life (which are encouraged) have limited markets.[18]

1.2. Definition of Genres in the Trade Market

In brief, then, SARFT regulations categorise and govern genre from an administrative perspective in order to manage the continuously growing market of TV drama in China. Tied up with the administrative system and censorship discussed in the previous chapter, this powerful decision-making body effectively impacts upon the whole industry. However, despite this politically-oriented control since the 1980s, the production of Chinese TV drama has even so been influenced by the market economy. This influence means that the market operates under a double system. On the one hand, the censoring and political decision-making at the stages of production, distribution and exhibition defines a boundary for the market, since producers are forced to comply with administrative regulations. On the other hand, only those TV dramas that 'survive' from serial political interventions enjoy a freedom within this defined boundary, and in turn meet the expectations of the market economy

The following definitions of genres are from the perspective of Chinese trade market. Notably, definitions of Chinese television drama can be a conscious and sometimes unconscious application of the concept of genre. The examples given in this section are from the stages of distribution and trade press coverage.

At the point when TV programmes head into the stage of commercial marketing after serial censorship from the SARFT, Chinese TV drama then faces strong commercial competition on an equal footing. Previous TV productions featuring SAFRFT's preferred subject matter (such as rural life, young viewers, and military life) now lose their privilege, and have to compete directly with the other genres such as detective or crime TV dramas. The commercial force of the media market therefore ultimately decides the success of a TV programme.

In a TV programme's life-cycle, the concept of genre remains a useful shortcut for definition or a means to manage expectations. Here I shall compare two main Chinese media distributors in order to study the definition of genre in the trade market, the Chinese National Audio & Video Exchange (CNAVE)[19] and the Chinese National Audio & Video Digital Right Exchange (CNDRE)[20].

CNAVE was founded in 2000. Being the first online service dealing with the media trade in an open market, it is specialised in distributing imported and exported audio and video products across China. In detail, it mainly provides its services to wholesale dealers, press, and production companies as well as to retail businesses and to individual customers. CNAVE sets up a connection between the content provider (CP) and service provider (SP) through its system of DRE, which is the further developed Software technology of Digital Rights Management. CP members provide the details of their companies to CNAVE, who will then be qualified to provide a trade platform for the SP. The same process also applies to the SP. As well as the detail of their companies, SP members also need to provide business licences or certificates (Internet Content Provider, ICP). Again, through CNAVE's certification, the SP then can purchase digital productions from its media platform.

By contrast, CNDRE was founded at a later date, on 16 November 2006. The centre is a co-operative set up between Guangdong Audio & Video Company and China Telecom. The business covers digital products and copyright, focusing more on the management of digital rights against current internet piracy activity in order to protect the current Chinese digital market.

Both CNDRE and CNAVE define Chinese TV dramas through their narratives. There are 19 groups in CNDRE's definitions, as follows: love/idol, melodrama/ethics, comedy/sitcom, social/reality martial arts/action, biopic/legend, detective, myth, horror, military/revolution, documentary, animation/cartoon, war, social/love, finance/business, politics/economics, young audiences, historical/costume and others. CNAVE divides TV dramas into 10 groups, as follows: comedy, melodrama, action, tragedy, science fiction, horror, war, social/documentary, classical and historical/costume. The table below illustrates, compares and contrasts these differential definitions.

Table 4.4 Differential Definitions of Genres by CNDRE, CNAVE and the SARFT[21]

CNDRE	CNAVE	The SARFT
Love/idol		-
Melodrama/ethics	Melodrama	-
Comedy/sitcom	Comedy	-
Social/reality	-	-
Martial arts/action	-	Martial arts (Traditional)
Biopic/legend	-	Biography (Early Period of PRC, The Republic of China, and Tradition) Legend (The Republic of China, Tradition)
Detective	-	Detective (Contemporary, Early Period of PRC)
Myth	-	-
Horror	Horror	-
Military/Revolution	-	Military (Contemporary, Early Period of PRC) Revolution (The Republic of China) Revolution (Important subjects)
Documentary	Social/documentary	-
Animation/cartoon	-	-
War	War	-
Social/love	-	-
Finance/business	-	-
Politics/economics	-	-
Young audiences	-	Young audiences (Contemporary, Early Period of PRC, and Tradition)
Historical/costume	Historical/costume	Historical (Important subject) Imperial (Tradition)
Other	Science fiction	Science fiction (Contemporary)
	Action	Others (Contemporary, Early Period of PRC, The Republic of China, and Imperial China)
	Tragedy	
	Classical	

There is a complicated match with the system employed by SARFT. For example, according to its framework, the subject matters of urban and rural in the categories of Contemporary, the Early Period of PRC and The Republic of China can be allocated to any of the categories provided by CNAVE. The recent famous Chinese sitcom *My Own Swordsman* (*Wulin waizhuan*, dir. Shang Jing, 2004-2005),[22] for instance, can be defined as either Historical/Costume or Comedy/Sitcom by CNDRE, or it can fall into the genre of Comedy or Historical/costume as defined by CNAVE. Furthermore it is identified as 'other' within the category of 'Imperial China' in SARFT's framework.

In consideration of the genre repertoires of elements of setting and narrative, the programme *My Own Swordsman* can further be defined as a costume drama as well as a sitcom because of its character types, individual stories and overlaid laughter tracks. The hybridity and overlap[23] demonstrated in this TV show is a common feature of television genre, as explained by Feuer and Allen. Feuer claims it is pointless to insist on generic purity in relation to television programmes, [24] while Allen believes that television genres and programming formats are regularly hybridised. [25] The example of *My Own Swordsman* evidently shows how two methods of classification are based on different motivations and generic interpretations. The rationale of SARFT is based on rigid administrative management of the whole production process for TV drama. There is a clear linear system in SARFT's framework through which to approve or reject a particular TV show. By contrast, CNDRE and CNAVE offer different definitions from the perspective of the trade market.

The definition of genres by CNAVE and CNDRE, then, is geared to the commercial market. Television channels can thus select their favourite TV dramas according to their preferred style. As such, CNAVE and CNDRE emphasise the importance of 'generic pleasure' and 'generic expectation'. [26] This process works, therefore, in a parallel way to narrative itself. In one sense, the definition from the trade market simply reinforces the idea that 'most genres do indeed work narratively'[27]. Combined with generic expectations, they decide whether the TV drama is to be classified as romance, revolution or legend. Furthermore, the nature of hybridity and overlap of narrative and/or style means that a 'reception-driven definition'[28] is not completely straightforward. In other words, even if viewers start out with very different expectations of genre narrative/style, they may nevertheless find themselves watching the very same television drama.

Analysing the genre definitions set up by CNDRE and CNAVE, genre clearly remains an important means of communicating information about the television text to institution and to audience,[29] playing a major role in how television texts are classified, selected and understood. In the following section, I shall explore another dimension of contemporary genre discourse by examining how generic concepts are found in the work of scholars and critics who study Chinese TV dramas, where the focus then tends to be centred on ideological and political conventions.

1.3. The Uses of Genre in Cultural and Ideological Practices

The application of genre from SARFT, CNAVE and CNDRE above demonstrates a multi-purpose method for exercising Chinese TV drama in practice. Specifically, SARFT is based on the management of whole of Chinese media production, to include guardianship for appropriate moral values in order to fit what is screened with the purposes of the present cultural policy. Definitions from the trade market then weight the capital value of the media products at the stage of distribution. The question of the genre definition then becomes the measure of the genre itself, as Mittell observes: '[g]enre do run through texts, but also operate within the practices of critics, audiences, and industries.'[30] Here, I shall therefore also scrutinise perspectives found within the practices of academic researchers and critics, as they view Chinese TV dramas from different angles of cultural form.

1.3.1. <u>Defining Genres under an Ideological and Cultural context</u>

In this regard, Michael Keane defines Chinese TV dramas as falling into three categories – historical/political, social (or reform) issues, and contemporary popular culture,[31] his rationale thus being based on the ideological and political context of each. Under this tripartite division, Kean further divides his categories into a number of subgenres, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 4.5 Genre Definitions of Chinese TV dramas by Keane[32]

Historical/Political	Kungfu ('wuda pian')
	Reworded legends ('chuanqi')
	Bio-pics of great leaders, statesmen, and patriots
	Royal court 'costume' dramas ('guzhuang')
	Historical parodies ('xishuo lishi')
Social (or Reform) Issues	Socialist realism in the 1980s
	Revelations of social injustice (late 1980s)
	Secular concerns (after the 1990s up until now)
Contemporary Popular Culture	Modern life
	Romantic themes
	City life

As one of the examples, Keane's divisions have been much more influenced by the ideology and cultural policy which Chinese television dramas reflect. As the table above illustrates, Keane divides these dramas by a combination of political time period divisions and subject matter. For example, the categories 'Social Issues' and 'Contemporary Popular Culture' both focus on the subjects of modern China, especially from the 1980s. The reasoning used for such a method thus relates to their individual social and political functions. The group 'Social (or Reform) Issues', for instance, is associated with the term 'mainstream melody' ('zhuxuanlü'), which Keane politically and ideologically connects with the concept of mainstream official ideology. Notably, this concept in the Chinese context specifically refers to the cultural and ideological slogan raised up by the party in the late 1980s, so as to carry forward thoughts of orthodox socialism, and to 'educate' people through the powerful media forum. Thus, by means of his genre divisions, Keane demonstrates political and social change through examining the actual subjects of Chinese television drama. For instance, he indicates how Chinese mainstream melody changed from the 'didactic narratives'[33] of the early 1980s blueprint for reform to rational debate upon the problems of 'unequal income distribution, corruption, inflation and social unrest' later[34]. By the mid-1990s, however, the mainstream melody had again been decoded into the concerns of living in an increasingly competitive and less egalitarian society. Thus, from the example of Keane's methodology and his study of Chinese mainstream melody, we can be clear that he devotes the greater part of his attention to the changing contexts of political ideology and culture in contemporary China.

Hence, through his interpretation of mainstream melody above within the specific political context of China, the generic method developed by Keane is to regard television drama as a cultural and political form. However, a point needing clarification here is that his concern with the 'mainstream melody' also covers a wide spectrum

across social/reform dramas and historical/political dramas according to his definition, which overlays the group classified by SARFT as 'important subjects'. Those television dramas which carry this awareness of mainstream melody obviously remain characteristic of 'the industrial era' of Chinese television production (from the mid-1959s to mid-1980s), where the mission was to educate the Chinese public, the rationale for all television producers and propagandists. The essential narrative of these television dramas is a kind of nation-building campaign, mostly propagating the patriotism, collectivism and socialism celebrated by the party. The reason for this genre continuing to exist up until now is thus its value of embodying a positive message concerning the party, the people and socialist realism for new times, as explained by Keane[35]. The obvious difference from the industrial era (under current political and economic circumstances) is that the Chinese government seeks harmony or balance between the official and massive popular culture (through a more sophisticated narrative?), rather than the bald and broad propaganda of the Party during the Cultural Revolution. At present, the genre of mainstream melody is a way of experimenting which combines with the values (?) of popular culture in order to weaken any conflict with official ideology. Notably, Keane comments in his work that this kind of mainstream ideological television drama represents a dialectic relationship between the mainstream ideological melody and the policy of diversity declared by the Party in modern China.

As for the third category of Contemporary Popular Culture defined by Keane, this genre is close to the global idea of the soap opera, and has been influenced by the popular and western culture from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and recently South Korea. Compared with the social function of mainstream ideological television drama as political melody above, this third category is believed to contain a devalued popular culture for the public,[36] resulting from the political and economic reforms of the 1980s. These are television dramas that closely engage with a consciousness of contemporary global culture, and which provide ample scope for narratives about intricate relationships in present society.

1.3.2. Raising awareness of generic studies by domestic Chinese scholars

Realising the time lag between the generic study of television drama of China and its rapidly developing industry, Mainland Chinese scholars have recently begun to devote their academic attention to how to define the various categories of drama discussed. Chinese scholar Zeng Qingrui[37] suggests two methods for categorizing Chinese television drama, as tabulated below.

Table 4.6 Two methods of categorizing Chinese television dramassuggested by Zeng[38]

Subject Matters (narratives)	Social reform of national enterprises
	Social reform of the rural life
	Anti-corruption
	Detective
	Military
	Urban life
	Melodrama
	Ido drama
	Women's television drama
	Children
	Important drama of revolution
	Historical television drama
	Bio-pic
	Martial arts
Formats	One-off
	Mini-series
	Middle length series
	Long length series
	Seasonal series
	Serials
	Adaptations
	Tragedy
	Comedy
	Popular
	Theatre drama
	documentary

Later Chinese scholars such as Wang Weiguo, Zuo Lixin and Zhang Ali have also joined the debate,[39] suggesting four methods. The first of these is to divide Chinese television dramas according to the regional cultures which engage with the narratives: for example, Beijing TV dramas, Shanghai TV dramas, Northeast TV dramas and so on. In term of the narratives, the second method categorizes Chinese television dramas into Romance, Martial Arts, Imperial life, Detective, Social Reform, Urban life, Rural life, Peasant workers' life, Industry, Military, War, Anti-corruption, Morals, Teens, Children, and Minorities. The third method highlights the political ideology which is harnessed to such dramas, using categories that include mainstream melody, commercial TV dramas, and Artistic TV dramas.

Despite the various discussions above, Zhang Ali, Wang Feng, Wu Sulin[40] (for the first time) study the TV drama of China by using the means of genre. By copying American TV genres and applying these to Chinese

political and cultural contexts, they develop a fourth method of categorizing, as follows: historical TV drama, Martial-arts TV drama, Hospital TV drama, Melodrama, Rural TV drama, Detective TV drama, Military TV drama, Theatre TV drama, and Documentary.

Given such widely differing methods for categorizing Chinese television dramas as above, I have approached the question of how the concept of genre is used in relation to these dramas through thinking about the functions of genre: for academic researchers and critics, for the trade market and (equally importantly) for the Chinese authorities. However, a surprising discovery is that (in contrast to the answer to this question from Western genre critics) at the early stage of production, the role of contributing to the definition of a project by mapping its relation to other similar texts is left out, and replaced by the format artificially regulated by the SARFT. My question raised here concerns the actual roles of those television drama producers and Chinese scholars in this generic process of Chinese television dramas. What are their relationships with the authorities? How do they contribute to a certain genre? In order to answer these questions, I need to investigate the political and cultural relationship between the state and the intellectual classes, and between institution and text.

2. Defining the Genre of PHTD through a Linguistic Approach

The study of the evolution of the Chinese television industry in the previous chapter provides us with the rich political and economic contexts of current Chinese media, and reveals that Chinese television has fused with Chinese policy since its early birth. Further discussion within that same chapter is then devoted to the particular cultural phenomenon of Chinese television drama.

Embedded into the fundamental methodology of genre in this thesis, both text and contexts are considered. Meanwhile, a Sinological approach further helps to define the genre of PHTD. In other words, I study Chinese television dramas and the politics and culture in which they are engaged and in which they have presented. This situating process leads in turn to a sociological study of television drama in general.

The genre of PHTD is given the so-called term of 'lishi zhengju' in Chinese. In order to preserve its authentic meaning, it is necessary to define the name of this genre from a linguistic perspective of the Chinese original. Firstly, the word 'lishi' (literally, history) highlights the narratives of such television programmes. This means that stories are all set within the historical period time before the foundation of the People's Republic of China of 1949. This historical division appears to be different from the regulations which SARFT have framed. As well-known Chinese historian and writer Guo explains, ambiguities are present in the definition of historical drama. He points out (for example) that if historical drama is defined as the narrative focusing on the past, then the concept of *past* appears very difficult to define. As everything will eventually end up in the past, therefore, there should be no such word as *now*.[41] Subsequently, he suggests the rule of the twenty-year division, which means that any story set twenty years from *now* can be defined as a historical drama. Chinese scholar Xiao later expresses his understanding of the term 'historical'.[42] In this, he adapts both the conventional norm widely exercised within the Chinese domestic academic field and SARFT regulations, while Xiao (on the other hand) defines historical drama as a narrative focusing on a story happening in the period before 1911.[43]

Historical TV drama is, however, defined in this thesis as one in which the storyline is timed before 1949. The orientation is considered through the narrative embedded into the political and cultural contexts. The rationale for this definition is as follows: firstly, the understanding of 'history' is based on factors within the development of the Chinese television drama industry and the changing political and economic landscape *since* 1949. Being an indigenous phenomenon, the production of Chinese dramas is labelled with the new Chinese characteristic of socialism. There is a very clear periodical and political division between *the present* (new China) and *the past* (old China) in Mainland China. Television dramas, whose story backgrounds sit in the period of 'new China' (after 1949), maintain the same political orientation. The constant shaping and reshaping of historical events/stories (before 1949) in TV dramas demonstrates the changing political and ideological navigation of the authorities.

From this perspective, the different views discussed on how to define the term 'history' above show underlying political implications. Nevertheless, the term 'political' in this genre is inspired by the Chinese words 'lishi zhengju' (literally 'mainstream historical drama'), a term widely used in Mainland China to define a certain group of television dramas. Here, the term 'lishi' refers to history (whose definition I have just analysed above) while 'zheng' in Chinese means *mainstream, straight/upright*, *appropriate* and *positive*.[44] The term 'lishi zhengju' first appeared in Mainland China is in the 1990s, when Chinese critics created it in line with a rising genre of historical parody in television dramas.[45] Notably, Chinese screenwriter Zhang claims that director Zhang told him to write the script of the television drama *Towards the Republic* (*Zuoxiang gonghe*, dir. Zhang Li, 2003) by setting the target of imitating a history textbook.[46] Thus, in his understanding, the interpretation of *mainstream historical drama* equals interpreting a textbook. Given that the history textbook in Mainland China is the resource for the historical achievements of the Communist Party,[47] those achievements *are* (in other words) the mainstream.

The genre of PHTD to an extent is therefore *mainstream* TV drama, very much engaged with the official culture and having a strong sense of rich political innovation. The meaning of *political* used in this thesis is at least twofold: it refers to narratives that are political in content/texts, and often portrays complex political power struggles within a historical event or among historical figures. The second meaning, however, refers to the political and historical contexts of the programmes' production, which clearly engage to a greater or lesser extent with the current changing political landscape of Mainland China.

Up to this point, we have briefly understood the genre of PHTD by looking at its linguistic terminology. In order to further define this genre, a historical review of the birth and development of this genre will project a broader picture and help us to further define the role of political and ideological interaction in shaping this genre.

3. Defining the Genre of PHTD through a Historical Review

The commercial development that has taken place in China over the past three decades has provided an

opportunity for the increasing production of PHTD. After the disaster of the Cultural Revolution, the transition of both the Chinese economic form and the models of cultural policy have shown a new trend towards the unity of opposites, between the promises of diversity advocated by the current authority, and the conservatism of regulation in legalism. On the one hand, the TV drama industry has become more and more profit-driven and commercial in terms of financing resources and production. On the other hand, SARFT blueprints legalise the hegemonic power of the central government over the shift in Chinese culture. This conflict has also been reflected through the delicate relationship between public demand and official requirements.

In order to define the genre of PHTD, it is necessary to review its history and to examine how it has been formed and transformed. Significantly, this rising genre has been culturally and historically generated under the prosperous Chinese media market and the special political circumstances of the Chinese context over thirty years. Thus, an emphasis on the evolutionary dynamics of this genre clearly shows how changing cultural and political circumstances can bring about generic shift and verisimilitude. In turn, the history of the genre of PHTD draws a political, historical and cultural picture of modern China. In particular, scrutiny of generic and cultural verisimilitude illustrates the heavy impact of the state upon the industry of PHTD and upon its formation as a genre.

3.1. The Early Works of *Nurhaci* and *The Last Emperor*

One of the consequences of the Open Door policy in the 1980s is that Western democracy began to spread widely amongst the young generation of China. As a result, a rebellious youth culture arose during the late 1980s and early 1990s, finding its expression in icons such as Cui Jian's rock music and Wang Shuo's fiction,[48] as well as the Tiananmen Social Movement of 1989). This was a sub-culture that coincided with the dismemberment of Eastern European Soviet countries, representing a serious challenge to the authoritarian rule established by the Party.

It was in opposition to this challenge that the 16-episode TV drama of *Nurhaci* (*Nuerhaci*, dir. Chen Jialin, 1986) was shown by most of the Chinese television channels, pointing at the same time to a significant trend in the rising popularity of Political History Drama. *Nurhaci* is a life drama inspired by the famous historical figure and important Manchu chieftain Nurhaci, who rose to prominence in the late sixteenth century in what is today Northeastern China. The whole life of Nurhaci is narrated, with a new focus on his family conflict between political decision and personal desire. This was also a drama (inspired by the genres of epic and tragedy) regarded as a new style,[49] contributing to the early development of Chinese PHTD. The reasoning here is as follows: significantly, the subject matter of *Nurhaci* was considered to be the first TV production to highlight the importance of the individual contribution of the imperial leader to the larger scale of the nationhood of China in history. In this regard, Chinese critic Ma concludes that this drama explicitly expresses the ambition of the Chinese people to strengthen their nation. More specifically, under the influence of this nationalistic psyche, the producers of this TV drama came to re-evaluate the figure of Nurhaci in history.[50] Ma's comment indeed defines one of the more usual features of the PHTD genre, in the sense that previous Chinese TV dramas often focused on the general collective nature of the Chinese people. By contrast, the life drama of *Nurhaci* indicated

a turning point in the new political and economic reforms of the 1980s, highlighting a new political discourse away from the narrative centre of revolutionary heroes towards evolutionary leaders.

The narrative of the TV drama *Nurhaci* thus illustrated the rising through history of a powerful nation, where the hero (as well as national leader) united Manchu tribes, consolidated the military system of Eight Banners, overthrew the Ming Dynasty and Korea's Joseon Dynasty, and finally conquered China. As the first in the genre of PHTD, it also was a turning point, being the first time that the life story of a Manchu chieftain and the history of Manchu were positively narrated. For in the past, traditional TV drama narratives had been anti-Manchu, labelling them stereotypically as barbarians, domestically corrupt, and powerless in the face of incursions from the West.[51] Interestingly (and also for the first time) the life drama of *Nurhaci* depicted Manchu as a part of the nation of China.

The success of this TV drama later led to a flourishing of the PHTD genre, especially in relation to the themes of the Qing dynasty, resulting in a group of similar productions, such as *Yuan Chonghuan* (*Yuan Chonghuan*, dir. Chen Jialin, 1987). Among these, the milestone in this early stage of the genre (evolution? Development?) was the 28-episode *The Last Emperor* (*Modai huangdi*, dir. Zhang Jianmin, 1988). Notably, compared with the first PHTD (*Nurhaci*), the production and narrative of *The Last Emperor* had become more mature and sophisticated. This TV drama illustrated the life of Manchu Puyi (7th February 1906 – 17th October 1967) as the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty, and the transition in his life from an emperor to a citizen in modern Chinese history. The figure of Puyi is established from his ascension to the throne as a small boy, to his imprisonment and political rehabilitation by the Chinese Communist authorities.

This is a life drama which is held to successfully counterpoise fiction and historical authenticity,[52] achieving great success after its first showing. Most Chinese critics made positive comments, and believed it to strike a good balance between historical reality and artistic recreation. They further agreed that the production retained the three principles drawn up by Chinese scholar Yue Yin in terms of literature adaptation, to adhere to: the general criticisms of a certain historical figure, the fundamental social relationships of a certain historical figure, and historical events.[53] Together with the TV drama *Nurhaci*, both focused on the life of two Qing emperors, and have been defined as the beginning of the new genre.

3.2. The Milestone of the TV drama Yongzheng Dynasty

Thus, both TV dramas *Nurhaci* and *The Last Emperor* achieved status through not just simply imitating the existing genres. Later, the masterpiece of TV drama *Yongzheng Dynasty* (*Yongzheng Wangchao*, dir. Hu Mei, 1997) amply demonstrated the maturity of the PHTD genre in Mainland China.

The *Yongzheng Dynasty* drama adopted from the previous two productions (*Nurhaci* and *The Last Emperor*) a similar structure and narrative style, illustrating the life of the fourth emperor of the Qing Dynasty from 1722 to 1735. It is of interest here that in the history of China, the Emperor of Yongzheng had been widely been portrayed as a devil, and a man who cruelly slaughtered Confucian intellectuals. As a result, his political

achievement was overshadowed by his tyrannical behaviour toward Confucian culture. Controversially, after broadcasts on national TV channels, the drama was prized for its faithfulness to history, which showed the rise of Yongzheng from his position as one of the princes of the Emperor Kangxi to a leader of China. Moreover, the most successful of his political achievements addressed in this TV drama was the continuity of peace and prosperity, as he cracked down on corruption, and reformed the financial administration system. Significantly, the first showing on CCTV was an instant hit, and this drama still holds the most-watched record on CCTV today.

4. The Transition from a Generic Model ('dianxing') to a New Model ('xin dianxing'): Defining PHTD through a Comparison of Political and Ideological Orientation in the Drama of Revolution

In this section, a comparative study of the popular TV dramas of Revolution will help to further define the ideological and political functions of PHTD. This comparison aims to investigate both genres through the study of their narratives. It is interesting here that SARFT defines these productions as 'Important Subjects' since they fall into the category of Revolution.[54] Also of significance in this comparison (in addition to the political time period divisions of storyline settings between 1919 and 1949) is Barmé's application of a four-principle norm to define the political and ideological orientation of Revolution Drama.[55] It will be observed that these four principles adhere doggedly to:

- socialism
- the people's dictatorship
- party leadership
- Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought

Thus, it can be seen that when the four-principle norm has been woven into the narrative of Revolution Drama, this genre demonstrates a generic model ('dianxing') of an ideological and political paean for the Party.

In order to promote the new-style politics of the one-party state in the new marketisation of China, television, as one of the most popular media, has become the key outlet for this subtle propaganda. Although the ideological orientation of academic book series and journals still demonstrates the attempt to 'brainwash' the communities of middle school and university students and other social elites, the nightly bombardment of the general public from the small screen has become a major focus for the propagandists. A large number of television dramas with their narratives on contemporary revolutions (including anti-Japanese and civil war productions) have been made to sell the image of the Party. For instance, the 20-epsiode television drama *The Long March* (*Changzheng*, dirs. Tang Guoqiang, Jin Tao, Lu Tao and Shu Chongfu, 2001) was made to celebrate the 70th victory anniversary of the Red Army's Long March, as well as a number of similar films on the big screen in 2001.

The Long March is based on the famous revolutionary events in China's history undertaken by the Red Army of

the CCP, the forerunner of the People's Liberation Army. Due to the determination and dedication of the surviving participants, the Long March has played a vital role in Chinese modern history in helping the CCP to establish a positive reputation among the people of China. Throughout this march, Mao's status has been solidified as the undisputed leader of the CCP, through defeating Chiang's KMT. As a glorified example of the Party's strength and resilience, the motivation for producing the genre of Revolution TV drama is thus to enable the Party to promote the great revolutionaries of the past so as to confirm its present authority. However, this is a genre that faces great political and ideological challenges in the global market, and one which is often not acknowledged, especially in regions such as Taiwan and Hong Kong.

In line with the established norms of the TV Drama of Revolution, the generic verisimilitude of PHTD represents a new model ('xin dianxing') when considering the historical-politics and socio-culture of Mainland China in the Greater China region. In order to avoid such ideological, cultural and political connotations in other regions (and to ensure the construction of this imagined community) the current authorities have adapted the genre of PHTD as a new strategy in its propaganda activities. The table below compares in visual form the four-principle norm of Revolution TV dramas with the new model of PHTD.

Table 4.7 Comparison between Chinese revolution drama and political history drama[56]

The ideological orientation within Revolution TV Drama	The moral orientation within the genre of PHTD
Socialism	Family nation
People's dictatorship	The nation of *Han* China
Party leadership	Sage leadership
Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought	Neo-Confucianism

As seen in this table, the genre of PHTD radically and deliberately express<u>es</u> the dominant doctrine of Confucianism as a positive and optimistic spirit of traditional Chinese virtues, instead of the initial Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought. Being different from the people's dictatorship highlighted in the TV drama of Revolution, the main core of PHTD shifts the model into a new notion of the Chinese nation as a whole, and emphasizes loyalty to its leadership and dictatorship. With the help of these reforms of ideological values, leadership and democratic structure, the idea of socialism has thus been transformed into the updated notion of a family nation. Despite the model (dianxing) upheld in Revolution TV dramas, the table above illustrates that the generic verisimilitude of PHTD transforms the four principles into a new norm. Specifically, this ideological re-orientation demonstrates the new perspective of national sentiment, rather than the broad propaganda of explicitly preaching the Party line. The political intention of this new norm is thus to attempt a compromise (on a global basis) between the different cultural and ideological spheres, and to consolidate recognition within the notion of 'Greater China'.

Nevertheless, the transformed political consciousness demonstrated in the PHTD genre in fact still upholds the past political and ideological values of the Party. One example (among others) can be seen in the milestone TV drama *Kangxi Dynasty*. Adapted from Eryuehe's novel *The Great Kangxi Emperor*, the story focuses on the

reign of the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing Dynasty, ranging from his deposition of Oboi to the Revolt of the Three Feudatories, and the later military campaign in the Kingdom of Tungning in Taiwan. This TV production won the Outstanding Drama Award in 2002 at the 20th Golden Eagle Television Awards (one of the top honours in China). Despite being mostly faithful to history, however, *Kangxi Dynasty* has been criticized for over-highlighting the theme of recovering Taiwan, while neglecting the Emperor's contribution to the Chinese language in the form of the *Kangxi Dictionary*, as well as the contention for succession among Kangxi's offspring.

The example of *Kangxi Dynasty* thus helps us to detect the generic verisimilitude of the TV Drama of Revolution. Instead of the people's dictatorship in '*dianxing*', *Kangxi Dynasty* proposes the notion of the Han nation, for instance. As we know from Chinese history, Kangxi was the third Emperor of the Manchu-led Qing Dynasty, which followed the Ming Dynasty (established by the Han Chinese). The Qing Dynasty was the last ruling dynasty of China, and was founded by the Manchu clan Aisin Gioro, who are an ethnic minority of China today. The Manchus are descended from Jurchens, a Tungusic people who lived around the region now comprising the Russian province of Primorsky Krai, and today Northeast China (Manchuria), which are the Chinese provinces of Heilongjiang and Jilin.

The Kangxi Emperor was the second Qing emperor to rule over China proper from 1661 to 1722. During his reign, he established the character of Manchu rule in China. Traditionally, some Chinese historians regard the Manchu conquest as a victory of barbarism over culture, as an opportunistic victory achieved with great cruelty by establishing a foreign despotism over a subjugated people. This view was widely accepted at the end of the nineteenth century, when anti-Manchuism became an important component of nationalism. In the manifesto of the Revolutionary Alliance promulgated in 1905, Sun Yat-sen declared, for example:

> The Manchus of today were originally the eastern barbarians beyond the Great Wall. They frequently caused border troubles during the Ming dynasty; then when China was in a disturbed state they came inside [the Great Wall], conquered China, and enslaved our Chinese people. Those who opposed them were killed by the hundreds of thousands, and our Chinese have been a people without a nation for two hundred and sixty years.[57]

Sun's speech thus brought three concepts into the spotlight – 'barbarians', 'to enslave', 'Chinese people without a nation'. Firstly (and importantly) what Sun means by 'Chinese people' in his speech refers to the Han Chinese, who are the biggest ethnic group native to China, and the largest single ethnic group in the world. Other nations or ethnic minorities are all considered (traditionally and historically) as outsiders or barbarians by the Han Chinese.

Of interest in this regard is the ambiguous interplay between the traditional concept of the 'Chinese people' as predominately Han and the modern perception of 'Chineseness'. In this, the *Kangxi Dynasty* is a TV drama which certainly draws attention from the critics. Critical attention is drawn, for example, to the fact that producers have carefully created a Han instead of a Manchu Emperor, whose role is highlighted in his executive position of extolling the Han Chinese and their culture. An example can be seen in episode 23, where the historical event of the Revolt of the Three Feudatories is narrated. Kangxi sends his Manchu army (known as the

Eight Banners) but they fail disgracefully against the feudal prince, Han Chinese Wu Sangui. In the end, Emperor Kangxi realizes that he must rely on the Han Chinese army despite all the opposition from his Manchu officers; he then creates the Eight Banners of Han led by the leader of the Han Chinese elite, Zhou Peigong, who ultimately crushingly defeats Wu. In the same episode, Kangxi thus announces himself as the Emperor of China (not just of Manchu), and declares his determination to adopt the civilization of Han instead of Manchuria. Notably, this TV drama clearly pictures the nation as Han, even though it was ruled by a Manchu emperor; further, it conveys the very controversial message to the audience that Kangxi was born as a Manchu, but was captured or conquered by the Han culture. Indeed he becomes a 'Han' in this TV drama. Furthermore, this Han culture is solidly built upon Confucianism, whose core is the concept of a family nation. Therefore, any conflict within the nation of China simply becomes (logically) a family conflict.

In comparison with the four-principle norms of the TV drama of Revolution, the genre of PHTD thus demonstrates generic verisimilitude under the changing cultural and political circumstances in modern China. In other words, this genre is not something that was suddenly born, but a generic cycle which 'spawns' outwardly from other existing genres, and is greatly affected by them. Investigation of the *new* four-principle norm therefore presents us with the critical notions of 'family' and 'nation'. The relation between 'family' and 'nation' in the narrative of this genre further presents 'order' and 'authority', and most importantly, the 'language' spoken in this 'family'/'nation'.

4. Chapter Conclusion: The discursive practice of genre in China

As seen, then, Mittell encourages us to examine genre as a discursive practice. By regarding it as a property and function of discourse, he believes that we can scrutinise the ways in which various forms of communication work to constitute genre definitions, meanings, and values within particular historical and cultural contexts. Accordingly, in this research, it will be seen that I have employed the genre of PHTD in my study in order to investigate how different perspectives of communication work so as to define a certain genre within a particular and salient cultural phenomenon in the Chinese context.

Through studying the categorising methods of SARFT, CNDRE, CNAVE, and reviewing academic researchers and critics (such as Keane), the above practices in genre definition have been established within the cultural, political or ideological contexts of the authorities, press accounts, and ideological and socio-political discourse. These practices are thus found to be exercised within the system of cultural power and historical politics that currently applied in China. As discussed, the genre definition set up by SARFT is based on specific regulations so as to act in an administrative role for the authorities, even though genre should develop through a natural commercial chain of TV dramas made and redefined by the historical dimensions of its production and reception. Schatz believes 'genres are made by the collective response of the mass audience'[58] after they have been established and named by the production industry. This is a symbiotic relationship between production and reception which should leave no room for a third party. By contrast, (as demonstrated) the SARFT acts over and above this commercial chain and historical dimension. The particular rules/regulations of the SARFT hence become a blueprint for genre. Nevertheless, SARFT's genre definition does match Altman's view of the term

genre as representing 'classical standards not only in terms of genre separation, but also in terms of rule-based creation'[59].

From the perspective of academic researchers and critics, the theoretical foundation of Keane's method is to 'lean on a common cultural consensus as to what constitutes a specific genre, and then go on to analyse it in detail'. Keane classifies these categories from current historical usage by the cultural specificity of genre. Keane's method retains the process/structure of the western definition of genres without necessarily retaining their content, and is thus useful when studying Chinese TV from the perspective of political culture.

Finally, after investigating the three practices of genre definition within the Chinese context, I have devoted my close attention to the scrutiny of the PHTD genre from three perspectives. Firstly, a linguistic approach defines the genre of PHTD in its own terms in Chinese, with linguistic implications that bring out considerations of Chinese politics, culture and history. Secondly, I have defined this genre from a historical view and reviewed how this genre has matured. Last but not least, I have further defined the genre of PHTD through a comparison with one of the popular genres in China – the TV Drama of Revolution.

From studying the different methods and ways of defining genres in this chapter, the nature of a genre to me is not neat, manageable or stable. Some TV dramas are a mixture of several genres, as we can see from the categories developed by CNDRE and CNAVE. The relation between genre and the individual TV drama thus acts more like 'the type/token model'.[60] In order to further demarcate PHTD and set up its own territory, the definition of a genre should also contribute to a fuller understanding of textual structure and genre conventions, as will be seen in the chapter to follow.

Chapter V
Genre Conventions of Political History TV Drama

As seen in the previous chapter**,** I have focused on different ways of defining the PHTD genre, starting from an investigation into drawing out and defining its various principles**.** I then devoted my attention to the genre definition itself, approaching this research from three perspectives: linguistic, historical and comparative. In this three-fold analysis, it emerges that the genre of PHTD has shifted in subtle ways, to emerge as a new model that in turn acts as a medium for the new style of propaganda adopted by the Party in the post-Maoist era**.** Notably**,** three early stage TV dramas (*Nurhaci*, *The Last Emperor, The Yongzheng Dynasty* and the milestone *Kangxi Dynasty*) represent a genre process, distinguishing generic verisimilitude from China's TV drama of Revolution. Most critics have in particular granted the status of blueprint to *The Yongzheng Dynasty*. However (following the above analysis) it is proposed that genre resembles a discursive cluster, having a nature more complicated than the simple giving of a name and explanation of a term. In this regard, Fourie points out the principle that 'a text can be demarcated as a genre when it adheres to specific conventions.'[1] The point being made here therefore is that such demarcation requires a study of the system of orientations that determine how text meets a set of basic convention patterns and how genre is preserved. In this chapter, I shall thus devote my attention to the narrative structure and the genre conventions of PHTD in its repertoires of elements.

Firstly, I focus my attention on the storytelling strategies and narrative structure of this genre. In order to make more explicit political and cultural meanings, this focus then shifts to probing the subject matter of PHTDs. In order to do so, I decode the language of the genre. Generic narratives are then found to be constantly structured around several political and moral messages, from cultural heritage through to Confucian moral values. Finally, a study of codes of content will look at generic features, further stressing the values above visually and commercially. This approach is more like what Mittell refers to as the 'interpretation' of a genre.[2]

1. Narrative Structure of PHTD and its Literary and Aesthetic Traditions

Following on from the previous chapter on the demarcation of the PHTD genre, then, the research focus now moves from 'what' to 'how', in the sense of *how* strategies are used within this genre to organise its stories. I shall start therefore from the question of how the narrative of PHTD has been structured. More specifically, is there any generic format or pattern which the genre of PHTD follows? If there is a pattern, what is it? How has this pattern been created? All of these questions in fact refer to the narrative structure in genre conventions. This means it will be necessary to look for a common structure, despite the diversity of story content. It is thus noteworthy here that the structure of the PHTD genre analogically shares a similar pattern to full-length Chinese vernacular fiction, as will be seen below.

Also important here is Zhu's conclusion that Chinese Dynasty Drama (as a mini-series) comes under the umbrella of the term 'serial drama'. The concept of the mini-series thus refers to one which can 'carry the storyline(s) to a final resolution after multiple installments'.[3] In line with Zhu's structural pattern of Dynasty

Drama, then, the genre of PHTD could also be labelled as a mini-series because of its narrative in a serial formula. In other words, this genre has a *finite* serial form. Specifically, the narrative can be broken down into episodes with a cliff-hanger between each one, with combined episodes efficiently drawing a larger historical narrative with closed endings. Interestingly, Greeber comments that this structure provides 'an important space for more complex issues and stylistic innovation than either the series or continuous serial can provide alone'.[4] Furthermore, the structure of the mini-series is 'obviously easier to schedule, filling the same neatly-timed hole for a comfortable number of weeks… the audience is led back to them week after week'.[5] This structure hence produces regular commercial breaks within and between episodes, as well as providing a break for the audience.

A further significant point to be made here is that Chinese serial TV drama has been inspired both by China's own rich narrative tradition and by television's exposure to serial narratives from around the world.[6] On one hand (as Zhu points out) the importing of American, Japanese and Korean TV dramas to the Chinese domestic market from the 1980s has impacted on the narrative strategies of its national TV dramas. On the other hand, the historical tradition of narrative equally (and importantly) contributes to the storytelling strategies of the PHTD genre. Zhu exclaims (for example) that Chinese historical TV drama has come from the literary inspiration of the theatre drama of 'pingtan'. This traditional theatrical form is one type of oral story-telling (with or without musical accompaniment), popular in Shanghai and along the Yangtze River Delta. This theatre drama has a long history, and can be dated back to the purely spoken (no singing) 'pinghua' (also known as *plain tale*). Importantly, the storytelling tradition of 'pinghua' in the Song (960-1279), Yuan (1260-1368), and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties is in addition a prose narrative form. Moreover, one of its derivations is 'hua' in Dun-huang literature, which 'has no specific connotation of "promptbooks" used by storytellers'.[7] 'Pinghua' itself has the features of literature performed contemporaneously as mixed prose and verse, and contains introductory verse formulae, as well as exhortations directed at the audience. However, Zhu's view of China's TV drama as originating from 'pingtan' tends to over-highlight a particular regional culture, instead of considering the literary derivation of narrative strategy and structure. Furthermore, the narrative structure of 'pingtan' and 'pinghua' was established in the fixed format of verse, which is clearly distinct from Chinese historical TV dramas.

However, in my view, the PHTD genre shares a similar narrative structure and strategy to the literary genres of historical records and Chinese fiction. Of these, the literary style deriving from historical records had a specific influence in classical Chinese literature. Notably, Confucius himself stressed the important relationship between reality and history. Historical records were therefore revered as a kind of prototype model amongst Chinese intellectuals and high ranking figures as the essence of bureaucratic culture. As the ruling class was largely formed of Confucian intellectuals in the history of China, this became a literary genre that consolidated their political hegemony and ideological orthodoxy. For example, the ruling class adopted this literary genre as a textbook guide to their political and moral behaviours. It was thus anticipated that the genre of historical records would have a significant role in driving together the twin principles of 'fortifying history' and 'advocating Confucianism'.[8]

Generally speaking, then, Chinese fiction has maintained a very close relationship with these historical records. Although fiction was often considered to be a low-brow culture, its narrative style (particularly that of historical

fiction) has largely imitated this historical genre. Amongst these fiction-based genres, the full-length vernacular ('zhanghui xiaoshuo' in Chinese)[9] has been the most popular and successful.[10] Thus, along with the modern Chinese language (which owes much to traditional full-length vernacular fiction) it is proposed that the narrative structure of PHTD has also been adapted from this literary genre. Indeed, from roughly the seventeenth century, vernacular fiction has become one of the platforms for particular members of the Chinese elite to exercise their knowledge, demonstrate their ideas and self-perceptions of Chinese history, and express their frustrations concerning current society and its politics. The narrative was often embedded in oral performance, popular culture, and folk memory, while the techniques of expression included lyric poetry, songs, descriptive verses, poetic exposition, parallel prose, dramatic arias, and even doggerels. The coexistence of classical and colloquial dictions is therefore one of the tokens of the intrinsic hybridity taken from other literary genres.

Notably, stories within this literary genre are inspired by well-known events and historical figures, and, indeed, almost every period in Chinese history has become the theme of this historical fiction. The motifs of dynastic existence (such as the founding of empires, restoration, wars, rebellions and falls from power) hence underline its symbolic nature. Thus, the cultural prestige carried by China's rich collection of historical materials on the one hand, and the sophisticated narrative structure of full-length vernacular fiction on the other, have (it seems) combined to become a readymade package for adaptation by the TV genre of PHTD. The generic norm established in this literary genre thus (in turn) inspires this TV genre. It is further suggested that its narrative prediction often lies in its cultural verisimilitude, meaning that the historiographical tradition interwoven with myth is converted into storytelling and dramatic performance. For example, the eighty-four episodes of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*[11] is a serialized adaptation from one of the four greatest Chinese full-length vernacular stories. It is notable therefore that (after the TV showings) a wide debate erupted on how best to adapt Chinese literature and important historical events for TV drama, a debate which continues to animate Chinese critics and scholars up to the present time.[12]

Besides the stories inspired by this literary genre, the narrative structure of 'zhanghui xiaoshuo' in vernacular novels also carries the genre traits of PHTD. In other words, both are serial in nature. Each chapter ends with a moment of suspense and an injunction to the reader/audience to read/watch the next session, as observed below:

> '…the reader will notice patterns and meanings emerging from contrast and complementarity within each chapter, between chapters, and between narrative units that comprise clusters of chapters, figural and structural repetitions, the gathering and dispersal of characters, and significant midpoints or middle sections, as well as framing sections that function as extended prologs and epilogs'.[13]

Thus, in essence, this storytelling strategy (derived as seen from full-length vernacular fiction) contributes considerably to Chinese PHTD with its combination of a clear structure and reasonable length. The nature of this specific narrative structure further marks out the features of interruption and continuation in Williams' theory of flow, in the sense that both the narrative structure of the PHTD genre and the Chinese vernacular novel are segmented narratives. The combination of flow and segmentation accordingly create a sense of continuity, and make the entire story flow.

It is interesting is this regard that Zhu's study of transnational television demonstrates how genre features differ between Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China:[14] '[T]he characteristics of transnational television dramas from the three Chinese production centers vary according to different origins'.[15] For example, most Hong Kong TV drama serials are either based on martial arts or contemporary social mobility sagas, focusing on the struggle of individuals to reach the top. In contrast, the popular serial dramas of Taiwan have traditionally been family melodramas (especially those stories that take place in the Republican era) although recently, its popular idol TV drama more specifically targets the younger generation.[16] This variation (between Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China) is partly due to the literary derivations of the three regions. For example, Hong Kong TV drama has often borrowed from the works of Hong Kong-based martial art writers such as Louis Cha Leung-yung, Gu Long, and Liang Yusheng,[17] while the melodramas popular in Taiwan are mostly adapted from local Taiwanese authors such as the popular novelist Chiung Yao. In contrast, full-length classical vernacular fiction and contemporary Chinese historical fiction are the main sources for PHTD, as shown. For instance, the famous contemporary Mainland writer Eryehe and all three of his biopic novels (*Kangxi Dynasty*, *Yongzheng Dynasty*, and *Qianlong Dynasty*) were adapted within five years by PHTD and shown at prime time on the national network CCTV.

Specifically, then, in aspects of narrative structure, two main adaptation approaches are borrowed from Chinese literature by the PHTD genre. The first (and highly successful) approach is that from full-length Chinese fiction, as Williams points out with reference to twentieth-century Chinese literature: 'the most successful screenplays have more often been reworking on novels or stories than writings penned from scratch for the screen'. [18] This approach is often seen in the productions of CCTV and/or those distributed by China International TV Corporation, such as classical Chinese novels like Cao Xueqin's *The Dreams of Red Chamber*;[19] Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*; Wu Cheng'en's *Journey to the West*;[20] and *Water Margins* by Shi Nai'an.[21] The second approach is to adapt a screenplay back to fiction, as was the case, for example, in the biopic historical novel *Genghis Khan* (2000), originally based on the screenplay. Thus, importantly, the author and screenwriter Zhu explains in the prologue to this work of fiction that its creative motivation was to fulfil the demands of Chinese readers and audiences, and to encourage the awareness of China's history through either visual-audio or literary experiences.[22]

2. Genre Conventions of PHTD

2.1. The Purpose of the Genre

As seen in Chapter II, then, I have employed Plooy's four classes of purpose as significant methodological constructs in relation to defining a genre and setting up genre conventions. Especially important from a socio-political view is the necessity of 'surveillance of the environment', which is the information conveyed by politicians for example, or the acceptance and rejection of certain social roles and norms. In order to fully understand the transmission of social and cultural heritage in the genre of PHTD (and cultural verisimilitude

from previous TV historical dramas) it will be essential therefore to briefly investigate the broad political picture from 1911 up until now, and how Chinese authorities have re-shaped and promoted the public understanding of history.

2.1.2.   Tracing the Party's Changing Cultural Strategies up to the Present Time

The May Fourth Movement of 1919, then, led by a group of Chinese intellectuals and elites, was intended to reform modern Chinese culture and society through a reconsideration and revaluation of traditional Confucian culture. The CCP was thus established under these historical, social and political contexts. Later, greatly contributed to by the intellectual classes, the fundamental ideological theory of the CCP was set up as Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought, which embeds Western philosophy and ideology into particular Chinese social contexts. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, this ideology was then further consolidated into the official and political orthodoxy of the Party. However, the later disaster of the Cultural Revolution ended the sentimental relationship between Chinese intellectuals and the Party. After the Maoist era, China entered into a new commercial era (known as the *new marketisation)* in the 1990s. In the meantime, economic and political reform had brought in huge political, cultural, ideological and economic challenges from the outside.

Specifically, under the pressure of globalisation after joining the WTO, the Chinese authorities faced the dilemma that hardline party propaganda had started losing its attraction for the commercial market, while the people had more alternative choices open to them to access new media formats such as the Internet, and to exercise their rights in choosing what to view or hear. Facing this decreasing support from the intellectuals and particularly from the young generation, the Party culture needed to respond quickly to these diversified cultural challenges. So as to address such challenges, a new style of propaganda was therefore urged, in order to avert the potential political and cultural threat against the authorities from those intellectuals who believed in their political convictions in accordance with Western democracy. Ross puts it as follows: 'a former style of politics that had lost its power to dominate cultural meanings becomes available, in the present, for definition according to contemporary codes of taste'.[23] As one example, the Party turned back to China's pre-Communist past, and re-examined its relationship with the common people, who still firmly held to traditional cultural and moral values, such as those enshrined in Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Thus, re-worked under a commercial guise, the 'songs, celebrations and publications' in relation to the Party 'attempted to emulate, manipulate and co-opt images borrowed from the consumer market'.[24] This new style of propaganda hence provided a subtle approach to soft-selling the party line to replace its previous harsh and exacting political demands.

2.1.2. 'Intellectual Flow' and Power Relations with the Political Hierarchy after 1989

In the context of the present study, then, establishing the purpose of a genre works not only as an approach to principles of definition, but also acts as a barometer of social contexts and power relations. From this perspective, television drama is much more about cultural practice at that moment in time and therefore (importantly) mediated through the lens of political policy. By looking at genre as a contextual discursive

process therefore, we can in this way situate the genre of PHTD within the larger regimes of power in which it operates. The genre can therefore be better understood through its cultural operations, which are in turn constituted by power relations.[25]

In this section, I shall therefore explore the influence of Chinese intellectuals on the production of the PHTD genre, focusing on contemporary relations between this intellectual group and the Party itself. It is significant in this regard that this intellectual elite initially appeared to be at ease with the economic and political reforms of the 1980s, as Hui observes: 'the new policies seemed at first to offer the antidote to the governmental malfeasance and economic stagnation of the last two decades of Mao's rule.'[26] Indeed, most intellectuals optimistically agreed to call this period the 'New Enlightenment' to distinguish it from the dark, preceding years. However, as the reforms gathered pace, frustration grew amongst members of this intellectual group with the increasing evidence of corruption and privilege accrued by some officials from abusing these reform processes. It was these mounting frustrations, then, which eventually led to a national explosion of discontent in 1989, culminating in the Tian'anmen Square Social Movement.

As a direct result of this social Movement, the intellectual classes to a certain extent withdrew, entering an increasingly tentative period in which they sought to come to grips with the events that rapidly transpired between mid-1989 and mid-1997. During these eight years following 1989, 1993 was particularly critical as a watershed point, as Wang observes below. Specifically, the period from 1989 to 1993 was a time of reassessment, meaning a political policy shift on the part of the government to 'characterize the failures of 1989 through critiques of intellectual radicalism in modern Chinese history.'[27] Accordingly, during this time, scholars produced numerous studies and compilations of research materials as part of a general reconsideration of modern Chinese history and the intellectual tradition. It is notable therefore that the study of popular liberalism during the 'New Enlightenment' period vanished as a consequence of political tension**s**.

At the same time, a new genre began to emerge in the areas of Chinese literature and media studies, a genre referred to as 'the new historicism in fiction' ('xin lishizhuyi xiaoshuo'),[28] which attracted considerable attention amongst China's scholarly communities. The important point to be made therefore is that Chinese literature and media again faced alternative paths which provided access to either liberal intellectual culture or political official culture. This new genre thus became a convenient choice for some Chinese writers who were unwilling to align themselves with official culture, while at the same time wishing to avoid the reality of political dilemmas. The most telling examples of this rethinking period are seen in the rise of the fourth generation of Chinese filmmakers and their works, such as Tian Zhuangzhuang's film *Blue Kite* (1993) and Zhang Yimou's film *To Live* (1994).

Along with the rise of these new phenomena, a group of much older Chinese intellectuals (also creative writers and skilled in constructing historical fiction) merged into an opposing scholarship, adopting a very different standpoint. In contrast to the new generation, theirs was a closer focus on the stories of the *sage* leaders and individual heroes, devoting their enthusiasm to an illustration of ordinary Chinese lives in the past. This was a literary division (along with its accompanying tensions) that during its early period impacted upon (and was

projected into) the later Chinese media, moving between film and TV drama (here defined as 'intellectual flow'). Hence, in brief, on one hand the fourth generation film directors were heavily influenced by the new historicism in fiction, yet, on the other hand, a stable group of producers/directors had joined in the production of the PHTD genre for the small screen, including examples such as Hu Mei's *Yongzheng Dynasty* and *The Great Emperor Wu of Han*, Wang Fulin's *The Romance of Three Kingdoms* in 1994 and Chen Jialin's *Nurhaci, Emperor Xuanzhong of Tang* (*Tangminghuang*, 1992).

Subsequently, having faced the Asian economic crisis in 1997, and having recognised the advent of the new global order, the challenge to Chinese intellectuals shifted in nature, and instead became one of 'how to offer a critique capable of setting out the particulars of this transformation to modernity and advancing remedies for the dire consequences of unfairness and inequality that it had brought to China'[29] In confronting this challenge, several intellectual schools of thought consequently started to vie heatedly for attention. The point to be made therefore is that 1997 had marked the same kind of watershed division as 1989 (a point on which most intellectuals agreed), with repercussions that are reflected in the milestone masterpiece *Yongzheng Dynasty*, produced and screened (significantly) in that same year of 1997.

Amongst the various schools of thought, one particular group of intellectuals (terming themselves the *New Left*)[30] held the view that the social problems faced by China were caused by capitalist mechanisms and corrupt practices. *Neo-liberals*[31] on the other hand were those heirs of the New Enlightenment who continued to insist on the primacy of the growth of domestic and international markets over every other consideration. It is significant in this regard that Chinese scholars are, however, likely put the neo-liberal group in the same camp as neo-authoritarians, as being 'those who proclaimed in the early 1990s the need for strict governmental political controls to ensure the success of the economic reforms against any democratic protests at its injustices.'[32] Specifically, stability was valued as a stimulus for economic growth, while advocating a monitoring role for state authority and intellectual elites to regulate the rapid expansion of the market. The two leading proponents of this neo-authoritarianism school of thought are Wang Huning and Xiao Gongqin, both of whom agree that China's political reform is a gradual process dependent upon locating a match point between Western democratic development and Chinese cultural traditions. Here, the common view of both neo-liberal and neo-authoritarians was to rely on such a monitoring role to guarantee their social vision.[33]

Chief among these heated debates was the notion of the 'nation-state', which was stressed by both Chinese intellectuals (of New Leftist, neo-liberal and neo-authoritarian disposition) and the state itself. Specifically, the essence of the debate hinged on the fact that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese sovereignty was constantly undermined by a series of wars, and thus lacks the characteristic mechanisms of a newly powerful entity, to the detriment of its own autonomy. The need is therefore for China to work to repair damage done in the past and to strengthen its autonomy, while being careful to specify what is meant by terms such as 'state', 'popular', or 'cultural sovereignty', for example. Importantly, then, one of the major concerns of the contemporary Chinese intellectual scene is the need to dispel the historical ambiguity surrounding the concept of a Chinese nation, and instead focus on the core question of how to construct a powerful nation-state. This core question currently preoccupies many young Chinese scholars, writers and journalists who have joined

the somewhat chaotic debate, and who have launched a serial of counterattacks to the criticisms of China from a nationalist perspective. A number of treatises with narratives focusing on nationalism have therefore been produced,[34] which aim to attack China's 'enemies' economically and politically, and which advocate the concept of Greater China.

These contemporary preoccupations combined with the historical relationship between the state and the Chinese intellectual elite therefore to provide the fundamental background to a fuller understanding of the genre purpose of PHTD, in line with Plooy's construct of surveillance of the environment above. Much can thus be learned from such new trends in the thinking of Chinese intellectuals and the expression of their political consciousness within the last two decades in China. Specifically, rather than recognising international criticism of China's political system and the various forms of cultural repression in the late 1990s and the new century, the response takes a new, transformative form, as Martin observes: 'both young intellectuals and the general public responded with a new kind of political and cultural nationalism'.[35] Thus, when this genre is viewed through the lens of this rising new awareness, it becomes clear that one of PHTD's core narrative subjects is just this potential power for the nation of this transforming school of thought.

2.1.3. The Genre Purpose of PHTD within the Net of Political Power

In accordance with the historical review of the development of Chinese television and TV drama in Chapter III, then, the role of Chinese producers and directors of TV dramas was formerly to act as agents for the authorities in the experimental and transitional periods, within what Keane terms 'the standardised supply-driven model of production'. He goes on to argue that such a model 'became untenable as viewers became more demanding', whereupon 'innovative forms emerged and investors entered in the marketplace',[36] meaning that the new mission challenged producers in the new period to make a profit, as well as mediate with the Party. Hence, compared with the previous tight political and socialist orthodoxy, this breakaway policy provided Chinese intellectuals with a bridging opportunity to connect with the industry as well as with the authorities. Importantly, however, this new relationship brings with it the need for the cultural industry itself to examine its own economic viability, as well as the political rationalities that in turn determine cultural policy.

Hence, the dilemma that producers and directors face at the present time is just that described by the famous Chinese modern writer Wang Shuo:

> Popular television drama is either interesting and is well-made, or it greases up to official critics. The worst scenario is that neither the audience nor officials are happy. This is the reality. We have to give consideration to both, and this means we can't just do what we want to. This is because television drama is not something separate from official culture.[37]

The point to be made therefore is that the above dilemma also encapsulates the constraints of the political power map upon the general production of the PHTD genre, as Wang succinctly observes. In this regard, I shall refer to the specific example of Chinese director Hu Mei and her masterly work entitled *Yongzheng Dynasty* in order to investigate the genre purpose as it operates within the Chinese political context. Many critics, including Zhu Ying, emphasise that a strong message is conveyed by this television drama, which is this: the only way to a

stronger nation is to ensure the implementation of the new policy, hence justifying Yongzheng's suppression of revolt.[38]

Importantly, then, this is a message in which sacrifice or the shedding of blood is vindicated for the sake of national stability and security (as expanded below in section 2.2.5) dramatised by Yongzheng's crackdown on political riots. Moreover, this is a message that (tellingly) echoes the neo-authoritarian aversion to the mentality of the Chinese intellectual movement. Zhu's revelation concerning the director Hu Mei is of interest in this regard, since she is rumoured to have a very close personal relationship with He Xin, a well-known neo-authoritarian, former government adviser and conservative cultural commentator, described as: 'notorious for his affiliation with the CCP hardliners behind the Tiananmen crackdown and its aftermath'.[39] Certainly his open expressions of doubt about the student movement in 1989 make it likely that his view has to some extent influenced *Yongzheng Dynasty*, which is filled with totalitarian nostalgia.

What we can see from the background to Hu's famous masterpiece, then, is the important fact that Chinese intellectuals often engage both with contemporary politics and associate with the current authority to act as the agent of the Party at one and the same time, and in this sense 'flow' between the two. This double perspective is in a sense the ideal, as neo-authoritarian leader Wang Huning promotes his political model of a stable and efficient central government that would make sound decisions when based on consultation with elite intellectuals. Importantly, this is also a perspective endorsed by Hu Mei's new film *Confucius* (2010), for which the production company has announced box office takings of 0.1 billion RMB[40] in its first two weeks of screening. It is interesting in this regard that leaked publicity surrounding this high figure suggests that the success of *Confucius* can be explained by SARFT's political directive to postpone the distribution in China of the American Hollywood film *Avatar* (dir. James Cameron, 2009).[41] The conclusion to be drawn from the case of Hu Mei's TV drama and film productions therefore is that the role of some Chinese directors and intellectuals is not independent, but is instead to work with those in political power.

However, encouragement from the SARFT does not signify unlimited prosperity for historical TV dramas, as seen in the issue of a series of regulations such as *the Notice of the changing regulations on important revolution and historical drama[42]*. The point being made is that this change is supervised by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China[43], and directly enacted by the SARFT. In accordance with this notice, firstly, all films and TV dramas on the subjects of revolution and history must be licensed through the SARFT's special committee. Primary scripts must be previously approved by the provincial branch of the SARFT, and then submitted to its central offices, where the scripts have to be examined yet again. If the production of an approved TV drama is then delayed and cannot therefore be finalised within two years, the licence will be automatically be revoked. The far-reaching powers of these regulations thus point to cautious attitudes towards the intellectual community on the part of the authorities.

Close analysis makes it clear, however, that both encouragement and strict control are exerted tactically by the SARFT, revealing their underlying political strategy towards the specific genre of PHTD, as well as towards the intellectual elite. Specifically, on the one hand the government will encourage those historical topics which suit

the current political circumstances, while on the other hand, any PHTD potentially threatening to contemporary Chinese policy, or negatively commenting on the current authorities, will be dismissed. An example in this regard is the TV drama *Qin Shi Huang*, filmed between 1999 and 2000; despite its initial broadcast in Hong Kong and Thailand in 2001, and Singapore in 2002, this TV series was judged to need re-editing several times before it was permitted to be shown in Mainland China. Even the director exclaimed over its fate, and expressed the view that such extensive re-editing and re-scheduling might be a record in the history of Chinese TV drama production and censorship. However, despite these uncommon delays, this TV series was finally allocated for broadcasting at 8:40 am, which is clearly a time with a meagre audience. [44]

In brief, then, the political control within which this specific genre is permitted to function reinforces Mittel's theory that genres are constituted by power relations. As seen, therefore, both the energy and creativity of the intellectual community and political forces combine to contribute to the genre purpose of PHTD. As a direct result, producers/directors attempt to repeat a success by the tactic of playing off repetition against difference. This repetition refers however to reworking in a familiar mode, but not necessarily one that is similar or successful. Working in this way means ensuring a certain degree of novelty, while at the same time minimising risks either politically or commercially. In the next section, I will in particular scrutinise the nature of this element of familiarity amongst PHTDs, and the study on the convention will provide a norm for the future PHTD playing within a political and economic comfort zone.

2.2. The Language Spoken in the Genre of PHTD

As seen in the previous chapter, then, four new principles (family nation, the nation of Han, leadership and Confucianism) are identified as elements of a new core model in defining the genre of PHTD. In this section, I shall investigate the narrative strategies of how this core model is being encoded. In other words, the genre conventions focus on the narrative strategies, which are: how the story is told, and what kind of generic language it speaks. The intention here is to find the systematic language which is used in this genre. This convention can be either verbal or visual, but both together structure and operate its rules. Generally speaking, the narrative strategies in this genre focus on the two main themes of Chinese politics and the cultural heritage of the past. These two carefully structured themes represent the current political and cultural values in modern China. In addition, studying the narratives of this genre reveals the extent of government censorship concerning those topics that are prevented and those that are encouraged.

2.2.1. The Cultural Heritage of Chineseness

The subject matter of the story in PHTD remains quite limited in terms of the choice of historical figures or settings, as well as the national identity they depict. Chinese heritage is the central theme in these dramas, no matter whether they concern Han Chinese, ethnic minorities or other nations. The image of China propagated is thus represented through the history of China and the cultural heritage of Chineseness. For example, the main setting of this genre is always in the territory of China. The tension is often expressed through the impact of the Han Chinese upon other foreign regimes in order to discuss the full import of being Han Chinese, and the notion

of Chinese nationality. Such properties (conventions) are referred to in the TV drama *Kangxi Dynasty*, for instance, where the historical figure of Emperor Kangxi becomes a metaphor for dramatising the importance of the Han Chinese and the essence of Chinese culture represented by Confucianism, as discussed in the previous chapter.

In order to demonstrate further these conventional patterns, I bring in for discussion a specific TV drama to illustrate how Chinese nationality and its cultural heritage impacts on foreign territories – *Jianzhen's Journey to the East* (*Jianzhen dong du*, dir. Lin Daqing, 2006) – inspired by the historical record of the monk Jianzhen's six attempts to visit Japan in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). The thematic content of this TV drama focuses on the story of Jianzhen, who helps to carry forwards Buddhism to Japan, and thence consolidates friendship between China and Japan through the religion of Buddhism.

The established codes in *Jianzhen* can be firstly traced to the phrase 'tribute missions', the meaning of the Chinese phrase which describes relations between China and those surroundings states who accept Chinese culture and recognise Chinese superiority. Notably, the Tang period was the high-water mark of Chinese influence on the development of Japan and Korea. Thus, the use of Chinese writing and the knowledge of Confucian texts reached Japan in the fifth century, as well as its technology, while in 538, Buddhism reached Japan via Korea. But it was not until the sixth and seventh centuries that the most sustained period of Chinese influences occurred. During this period, students and monks travelled to China to study religion and culture, on the subjects of 'the institutions of government, particularly as perfected under the Tang dynasty, and the doctrines of Buddhism, as institutionalized under the power of the Chinese emperors and the Sinified sectarian orders'.[45] At the same time, in Japan, Prince Shotoku promulgated a document known as the Seventeen-Article Constitution, which expresses Confucian ethical and political doctrines, and endorses Buddhism as contributing to the ideal of social harmony. This historical background hence provides the frame of reference for the TV drama *Jianzhen* in order to present in dramatic form historical and cultural relations between China and the outside world in the past. A sharing of culture with other nations (or the pride of *cultural letting*) is the **characterisation** of the convention in *Jianzhen*. The superiority of Chinese civilization thus becomes a conventional sign of this genre.

Image 5.1 The Chinese cultural heritage of Buddhism travels to Japan, in *Jianzhen's Journey to the East* (*Jianzhen dongdu*, 2006)
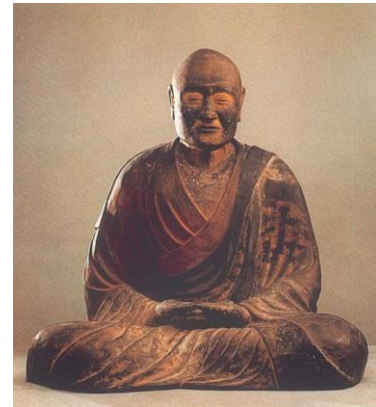
Image 5.2 Jianzhen (Ganjin in Japanese, 688-763), dry-lacquer statue at Toshodaj-ji, Japan

Accordingly, similar thematic content to this successful, powerful and ancient representation of China can be seen in many TV dramas of this genre. The significance of this genre convention lies in the opening up of dialogue on the issue of national identity between the past and the present of China. The celebration of Chinese cultural heritage is therefore not just for the Han Chinese, but must also embrace those of Mongolian, Manchu and other ethnic groups.

Furthermore, the exposition of this genre mainly focuses on the life of the Han Chinese,[46] even though some might argue that *Genghis Khan* (*Chengjisihan*, dir. Wang Wenjie, 1999), as one example, is an epic about a world-famous Mongol Khan. Being a most significant and successful military leader, he later conquers China and founds the Mongol Empire (1206-1368), the largest contiguous empire in world history. Interestingly, when this story is reconstructed in the genre of PHTD, historical, political and cultural contexts have been embodied in a new way, as the playwright Zhu Yaoting comments. Genghis Khan is not only a hero of the Mongols, but is given a title that incorporates the notion of the whole Chinese nation, as signified in the Chinese term of 'Zhonghua minzu'.[47] This narrative strategy also can be witnessed in similar TV dramas such as *Kangxi Dynasty* and *Yongzheng Dynasty*. Thus, even though Manchu Emperors are featured, it is proposed that the genre of PHTD clearly exposes the imperialist vision of the concept of national identity held by the Han. In other words, the ideological approach dramatised in the genre of PHTD demonstrates the concept of a nation which is hardly a settled place; on the contrary, its space and sovereignty are contested, and its future status in the process of becoming.

2.2.2.   The Cultural and Political Consensus of Male-oriented Society

The second conventional pattern of the PHTD genre is found in the thematic content of the chosen characters. Obvious samples are seen in some of the titles featured, which can be divided into two groups. The first of these is figure-centred as seen in the TV dramas of: *Genghis Khan*; *The Great Hero Zheng Chenggong* (*Da yingxiong*

Zheng Chenggong, dir.Zhou Xiaowen and Wu Xiaogeng, 2003); *The Great Emperor Wu of Han*; *Qin Shi Huang*; *The Great General Shi Lang* (*Shi Lang dajiangjun*, dir. Ning Haiqiang, 2005); *King Guojian of Yue* (*Yuewang guojian*, dirs. Huang Jianzhong, Yuan Bin and Yan Yi, 2007); and *Zhenguan changge* (A Story of Tang Taizong, dir. Wu Ziniu, 2007). Secondly (in contrast), some titles are action-oriented, including: *The Affairs in the Swing Age* (*Jiangshan fengyu qing*, dir. Chen Jialin, 2007) and *The Great Revival* (*Woxinchangdan*, dir. Hou Yong, 2007). Notably, in further investigation into the large group of figure-centred TV dramas, those that are male-oriented take up the majority of the entire set of productions. The proportion of female-centred TV dramas produced is comparatively small in number, such as *Empress Wu* (*Wuzetian*, dir. Chen Jialin, 1995). Although both the narratives of female-centred and action-oriented TV dramas refer to a period setting and historical events, it is telling that the stories are nevertheless dominated by male historical figures.

It can therefore be concluded that the narrative structure of PHTD contributes to the preservation of an old-fashioned and male-oriented society. This repeating of its formulas marks and visually demonstrates the patriarchal society of China, a doctrine which runs throughout the culture to everyday practices. The relation between the media text of PHTD and social-ideological reality is thus tied up with Confucianism, which promotes politics as an extension of family and personal ethics. In other words, a state ('guo') is nothing other than an enlarged family ('jia'), where relations between ruler and subjects, between those who govern and those who are governed are equivalent to those between parents and children. Therefore, any political conflict must be dealt with according to the same principle used in a family context. Confucianism therefore proposes that the solution to political conflicts is to lay down rules for handling both internal and external problems.

Built upon this structure of family-nation, the moral and political orthodoxy of Confucianism crystallises into Three Guiding Principles ('san gang') and Five Constant Regulations ('wu chang').[48] The first of the Three Guiding Principles is the subordination of a subject or minister to his ruler, followed by that of a son to his father, and of a wife to her husband. These principles are taken as the essence of life and the bonds of society. In this way, Confucianism extends the boundaries of moral codes from individual matters to social and political areas, not only providing the state with an ideological format, but also equipping the authorities with the standards to judge behaviour and thoughts. Among the Three Guiding Principles, the last two strengthen the ideology of a father/male-centred social and family structure. In other words, within a family a son has to be subordinate to his father, and a wife to her husband. This concept of family structure further impacts upon the wider scale of the nation itself. Being a family nation, the male plays a far more significant role than the female. In turn, the genre of PHTD functions to establish these coded signs to ensure comprehensibility.

2.2.3.   An Anti-corruption Campaign: The 'Outspoken Myth of Clean Officials'[49]

Interestingly (and topically at the present time), Zhu proposes 'the myth of clean officials' in her examination of totalitarian nostalgia as a hidden message in the *Yongzheng Dynasty*. This is a concept that (in her view) refers to the morally upright and incorruptible government officials designated by Chinese imperial rulers in order to hold them up as paragons of the Confucian ideal. These upright historical figures are often written into official

records in order to exhort by example.[50] However, Zhu also notices that this 'clean officials' myth is constantly reinterpreted in historical and political perspectives. She also comments (importantly) that the current yearning for such officials in TV drama can be directly related to the intensity of political oppression, especially when 'injustice prevails and ordinary people have little means of having their grievances addressed'.[51]

It is significant in this regard that the most pressing issue that China currently faces is the spread of rampant political corruption, resulting from economic and political reforms and rapid economic growth in the 1980s. This corruption had become steadily worse by the early twenty-first century, and has subsequently represented a major legitimacy problem for the CCP. The impact of the political campaign against corruption (initiated by the previous Chinese leader Hu) was thus swiftly felt. TV networks (as Zhu further observes) were therefore 'quick to capitalize on the renewed appeal of the clean official, producing a number of biographies and television dramas about ancient clean officials'.[52] These are dramas which 'address the issue of corruption and sage leadership in contemporary settings',[53] with the message of clean officials interpreted as the following:

> […] it is popular with a public in the mood for righteous action; it is a pat, profitable formula for TV programmers and producers; and so long as it stays within the boundaries set by its official overseers, it boosts the public image of a ruling party very much in need of a facelift.[54]

In this historical sense, director Hu Mei of *Yongzheng Dynasty* explains that the intention in making this TV drama is to represent through performance '…his [Yongzheng's] crackdown on political corruption, a theme that resonated strongly with popular sentiment in China by the late 1990s'.[55] In this TV drama, Emperor Yongzheng is portrayed as a 'clean official', an upright leader, and a lonely reformer with extraordinary endurance in forsaking his own needs for the betterment of society.

Amongst those who rule and govern in a Confucian society, the chief of a state takes responsibility for reducing tension and solving conflict. To further strengthen Zhu's concept of clean officials, it appears that this anti-corruption campaign is often carried out by the rulers and governors. As an example, even though most of his siblings are involved in various kinds of corruption, Yongzheng somehow remains immune to those economic and political frauds. In this drama, Yongzheng is 'upright and outspoken, with no tolerance of corruption. He is loyal to his father, and devoted to the people, seeming to put the well-being of ordinary Chinese over his own political ambitions'.[56] This television drama has thus successfully established an ideal Confucian paragon of virtue. In line with the Three Guiding Principles of Confucianism, Yongzheng, as a prince, is subordinate to the subject (the aged Emperor Kangxi); as a son, he is faithful to his father. In terms of the Five Constant Regulations - humaneness ('ren'), righteousness ('yi'), ritual/propriety ('li'), wisdom ('zhi') and faithfulness ('xin'), his well-known lack of humaneness (ren) and ritual/propriety (li) in history does not detract from his depiction as the ideal image of righteousness (yi), wisdom (zhi) and faithfulness (xin).

What we can see from the *Yongzheng Dynasty*, then, is a great upright leader of a patriarchal society. Corruption can therefore be blamed only upon particular officials (perhaps senior) with their decadent lifestyles, but the superior position of a leader figure cannot be challenged as above suspicion. Thus, the ideological model of the PHTD genre aims not to question the root of corruption in a political system, but to draw a great (and heroic)

image of a leader, while corruption is found specifically in the individual. This consensus of individual fault thus leads the media text of PHTD into the political realities of contemporary China. This means that (even though economic and political reforms in the 1980s encouraged a more pluralistic social-political pattern) the conflict between local power and central authority has never been so tense after almost three decades of rapid change. The previous Chinese leader (Hu) thus offered a systematic cure for corruption, emphasising that 'anti-corruption work should continue focusing on leading officials'.[57] Notably, however, the 'leading officials' addressed by Hu are those officials who hold regional senior or leading positions in certain bureaucratic organizations whose corruption (significantly) potentially threatens leadership power. The central figure and leadership of the CCP should however never be questioned. Of course, just as in most political history TV dramas, the leader or chief of the Chinese nation is a symbol of uprightness with remarkable endurance, self-imposed deprivation, and a single-minded devotion to work. Thus, through the influence of the Chinese media, a group of such figures follow this conventional pattern, such as the former Chinese PM Wen Jiabao, or the ex PM Zhu Rongji, as a 'lonely reformer' who put the welfare of the nation above all else.

2.2.4.   The Hidden Conflict: The Message Conveyed by the Culture of Political Tactics

The significant point to note here, however, is that underneath the theme of Chinese cultural heritage (the narrative of patriarchal society and the 'code of clean officials' in relation to political reality) the actual political tactics employed by the characters exist as a hidden sign at the heart of the genre of PHTD. As we have discussed, this genre has been closely harnessed to the fundamental orthodoxy of Chinese Confucianism. However the wise guidance dramatised for Chinese politics and culture (as the other side of the coin) can simultaneously appear hard-nosed, which in turn works against the positive thematic content that the PHTD genre sets out to construct. In other words, it is the importance of developing skill in such political tactics that drives the action (and in turn creates conflict), which (it is proposed) becomes a hidden message in this genre, as Wang points out. The cultivation of such political tactics could potentially have a negative influence therefore on the construction of audience consciousness towards the interpretation of a political action.[58]

Notably, however, the cultivation of such political tactics is also a Confucian strategy, denoting the capacity of an individual to enter into successful political engagement with social groups.[59] In the scale of Chinese cultural and political contexts, this political behaviour refers to whatever it takes to get to the top and requires the art of being cunning. In other words, the actions taken in the art of political tactics include the behaviours of making and breaking alliances, making and breaking promises, making and breaking rules, lying and truth telling, blaming and forgiving, misleading and misdirecting, binding and detaching political and social relations.

Wang fully examines this cultivation of political tactics in Chinese Qing Dynasty TV drama, and considers it as one of the main conventional patterns. She divides and evaluates the moral by looking at the distinction between evil and good; she sees profit as the key to the economy, but points out that valuing material wealth and achievement (as exhibited by Chinese politicians) is about 'wanting', 'demanding' or 'need'. Samples can be seen in TV dramas such as: *Yongzheng Dynasty*, *Kangxi Dynasty*, *Jiaqing Dynasty* (*Jiaqing huangdi*, dir. Teng Wenji, 2005), and *The Great Revival* (*Woxinchangdan*, dir. Hou Yong, 2007). The culture of political tactics in

these TV dramas does, however, over-highlight the use of whatever strategies might take an individual to the top. The conventional pattern is often in a similar narrative structure: a world of the survival of the foulest. In other words, the upright characters are often tricked by the malevolent. In order to win the political battle, clean officials must therefore be as cunning as their malicious adversaries.

It is of interest that the value attached by Chinese intellectuals and politicians to the ability to read the prevailing politics and act accordingly is inspired by Book Seven of *The Analects*, where Confucius observes to his student Yen Hui: 'When wanted, then go; when set aside, then hide.'[60] He then further observes that 'when the Way prevailed in his land, he served the State; but when the Way ceased to prevail, he knew how to "wrap it up and hide it in the folds of his dress".'[61] Here, Confucius' words demonstrate a traditional Chinese wisdom – for the sake of one's own survival. This is a wisdom of self-preservation where actions must remain within the Five Constant Regulations and Three Guiding Principles, which crystallise into two pieces of advice to survive in political and social conflict: still water runs deep ('dazhiruoyu'); and where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise ('mingzhebaoshen'). These two idioms embody the essential doctrine of the Mean (some Western scholars also interpret this as the 'Middle Way'), developed later by the Chinese scholar Zhu Xi. The goal of the Mean is to maintain balance and harmony by directing the mind to a state of constant equilibrium.

The above philosophy is thus fully demonstrated in the genre of PHTD. In the *Kangxi Dynasty*, for example, the Emperor Kangxi is aware that the Crown Prince Yinreng is secretly planning to depose him, and is gathering about him a partisan group of followers. Even though the Emperor's actions are unlawful, he nevertheless makes the decision (in episode 45) to demote Yinreng from his position as a Crown Prince. However, one of his favourite consorts, Rong, steps forward and claims that the will of Empress Xiao Zhuang Wen (Kangxi's Grandmother) is to retain Yinreng as the Crown Prince. The result is that Kangxi takes away Rong's title of imperial consort and punishes her by making her a slave. It is interesting in this regard that the director in this story over-embroiders the tragic life of consort Rong, conveying the significant message that when certain politics are demanded or wanted, the wise thing is to remain silent. Actions against imperial power will lead only to personal tragedy.

Clearly, political wisdom does not equate to moral wisdom, given that the genre of PHTD has developed a series of stories about the miserable life of the good, and the power and wealth held by the evil. Indeed, Wang claims that dramatisation (and over-exaggeration) of the driving force of political demands instead of the wisdom of traditional morality could potentially lead to a crisis of confidence between the public and the state. The enactment in such dramas of stifling the political opinion of others, and of acts of corruption being constantly carried out thus teaches the worship of power for its own sake. Wang therefore (importantly) questions this genre convention and points out its negative impact on mass TV audiences. Her claim is instead that TV drama should mirror the realities of contemporary China, and that (instead of focusing on political tacticians) the positive spirit of Chinese civilization should be put into dramatic form and highlighted.

<u>The Moral Value of Sacrifice</u>

It is of interest in this regard that the narrative on the moral value of sacrifice plays an equally important role in the genre of PHTD. A true Confucian thus considers sacrifice to be the utmost expression of reverence and humanity. In other words, such a mental and spiritual sacrifice in humanistic terms equates in turn with putting the needs of the common people above all things.[62] The Confucian concept of sacrifice, then, is frequently strongly dramatised in PHTD, as we often see the story of the good becoming the victims, while wise leaders sacrifice themselves for the sake of the nation.

Specifically, the thematic content of Confucian sacrifice in the genre of PHTD is often presented as two types. Firstly, the wisdom of a particular minister is dramatised through an image of offering himself/herself as victim by accepting the known consequences of a political decision. A number of examples are seen (as we discussed earlier) such as the imperial consort Rong in *Kangxi Dynasty*, who (as a sage wife) sacrificially offers her daughter in marriage to Kangxi's rival to achieve peace in episode 34. She then foregoes her friendship with Wei Dongting in loyalty to the emperor in episode 36, and sacrifices herself to defend the will of Empress Xiao Zhuang, which finally costs her life. Secondly, in the same way, Kangxi, as an Emperor, sacrifices himself to maintain the moral legitimacy of a sage leader of the nation. The iconography of Kangxi has thus been created. For example, he suffers deeply from losing his beloved consort Rong and his great-grandmother Empress Xiao Zhuang, while (in episode 34) he demotes his best friend (Wei Dongting) to the low status of local officer in remote Taiwan in order to consolidate the territory of Taiwan.

Another good example of dramatising the role of the sage leader as sacrificial victim is *King Goujian of Yue* (Yuewang guojian, dir. Huang Jianzhong, Yuan bin and Yan Yi, 2007). This TV drama is inspired by the real historical figure of King Goujian of Yue, and the legendary story of his defeat of King Wu (Fuicai). In the war between Wu and Yue, King Goujian of Yue was captured**,** and became Fucai's slave for three years until he was eventually pardoned to return his native state. Once back in his kingdom, however, Goujian was disgusted by the behaviour of the rich, and instead dressed himself in the clothes of a poor peasant. Every morning he reminded himself of the humiliations of slavery by tasting bile, so that he would never forget. Then, after ten years of preparation, and economic and political reforms, Goujian took his revenge against Wu in a mighty battle, after which Fucai, the King of Wu, committed suicide. This TV drama was directed by Huang Jianzhong, Yuan Bin and Yan Yi, and shown in 2007, a year before the great event of the Chinese Olympics.

The actor who played King Goujian in this TV drama (Chen Baoguo) commented during an interview that this story had inspired him as a man in his role as a tragic and classical hero.[63] The hero Goujian sacrificed himself to be the slave of King Wu for the sake of his state and the public, as dramatised, for example, in the scene where Goujian the slave is humiliated by being forced to pull the carriage of King Wu in place of his horses. Of course, this sacrifice was harnessed to his political tactics, for (in the interests of self-preservation) he had to be cunning, pretending to worship the power of King Wu and to appreciate his forgiveness. In order to gain the King's trust, for example, Goujian even sacrificially slaughtered his warrior, who had failed to assassinate King Wu, to enact in dramatic form that his righteousness contradicted his intended actions. He made an alliance with

the King, but broke it; he drew up a written promise to be subordinate to Wu, but tore it up later; he constantly lied to King Wu, but revealed the truth only when his political and military power was prepared and in readiness. He then (finally) misled King Wu into a great battle with other states so as that he could find the opportunity to defeat him.

Nevertheless, however much he lied or whatever promises he broke did not affect his status as a great tragic hero in this TV drama or in Chinese history, as he had lived sacrificially for ten years. Such sacrifices granted him (in Confucian terms) the power and right to overcome the state of Wu. Thus, for this great purpose of defeating the state of Wu, his people all had to sacrifice themselves in various ways. We can fully understand, then, such stories as the warrior who was willing to commit suicide in order to protect his King; or the ordinary people who gave up their own individual interests to form an army when their leader needed their military power; or the beauty Xi Shi, who sacrificed herself to seduce King Wu; and even the wife of Goujian, who had to do the same for the sake of her husband.

Thus, the PHTD genre enacts in strong dramatic form the importance of Confucian sacrifice. In other words, social disorder, lack of human rights, a constantly changing political landscape, and unequal treatment among the people are tests of being true Confucian Chinese, who should be willing to martyr themselves for the sake of building China into a strong nation. In turn, Chinese leaders must sacrifice themselves to the mighty purpose of achieving an economically and politically powerful nation. These, then, are conventional topics re-interpreted in the genre of PHTD, but further stories are also often seen, such as (for example) poor intellectuals at the mercies of imperial leaders, grass-root victims gaining final justice from the leader, poor young men (often intellectuals again) at the mercies of some rich, upper-class female (princesses, high officials' daughters, or even imperial consorts or empresses).

Through the scrutiny of genre conventions in PHTD, then, it emerges that national elites are especially emphasised, followed by the stories of women, minorities and the lower classes. Despite this social mobility, the central narrative of this genre focuses on leadership either within the fields of political power or intellectual worth, and the stories of how leadership seizes absolute executive power. The over-exaggerated emphasis on individual power in this genre is thus fully illustrated. It is therefore proposed that this trend of generic narrative comes from the current political determination to re-establish the central power of the authorities. In other words, the genre of PHTD implicates a clear message that a leader is the head of the country, parallel to the father of a traditional Chinese family; his subjects, ministers, even the general public should hence be loyal and serve their leader in achieving the great purposes of the nation in line with the Confucian belief that sons/daughters must have (and demonstrate) filial piety. The stories told in this genre thus represent a patriarchal society with a clear division in class, but (even so) the factor of class struggle is nevertheless often neglected. Importantly, these are therefore divisions and differences which are based on power relations. The PHTD genre hence demonstrates specific relationships amongst the Chinese: those who are in control of the structures of political, economic and cultural decision-making, and conversely, those who are reduced to the condition of dependent participation.

3. The Codes of Content in the Genre of PHTD

Thus, it will be seen (as discussed in chapter III) that the PHTD genre has attained massive levels of production over the past three decades, as set out in the *Historical Review of Chinese TV and TV dramas*. In 1994, for example (according to the survey done by the SARFT) more than 6,000 episodes of TV drama had been produced. By the end of 2005, this figure had jumped to 514 dramas with 12,447 episodes. Amongst those productions, historical TV dramas stood at the comparatively high rate of 175 featuring 5202 episodes, which took up 34% and 42% respectively of annual TV drama production in 2005.[64] It is of interest in this regard that (along with high levels of production) PHTD has presented the neat and self-contained genre convention discussed above. In this section, therefore, the next step is to focus on the study of the codes of content, and investigate those codes from the following three aspects:

- Big-budget features
- Star icons
- Poster design

The analysis of these established genre conventions will enable me to map out the articulations of this genre and to explore how these codes create, express, reflect, and unify its sociocultural, and ideological meanings, as expanded below.

3.1. The Tent-Pole Features of Big-Budget Production

Notably, the directors or producers of PHTDs are often those who come from the film industry. An important point here is that this intellectual flow between film and TV drama industries ensures a potentially accomplished and professional film production team. For example, the director Hu Mei started her career as a film director in the First August Film Studio (a Chinese military film studio) in 1982. On the big screen of film, her famously directed film *Times Away from War* (1986) is said to be the first psychological film in China, and won her a number of international awards. Following her glorious film career, her first major success on the small screen of TV was the *Yongzheng Dynasty*. As a result, she is now considered to be a top-level TV drama director and producer in China. It can thus be seen that (along with the filmic and epic narrative style infused into TV dramas) this intellectual flow has also brought advanced techniques to TV drama. A significant example is the case of the film director Guo Baochang, whose *Grand Mansion Gate* was the first to use filmic HD technologies. As seen in the work of these two directors, then, interaction with the Chinese film industry provides technical and intellectual backup to the growth of TV drama.

It is therefore often the case that the concept of the high-budget film influences the production of PHTD, which turns it into one of the most expensive TV genres. A further example strengthens the case for this transfer of high-budget cinematic expenditure to the genre of PHTD, in the form of *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*, with a total production cost of 170 million RMB[65]. This drama was extensively praised for the high quality of its

well-known cast, its famous historical locations, its fully-detailed style of clothing, setting, and expensive decor. For instance, the cost of designing the sets was nearly 100 million RMB. The production began by costing 40 million RMB to build two historical sites (from scratch) in Zhuozhou city (Hebei Province). Each site was 1,200 square meters in size, and these two sites still remain as the biggest outdoor film locations in China today. In addition to these two filming sites, another two sets for Tang and Han cities in Wuxi city (Jiansu Province) cost in total 20 million RMB.

A further 5 million RMB was spent on over 30 thousand actual costumes in one thousand styles, with the number of props totalling nearly 70 thousand, at a cost of 7 million RMB. The Battle of Guandu, for example (one of the three major battles in this TV drama) was filmed in June 1992, costing 400 thousand RMB for this single shoot, involving the participation of nearly 10 thousand soldiers borrowed from seven military bases as there were not enough temporary figurants.

Image 5.3 Poster of *The Romance of Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*, 1994)

Despite this high budget layout, *The Romance of Three Kingdoms* made a marvellous financial return. As an example, following the first broadcast on CCTV 1, the sale of distribution rights to Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia reclaimed all the capital expenditure. Repeating the series on different regional channels later amassed pure profit, made through the sponsors and advertisements. Furthermore, the studios in Zhuozhou and Wuxi also run a successful business by renting the filming sets, also profiting from the consequent boost to tourism.

Such huge investment at the production stage of PHTD has often led to other successes, not just from a commercial perspective, which, of course, is crucial for this industry. As the producer Wang Fulin of *The Dreams of Red Chamber* claims, the intention in making such drama is to strengthen national production capacity, and to affect (to 'affect' here means to be popular and act as a milestone for this genre) a generation or even two generations of Chinese audiences. The core value of these PHTDs is therefore to celebrate Chinese nationality, while making a profit is an added bonus.[66] Thus, to echo CCTV's senior manager, no other production unit could have achieved such hugely profitable TV drama within a period of ten years. [67] Interestingly, news released in 2007 announced that CCTV had decided to build on these successes by producing a brand-new version of *Three Kingdoms* projected for 2008, with a budget of 180 million RMB. This new version was released in China in 2010.

3.2. The Input of Stars

As seen above, then, the intellectual flow of directors from the film industry to TV drama production has successfully input filmic features into the PHTD genre. Notably, however, this is an intellectual flow that also occurs in the movement of actors/actresses between film and TV drama productions. Put another way, particular stars often become an integral part of enunciating the film or TV genre, since they themselves are recognised symbols or codes, even becoming interwoven with the specific convention that signifies a certain genre. In turn, that genre then becomes the iconographic site in which stars can be displayed. In other words, with the help of the iconography of the stars involved, a genre can be recalled in the expectation of a specific star performance.

A further remarkable feature of the PTHD genre is thus that the same actors often appear in this genre and play similar roles across many different thematic contents. A two-way exchange is therefore set up, whereby certain performers become a visual symbol of this high-budget genre. In turn, they bring back more profit as a return on investment through their high profile and quality of performance. In order to further investigate the contribution of iconographic stars to this genre, I divide them into two groups by their gender. Specifically, then, in contrast to male actors, female stars often take the roles of motherhood. The male stars hence often play far more significant roles and more complex characters than the female. In general, the roles that the male takes are heroes, leaders, or political or cultural villains, such as the famous Chinese actors Chen Daoming (seen in the stills below), Wang Gang, Tang Guoqiang, Chen Baoguo, and Bao Guo'an.

Often, some domestic scholars confuse the view of historical characters with the study of the central protagonists. For example, Chen Daoming has expanded his career across several PHTDs, such as: *The Last Emperor* (1988), *Northern Navy* (1992), *Kangxi Dynasty* (2000), and *The Long March* (2001), including also the film *Hero* (2002), where he took the role of the Emperor Qin, directed by the remarkable Chinese film director Zhang Yimou. As a result, these roles have helped Chen to establish his iconography of featuring as king, emperor or leader, such as *The Prince of Han Dynasty* (2003), *The Affairs in the Swing Age* (2005), and *The Great Revival* (2007). Thus, being an actor who specialises in the performance of historical characters, Chen has brought with him all the qualities and connotations of the literary tradition in decoding historical figures.
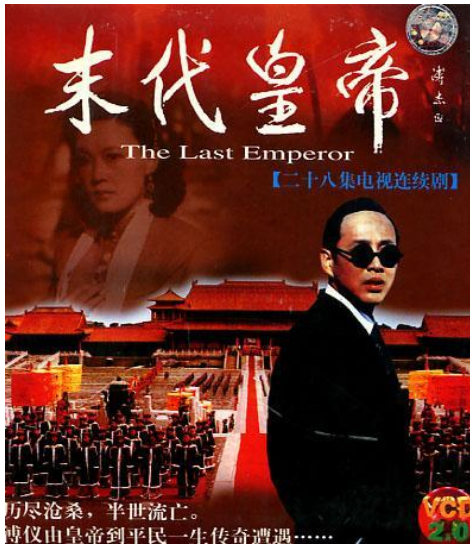
Image 5.4 Chen as the Emperor Puyi in *The last Emperor*

Image 5.5 Chen as the Emperor Kangxi in *Kangxi Dynasty*

Image 5.6 Chen as King Qin in film *Hero*

Image 5.7 Chen as the Emperor Tianqi in *The Affairs in the Swing Age*

Image 5.8 Chen as the King Guojian in *The Great Revival*

128

Through the scrutiny of Chen's example, it becomes clear, then, that stereotypical performances by particular stars are constructed through the various narratives, who in turn promote the well-known genre of PHTD. In other words, the genre is itself a vehicle for starring actor and actresses, enabling them to show off their performing skills, while they themselves in turn act as vehicles for the genre's continuing development. Put another way, they have a role in their own construction, and participate in their own myth-making.

Another case study in this regard is the actor Tang Guoqiang, in his roles as Manchu Emperor in *Yongzheng Dynasty, The Affairs in the Swing Age*, and the Emperor Li Shimin in *The Story of Tang Taizong*, leading roles which are consolidated through the PHTD genre. From this perspective, Tang has presented himself as a maker of his own authenticity, and as such is involved in his own mystification. However, rather than limiting his performances to the role of Emperor, Tang has (interestingly) taken a step further, to portray Chairman Mao Zedong in a numbers of Revolution TV Dramas, such as: *Mao Zedong, the Founder of China* (*Kaiguo lingqiu Mao Zedong*, dir. Yang Guangyuan and Wang Yixing, 1999), *The Long March*, and *The East is Red* (*Dongfang hong*, dir. Su Zhou, 2008).[68] Hence, up until now, the actor Tang Guoqiang has performed the role of Mao in 16 TV dramas and 4 films, suggesting that he carries through his acting charisma as a great leader, no matter whether that leader is a traditional feudal emperor or a modern communist chairman.

An important point to make here is that Tang's image-construction demonstrates the art of illusionism, or (in other words), *putting there* what in fact *isn't there*. Put another way, Tang has established a role style particular to himself, to an extent, which embodies a positive message, a carefully manufactured persona of a great leader such as an Emperor or Chairman Mao. Furthermore, this is a transformation of performing style that reveals a visual but subtle link between the genre of PHTD and the TV Drama of the Chinese Revolution. Specifically, even though the connotations of this image-construction are 'concealed'[69], they nevertheless carry an implicit undercurrent of transfer from the feudal past through to contemporary communist China, connecting traditional Confucian orthodoxy with the current official ideology.

A further salient aspect of such image-construction is that nearly all the TV dramas[70] which enact the role of either Mao Zedong or specific Emperors were made after Tang reached his 50th year in 2002. Thus, this continuing transformation of Tang's performing style and image has the added factor of authentic aging throughout the various productions. We thus see that an implicit aim in this genre is now to subtly produce an idealised image of the father-figure leader, driven by the notion of the traditional Chinese family-nation structure and a patriarchal Confucian society. The so-called 'problem of aging' for male actors (often bringing the loss of leading roles in other genres) thus seems less significant in the genre of PHTD. Indeed, aging could instead lead to potential success.

In contrast to the roles of the male, female stars play far less important parts. A few competitively important roles are often those for the older female stars, seen as acting the mother of a certain emperor, leader or hero. Often seen in this genre are Siqingaowa and Gui Yalie, for example. The reason for this reduced significance can be found in the earlier study of the conventional pattern of male-oriented structure in the narrative of this

genre. Young female characters are necessary to the story, but are not the central focus of the narrative. Generally speaking, therefore, the choice of young actresses is less strict than the typecast male actors, and their presence is supplementary to the heroic or imperial romance.[71]

As seen above, then, the genre of PHTD contributes to the making of a star, many of whom have been involved in performing a highly circumscribed and conventional version of Chinese historical figures. The image-construction of these stars is thus more than just an image, but a cluster of meanings, in which stars become a visual symbol of the cultural code and value. Their iconography thus incorporates all the cultural implications of being a Chinese leader. The charisma of such stars will therefore shine through any superficial self-confidence in the genre of PHTD, whether it is a case of the Confucian moral hero in *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*, a 'Chinese' Emperor in *Kangxi Dynasty*, or a Chinese Buddhist monk in *Jianzhen's Journey to the East*.

3.3. The Use of Visual Symbols in Poster Design

In this section, it will be seen that a visual study of PHTD poster design provides a new generic template for TV producers developing studio projects, simplifying communication among studio personnel, and ensuring long-term economic benefits. In other words, the application of genre convention is not only seen in the narratives of a certain production, but also in studio publicity.

In order to visually strengthen this view, I start from examining two posters: one is the Hong Kong costume TV drama *A Step into the Past,* while the other is the Mainland PHTD *Qin Shihuang*. By scrutinising the design of the two posters below, it is possible to distinguish between the codes of the thematic content in these two genres.

Image 5.9 The cover of the television drama *Qin Shi Huang* (*Qin Shi Huang*, 2001)

Image 5.10 The cover of the Hong Kong television drama *A Step into the Past* (*Xunqin Ji*, dir. Man Wai-hong et al., 2001)

With regard to the visual design of the poster publicising *Qin Shihuang* (top left), the genre narratives of this drama are located at the top and the centre, overwhelming the names of the stars, located beside images of the characters themselves. The topmost prose promises audiences 'a monument to historical epic, the heroic emperor of unified China', while the words under the title (*Qin Shihuang*) in the middle further highlight the genre features in the general statement 'panoramic historical television drama'. Significantly, the design of this poster brings into the foreground photographic close-ups of the two male characters, while the females are illustrated only as their background, with a battle scene dominating the bottom section of the poster. In contrast, the poster advertising *A Step into the Past* (top right) is overcrowded with actors and actresses, with female characters to the fore, appearing more dominant than the males behind them, who are located centrally but as more of a backdrop. The foremost image among the males is the leading character (Officer Hung, dressed in traditional costume and positioned in the centre) while the image depicted in the bottom right corner of the poster pinpoints the dramatic theme, in which Hung travels back in time from the modern day to the past.

The above posters explicitly suggest and identify their genres, and visually offer a snapshot of the content. The poster advertising *Qin Shihuang* focuses on symbols of a patriarchal society, such as the image of battle and the power of men. Although the women are depicted, they and their beauty serve the purpose of embellishing the romance of these powerful males, which adds to the flavour of this genre.

Image 5.11 The poster of
The Story of Tang Taizhong

Image 5.12 The cover of *Genghis Khan*

Image 5.13 The cover of
The Great Revival

A similar poster design is evident in advertising other PHTDs. For example, that for director Wu Ziniu's *The Story of Tang Taizhong* (above) has a similar layout: the leading male is positioned in the centre, while his ministers (together with female beauties) become his background. The imperial mightiness of the palace is shown underneath this image. Thus, even though there is no other text apart from the title, the genre of this TV drama is clearly identified. A further instance is the poster for Wang Wenjie's TV drama *Genghis Khan*, which also has four main components: a close-up image of Genghis Khan, the battle scene, a second and smaller image of Genghis Khan subduing his steed, and the title. In the same way, the poster for Hou Yong's *the Great Revival* (2007) highlights the image of King Yue's slavery at the bottom, but maintains a similar visual structure.

Generally speaking, then, poster design for the PHTD genre can be divided into three components: the image of leading actors (this could be one, or a group, but often only the leading protagonist), the title, and the historical scene as background. These posters therefore invariably offer and guarantee a similar structure – historical background, epic drama, romantic adventure, male-oriented narrative, the powerful ruling class, and so on. This visual poster design of image and its structure hence contributes to the codes of content in genre conventions.

4. Chapter Conclusion

Thus, as seen, genre studies constitute not only a process to mark out an accurate definition, but also an engagement with larger social contexts. In this, I have devoted my close attention to the specific genre conventions of PHTD, approached through the three core questions of: narrative structure, conventional pattern and codes of content.

Chapter V has taken as its starting point an investigation into the cultural and literary heritage which has inspired and impacted upon the narrative structure of PHTDs. It has been proposed that such studies in narrative provide us with a precise way of fully understanding how this generic narrative works and how its storytelling strategies are inspired by traditional Chinese literature. It is for this reason, therefore, that the literary genre of full-length Chinese vernacular fiction has been brought under the spotlight, yielding insights that have provided me with a historical reference. As stated, the narrative structure of full-length Chinese vernacular fiction presents a specific traditional mode, which is the integration of three elements: **exposition**, **development** and **resolution**. In the **exposition**, the theme of the PHTD genre (in line with the literary genre of vernacular fiction) follows the elements of the locality (where), the time (when) and the cause and nature of underlying conflict (what). This generic pattern not only appears to influence the entire narrative, but also repeats in the structure of every episode. Thus, a highlighting of events that occurred prior to the current episode, a quick reminder of one or more subplots, and a reintroduction of one of the themes in the story are the common strategies applied both in PHTDs and full-length vernacular fiction. The **development** of the plot focuses on the identification and intensification of themes, values and attitudes towards social, political, intellectual and moral issues in a particular society. The **exposition** leads to the **resolution** which shows the final climax to the dramatic conflict. It will thus be seen that the scaffolding of traditional full-length vernacular Chinese fiction supports the narrative structure of the modern PHTD and demonstrates narrative expectations in this TV genre.

In order to further investigate the genre conventions of PHTD, my attention has been drawn both to the purpose and to the generic language spoken. Specifically, a scrutiny of the purpose helps to connect the cultural and political background to contemporary China, and explains why the Chinese authorities encourage the production of this particular genre. This has been an approach which provides evidence for Lassell's model of Five Ws, which has enabled me to answer one particular 'W' question – that of '**which** circumstance' as an element of this model (**who** says **what** in **which** circumstance to **whom** and to **what effect)**. From this perspective of 'purpose', it has further emerged that (from a socio-political point of view) the changing political

map of modern China provides the reason why this genre was born, and why it has matured in the specific ways discussed.

Importantly, it has also been demonstrated that (through the agency of the PHTD genre) a subtle U-turn has taken place, from hard-line party rhetoric to the traditional Chinese orthodoxy of Confucianism. As seen, the construction of meaning has also been a significant focus in terms of genre content. I have in particular focused on its narrative content (that is, the language of this genre), including: the cultural heritage of Chineseness, the cultural and political consensus of male-oriented society, anti-corruption themes, the Confucian culture of political tactics, and the moral value of sacrifice. It has thus been found that this content evidently presents the patriarchal society of China's past, which offers a space for playing out contemporary anxieties and visions of national identity, individual success and power.

The last section of this chapter has further discussed the codes of content in the genre of PHTD, such as finance, technical and visual input into big-budget productions, the stars themselves, and poster design, focusing on how these three elements express sociocultural and ideological meanings from direct and indirect perspectives. Nevertheless, the core elements in narrative constitute this given genre, and have projected into PHTD the historical, political and cultural practices of China.

In summary, chapters IV and V have studied the genre of PHTD from the perspectives of genre definition and conventions. This exercise has helped to establish a pattern or norm which a group of TV dramas follow, and which (in turn) renders them distinctive. However, these established norms or generic patterns do not imply that a genre remains static and unchangeable. In other words, TV dramas differ distinctly from one another, and seek to find alternative modes of expression by using existing signs and codes in order to offer the pleasure of the new. Thus, in the next two chapters, I will focus on generic and cultural verisimilitude to underline Cledhill's hypothesis: the fantasy inside the bounds of generic credibility, and the sense of social world outside the genre of PHTD.[72]

Chapter VI

From One to Another:

Generic Verisimilitude and Genre Hybridity of PHTD

As seen, the analysis of genre definition and conventions in the preceding chapters has emphasised the significant finding that generic norms of PHTD are shared across the entire industry, for commercial reasons that Altman notes: '[b]y assaying and imitating the money-making qualities of their most lucrative films, studios seek to initiate film cycles that will provide successful, easily exploitable models associated with a single studio.'[1] In this regard, it will be noted that those who are studying the PHTD genre also contribute to establishing these successful norms, since (in turn) producers replicate scholarly research findings in their commercial practice, and thus initiate ever-more successful cycles. Scholars then further benefit from replicating certain aspects of successful publications which again strengthen these cycles. Thus, from this perspective, both producers and scholarly researchers each contribute to the replication, initiation and embedding process of this particular genre.

As also seen (in contrast to the focus on genre definition and conventions above) Todorov has identified two types of verisimilitude: **generic verisimilitude** and the broader social one of **cultural verisimilitude**. Thus (importantly) Neale has drawn on Todorov to deepen the specificity of the term *verisimilitude* to signify that 'ideas of plausibility and probability can be applied to films to make them intelligible to audiences and critics alike.'[2] It is suggested that this term can also be taken to mean the 'appearance of truth', as an absolutely crucial element in the study of the PHTD genre. In other words, how can the norms in a genre film be made to represent reality as we know it? It is in this regard that Neale develops his discussion of Todorov's distinction between genre and realism, arguing that generic verisimilitude allows free rein to producers to ignore or sidestep aspects of realism and still make the genre text feel 'true' to audiences.

Significant also is Neale's further development of Todorov's two types of verisimilitude to refer to a work that 'presents a reasonably accurate description of reality and aspires to the truth.'[3] Thus, the first type of generic verisimilitude refers to a certain work that conforms to the rules and conventions of a particular genre. Specifically, Neale's suggestion is that genre is a process which demonstrates specific historical characteristics

and (within this) genre changes. As seen, the study of narrative structure and convention in PHTD provides strong evidence for Neale's viewpoint, in the sense that this genre was not suddenly born, but generated from a cycle, and can therefore plausibly be viewed as a hybrid of several genres. An example is seen in chapter IV, where analysis demonstrates how structures and storytelling strategies in the genre of PHTD were influenced by full-length Chinese vernacular fiction. This recalls Mittell's analysis of the blurring between boundaries of genre definition and of their hybridity, where he questions the notion of genre purity as pointless and unrealistic. The focus in this chapter will thus be upon these discussions and views on the nature of generic verisimilitude and hybridity in the PHTD genre, as expanded below
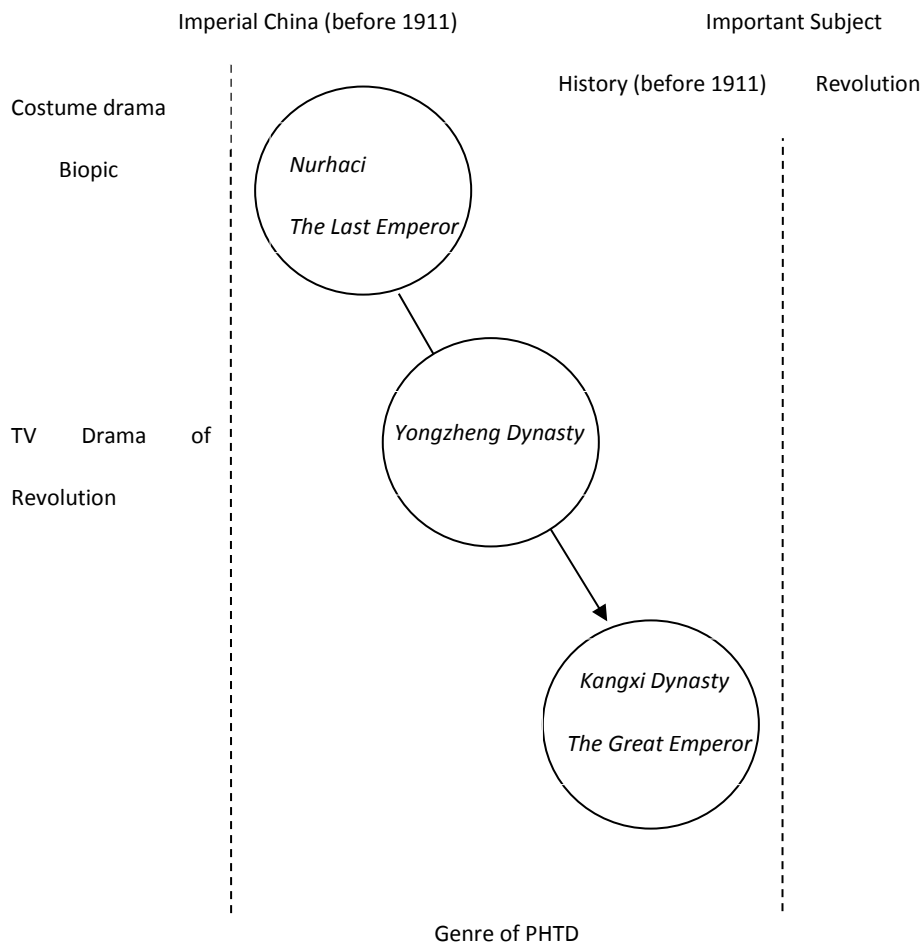
Despite the significance of shared generic features across the industry noted above, the chapter begins with the scrutiny of generic verisimilitude, focusing both on differences and similarities within the genre of PHTD. Hence, while the study testifies to the historical character of the process of this genre (and the changes within that process) the second part of this chapter makes comparisons with other existing TV genres. As seen, similarities and differences found among the PHTD genre and others (such as costume drama and biopics) lead to the conclusion that a genre is created through a cyclical process. In other words, studying the workings of hybridity across TV genres demonstrates how each one influences the PHTD genre itself, and how PHTD impacts in turn on other genres. A case study analysis of two PHTDs (*The Great Revival* and *King Guojian of Yue*) is therefore included in the last section of the chapter by way of illustration. It emerges (for example) that the story plots of these TV dramas are identical, and that both were produced simultaneously around 2007, while close examination demonstrates the coexistence of genre conventions and generic verisimilitude between the two. The study of generic verisimilitude and genre hybridity will thus lead to the question of genre purpose, within which political implications and strategy implicitly play a key role in forming this genre.

1. The Early Stages of PHTD Evolution

In the preceding chapters, I have devoted my attention to the textual analysis of PHTD. In this, an important finding is that definitions and conventions of this genre are not identified as an isolated case or produced by a single studio, but instead form a group that includes contributions from a number of different producers. In other words, these TV dramas retain some identifiable features from previously successful ones, but a precise identical pattern has not been necessary'.

As seen from the table below, I propose a map to demonstrate how the PHTD genre has evolved, by means of cross-referencing definitions used by SARFT and the trade press (CNAVE and CNDRE). At the top of the table is the reference from SARFT's regulatory framework, while the left-hand column lists the TV categories of costume drama, biopic and drama of revolution as defined by CNDRE. Both spheres are thus shown to contribute to generic verisimilitude in the genre of PHTD. In other words, in contrast to SARFT's categorisation as 'Imperial China' or 'Important Subject' (see the upper section of the table), this genre is considered as costume/historical drama by CNAVE (on the left). The table therefore illustrates explicitly the shared generic features of Chinese costume dramas and biopic dramas in the early developmental stages of the PHTD genre. Specifically, the impact of changing political circumstances upon the TV drama of revolution has greatly influenced PHTD and consolidated it into an established genre, as will be fully discussed in chapter VII on the subject of cultural verisimilitude. Throughout this evolutionary process, it will be seen that the TV dramas *Kangxi Dynasty* (*Kangxi diguo*, dirs. Chen Jialin and Liu Dayin, 2001) and *The Great Emperor Wu of Han* (*Hanwu dadi*, dir. Hu Mei, 2004) mark out the maturity of genre conventions in PHTD.

Table 6.1 Development at the Early Stages of PHTD[4]

Imperial China (before 1911)   Important Subject

History (before 1911)   Revolution

Costume drama

Biopic

Nurhaci

The Last Emperor

TV   Drama   of

Revolution

Yongzheng Dynasty

Kangxi Dynasty

The Great Emperor

Genre of PHTD

Some critics have noted, however, that the story plots of *Nurhaci*, *The Last Emperor*, *Yongzheng Dynasty* and *Kangxi Dynasty* were coincidently set in the Qing Dynasty. Thus, they also often categorise this genre as Qing, Qing palace[5] or dynasty drama. Normally, there are however two principles of definition within this particular genre. The first is that stories are closely linked to the imperial lives at that time. This is nevertheless an assumption which often focuses on one shared component (narrative content) of genre convention, which leads to a view of *Nurhaci*, *The Last Emperor*, *Yongzheng Dynasty*, *Kangxi Dynasty*, *Kangxi Incognito Travel* (*Kang Xi weifu sifang ji*, dir. Zhang Guoli 1997-2007) and *Returning Princess Pearl* as constituting one group. However, we should be aware that TV drama such as *Returning Princess Pearl* is a comedy or costume drama, which clearly differs from the PHTD genre. The same assumption is also applied to the new term of dynasty drama.[6] Although this term shares some genre components with the genre of PHTD, it narrows down the broad

scale of this dynasty into a single period and (as a result) confines itself to scenes showing only imperial palaces or emperors.

Of interest here is Altman's perspective, where he points out that 'for every dozen cycles, only a few genres ever emerge, and even fewer endure'.[7] In this regard, the important finding emerges that PHTD has combined different genres, and has consequently emerged as an established one. It is therefore suggested that examining the genre process (and how each genre interacts with others) illustrates that the PHTD genre is not a rigid stereotype. Instead, it is a growing genre, consistently cross-fertilized by the industry, and which can consequently also be studied through genre evaluation and re-interpretation. In this regard, Altman sees a genre process as *gentrification*, which he defines '… in terms of a regular alternation between an expansive principle – the creation of a new cycle – and a principle of contraction – the consolidation of a genre'.[8] He continues with the point that '[g]enres are not just *post facto* categories … but part of the constant category-splitting/category-creating dialectic that constitutes the history of types and terminology'.[9] This is a perspective, then, that allows me to scrutinise the historical characters of PHTD together with the integration of the rules and conventions in a certain work, which later leads me (in turn) to a further examination of hybridity across other genres.

2. The Hybridity of the PHTD Genre across Others

2.1. Hybridity and Distinction between Narratives in Costume Drama and PHTD

It is of interest that the well-known genre of TV costume drama in China does not appear in SARFT's regulatory framework. Instead, the genre of Costume TV Drama is categorised into either the group termed *Imperial China* or the sub-category *Historical Drama* under the group heading of *Important Subject*. Specifically, this group (*Imperial China*) further includes (for example) the sub-categories of 'legend', 'palace', 'martial arts', 'youth', 'biopic', and 'others'. Significantly, therefore (and in contrast to the regulatory framework of SARFT) the term TV costume drama is identified only by CNDRE and CNAVE. This is a term ('guzhuang ju' in Chinese) widely agreed among Chinese critics to be defined by a period setting where protagonists imitate tradition, but without necessarily following historical truth. This genre began to rise in popularity in China in the early 1980s,[10] the first one-off production being *Immortal at the Magpie Bridge* (*Queqiaoxian*, dir.Guo Qing, 1980), co-produced by CCTV and the Jiangsu TV Station, and shown on 31st

December 1980. This costume comedy was adapted from a well-known Chinese legend, and vividly illustrates a love story between the famous talented woman Su Xiaomei and her bridegroom.

More recently, the genre of TV costume drama now often includes martial arts ('wuxia'), legend, fantasy, and historical drama. For instance, the protagonists in martial arts productions are often warriors or righteous fighters as key figures in stories that dramatically fantasise chivalrous acts of daring and mutiny. The myth/legend story-line then creates an imagined world of human beings who co-exist with divine entities, inspired by traditional Chinese legends and myth. In addition (and in contrast to this adaptation of well-known stories rooted in myth or legend) a new popular fantasy TV drama is recently generating heated interest, as follows. Often adapted from modern fiction, the protagonists frequently hold magic powers, such as the Hong Kong television drama *A Step into the Past*. All such martial arts, legend and fantasy TV dramas at the same time allow free rein for lavish and spectacular display, which is sometimes superior to the narrative content.[11]

As for the narrative style of historical TV dramas, this is often a reconstruction of documented events with respect to reality. There are two sub-groups within this genre – biopics and historical fiction. The first of these emphasises real historical figures, with a narrative structure that follows the time sequence of historical events. In contrast, the second sub-group (historical fiction) although also set in the past, permits artistic license with regard to presentation and subject matter, with the condition of it not deviating in significant ways from reality. In other words, historical fiction often portrays fictional accounts or dramatises historical figures or events in a notable period of history, where the names of people and places are frequently altered and may not align with historical reality. This artistic license comes from the personal perspective of producers, whose intention is to capture the spirit and the manners of particular historical figures, while well-known historical events merely complement the story background.

As seen, then, the definition of TV costume drama appears to be a loose and ambiguous one in terms of genre, often referring to a specific group of TV dramas sharing the common narrative feature of using history as a story background. It is suggested that hybridity is present across TV costume drama and the genre of PHTD, however, despite this ambiguity. For example, both genres emphasise equally the importance of a historical setting, and of romance under broader historical circumstances.

Here I shall again employ the TV costume drama *A Step into the Past* and the PHTD *Qin Shi Huang* studied earlier in chapter V, in order to further analyse the extent of hybridity that takes place between these two genres. *A Step into the Past* was produced by Hong Kong TVB in 2001, in which the producers created a fantasy story involving the 21st century Hong Kong police officer Hung Siu-lung, who travelled back in time to ancient China during the Warring States period. There, Hung was involved in a number of important historical events. With his knowledge of modern life, excellent social skills, diligence, and intelligence as an elite special agent (as well as his prowess in martial arts), officer Huang survives the violent historical period, and leads the first unification of China in the Qin Dynasty. In contrast to this fantasy production, *Qin Shi Huang* narrates the life story of the first Chinese Emperor. This TV drama was produced in Mainland China between 1999 and 2000, and was then first released to the Hong Kong and Thailand markets in 2001, and Singapore in 2002. In Mainland China, however, historians and members of the SARFT requested the producers to re-edit the production before its final prime showing on CCTV in 2007.

In making a comparison, both TV dramas were adapted from fiction written by modern authors, and both story plots are set in the transitional period between the Warring States and the beginning of the Qin Dynasty. Yet, with regard to literary sources, there is a great difference. On the one hand, *A Step into the Past* was adapted from Huang Yi's martial arts novel *The Chronicles of Finding Qin*, a fantasy story with few historical references. On the other hand, the writer of *Qin Shi Huang* is the famous Mainland Chinese playwright Zhang Tianmin. Moreover, the director of this TV drama claimed during an interview that full research had been undertaken in historical documentaries of the first Chinese Emperor, and that a large number of historians and researchers had been consulted in order to maintain the historical authenticity of the Qin Dynasty. *Qin Shi Huang* is believed to be faithful to historical records, although with a small twist in some disputed historical details.

The effects of hybridity between the genres of TV costume dramas and PHTD thus result in the shared generic feature of the historical period setting. The distinctions between the two, however, lie in the consideration of historical reality and artistic creation. Hence, *A Step into the Past* is a science fiction production, hybridising with costume drama, while *Qin Shi Huang* projects a transitional society and the politics of an important landmark in Chinese history. Thus, the value and purpose of this latter production is in the rethinking of Chinese culture, society, and politics at a transitional moment. Furthermore, the genre of PHTD demonstrates a distinction in narrative style, which depicts actual historical figures or events, and regards historical 'truth' as

one of its main principles. The comparison undertaken with TV costume drama therefore provides evidence that the genre conventions of PHTD focus on the narratives of historical events, great leaders, and famous historical figures. In other words, this genre is generally interested in the narrative of a great leader's triumph against the obstacles and complications of broader historical circumstances.

2.2. Differential Socio-political Attitudes towards the History of China: the Genre Distinction between Historical Parody and PHTD

The investigation of hybridity across narrative strategies between the genre of TV costume drama and PHTD above, then, demonstrates the shared feature of historical setting. This investigation further demonstrates that genre itself is not isolated, but is an interactive force across different TV categories. This means that PHTD is not only influenced by other genres, but also contributes in turn to their development. In order to further to strengthen this argument, I shall bring in a comparative case study of *Kangxi Dynasty* and *Kangxi Incognito Travel* (*Kangxi weifusifang ji*, dir. Zhang Guoli, 1999-2007)[12]. In contrast to the PHTD genre of *Kangxi Dynasty* (scrutinized in the previous chapters), Chinese critics consider *Kangxi Incognito Travel* to be a historical parody. Here, the study of hybridity between the two genres will indicate the purpose of the historical parody genre, focusing on its socio-political perspective on the history of China.

Historical parody has been a rising genre in China since the late 1990s, and has attracted a great deal of academic attention. Clearly, a considerable genre difference exists between PHTD and historical parody, but the two genres nevertheless also have a very delicate relationship. It is of interest in this regard that Keane's genre definition of Chinese TV dramas includes a genre termed historical parodies within the *Historical/Political* category (see section 1.2.1, chapter IV). He explains that historical parodies are theoretically based on historical narrative, but allow screenwriters to reinvent and play with history. There is also a comic element, however, where the narrative is twisted in ways that satirize contemporary politics.

The first agreed-upon and well-known historical parody in recent memory is the forty-one episode *Chronicles of Emperor Qianlong* (*Xishuo Qianlong*, dir. Fan Qiuming, 1991), a joint production between mainland China and Taiwan. The story-line concerns the imagined life of the Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty and the legendary story of his historical visit to the southern regime of China. Rather than narrating from a thoughtful

historical perspective, however, the political motivation for Qianlong's visit is instead trumped by a series of romances. Despite its untruthful narrative, this TV drama immediately smashed box office records across China when it was first shown on CCTV in 1991. Following its spectacular successes, the concept of 'xishuo' (literally 'parody') is preserved in this popular term, which has itself been defined as an imitation, but one which is not always at the expense of the parodied text. Specifically, this new cultural form provides a relatively polemical and allusive imitation to past culture. Later, a number of similar productions were released, including *Returning Princess Pearl* (*Huanzhu gege,* dir. Sun Shunpei 1998-2003) and *The Chronicles of Empress Cixi* (Xishuo cixi, dir. Fan Qiuming, 1992).

Among these historical parodies, *Kangxi Incognito Travel* can be considered as a milestone of this genre, where the story-line was inspired by the original historical record of the Emperor Kangxi visiting the south of China incognito. This re-creation of the narrative turns the historical Emperor Kangxi into a fictional figure, dramatising this legendary image into one who helped ordinary people, corrected policy wrongdoings, and punished corruption, with a twist of modern comedy. The show was a huge success nationwide, and it has been re-aired on different channels after its debut. However, the real achievement of this TV drama lies in the fact that although this story mirrors contemporary social injustice and corruption, because of its comic effects, it is considered as a historical parody.

Speaking against this categorisation, the writer of this TV drama (Zhou Jinzhi) proposes his work as a 'neo-costume drama' during one of his interviews,[13] explaining that the recreation of the Emperor Kangxi with a modern twist is in fact based on a political assumption concerning how to solve current social problems and injustices through the lens of a specific historical context of the past.[14] *Kangxi Incognito Travel* mocks (and comments on) original historical figures through humorous, satiric, or ironic imitation.[15] It is also significant that the narrative content in fact follows four significant norms of PHTD, which are: the concept of family nation, the nation of Han, neo-Confucianism, and leadership. Furthermore, this TV drama voices the same essential codes spoken in the genre of PHTD, such as a focus on anti-corruption, male-centred society, and the culture of political tactics. Despite this hybridity, however, a differential social-political attitude is manifest in *Kangxi Dynasty*, in that *Kangxi Incognito Travel* fulfils the contemporary appreciation for satire and comedy.

Other, similar historical parodies can also be seen, such as *Liu the Hunchback Chancellor* (*Zaixiang liuluogou*, dirs. Shi Ling and Zhang Zi'en, 1996) and *Eloquent Jixiaolan*. Thus, if the genre of PHTD can be regarded as over-serious preaching, TV dramas like *Kangxi Incognito Travel* have chosen a milder expression of the four-principle norm as discussed above. However, the re-creation and re-enactment of historical fiction and political events perhaps unavoidably results in an attitude of historical parody instead of the realism of the PHTD genre.[16]

2.3. The Purpose of Genre: Distinctions between Biopic/Epic and PHTD

In contrast to TV costume drama and historical parody, there are two outstanding genre features of PHTD which set it apart, namely: historical setting and realistic quality. The point to be made is that this realistic quality acts as counterbalance between artistic creation and historical realism. Explicitly, most PHTDs focus on national epics, such as, for instance, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Kangxi Dynasty*, and *Genghis Khan*, and highlight the strength of leadership in male-oriented society. However, the heavy focus on characters and leaders demonstrates the hybridity of PHTD across the epic and biopic genres. Indeed, it is to be noted that even some critics such as Ma address *Nurhaci* as an epic.[17] Despite the genre similarity, however, it is suggested that a major distinction is apparent in terms of genre purpose. Specifically, PHTD pinpoints a larger cultural, national and political scale, in contrast to the micro-perspective often portrayed in costume drama. Thus, story-lines of the biopic/epic genre are often more dramatised in artistic input, and its narratives portray a human drama on a grand scale, typically entailing high production values, a sweeping musical score, and an ensemble cast of bankable stars who are dressed in expensive costumes. Epic TV dramas often have an historical setting such as war or crisis and cover a long span of time, showing the hybridity of such features across the two genres. However, although the main figures are often crucial in both genres, the epic/biopic for the most part develops its storyline around one central conflict. This central conflict is usually seen as having far-reaching effects, whereas PHTD (on the other hand) often portrays the changing course of history.

In order to demonstrate hybridity as well as the distinction between the two genres, the forty-five episode *Qiao's Grand Courtyard* (*Qiaojia dayuan*, dir. Hu Mei, 2006) and the fifty-eight episode *Emperor Wu of Huan* (Hanwu dadi, dir. Hu Mei, 2005) are here brought in as a comparative case study.[18] Directed by the same female director (Hu Mei, also the director of *Yongzheng Dynasty*), *Qiao's Grand Courtyard* as an epic/biopic TV

drama is set in the period of the late Qing Dynasty of the 1900s, and is a heroic story in Chinese business history. It narrates the real life story of businessman Qiao Zhiyong, who lived through the late Qing Dynasty and owned a third generation family business in Qiaojiabao, a town in Qi County of the Shanxi Province. Qiao devoted his whole life to helping people, and to enriching the country through his business. As a way of achieving his tremendous dream of enlarging his business across China and unifying the currency, Qiao was involved in a complicated life-long battle to counterbalance and ensure the successes of his business with his family, bandits, nobles, the court, and the Peace Army and Assemblies. The heroic life of Qiao in this TV drama further questions the meanings of the moral value of friendship, and of being honest, faithful, and modest in a cunning business world.

Image 6.1 Poster of *Qiao's Grand Courtyard*

As Chinese biopic/epic TV drama is famous for stories of outlaws, criminals or businessmen, many cases can be seen to put an emphasis on the larger events (like war, or political and social conditions) surrounding the person's life as they rise to fame and glory. This genre often attempts to tell one person's life story comprehensively, often by beginning with his or her childhood to focus on the most important years of their lives, thus concentrating on his or her achievements in adulthood. Authenticity to some extent is demanded in

this genre, but often events have been dramatised in order to fit into the purpose of the whole narrative content and strategy. For example, in *Qiao's Grand Courtyard*, producers dramatize Qiao's personal life with a trianglular romance between Qiao, his wife Lu, and his lover Jiang.

In contrast to *Qiao's Grand Courtyard*, the *Great Emperor Wu of Han* is based on the actual life story of the Emperor Wu of Han (156BC – 87BC), the seventh and most famous ruler of the Han Dynasty. To a certain extent, then, this TV drama demonstrates a great deal of genre hybridity with the biopic. Firstly, the emphasis upon the real life drama of Emperor Wu on a grand scale begins his life story from early childhood through to his death. An outstanding personality, or important political and historical events such as the Rebellion of the Seven States are thus brought into the limelight. The story also follows various international conflicts, such as the pivotal war between Han China and Xiongnu in order to celebrate the major victory of Han and his success in enlarging the Empire in the history of China.[19] Secondly, *Great Emperor* remains one of the biggest budget productions (fifty million RMB) in the history of the Chinese TV drama industry. It was filmed in various scenic locations in order to depict the expansive Han Empire, including the Chinese provinces of Inner Mongolia, Hebei, Henan and Zhejiang. It was also famous for its sweeping battle scenes, glorious costumes, the most accurate imitation of historical props, and splendid palace backdrops. Finally, the casting team billed China's top stars like Chen Baoguo, Jiao Huang, Gui Yalie, and Tao Hong.

Image 6.2 Poster of *The Emperor Wu of Han*

As we can see from the examples of *Great Emperor* and *Qiao*, then, hybridity exists between the genre of PHTD and the biopic/epic. However, these shared genre conventions and codes of content do not mean these two are of the same genre. The reason for their genre distinctions lies in the broader political and cultural context beyond their narrative realm, as Mittell points out: '[g]enres are not found within one isolated text…. Texts cannot interact on their own; they come together only through cultural practices such as production and reception'.[20]

It is proposed therefore that the disparity between the two is the result of the *purposes* of these two genres. *Great Emperor* highlights Emperor Wu as a great leader on the grand scale of the nation, for example. Yet the story of the businessman Qiao portrays an individual life achievement in the late Qing Dynasty. In contrast to the less notable Qiao, Emperor

Wu is best remembered for the vast territorial expansion under his reign as well as for creating a strong and centralised Confucian state. He is often cited in Chinese history as the greatest Emperor of the Han dynasty, and one of the greatest Emperors in Chinese history. His effective governance awarded to the Han Dynasty the title of being one of the most powerful nations in world history. *Great Emperor* thus brings Emperor Wu into the spotlight for his adoption of the principles of Confucianism, encouraging schools to teach the Confucian classics, and subsuming Confucian principles into the state philosophy and codes of ethics. The most interesting story in this regard is the last episode of *Great Emperor*, in which Emperor Wu left his will to his descendants, ordering 'no supremacy but peace and harmony', despite the brutal establishment of an autocratic and centralized state in his lifetime.

Differences in cultural practice in evaluation and interpretation between the biopic and political historical drama further strengthen the distinction between the two genres, as can be witnessed through political connotations at their exhibition stages, for example. *Great Emperor* was released in prime time on CCTV channel 1 at the beginning of the Chinese New Year, while *Qiao* had its debut on the same channel on 15 February 2006. It is suggested that the reason for highlighting their different release dates (especially for *Great Emperor*) was to place this TV drama into a very specific political context: namely, the political changes taking place in the China of 2004. In this year, the 16th Central Committee of the CCP held its Fourth Plenum in Beijing. Specifically, at that time, it carried out the decision to strengthen the party's 'building of governing capacity' and approved Hu Jintao to succeed Jiang Zemin as the chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission on 16-19 September 2004. Furthermore, in terms of the cultural context of that same year, the Chinese government for the first time officially celebrated the 2555th anniversary of the birth of Confucius, emphasising his role as a great ideologist and educator. These particular political and cultural events thus provided the production background to *Great Emperor*. It is significant therefore that this unique political quality of the PHTD genre in connecting to contemporary political and cultural contexts is hardly traceable in the biopic/epic *Qiao*.

In contrast, *Qiao* presents the relationship between cultural practice and entrepreneurial activity, and highlights the connection between TV production and the heritage industry. In the narrative of a notable business group in the Shanxi Province, their lifestyle, and their doctrine for being businessmen, *Qiao* is set in the Qiao family's grand courtyard, built at the end of the Qing Dynasty. It is intriguing therefore that (after the production's debut),

the compound has now become a tourist spot. This genre thus provides a boost for the Chinese cultural heritage industry through its making and consumption of history, impacting directly on tourism.

In comparing the two TV dramas above, it is clear that hybridity exists between these closely connected genres, but the factor of verisimilitude within each one marks its own genre territory. Nevertheless, genre verisimilitude is not only distinguished by narrative structure and convention. It is proposed therefore that a context-centred approach should be equally highlighted. This approach considers Lacey's tripartite relation for defining a genre: namely, the importance of media institution. In other words, the genre of PHTD and its texts need to be situated within historical variables, related discourses, and inter-textual relationships to posit potential readings of the politics and culture which construct the genre. This approach looks to various contextual factors that lead to specific negotiations of meaning for particular texts by fusing the study of textual traditions, social movements, and institutional frameworks to uncover the conditions and possibilities of interpreting genres.

In this regard, I have compared the genre of PHTD with those of TV costume drama, historical parody, and epic/biopic. Throughout this comparison, I have examined this genre through hybridity across genres. As seen, the PHTD genre indeed shares some similarities with others, such as period setting, a perspective from a national scale, and bringing individual historical figures into the spotlight. However, what decides PHTD as a genre is its own uniqueness. The verisimilitude within this genre therefore remains a stable generic route for the forthcoming TV dramas to follow. Furthermore, I have noticed that this genre is likely to connect to the current state of political and social awareness. Thus, a genre is not just built upon on pure text or genre conventions or norms. It also is a cultural and political product, constituted by media practices. In other words, the context surrounding this genre is also a powerful means for its interpretation, as will be fully investigated in the next chapter examining the cultural verisimilitude of PHTD.

3. Generic Verisimilitude: a Case Study of *The Great Revival* and *King Goujian of Yue*

In this section, I will consider two PHTDs, *King Goujian of Yue* and *The Great Revival*. Both TV dramas consist of 41 episodes, and were initially released in 2007, but were produced by two different directors and companies. Before studying these two TV dramas, it is also worth mentioning another television production – *The Conquest* ('Zhengba') – with similar subject matter but of a different genre. This 42-episode drama is a coproduction between Mainland China and Hong Kong TVB Costume Drama, directed by Huang Zuquan. The

prime showing took place on 18th December 2006 through to 10th February 2007. Both *King Goujian of Yue* and *The Great Revival* were productions of Mainland China, while the story plots are all inspired by the historical rivalry between the Yue and Wu states during the Spring and Autumn Period 770 – 476 BC. This well-known story is about Goujian's (the King of Yue) perseverance in overcoming the odds to defeat his rival (Fucai, the King of Wu). In contrast, the Hong Kong TVB *Conquest* dramatizes the romantic tragedy of courtship by Fucai and Fan Li (the state advisor of the Yue) of Xi Shi (the beauty), highlighting the brotherhood between Fan Li and Goujian.

In contrast to the narrative content of *Conquest* (but focusing on the historical figure Goujian and his political struggles as a great sage leader of the state of Yue), the Mainland PHTDs of *King Goujian of Yue* and *The Great Revival* noticeably share genre conventions and a four-principle norm. In this section, then, I devote my attention to generic verisimilitude and to the scrutiny of the generic features of both TV dramas in order to assess how and why the two productions contain the same narrative content and are in the same genre, but (at the same time) noticeably differ from each other.

3.1. The Study of Generic Verisimilitude through the Codes of Content in the Genre of PHTD

The analysis of generic verisimilitude in this section takes place from the perspective of the codes of content, including the starring icons, directors, and big-budget production features of the PHTD genre. In this, genre conventions provide a comparatively static norm, while the codes of content then provide the space for the genre to regenerate and develop in order to remain the same, while (simultaneously) retaining difference.

With regard to the starring icons in the PHTD codes of content, the leading actor in *The Great Revival* is one of the most famous Chinese stars, Chen Daoming, while the other lead in *King Goujian of Yue* is Chen Baoguo. Both actors have a rich history of performing as the great leader, king or emperor in films or TV dramas, as chapter V's full investigation of Chen Daoming's performances demonstrates (see section 3.2, under the heading *Input of Stars*). In contrast to Chen Daoming, the actor Chen Baoguo was born in 1956, and is best known for his role in *Northern Navy* (co-performing with Chen Daoming), *The Great Emperor Wu of Han*, King Gui in *The Affairs in the Swing Age* (together with Chen Daoming as Emperor Tianqi), and *The Story of Tang Taizhong*.

Interestingly, both Chen Daoming and Chen Baoguo performed the same role of Guojian in identical story lines of revenge upon King Fucai in two PHTDs produced in the same year. The fact that these two TV dramas involved two famous Chinese actors consequently attracted great interest from critics, leading to frequent publicity about the two protagonists. Indeed, during the primary showing, some Chinese media dramatized 'a battle of the stars' between the two famous Chens - Chen Daoming and Chen Baoguo. Thus, as I have previously concluded in chapter V, the function of such iconic stars is to act as a vehicle for the PHTD genre. In other words, famous stars can fulfil the demands, codes and conventions of a particular genre in terms of generic expectations. Hence, because the two Chens are clearly both good at portraying historical figures, once their names are seen on the cast-list, they virtually guarantee the ratings of the TV dramas in which they perform leading roles.

In addition to the focus upon these two leading actors, I also now bring into the spotlight the directors of both TV dramas for comparison and analysis. The director Huang Jianzhong, born in Indonesia in 1941, is currently one of the senior directors at Beijing Film Studio. Huang (who worked with Yuan Bin and Yan Yi) produced *King Goujian of Yue* in 2005. In contrast, the director Hou Yong of *The Great Revival*, born in 1960, is a Chinese filmmaker and senior cinematographer from Shenzhen Film Studio. Being the fifth generation of Chinese directors, he is a well-known cinematographer in collaboration with director Zhang Yimou, and in filming the first HD television drama *Grand Mansion Gate*. The first film which Hou directed was *Jasmine Women,* released in 2004, and starring Zhang Ziyi.

The above investigation of starring icons, then, includes the roles of well-known actors and famous directors in investigating the generic verisimilitude between these two TV dramas under discussion. With regard to production, however, it is intriguing that both TV dramas were distributed by the China International TV Corp. *The Great Revival* was produced by the collaboration of China Film and Television Production Co. LTD (CITVC) and Beijing Huanle Culture and Art Co. LTD, with a total budget of 40 million RMB. *King Goujian of Yue* (with a budget of approximately 30 million RMB, was the most expensive production from CTPC in 2005[21]) and a co-production between China Television Production Centre (CTPC), Shaoxing Television Station, Hangzhou Jianyi Film and Media Co. LTD, and Beijing Dongfang Shijie Culture and Media Co. LTD. Here,

both CITVC and CTPC were originally from CCTV. Currently, CCTV has a 24% shareholding in CITVC, while CTPC is united directly under the administration of CCTV.

3.2. Generic Verisimilitude: What is the Purpose?

It is interesting therefore that when *The Great Revival* and *King Guojian of Yue* were both produced under the same CCTV administration (and released at almost the same time), critics began to question the purpose for creating these two identical television series. I suggest that one of the possible explanations was a result of SARFT's new decree issued on April 2006. This new regulation of the pre-production stage appears to relax its previous direct intervention on scheduling quotas for all TV productions[22] (see chapter IV, section 1.1, under the heading of *SARFT's regulatory framework for Categorizing Chinese TV dramas*). The significance of SARFT's policy change here is that genre repetition among TV drama productions was allowable from that point onwards, as confirmed by Chinese director Qiu Xiaojun in an interview. This decree, he states, encourages media market decisions driven by economic forces instead of political forces expressed through governmental intervention.[23] In other words, this freedom to some extent prompts a market valuation of Chinese TV drama, and contributes to the generic verisimilitude of similar productions within the same genre so as to ensure the establishment and stabilisation of PHTD.

At the stage of distribution and exhibition, *The Great Revival* won its grand finale on Channel 8 of national CCTV at the start of the Chinese New Year of 2007, while the purchase of each episode is claimed to be even higher than the previously successful *Great Emperor Wu of Han*. In contrast, *King Goujian of Yue* was required to begin its first showing only at the level of regional/local channels, even though it was approved through the censor as early as May 2006. The rumour is that the chief executive of CCTV suddenly turned against this TV drama without any obvious reason. The only explanation given was that the performance of Chen Baoguo in *The Great Emperor Wu of Han* had achieved a huge success in 2006, and that the same image-construction would lead to peer fatigue. Nevertheless, Chen Daoming has not figured in any production of the PHTD genre for six years, and the demand for his re-appearance is subsequently growing. Indeed, no matter how the producer (Li Gongda) of *King Goujian of Yue* explains this sudden and unexplained change, the greatness of Chen Baoguo's performance cannot be refuted.[24] Yet another voice explained that CCTV's channel 8 did not have a successful viewing record in general. In contrast, the channels of local/regional television stations had a

better viewing record in term of prime showings, and *King Goujian of Yue* was therefore expected to achieve a better market share when distributed to local channels. Thus *The Great Revival* won the honours for its prime showing on the national channel while *King Goujian of Yue* became a cash winner.

It is here that political considerations for showing *The Great Revival* on the national channel and commercial motivation of *King Goujian of Yue* shown on regional channels signal the genre purpose. Thus, although generic verisimilitude labels these two TV dramas as being of the same PHTD genre, similarities and differences between them further serve deep political and social purposes. Explicitly, these two TV dramas covered both the national and regional channels in order to create an appropriate atmosphere prior to the hugely significant event of the 2008 Olympics held in China. In other words, the purpose was to constantly bring to the surface a sense of national consciousness, already fertilised by the rapid economic development over the last two decades, successfully fighting against the world economic downturn in 2008, and the honour of hosting the biggest international political sporting event of the Olympics in China. All of these factors, then, essentially showcase, (and perfectly mirror) the historical story of King Goujian, in terms of past sacrifice and current success.

Projecting the genre conventions analysed previously in chapter V onto the current reality (particularly the subject of sacrifice), the point to be made here is that the Chinese perceive the history of the Opium and Sino-Japanese wars over the last hundred years (especially the end of the Qing Dynasty) as a matter for national humiliation. It will be seen therefore that the historical story of King Goujian puts this humiliation in the context of the national dream, in the sense of believing that sacrifices are made for the sake of the nation. Thus, veneration of the Western powers for their technological and civil advancements over a hundred-year period is likewise seen in terms of sacrifices which would eventually grant China the power and right to overcome their difficulties on the road towards becoming a strong nation. Hence, the importance of the Olympic Games is not only that of an international sports event, but also as a political showing that indicates to the world the prosperity, glory and power of the Chinese nation at the present time.

4. Chapter Conclusion: Textual Components or Textual Category of the PHTD Genre

It will be seen that as Altman points out, it would be convenient if genre stability was guaranteed, but it is decidedly not so. Specifically, within over half a century of history dating from the late 20th century, the PHTD genre has generated a large number of productions. Yet within these (as demonstrated) this chapter has shown

that PHTD as a genre cannot be defined by an isolated text. Instead, as Mittell comments, it emerges 'from the inter-textual relations between multiple texts, resulting in a common category.'[25] This means that the individual text does not function on its own. The important point has therefore been made that TV dramas come together through the practices of production (as well as reception) and through many diverse enunciations from the widest possible range of sources, including corporate documents, press commentaries, trade journal accounts and regulatory policies, as discussed. Thus, the first showing of *Nurhaci* on CCTV in 1986 demonstrates PHTD in its new born form, while the successful *Yongzheng Dynasty* that followed indicates its maturity. In the same way, it is proposed that the generic verisimilitude traced in *Kangxi Dynasty* and *Qianlong Dynasty* provide evidence that the texts of these TV dramas actively bond with certain political and cultural activities to form into a comparatively stable genre, as seen. Thus, *Kangxi Dynasty* will resonate with other, similar TV dramas to demonstrate the generic verisimilitude of the PHTD genre.

It has also been shown that the case may arise where the same genre might operate differently in diverse historical and cultural contexts. The conclusion is therefore that genre is transformed through different historical, social and political contexts, and might present itself differently in accordance with those specific practical contexts. As we can see, the political implications of the PHTD genre are made is to connect the contemporary reading of the past with the interpretation of the current nationalist discourse. On the one hand, this scrutiny of generic verisimilitude helps to distinguish and compare current TV dramas with those produced at earlier stages, in order to assess the changing political discourse of China over the last decades. On the other hand, we could equally deduce that the changing focus of political implications at different stages show the instability of this genre. In other words, generic verisimilitude and instability might cause the genre cluster to appear differently at different stages, but the genre *functions* of PHTD indeed remain the same. In this regard, generic verisimilitude offers the possibility of regulating the memory and expectations of a certain genre through operating over a series of textual typologies. Generic codes and conventions then set up the preferred reading, which contributes to genre expectations. From this perspective, generic verisimilitude in turn provides the industry with the wherewithal to ensure the genre expectations of their product.

Thus, a genre constitution process, as Altman comments, is not limited to its first appearance. It is unlikely for a genre category to remain forever stationary once it is constituted. The genre is thus a constantly shifting map. In order to demonstrate this feature, Altman further applies himself to the scrutiny of the woman's film, here

defined as one that has a woman at the centre of the story-line. Haskell concludes that the generic features presented by their narratives are sacrifice, affliction, choice and competition. However, in its early stages, for nearly two decades the term woman's film always had to be set apart by quotation marks, for the reason that examples cited by the critics are drawn from the existing genres such as dramas, melodramas, films noirs or screwball comedies, as Altman points out. However, mid-80s feminist criticism greatly contributed to the change of perception towards this genre. In the late 1980s, therefore, Doane stripped the term of its quotation marks, and referred to it as a proper genre. Altman's work entitled *The Desire to Desire: the woman's film of the 1940s* thus marks the first confirmation of the woman's film as a genre.[26]

Hence, as seen, the genre of PHTD is also a trans-historical phenomenon, which horizontally recombines with other genres. In other words, PHTDs have constantly assimilated the features of these other genres, displaying cross-wise hybridity. These shared features occur not only across other TV genres such as the drama of Revolution, but are also fertilised by Chinese literature and historical records. The action of generic verisimilitude within the genre of PHTD (as well as hybridity across other genres) therefore also takes into consideration narrative, practical production and political forces.

As discussed, the genre of PHTD has the generic verisimilitude of a Chinese setting, although the geographical territory of this idealised motherland of China is reliant upon different dynasties in history. However, common in this genre is the cultural identity of being a unified imagined community of 'Greater China'. While this historical discourse on the notion of nation-state supplies a cultural commentary to the rest of the world, there are shortcomings, as Helmut points out sharply: 'what appears absent in China is a sober analysis of real cultural accomplishments since 1980 and the clear definition of an official cultural policy that seeks international recognition for such accomplishments.'[27] Indeed, many Chinese intellectuals in the 1990s seemed frustrated on many fronts in this climate of questioning as to what constitutes 'Greater China' and what is outside it, as will be more fully explored in chapter VII, through the political discourse that surrounds the production of the PHTD genre. Specifically, as will be seen, the political approach begins with the interplay of the cluster outside of texts, locating a certain sample within the complex interrelation between industries and political forces under the particular historical and social contexts.

Genre as a cultural and political practice is thus not a fixed and stereotypical concept, as Mittell points out: '[g]enres transect the boundaries between text and context, with production distribution, promotion, exhibition, criticism, and reception practices…'[28] The focus has therefore been on the breadth of discursive enunciations around this type of production, and mapping out as many positions articulating knowledge as possible, situating it within larger cultural contexts and relations of power by exploring the broad variety around the generic discourse by the given instance. Thus, what I have undertaken is to examine generic verisimilitude in its operation, change, and proliferation in order to understand the political discourse of this type of TV drama.

Ultimately, Chapters IV and V have scrutinised the genre of PHTD through a traditional view of narrative study in questioning its definition and history. I have defined the core elements that constitute this given genre. However, it has been proposed that this particular genre should be situated within a larger discussion of texts in order to map the internal-external distinction from other existing genres. In contrast, then, chapter VI has therefore brought into play primary TV dramas as samples in order to explore the generic verisimilitude of the PHTD genre and genre hybridity across others: for example, the similarity with (and distinction from) biopics or TV costume drama through case study. Here, generic verisimilitude (what decides to be in the same genre) and genre hybridity (what decides not to be) lies in the distinction between textual component and textual category.[29]

Thus, as seen, generic verisimilitude acts to 'regulate the production of difference by producing their differences within very circumscribed structures of similarity'.[30] This offers a way for television industries to control the tension between the similarities and differences inherent in the production of any cultural product, as Mittell further explains: '[a] category works primarily to link a number of discrete elements together under a label for cultural convenience.'[31] Here, Mittell's notion of cultural convenience matches Neal's perception of cultural verisimilitude: thus, if generic verisimilitude 'allows for considerable play with fantasy inside the bounds of generic credibility', then cultural verisimilitude 'refers us to the norms, mores, and common sense of the social world outside the fiction.'[32] It is from this perspective that the next chapter will further examine the genre of PHTD with regard to how this 'cultural convenience' operates, changes, and is proliferated.

Chapter VII

The Reconstruction of Historical Memory and Cultural Verisimilitude:

Case Study Analysis of *The Great General Shi Lang*

As seen, the two-fold aim in this thesis is to investigate the PHTD genre in order to make divisions and to justify its classifications, and to build a theory-based picture of the social and cultural role that this genre performs. This is an investigation in line with Feuer's perspective, who pinpoints the concept of genre as one that implies dealing with 'the ways in which a work may be considered to belong to a class of related works'.[1] Thus, textual analysis of themes and structures in Chapters IV and V demonstrates PHTD's genre definition and its conventions, showing it to have a norm of four principles. Again (as I have discussed in Chapters IV and VI) the two TV dramas of *Nurhaci* and *The Last Emperor* contributed to forming this specific genre in the 1980s. The norm set up in these two TV dramas in turn helped later ones, with similar productions gradually emerging into one established genre of PHTD. This successful model, exhibiting shared textual conventions and structures, therefore further leads us to interpret these productions not as separate entities but as a generality.

Importantly, the previous chapters have also examined the derivation of Chinese TV drama from other forms of entertainments, such as radio drama, film and Chinese full-length vernacular fiction. Chapter VI further compares PHTD with TV costume drama, biopic and the TV drama of Revolution, showing these productions to be a cross-media formation from the perspective of generic hybridity. Thus, hybridity and convention taken together have exposed genre as having discursive features. In other words, there is no fixed and absolute definition for a certain genre. I conclude therefore that genre can switch, transform, or be subverted, and that it evolves with the times under different cultural, historical and political contexts. Genre is thus found to be a paradoxical concept, being simultaneously conservative in texts and innovative as it responds to political and cultural forces. This paradoxical complexity further encourages us to research and examine the genre of PHTD discursively from the perspectives of generic and cultural verisimilitude. Specifically, it is proposed that the study of genre should not only investigate the narrative through an interpretive approach, but should also refer to the role of specific institutional discourses that feed into and form its structures. In other words, we should ask 'what a genre means for specific groups in a particular cultural instance',[2] as Mittell confirms:'[g]enres are cultural products, constituted by media practices and subject to ongoing change and redefinition'.[3] This is a

significant clarification, which reinforces the proposition that genres behave differently in different cultural environments, and that they should therefore be examined accordingly, under different cultural, political and regional contexts.

Hence, the genre of PHTD is shown to be a consequence of decisions made at the level of the production and political regulations, and critical debates in theoretical terms. Both decisions and debates are therefore found to contribute to shaping or reshaping this particular genre. In turn, a successful PHTD might impact upon the shaping of other similar productions, thereby affecting subsequent TV dramas. This chapter thus further investigates the specific notion of cultural verisimilitude. Namely, the genre transects texts via its cultural interactions with industries and broader historical-political and social-cultural contexts. In other words, the aim is 'to theorise about the social and cultural role these genres perform.'[4] One of the approaches is consequently to understand how the PHTD genre adapts to political forces, and examine how this genre interprets cultural and historical discourse, in accordance with Mittell's suggestion: 'we should focus on the breadth of discursive enunciations around any given instance, mapping out as many articulations of genre as possible and situating them within larger cultural contexts and relations of power.'[5] The intent of this socio-historical examination of cultural verisimilitude is accordingly to present the actual cultural, political and practical life of a genre.

In this chapter, I focus on the case study of TV drama *The Great General Shi Lang* (*Shi Lang Da Jiangjun*, 2006) in the areas of textual analysis, industrial practice, and historical reconsideration, so as to test how all these realms work in interactive tandem. In brief, the 37-espisode *Great General Shi Lang* was produced through cooperation between the Fujian Film Studio and CCTV. The director Ning Haiqiang is a well-known film/TV drama maker from First August Film Studio (a military film studio). According to the administrative formats of SARFT, *Shi Lang* is a TV drama in the category of 'Important Historical Subject,' representing the historical story of the Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty and his general Shi Lang in the recapture of Taiwan. The production period lasted two years with a budget of over 20 million RMB, while its prime showing took place on CCTV channel one, on 27th March 2006.

With the help of theoretical scaffolding set up at the beginning of this thesis, then, the analysis of the PHTD genre opens the study with the scrutiny of its purpose, conventions and norms. As seen, however, it is suggested that this purpose additionally needs to be considered within the larger scale of social-cultural and

historical-political contexts, in order to reflect the reality of contemporary China. It is for this reason that the chapter begins the case study with an analysis of the purposes for producing this TV drama. Such a case study requires a historical, political and cultural integrated perspective incorporating Taiwan, Mainland China and (additionally) extending this relationship to the USA. This is a perspective examined through the narrative of this TV drama. The second part of this chapter emphasises the textual analysis of the narrative and particularly focuses on one essential question brought out through *Shi Lang*: namely, the relationship between the two concepts of historical memory and cultural verisimilitude, two concepts which have a close link to Chinese aesthetics and Confucianism. Chinese intellectuals in turn appear to play a key role in turning this abstract political ideology into a visual reality. Thus, the end of the chapter further devotes attention to cultural hierarchies and power relations. Through this exercise of case study analysis, the message of Han nationalism, the concept of Chineseness and its legacy for the present are thereby exposed. Thus, in the fusion between political and cultural forces, *Shi Lang* demonstrates how the current modern political and social values of China are encoded in a historical context, and the nature of political and intellectual influences in the process of image making.

1. 'History Can Witness All'[6]: Geographical Politics behind *The Great General Shi Lang*

In 2006, Director Ning (in an interview talking about this TV drama) described *Shi Lang* as not only a historical production, but also a military one, with a strong sense of patriotism.[7] He went on to say that the motivation for producing this drama was the result of larger political considerations of contemporary relations between Taiwan and Mainland China. The purpose of making *Shi Lang* was thus to promote critical discussion with regard to the historical and political spectrum of Taiwanese issues within the larger challenge of the unification of China.

The geography of Taiwan is an island group located in East Asia between the South China Sea and the East China Sea, off the south-eastern coast of the Mainland China. To its northeast are the main islands of Japan, while the southern end of the Ryukyu Islands of Japan lies directly to the east, with the Philippines to its south. Records from ancient Chinese history indicate that the Han Chinese might have known of the existence of this main island of Taiwan since the Three Kingdoms period (230 A.D.). During the Ming Dynasty, Admiral

Zheng is indeed recorded as visiting Taiwan in 1430, while Imperial Japan had sought to control Taiwan since 1592. By the 16th century, Europeans began settling in the main island of Taiwan; first Portuguese ships landed, followed by the Dutch in 1624, who made it a colony. Later, the naval and military forces of Southern Fujian of China defeated the Dutch in 1662. In 1885, Japan took over control of Taiwan and Penghu as a result of Chinese defeat during the First Sino-Japanese War (1884-85). Since the end of Word War II in 1945, Taiwan has been under the administration of the Republic of China, which was then the *de facto* government of all China. When the Nationalist government retreated to Taiwan in 1949, it was regarded as a base for the recapture of the Mainland. At the present time, it is still under the effective jurisdiction of the Republic of China.[8]

With such a complicated background of historical and geographical politics, in recent times Taiwan's relations with Mainland China have undergone a number of changes, especially during the period of Bush's US Presidency. At the beginning of his administration, the American government seemed to abandon the long-standing US policy of 'strategic clarity', placing more emphasis on Taiwan's interests and less on Mainland concerns. President Bush then publicly stated that the United States would do 'whatever it takes' to help Taiwan's defence – a position more supportive of Taiwan that had been articulated by him personally. In April 2001, he also approved a substantial sale of US weapons to Taiwan, including Kidd-class destroyers, with anti-submarine capabilities. The White House then became more accommodating to visits from Taiwan officials than previous US Administrations, permitting visits from Taiwan's president in 2001 and 2003, and from Taiwan's vice president and defence minister in 2002.

As well as these changing international political circumstances for Taiwan, the long-ruling Nationalist Party (KMT) lost the presidential election to the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate (Chen Shuibian) by a razor-thin margin in 2004. Chen was then able to seize the political initiative by disavowing the concepts long embraced by his KMT opponents: that there is 'one China', that Taiwan is a part of it, and that Chinese history and culture are Taiwan's heritage. The 'one China' formulation thus appeared to unravel during Chen's administration, when he began to depart significantly from precedent late in 2003 by referring openly and frequently to a sovereign Taiwan. He emphasized a 'new Taiwan identity' and said publicly that Taiwan was already 'an independent, sovereign country'. The previous president, Li Denghui of Taiwan, had also emphasized the 'independence' theme during his US visit in October 2005, claiming that the international

community should recognise Taiwan as independent territory. Within the same year, Taiwan had successfully test-fired its first 'Hsiung-Feng' cruise missile, with a range of 1,000 miles. In 2006, Taiwan president Chen in his New Year speech announced that strengthening the island's separate identity would be his top priority for the remainder of his term. These series of actions thus raised shared concerns about what appeared to be the rapid fading away of the 'one-China' policy in Taiwan.

Political bells rung by Taiwan Chen's administration have therefore raised anxieties about its future and the implications for Mainland-Taiwan relations. Thus, in Mainland China some are concerned that a continued emphasis on 'Taiwan identity' may lead to ethnic polarisation and conflict. Others have considered the implications that these trends have for a possible declaration of Taiwan independence, which Beijing has vowed to 'pay any price' to prevent. In 2001, for example, to mark the 80th anniversary of the founding of the CCP, president Jiang gave the speech below:

> The status of Taiwan shall in no other way be allowed to change. The Chinese communists are rock firm in their resolve to safeguard state sovereignty and territorial integrity. While we do have the greatest sincerity to work for a peaceful unification, we cannot and will not undertake to renounce the use of force. We are fully capable of checking any attempt to split China by seeking Taiwan's "independence".[9]

In 2005, the Chinese National People's Congress (NPC) officially adopted a ten-article 'anti-secession law' aimed at reining in Taiwan independence advocates. Article 8 of this new law specifically authorises the use of 'non-peaceful means' to reunify Taiwan with China. Hence, according to Article 8,

> In the event that the 'Taiwan independence' secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

On reading this newly adopted legislation, Chinese intellectuals widely debated its implications, fearing that the law could harass independence advocates in Taiwan by, for instance, labelling them as 'criminals' and demanding their extradition from a third party. One of their biggest concerns was that this anti-secession law could significantly raise tensions across the Taiwan Strait and increase the possibility of conflict.

On 17 August 2005, Taiwan's army and navy conducted joint military exercises designed to counter a PRC amphibious invasion and blockade. Interestingly, only one day later, China and Russia began an eight-day joint military exercise off the Shandong Peninsula – their largest joint military exercise in the modern history of Mainland China, involving nearly 10,000 troops. The Chinese Mainland government continued to increase its missile build-up along the south China coast opposite Taiwan, now deploying close to 500 missiles.

However, this increasing political tension between Mainland and Taiwan did not stop economic and intellectual flows at the level of non-governmental sectors. As an example, intellectual flows of consultations on cross-strait and other issues provided (in the view of some Taiwanese officials) an active 'second track' for Mainland-Taiwan dialogue.

It was against such a background of international and domestic political complexities, then, that the TV drama *Shi Lang* was produced, with a main theme emphasising the importance of the unification of China. Neo-Confucian scholar Dr. Cheng Ming, as a proponent, claimed that the reason for proposing this TV drama script was his ongoing concern about the separation of Taiwan. Contemporary Taiwan issues are a 'mess'[10](he observed) because of the international political atmosphere involving the US and Japan. His wish therefore was that *Shi Lang* might push the government to 'make up their minds and set up an effective strategy to deal with the serious challenge from Taiwan'.[11]

Director Ning in an interview with CCTV on October 2005 further claimed that the purpose for producing *Shi Lang* was because of his long-standing concern about the case of Taiwan as 'the un-separated part of our China known by all Chinese.'[12]Although Ning was not familiar with the specific controversies surrounding the particular figure of Shi Lang, he believed this figure to be a great hero due to his historical contribution to the unification of China. At the end of the interview, he particularly highlighted that 'history can witness all'[13].

2. Cultural Verisimilitude in Reconstructing the Memory of History

The historical and political relations between Mainland China and Taiwan outlined above, then, provide a background understanding to the genre purpose of the TV drama *Shi Lang*. In this section, I further focus on the study of its genre narrative so as to answer two questions:

- What strategy of story-telling is employed in *Shi Lang*?

- What cultural verisimilitude exists between the genre of PHTD and historical reality?

The TV drama narrates the biopic of the patriotic general Shi Lang and his great contribution in recovering Taiwan and historically consolidating the political and geographical territory of the Qing Dynasty, vividly describing how this historical figure overcame the various political tactics employed by the Qing imperial court. The main theme of this TV drama suggests a series of questions, as follows:

- Whether to recover Taiwan

- Whether to allow Taiwan to function independently

- Whether to choose Shi Lang as the general to recover Taiwan

- How to recover Taiwan.

In order to interpret the factor of cultural verisimilitude in reconstructing the memory of history, I begin this section with a comparative case study between two PHTDs *Kangxi Dynasty* and *Shi Lang*. As discussed earlier in this thesis, the genre of PHTD received great attention at the end of the twentieth century and the first decade of the 21st century. In particular, the large number of PHTDs produced were for the most part inspired by historical stories of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). Among these, the famous 50-episode *Kangxi Dynasty* illustrated the life story of Emperor Kangxi and covered a series of historical events, including the story of Kangxi and of General Shi Lang in the recovery of Taiwan. Both *Kangxi* and *Shi Lang* have thus chosen the Kangxi reign of the Qing Dynasty as their story backgrounds, and involve the disputed historical figure of Shi Lang. One of the differences lies in the leading character focus: specifically, the previous one focuses upon Kangxi, while Shi Lang is the main narrative centre in the second.

2.1. The Historical Figure of Shi Lang

According to controversial interpretations of Shi Lang in Chinese history, this historical figure has been represented in two diverse ways in these two TV dramas. In order to restore a sense of this figure and his life, it is necessary to begin with research into historical records, including the historical background in which he lived: the reign of the Kangxi Emperor in the Manchu-led Qing Dynasty.

In section 4 of Chapter IV, I have analysed the conservative and historical views of the Qing Dynasty, and the racist attitude of the Han Chinese towards the Manchu. A further example that reinforces this hostile relationship in history is that the Manchu as a minority ruling class imposed the *Queue Order* to force other ethnicities into submission in order to maintain governmental control. This order instituted a strict separation between Han Chinese and Manchus by prohibiting intermarriage. Furthermore, the ruler of the Qing Dynasty implemented a mandatory shaving of the hair, as historical records show. Any man who did not adopt the Manchu hairstyle within ten days would be executed, the slogan of this *Queue Order* being: 'keep your hair, and you lose your head; to keep your head, cut off your hair.' That the Han Chinese were strongly against this ruling led to mass slaughter by the Qing court. In literary and academic fields too, records show that the Manchu rulers also used inquisition to silence the opposition. Importantly, these conflicts between Han Chinese and Manchus were carried all the way through the Qing Dynasty.

Image 7.1 Portrait of Shi Lang

Within this large historical scale, the Ming-Qing Admiral Shi Lang as a Han Chinese had extensive warfare experience in south-eastern China, and was particularly proficient in naval fighting. He joined Zheng Zhilong's fleet as a captain of the left vanguard, and served the Ming Dynasty (ruled by Han Chinese) at the beginning of his career. During the early 1640s he served in the Zheng family fleet, where he came into conflict with Zheng Zhilong's son Zheng Chenggong (also known as Koxinga, 1624-1662). In 1646, when Qing troops moved to the south of China, Shi Lang defected to the Qing Dynasty, while Koxinga killed Shi's father, brother and son. In the Manchu fleets, Shi Lang later became commander-in-chief and destroyed the power of the Zheng family and conquered Taiwan in 1681.

2.2. The Input of Star Icons into the Concept of Confucian Masculinity

In this section, the reading of images from the codes of content (as discussed in section 3.2, Chapter V) is integrated into the study of genre convention (see section 2.2.2, Chapter V) in order to comprehend the generic and cultural verisimilitudes of the historical figure Shi Lang in these two TV dramas. This integration will act

to consolidate theoretical and literary genre methodology on how the discourse of Chinese history serves the purpose of the PHTD genre.

Historical and cultural identity is based on an agreed common sense in the interpretation of a specific historical event. In other words, the historical figure of Shi Lang cannot be separated from his established historical records and reality. However the genre of PHTD is often driven by the purpose, which to some extent shifts the direction and shapes the content of this interpretation. This shift or shape is not untruthful, nor an amelioration of nature, nor an evasion of reality, but the nature of the generic and cultural verisimilitude that occurs in the genre itself. This nature can in turn help the Chinese producer to create differentiated and individual personal work.

Image 7.2 An illustration of Zhang Fei (left) and Guan Yu (right) in the classical novel *Stories of the Three Kingdoms*

In the TV dramas of *Kangxi* and *Shi Lang*, then, the historical figure of Shi Lang has been re-created and re-constructed according to differing purposes, which provides Chinese producers with an excuse to depart from historical reality, as will be seen below. With regard to how to encode the same figure, the Confucian interpretation on the virtue of Chinese masculinity – 'wen' ('literary' in Chinese) and 'wu' ('military' in Chinese) constitutes a mean for generic and cultural verisimilitude.

2.1.1. The Traditional Interpretation of Chinese Masculinity and Its Symbolic Images

According to the Confucian virtue of Chinese masculinity, the fundamental understanding is composed of the two components 'wen' and 'wu', which are just like the duality of the famous Chinese 'yin-yang'. In contrast to the relationship of 'yin-yang' in presenting two components of the universe - man and woman, however, the relation 'wen-wu' demonstrates the two requirements of being a man. Thus, the concept of 'wen-wu' can be interpreted as 'mental-physical' or 'literary-martial skills' in English, where the Chinese emphasise the principles of harmony and balance between these two principles. These two forms of masculine ability are what the 'ideal man' must possess in order to achieve successful self-management and good government on a

personal and national scale. However, in practical terms, the virtue of 'wen' as skill in literature, culture and art, has been often represented as superior to the military virtue of 'wu', even though both should be of equal importance and combined in a full education in Confucianism.

The best examples of these two components of Confucian masculinity are the two well-known historical and literary figures Zhang Fei (the symbol of 'wu') and Guan Yu (the symbol of the ideal combination of 'wen' and 'wu'), as seen in illustration 7.2 above. Taken from the famous full-length vernacular fiction *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* from the 14th Century, the images of Zhang Fei (on the left) and Guan Yu (on the right) are deeply rooted into the collective Chinese cultural consciousness. Guan Yu, as the best-beloved of all heroes for the Chinese, is encoded with the virtues of loyalty and righteousness. He has been described as a man of great prowess and gigantic stature with a long beard, phoenix eyes, a face as ruddy as ripe dates, and a voice as deep as a bell. The prowess of Guan Yu is well matched by his great heart and immense courage. In contrast, Zhang Fei, the sworn brother of Guan Yu, is famous for his supreme bravery as well as for his impetuous temper, while the rude and robust nature of his heroism makes him the darling of the folk audience in the storyteller's version.

2.1.2. From 'Wu' to 'Wen': Reconstructing the Visual Image of Shi Lang

In contrast to Shi Lang's representation in the TV drama *Kangxi Dynasty* as possessing the concept of 'wu', his historical image in *Shi Lang* is instead created based on the literary and aesthetic concept of 'wen'. Importantly, during my interview with the screenwriter Zhang Xiaotian of *Shi Lang* in 2009, Zhang explained that his initial intention was to create a general with great Confucian moral virtues. Therefore, for example, he highlighted Shi's ten-year study of Confucian texts in order to demonstrate a period of mental and spiritual growth in stature from a martial general to a Confucian intellectual.[14] The visual image of Shi Lang thus was illustrated with a long beard and phoenix eyes, his hair turning grey due to the intensive study of naval warfare and the ongoing effects of political pressure.

This image is clearly influenced by the ideal icon of Guan Yu (discussed above). However, even though this TV drama was supposed to highlight Shi Lang's intelligence and military prowess at naval warfare military tactics in the recovery of Taiwan in order to underline the virtue of 'wen', the whole story became over-focused on his political fights with the opposition in the first 22 episodes out of 37. The screenwriter Zhang

164

was still not satisfied therefore with this visual image, and criticized this iconography of Shi Lang as lacking the Confucian intellectual dimension.[15]

Image 7.3 The image of Shi Lang in *Great General Shi Lang*, 2006

Image 7.4 The image of Shi Lang in *Kangxi Dynasty*, 2001

In contrast, then, the image of Shi Lang in *Kangxi* was instead inspired by the concept of 'wu'. The first appearance of this character was not until episode 27, where he is fully embodied in his heavy military dress. Thus, in the story of Kangxi recovering Taiwan prior to episode 35, for instance, Shi Lang constantly emphasises himself as the one only with knowledge of military force, while nothing is mentioned about 'wen'. Indeed, Shi even satirises his old master Yao as a stubborn Confucian scholar. The image of Shi Lang in this TV drama is thus inspired by the fictional figure of Zhang Fei (discussed above). In other words, the re-creation of this historical figure in *Kangxi* is of one who was brave but without clear political awareness; intelligent, but only within the military area; straight and hot tempered, but without the restraint of Confucian morality.

As above, then, the image of Shi Lang drawn in the TV drama bearing his name seemingly portrays the ideal man, combining both 'wen' and 'wu'. However, if this image fulfils the requirements of Confucian 'wen', it nevertheless contradicts other essential moral values within it: namely, loyalty and righteousness. In other words, the historical reality is the fact that Shi Lang betrayed his Han nation to the Manchu. Being aware of this historical reality, it is proposed therefore that the director and writer in *Kangxi* established the image of Shi Lang as a martial general in order to avoid any potential debate on his morals. Briefly, being an illiterate general ignorant of Confucianism thus excuses him for betraying Zheng's troops. As for the fact that the leader

165

of Taiwan (Zheng Jing) slaughtered his family, Shi Liang sought in return for personal revenge to defeat Taiwan, rather than loyally serving on behalf of the Qing Dynasty.

Thus, comparison between the images of Shi Lang in these two TV dramas brings out the issue of cultural verisimilitude in the genre of PHTD, with the different focuses or genre purposes providing a foundation for the re-creation. For instance, in *Kangxi Dynasty*, the actual history has itself been reconstructed. Instead of Koxinga murdering Shi Lang's family members, this TV drama attributes this inhumanity to Zheng's son Zheng Jing, thus preserving the well-known image of Koxinga as a national hero. In this way, the direct conflict between this national hero and Shi Lang is then reduced. Cultural verisimilitude in *Kangxi* therefore allows the reconstruction of events based on the original objectivity, but offers an alternative pathway between current political purpose, cultural identity and the historical reality of the past.

3. Intellectual Forces in the Use of Cultural Verisimilitude

Having investigated above precisely how the historical image of Shi Lang in *Kangxi* and *Shi Lang* is reconstructed, we are now in a position to identify the crucial role of Chinese intellectuals (such as those producers, directors and screenwriters) in contributing to cultural verisimilitude in the genre of PHTD. In this section, I propose therefore to extend my research area from the focus of this genre to the generic cultural cluster. In other words, I situate the TV drama *Shi Lang* into the larger network of cultural hierarchies and power relations. This is an approach to investigating the role of intellectual forces that enables further understanding of this specific cultural practice.

Chinese intellectuals are a special and important social group in contemporary China, who, as Wang notes, 'use literature as a base to express their values and beliefs and therefore to influence other people.'[16] With the impact of political and economic reform in the 1980s, however, this influential intellectual group have restructured and revised their initial interests. In order to demonstrate these changing interests over the last three decades, I will employ two examples from the performing arts, which were exhibited separately on the Great Wall and the Forbidden City. My reasons in this are to make possible a visual picture of the changing political and social concerns of Chinese intellectuals, and how they present such ideas or concerns in their work, which leads in turn to the question of cultural verisimilitude. These two examples from the performing

arts will additionally help to further understand the re-creation of the historical images of Shi Lang in the two television dramas discussed above.
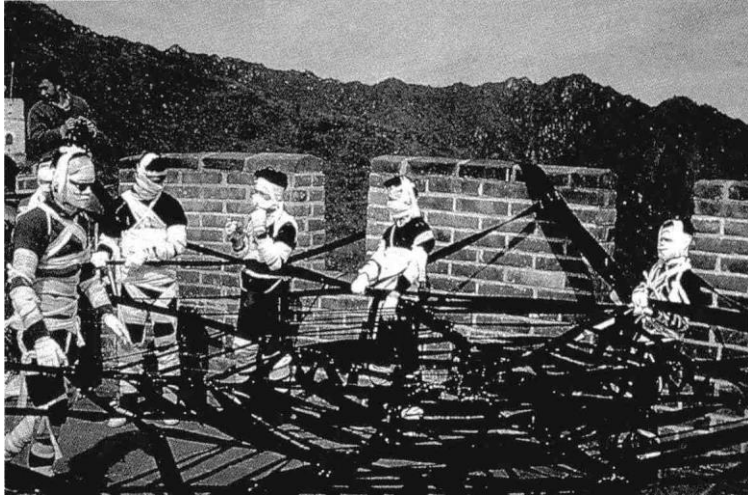

Image 7.5 Concept 21st Group *Great Earthquake 1988* Performance

As we have discussed in section 4, Chapter III, the political interests of Chinese intellectuals and elites in the pre-1989 Tian'anmen Social Movement were mostly concerned with the questions and issues of democracy, and the reformation of Chinese society and culture through investigating social problems and criticizing of traditional values and morality. These concerns can be seen through the example of the visual art piece entitled *Great Earthquake 1988*, performed by the Concept 21st Group, as a series of works enacted on the Great Wall of China. During the performance, the artists wrapped themselves in white bandages and appeared to be exercising, or taking part in Chinese martial arts *Tai Chi*. Mummified in white bandages, the bodies of the artists looked like the wounded in a hospital or mourners at a traditional Chinese funeral. It is interesting to note that such images were a regular feature in most of the works that appeared during the late 1970s and 1980s, together with the act of wrapping one's body, which became a common gesture used in performance art. The acts of bandaging and self-inflicted injury can contain different meanings, but among them are surely the following:

> […] the tragic psychological scars caused by the political repression, violence, destruction of the Cultural Revolution, and the suppression of traditional Confucianism described by Lu Xun as "eating people"('chi ren'). Such symbols of solemnity and sacrifice may also reflect the sentiment of the artists and intellectuals searching for modernity and democracy in the 1980s.'[17]

Moreover, the fact that the performance took place on the famous historical site of the Great Wall is significant, since this site has been widely regarded as a national symbol for over 5000 years of China's history. This is a

167

symbolic meaning therefore which visually presents the ancient past, but which has also has been reconfigured in order to confirm many aspects of contemporary Chinese society. The symbol of the Great Wall was used by artists here as a way of critiquing more general ideas of tradition, conservatism and state ideology in the 1980s, for example. It is therefore proposed that through their performance, the history which the Great Wall represents is no longer a crystallization of the past, but rather it is reproducible, fragmentary and mobile, and integrated with many materialistic and private concerns. The artists wrapping themselves on the architectural sites of the Great Wall, for instance, points to the drawing of a connection between wounded people and ruined historical monuments to signify 'binding the nation and people together in a call for a rebirth of the nation'[18]. The choice of the Great Wall as a backdrop transforms the historical memory into an allegory for contemporary society, while the individual identities of artists during the performance become merged into Chinese national identity on a larger scale. In other words, the values of historical symbol and reality have been re-examined as well as tradition and national identity.

In contrast, Chinese intellectuals were forced to re-think their intellectual and cultural values with the failure of the social movement in 1989, and confront the implications of this failure, as well as 'the relationship between Chinese history and the cultural movement in which they had participated', as Hui observes.[19] After 1989, facing a pervasive commercial culture, Chinese intellectuals were 'conscious of the fact that they are no longer contemporary cultural heroes or arbiters of value.'[20] For both the intellectuals and the state:

> […] the modernization was on the one hand a search for wealth and power along the path to the establishment of a modern nation-state; on the other hand, it was the process of re-evaluating their society and tradition against the yardstick of Western society and its cultures and values. Therefore, the most conspicuous feature of the Chinese discourse on modernity is its location within the "China/West" and "tradition/modernity" binaries.[21]

During this re-evaluation period, Chinese intellectuals turned toward the practical demands implicit in Chinese history in modern life rather than to the revival of any sort of pure scholarship. The performance/conceptual work *Knocking on the Door* (*Koumen*) by Wang Jin, for example, reflected the ways in which booming commercialism has dramatically changed Chinese social life and culture in the post-1989 period. In this work, Wang took bricks that were centuries old from the wall of the Forbidden City, and painted American dollar bills on their surfaces. He then put back the bricks into the original ruined palace wall, where the viewers can

clearly contrast the painted brick (today) with the old decrepit palace walls (the past). Again, the historical memory and reality of China's Forbidden City played a significant role in transferring the past to today in Wang's work, and opens the way to questioning the value of history in contemporary China at a time when 'the effects of globalization are literally knocking at the door of Chinese civilization.'[22]

Although the 1989 Tiananmen pro-democracy demonstrations did not change the fundamental reform path China has followed since the end of the 1970s, the role of intellectuals in being the 'spiritual engineers' of the Chinese 'industrial era (1958-1989)' has indeed altered in its purpose. Specifically, changing interpretations and readings from Chinese intellectuals on the discourse of history and how to

Image 7.6 Wang Jin *Knocking on the Door* 1995

reconstruct Chinese historical memory indicate their precise new mission – to answer the question of the new relationship between China and the West, and tradition and modernity. By shaping and reshaping the discourse of history, Chinese intellectuals therefore intend to bring historical memory to bear upon the contemporary social issues that concern them. Meanwhile, the Party have begun sharing economic power with the intellectuals again as the result of this social movement. This sharing of economic power, however, is taking place within certain limits. It is apparent, for example, that the Party have re-examined the political environment, and have taken care to separate economic elements of freedom and democracy from the political before entering an era of new directions. Moreover, that political freedom granted at grassroots level has in the same way been carefully separated from that centrally held. [23]

An important point to be made, however, is that cultural verisimilitude directed through intellectuals has been successful in giving history a greater role in the understanding of human affairs and a way to understand a society. History to Chinese intellectuals is a collection of evidence on which theories can be tested, or a charter drawn up from which to justify present decisions. In turn, it can also be an efficient way to apprehend the spirit

of a community. Because of the practice of using history and culture to define a community by intellectuals, however, the confusions of history and culture could also become a challenge to cultural verisimilitude. Thus, the TV drama *Shi Lang* faces challenges from the perspectives of historicism and nationalism, and (importantly) these challenges are not only to Shi Lang's particular historical behaviours, but also to the cultural concerns which *Shi Lang* potentially shapes and redirects.

Clearly, the specific genre purpose of *Shi Lang* might propose only the individual judgements of the screenwriter or director on a specific political issue. However, the intrusion of individual political judgements on the historicist's position could contradict the readings of the historical past and their cultural value. In other words, the creation of *Shi Lang* is not the process of individuals creating genre texts, but a 'culturally activated function of texts that links them to a particular figure and system of knowledge … via broader contextual circulation.'[24] From this perspective, the Qing Dynasty and the achievement of Shi Lang in the eyes of the director, the screenwriter Zhang and Dr. Chen Ming are regarded as a significant step for the subsequent unification of China. Specifically, they use this TV drama as a political sword to shape and reshape current political consciousness. Thus, Shi Lang became the hero with the appropriate Chinese national spirit in this particular TV drama, even though to an extent he denied Confucian values and their centrality in Chinese society. This arbitrary and inconsistent reconstruction of his image has therefore been questioned as a proper historicist approach, as too has identifying the national past with current political disputes.

4. Truth or Simulation of Truth: Cultural Verisimilitude in the Genre of PHTD

It can be concluded, then, that the factional content of this genre mirrors the reality of contemporary China and thus represents a view of the outside (real) world. In other words, although fictional texts deal with imaginary content, they are nevertheless also embedded in the outside world. From this perspective, the relationship between fact and fiction demonstrates a political recognition which refers to the legitimacy of the one party society in China, rather than of a cultural identity.

4.1. Between Fact and Fiction: the Traditional Concept of 'History'

As seen, then, section 1 of Chapter V has shown the long tradition of pursuing the study of historical TV drama through its adaptation from full-length vernacular fiction. A discussion within the field of full-length vernacular fiction itself has also apparently been inherited by those critics who study the genre of PHTD, where the debate surrounds the relationship between fact and fiction.[25] In order to explore this relationship in the context of this TV genre, the first step, then, is to distinguish two important Chinese terms in relation to historical investigation: the study of history ('lishixue') and the textual study of historical records ('lishiwenbenxue'). Here, the words *history* and *text* traditionally cannot be separated, since the term *history* itself refers to a collection of events. Moreover, Chinese linguistics traditionally consider this term as a format of art.[26] Indeed, according to the Chinese literary and aesthetic narrative tradition, the most significant feature of this art is thus the creation of factional content through fictional texts. This literary tradition can be traced back to China's famous *Zuozhuan* (a commentary on the production of the historical records compiled between 722 BCE-468 BCE).[27] This tradition allows Chinese historians and writers to select, process, and adjust historical events in order to compose histories through the lens of moral values and cultural and political ideology.[28] Historical records are thus regarded as a literary genre in themselves, in contrast to other genres such as poetry or fictional prose in China rather than the objective written study of history. It is for this reason that such fictional texts often lead to ambiguity between reality and the use of assumption in interpreting that reality.

Specifically, this ambiguity (between reality and the simulation of that reality) lies in the following principal aspects: textual and linguistic concerns, and the percentage of factional content in a literary work as a whole. In line with the tradition of full-length vernacular fiction, then, these are concerns that come together to further impact upon the genre of PHTD. As a visual fusion of the historiographical tradition with the mythologising memory preserved in its narratives, therefore, PHTDs often deal with the personal sphere of historical figures and with the great historical events within which they have participated. As such, it is just this personal sphere that has often inflamed heated debate amongst Chinese critics examining the historical truth of these TV dramas.

Firstly, linguistic study of the term *vernacular fiction* in itself demonstrates how fiction reflects history, to the extent of often being called 'unofficial history' ('yeshi') by critics.[29] For instance, the literal meaning of the name *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*) is 'the Elaboration of the Meanings of the (records of the) Three Kingdoms', which 'implies adherence to or assimilation of official historiography.' In the same way, the title *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan*) carries echoes of 'biographies', 'arrayed traditions', or 'a standard category

in official historiography'. This is a proposition confirmed by Li, in his study of Chinese vernacular fictions, as follows: '[t]he conceit of recording "what actually happened" and the presumed filiations to the rhetoric and concerns of official historiography are most evident in the genre of historical fiction.'[30] Hence, when vernacular fiction has been in turn adapted into the genre of PHTD, literary characteristics may have also inspired TV producers to counterbalance their personal views with an attempt to commentate upon historical truth.

Secondly, in order to counterbalance factional content with fictional text, Chinese scholar Zhang Xuecheng (1739-1801) prompted the famous method of 'seven tenths of historical facts, three tenths of fictional arrangement' within the literary genre of vernacular fiction.[31] Inspired by vernacular fiction and Zhang's well-known 3-7 method, Chinese scholar Zeng Qingrui further proposed 'respect for three compulsory elements' ('sange biyaode zunzhong') and 'three rational creations' ('sange heli de xuguo') to structure the production of Chinese historical TV dramas after a forum held by CCTV in 1994 following the airing of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*,[32] as listed below:

1) Respect for historical reality.

2) Respect for official views.

3) Respect for the national sentiment of being Chinese.

Within the guardianship of these 'respect for three compulsory elements', then, producers can create their works within 'three rational creations'. This list includes the permission to recreate or reconstruct the following:

1) The historical set and atmosphere.

2) The details of historical events.

3) The emotions of historical figures.

Zeng's method is well demonstrated by the current Chinese historian and playwright Zhang, who employed the same formulae in *Shi Lang* and *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*. Indeed, the importance attached to these formulae became clear during my interview with Zhang. In particular, he claimed that locations and figures in history could not be changed except for romantic courtship and the kinship between major actors,[33] as depicted in *Kangxi,* for example, in the fictional love story between Kangxi and his female servant Sumalagu.

4.2. The Use of Cultural Verisimilitude in Blending Factional Content with Fictional Texts

Cultural verisimilitude, then, provides a practical method for how to fuse factional content with fictional texts. For example, in episode four of *Kangxi*, a fictional story is created in the form of a debate between the Buddhist monk Xingsen, the Emperor Shunzhi, and Buddhist master Yu Linxiu. As an answer to Yu's question of who is superior – Buddha or the Emperor – the Emperor Shuzhi responds that Buddha is the greatest in the universe. However, the master Yu then sighs, and points out that belief in the superiority of Buddha's royal power is in fact the greatest smokescreen in the universe, because imperial power is real in contrast to the illusory power of Buddhism. This story in fact implies something which is hidden 'somewhere else' through identifying an invisible fine line between religion and politics, which in turn acts as a bridge between the narrative of this TV drama and the reality of the real world. The story-line of this debate thus carries the profound implication that religions can never challenge the real political power of the authorities. To further unveil the political and social purpose underlying why this TV drama was produced, the Falun Gong religious movement of the 1990s in China needs be brought into the spotlight.[34] Falun Gong's religious belief heavily emphasises morality in its central tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance. When the number of believers continued to grow rapidly, its popularity began to touch a political nerve for the authorities. In 1999, the Party therefore acted to dismantle the legacy of Falun Gong with a nationwide crackdown and a multifaceted propaganda campaign against its practices. In setting this social and political event as the background, then, the storytelling strategy in this TV drama implicitly connects the effective narratives above with the outside (real) world of the contemporary political campaign.

Accordingly, in line with the explanation and examples given above, cultural verisimilitude acts as a method whereby genre language is created for certain effects.[35] The concept of cultural verisimilitude can also be interpreted by the well-known Chinese idiom—'jiegufengjin' (literally 'to use the past to compare with the present, or borrow an ancient lesson to criticize a current practice'). This well-known idiom, as Li Shengli sharply points out, actually demonstrates the embarrassing situation of Chinese writers' limited freedom to create modern stories reflecting contemporary social problems.[36] In other words, they are confined to the strategy of reconstructing history and (consequently) sometimes breaking with historical truth. Nevertheless, the genre of PHTD does successfully demonstrate a balance between the fictional and factional components, in

which Chinese intellectuals straightforwardly narrate historical figures or events but, at the same time, also combine this narrative with the current social and cultural consciousness.

As seen, then, it is through cultural verisimilitude that writers can grasp the opportunity to employ history in order to disparage the present, criticise a current practice, or demonstrate their political opinion. For example, in episode twenty-four of *Kangxi*, the director and screenwriter borrows the voice of the great-grandmother of the Emperor Kangxi—Empress Dowager Xiaozhuang—to speak of the importance of gaining the support of the ordinary people. In the story-line, she philosophically states, for instance, that a ruler can simply draw his territory onto a map, but that he can never draw into this map the will and support of his people; it is they who form the true foundation of the stability of a country. Thus, rulers should show humanity and kindness to their people. She continues with the political point that that even when it is seemingly rather easy to obtain the support of the common people, the ruler must nevertheless specifically show his respect and benevolence for the intellectual and elite classes. Clearly, we can thus in fact read into the fictionally created Empress Dowager Xiaozhuang's speech a political statement from contemporary Chinese intellectuals who wish to be seen as part of the political elite.

Here, it should likewise be noticed that cultural verisimilitude is not only used by Chinese intellectuals, but also employed by some Chinese political leaders in history. When they intend to make a contemporary political point, these political leaders also resurrect a centuries-old novel or a certain historical event by using the same method. For example, in 1975 Mao Zedong and his followers made a noisy if indirect assault upon Deng Xiaoping with relatively pragmatic economic ideas through headline-grabbing denunciations of the rebel leader Song Jiang, in the Ming novel *Water Margin*. These denunciations insist that Song Jiang was a 'capitalist' who had sold out his band of virtuous outlaws to the corrupt imperial court, implying that Deng's support for using some material incentives in economic production sold out to capitalism. As seen, then, this is an aesthetic methodology that evidently continues to play a significant public role in the twentieth century.

Thus, on the one hand, it emerges from the above analysis that the tradition of storytelling strategies in full-length vernacular provides a literary foundation to fuse different historical materials and current political perspectives into an aesthetic whole. On the other hand, fusing historical truth and historical assumptions in this way produces complexity, depth, and unresolved contradictions in many of the historical TV dramas discussed.

In this regard, Chinese critic Yang Wei lists a number of falsities in recent PHTD genre, and (as a consequence) devalues them as products intended for lowbrow culture.[37] Yang cites the false romance in *Kangxi* as a case in point, where the Emperor Shunzhi (the father of Emperor Kangxi) devotes himself to Buddism after the loss of his beloved; its authenticity is doubtful (Yang goes on to note) as no evidence can be found in historical records. Nevertheless, my proposition is that cultural verisimilitude in fact invokes nostalgia for national and cultural historical tradition, and an interest in modern media language and historical authenticity, opening up new avenues to connect past history to the present.

5. Multi-readings of Chinese Nationalism in Cultural Verisimilitude

It is intriguing that analysis of the historical figure of Shi Lang (with contradictory images presented in the two television dramas as discussed above) has now opened a debate about how Chinese intellectuals reconstruct historical memory. It can be concluded therefore that cultural verisimilitude provides them with a successful (although controversial) approach for layering historical reality onto various historical discourses on the stage of media production. In this section, therefore, the multi-readings of Chinese nationalism and the concept of Greater China in *Shi Lang* are considered through scrutiny of this reconstructed discourse and of how the historical reality of Shi recovering Taiwan is simulated as being true.

5.1. The Concept of Nationalism

Interesting in this regard is that on 25th March 2006, an anonymous internet user left a message on the website *Confucius Study Forum* ('Ruxue lianhe luntan'),[38] questioning the motivation for producing the television drama *The Great General Shi Lang*, citing the famous Chinese historian Luo Yaojiu from Xiamen University, as follows: 'just after 100 years since we have overridden the Qing Dynasty, Shi Lang, as well as Wu Sangui, and Hong Chengchou, have become a treasure-trove for Han traitors and their quislings. What is the reason for CCTV suddenly showing this historical television drama of the traitor Shi Lang?'[39] In responding to this message, the founder of the forum (Chen Ming) acknowledged that he was indeed the initiator of this historical TV drama,[40] but pointed out that there were two aspects regarding its possible interpretations. On the one hand, some accept the historical fact of the recovery of Taiwan, but reject the the affirming narration of Shi Lang as a historical figure and a national hero in this recovery. On the other hand, some regard Chen as a scholar from

a school of traitors to the Han people. The vital focus of the TV drama *Shi Lang* thus centres on the following questions: was Shi Lang a traitor of the Han? How can the Taiwan issue be faced appropriately? How can ethnic conflicts be counterbalanced?

The multi-layered ambiguities attached to the readings of the concept of nationalism, together with its possible different readings, therefore lie in precisely how the questions above are to be confronted: specifically, how restructuring the nation of China under the contexts of current political ideology and the modern hierarchy of values is to be carried out; and how the concept of the ethnic Han and the sentiment of being a Han is to be read.[41]

5.1.1. The Concepts and Distinctions between 'Guo' (country) and 'Tianxia' (all those under heaven)

Historically and geographically, China is a land of contrasts with many minor states alongside a large and powerful one. Within thousands of years of history, China has been constantly occupied by various different nationalities or ethnicities. This complicated historical factor is thus causing confusion for the Chinese with regard to their national identity.

According to the classical linguistic terms of China, there are no words which are equivalent to the term of *nation* in English. Nevertheless, this lack in the *concept* of nation does not mean that the Chinese are lacking in the sense of nationhood. In fact, the Han Chinese have a strong national consciousness, and exhibit nationalist behaviour when they are involved in conflicts with other ethnicities or nations, while the Chinese in general have a strong self-identity towards their cultural heritage and geographic territories. These subtleties can be compared to the two sides of a coin, which compose the basic sentiment of *being Chinese* and the Chinese nation. Interestingly, Chinese scholar Gu Yanwu[42] (1613-1682) divided this fundamental sentiment into two terms - 'tianxia' in Chinese (literally meaning 'all under heaven') and 'guo' (country). Specifically, the analysis contained in the chapter entitled *Zheng Shi* in Gu's famous work *Ri Zhi Lu* differentiates between 'wang guo' (subjugation of a country) and 'wang tianxia' (subjugation of 'those under heaven'). In this, the term 'wang guo' refers to the change of a particular dynasty or the system of a government body, while (in contrast) 'wang tianxia' is what he calls the subjugation of 'all under heaven', which actually means cultural extinction. Hence, according to Gu's theory, Chinese intellectuals should respond against cultural aggression and extinction, but

not to the change of a particular system of any government. Briefly, then, what concerns Gu in his work is the difference between cultural region and political terrain (cultural nationalism and irredentism respectively) the argument which is also central to that raised by the TV drama *Shi Lang*.

In this regard, during an interview the Neo-Confucian Chen listed a number of acceptable conditions in response to the unification of China. The ideal one for him would be unification under the rule of the Han Chinese; the second would be temporary separation with different government systems but both ruled under the same ethnic Han Chinese with the same goal of unification; the third would be rule by non-Han Chinese but involving unification. The worst government system, however, would be separation, ruled by different ethnicities of Han Chinese and non-Han Chinese.[43] As we can see from Chen's points as well as those raised in the narrative of *Shi Lang*, both highlight the full implications of irredentism, which intends to promote the annexation of territories based on the current or former presence of Chinese nationals residing within them, forming a state which composes most or the entire nation's members.

However, the exaggerated version of unification of the territory of China in *Shi Lang* is emphatically against the moral values of Confucianism, which focus on cultural rather than hereditary connections between Chinese ethnicities. In history, the official orthodoxy of Confucianism was deeply involved with politics, by reason of which its ethics became a universal yardstick for behaviour and ideas, and conducted the schools of thought and human relationships within Chinese society. The moral and political requirements of Confucianism were crystallised as 'Three Guiding Principles' ('san gang') and 'Five Constant Regulations' ('wu chang') (see sections 2.2.2. and 2.2.3. of Chapter V). These regulations are believed to be as constant and unchanging as natural laws, remaining the same for all time and guiding all other virtues. The hierarchy of moral values in Confucianism thus promotes common cultural regimes and allows people from different origins to assimilate into a nation. This traditional culture and moral values have existed in the consciousness of the Han Chinese for over 2,500 years.

Hence, the positive historical figure of Shi Lang created in this TV drama challenges traditional Confucianism by reason of his serious moral misbehaviours. Firstly, the figure of Shi Lang is described as a national hero who recovered Taiwan and thereby contributed to the unification of the whole of China in the Qing Dynasty. On the scale of moral values and virtues, however, he as a Han Chinese did not display righteous behaviour

towards (yi) his previous leader, and was not faithful (xin) to his own Han ethics in term of the Five Regulations of Confucian virtues. Nor did he subordinate himself to his ruler (the Ming Dynasty) according to the Three Guiding Principles. Therein lies a central conflict therefore between the virtues of righteousness and political power. The political force of the Qing dynasty thus made Shi Lang into a hero, but this concept of heroism cannot be accepted by the Confucian morality. In other words, this TV drama has morally failed in over-advocating short-sighted utilitarianism against its historical claims, and has therefore failed (in turn) to recognize the difference between irredentism and civic nationalism.

5.1.2. The Rival of Shi Lang: Multi-readings of the Historical Figure of Koxinga

In order to strengthen the understanding of irredentism and cultural nationalism of Han, I shall examine another important historical figure (Koxinga) who contrasts with Shi Lang. Koxinga is a well-recognised and famous national hero who lived in the late Ming Dynasty to the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. He was a military leader, and led his troops to attack the Dutch colonists at Taiwan in 1661, which effectively ended 38 years of Dutch rule in Taiwan. Later, Koxinga devoted himself to making Taiwan into a base for anti-Qing sympathizers in order to restore the Ming Dynasty (Han Chinese) to power. Koxinga is thus from any perspective a national hero, based on his restoration of the territory of Taiwan to the administrative control of the Han, and as an orthodox representative of cultural Confucianism against the barbarism of Manchu rule. He defeated the Dutch and kept the realm of Han unified, but, at the same time, did not betray his own ethnic group and held fast to the traditional

Image 7.7 Image in Zheng Chenggong Temple in Tainan, Taiwan

cultural values of the Han Chinese. Indeed, today, in coastal China (especially Fujian and Taiwan, and among overseas Chinese in South East Asia) Koxinga is actually worshipped as a god.

In respect of modern politics, Koxinga has become an interesting figure, as several opposing political forces have invoked him as a hero. Indeed, his historical narratives have frequently been interpreted to justify often conflicting motives and affiliations. He is considered as a national hero in Mainland China because he expelled the Dutch from Taiwan, and established Chinese rule over the island. Moreover, during the Japanese control of

Taiwan, Koxinga was honoured as a bridge between Taiwan and Japan for his maternal linkage to Japan. The Chinese Nationalist Party in Taiwan regards him as a patriot who retreated to Taiwan and used it as base to launch counter-attacks against the government of Qing Dynasty on the mainland. As such, the Nationalists have frequently compared Zheng to their own leader. Supporters of Taiwan independence have historically held mixed feelings toward Zheng. But recent Taiwanese Independence supporters have presented him in a positive light, portraying him as a native Taiwanese hero seeking to keep Taiwan independent from the Mainland Chinese government.

At the present time, the delicate relations between Taiwan and Mainland China start from the division between ideology and self-identity based on shared culture and moral values. The representation and multi-readings of certain historical figures relating to this delicate relationship are therefore a cause-and-effect of this contemporary social and political relationship between Taiwan and the Mainland. Koxinga's family has been honoured by the Taiwanese for hundreds of years, to which the 150 Koxinga temples in Taiwan testify. The positive commentary on the figure of Shi Lang clearly caused huge disagreement with the Taiwanese therefore, with the result that some Mainland intellectuals were worried that this reconstruction of a historical figure would lead to negative effects. Specifically, the vivid image reconstructed in this TV drama could cause moral hostility from the Taiwanese by comparing the current Chinese government to the system of government experienced under the Qing Dynasty.

5.2. Han Ethnocentrism or Han Nationalism: a Dilemma in Reading the Concept of the Chinese Nation

In addition to the ambiguous concept of irredentism discussed above, the reading of Han ethnicity is also closely tied in with cultural Confucianism. This ethnicity initially refers to blood kinship based on hereditary connections which are found in human nature at the level of instinctive behaviour. Because of this blood kinship, then, Han ethnicity was bound up together with its heritage. However, with the changing historical and political circumstances in modern times, the Han Chinese began to look for historical, cultural and economic contexts in order to expand to beyond their ethnicity and blood kinship heritage. Interestingly, Chinese critic Shi Yong has pointed out sharply in this regard that Chinese intellectuals must be wary of the

racism inherent in Han ethnocentrism. Instead, he rightly emphasises that the basis should be one of civic nationalism, meaning a shared cultural heritage and civilization, not one of ethnic nationalism.[44]

Historically, then, the Han Chinese are concerned about people relationships, especially through kinship ties. Informed by life experience, the concept of family is thus a ready-made structure, which in turn translates into political structure. For example, the word 'country' in Chinese is 'guojia', which is literally composed of two characters: *nation* ('guo') and *family* ('jia'). The word 'guojia' is the ideal political reference, and has endured throughout the ages as objects of supreme emotion and loyalty. A good example of this are the so- called 'Descendants of Yan Di (Yan Emperor) and Huang Di' (Yellow Emperor) and the 'Descendants of the Dragon'. The kinshp to Han Chinese may be fictive (meaning no real genetic relationship) but is nevertheless believed to exist ethnically. People within a 'guojia' are thus expected to act (and be cared for) as family members, not as civil citizens, and hence ready to sacrifice themselves for their family and motherland (as seen in section 2.2.5, Chapter V).

As will be understood from this historical background, nationalism puts great emphasis on the idea of the nation as a larger unit of the family in China. Factually, then, the Han Chinese, have significantly contributed to the Chinese culture, representing one of its key components. Furthermore, as seen, this is a culture that has been greatly influenced by Confucianism. These defining influences partly explain the fact of boycotting Manchu control during the Qing Dynasty when Chinese nationalists overthrew the monarchy, thus upholding the Han Chinese identity in contrast to the minority rulers. An important point to be made therefore is that this boycott occurred at both ethnic and civic levels at that time, demonstrating that the Chinese people self-value themselves as being Han Chinese based on their cultural heritage and ethnic kinship.

Evidently, as shown in the previous chapters, one of the most significant features demonstrated in the genre of PHTD is the advocacy and celebration of the civic nationalism of the Han culture. The current intellectual and political trend in reconstructing Chinese history today is therefore to place greater emphasis on just this cultural aspect rather than upon Han ethnicity. This emphasis in turn signifies that any minority ethnicities in Greater China who adopt Han Chinese culture can be regarded as Chinese (the 'Descendants of the Dragon'), a moral logic that becomes the fundamental sentiment of *Shi Lang*. Significantly, during my interview with the screenwriter Zhang, he spoke to me in this regard, using the concept of 'Chineseness', claiming that it is wrong

to judge a national hero by judging whichever imperial court he served: whether Han Chinese, Manchu or Mongolian – all are Chinese. A changing dynasty does not therefore mean a change in whether or not one is Chinese. Equally importantly, he further emphasised that his view that only those who betray China to other nations such as America or Japan, for example, should be regarded as traitors.[45]

Thus, the point being made here is that Zhang expressed to me during interview an explicit message concerning Han culture, which matches Chen's viewpoint discussed above. An awareness of moving away from non-Han culture towards acceptance of the Han ideology in its *Chineseness* should be the hallmark of Chinese nationalism.[46] This awareness can be explained as a kinship selection, which 'is not the same as "group selection", as Kellas observes: […] there is no hard-and-fast boundary involved between groups of mating individuals, as might be found between ethnic groups or nations.'[47] In other words, the difference from the past (when kinship relations were the basis for those belonging to the Chinese nation) has now become a serious issue in modern China. It is important to note, for example, that during the Qing Dynasty, the ethnic Manchu were thought of as barbarians by the Han Chinese. In contrast, the ethnic Manchu nowadays have become an integral part of the 'Descendants of the Dragon' and are therefore cultural kin to Han Chinese, who are significantly different from the Japanese, the Koreans or of course the Americans.

This viewpoint of kinship selection as the basis for Han culture and its cultural heritage offers a window onto the world of current politics. To be precise, nationalism is a combination of biological ethnocentrism, psychological ingroup/outgroup hostile propensities, and cultural and political differences. There are, however, specific conditions which distinguish groups based on generic rather than cultural differences. Moreover, there is a sufficient condition that distinguish groups on a genetic basis (as against cultural identity) which is only partly a spontaneous feeling which people experience. Rather, this feeling relates to the position they have in society. Manchus are not Han Chinese in term of their biology or ethnicity, for example. With regard to its culture, however, there were great differences from the established orthodox ideology of Confucianism in past Han empires. Nevertheless, we can see traces of the current PHTD constantly highlighting how the Qing Dynasty adopted Han culture, and identify themselves as part of the Han group. This identifying may or may not be accepted by some Chinese, but acceptance does usually lead to dual or multiple identities, especially when a historical national identity is overlaid with a contemporary political status such as citizenship or with a new national identification derived from the state and the official nation. Where this consciousness is adapted

into the TV drama, *Shi Lang* thus represents the tacit concepts of Han Chinese ('han zu') and Chinese ('zhongguo ren'). Whether or not the loyalty of Shi Lang is to the Han Chinese or to the Chinese is not therefore clearly identified.

5.3. Chinese Nationalism: a Power Tool for a Political Ideology

The TV drama *Shi Lang,* then, encourages a non-peaceful solution towards the unification of Chinese nation, and challenges the concepts of Chinese nationalism through the approach of being a Han ethnic, belief in the culture of Confucianism and its territory. This TV drama therefore bears witness to the confusion and ambiguity experienced by Chinese intellectuals in facing the reconstruction and re-interpretation of Chinese historical memory under the contemporary political context. It is interesting in this regard that Breuilly's perspective on Chinese nationalism gives clarity to the purely political, in contrast to the cultural ambiguities above. Such nationalism is (he notes) 'a state of mind, as the expression of national consciousness, as a political doctrine elaborated by intellectuals'.[48] Thus, in his view, no matter what the interpretation of nationalism may be, its fundamental basis primarily is from a political perspective and hence bonded with political power. Nationalism thus plays a major role in the pursuit of obtaining and using state power in contemporary China.

The genre narrative and its relationship to the institution of this TV drama have consequently demonstrated how nationalism operates and what it is about contemporary politics in China that makes nationalism so important. In answering the questions thereby raised, we are able to consider the contributions of culture, ideology, class and much else in relation to *Shi Lang,* as seen. Nevertheless, as Breuilly points out, there are three bases that need to be considered here on which nationalist arguments of purely political doctrine are built:

- That there exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character;
- That the interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values;
- That the nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty.[49]

While it may be the case that nationalists often see their own nation as simply one amongst many, if we apply Breuilly's three bases to reading Han/Chinese nationalism, multi-readings of the concept of nationalism portrayed in *Shi Lang* are driven by a similar condition of being under the sovereignty of the Chinese

contemporary governmental system, which is under one party (the Chinese Communist Party – CCP). In line with the second of Breuilly's bases above, then, the interests and values held by the CCP thus take priority over all other interests and values. It is significant therefore that the sensitive political background between the Mainland China and Taiwan as the political background also of this TV drama becomes logical and reasonable in the light of such priorities.

Thus, what *Shi Lang* mirrors precisely is Mainland China's strategic plan for shared culture and moral values with the Chinese in Taiwan and overseas, instituted under the previous regime of President Jiang Zemin. The difficulty here, however, is the fact that the political ideologies held by the different political regions behind the concept of nationalism are distinctive. In other words, it is proposed that Mainland China needs to seek cultural similarities with Taiwan, Hong Kong and other Asian countries in order to break down the estrangement between the different government systems of a one-party state and democracy. It is important therefore to make the point that the neo-Confucian culture proposed by Mainland China is in direct contrast to its existing political ideology. Thus, we see through the example of *Shi Lang* that nationalists do not necessarily behave fairly, nor can their beliefs be applied with logical standards to political ideologies, as Kellas observes: 'Nationalist ideology can be left-wing, right-wing, constructive of new states or destructive of existing states. It can protect or destroy freedom, establish peace or lead to war.'[50]

In addition, the multi-readings of the concept of nationalism discussed above manipulate the construction of the Chinese nation-state encouraged by the Party. Under this one party leadership on Mainland China, the official ideology is 'Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory', as approved by the National Party Congress on September 1997, and as (since that time) guides the actions of its constitution. This official ideology intends to strengthen the building of a spiritual socialist civilisation of love for the motherland, for the people, for labour, for science and for socialism. Moreover, it is an ideology that seeks to educate the people in patriotism, collectivism, internationalism, communism, and in dialectical and historical materialism. This ideology is further believed to combat what are considered to be the decadent ideas of capitalism and feudalism and other, similar schools of thought. From a practical point of view, there are two intended targets, as Michael Keane notes: firstly, a standard which purports to represent an ultimate human nature, which is socialist, and allows culture to perform its task of raising the 'spiritual level ('jingshen

183

shuiping'). Secondly, cultural activities are used, along with other mechanisms and strategies, with the intention of resolving imbalances and abnormalities within society.' [51]

As seen, then, following the 1989 Tian'anmen Movement, the Chinese government has become especially resistant to any ideology that appears to have links to what it perceives as bourgeois notions of democracy. Instead, the Party has consistently emphasised the idea of a CCP-led direction. Thus, rather than looking outward for political and cultural inspiration, we see that the Chinese government has now begun to search inside China's pre-Communist past. As a result, Jiang started his campaign of traditional Chinese virtues, openly identifying Confucius as one of China's great thinkers and ruling that Chinese people must thoroughly study his fine ideals and carry them into the future. Jiang's remarks therefore seemingly demonstrate that the Party is attempting to merge the current official ideology with traditional culture. In September of 1994, for example, the People's Daily (the biggest national and governmental news agency in China) co-sponsored a conference of *The Thought of Confucius and the Twenty-First Century* which sought to show the compatibility between Confucian values such as diligent study, industriousness, loyalty, good faith and ritually correct behaviours, and the present regime's political and cultural agenda.

It is intriguing therefore that after this conference, some Chinese scholars quickly joined the chorus, and put forward the theory of the Confucianisation of Marxism-Leninism. The best example of this process was a speech President Jiang gave at Harvard University on 1st November 1997, in which he was careful not to mention the official ideology of Marxism; instead he emphasized the 5000-year long history of China and the great cultural advances and achievements made in science and technology. This rekindled appreciation of China's past has prompted the government to sponsor the establishment of societies for national studies; to promote patriotism by celebrating China's special characteristics; and to seek to encourage harmony throughout society. Thus, although concern for the concept of Chinese nationalism (either irredentism or Confucian moral values) appears to be purely cultural, the basis behind it is seemingly nevertheless political, particularly when examined in terms of Breuilly's analysis above.

However, the TV drama *Shi Lang* may not necessarily be concerned with the consequences of this political campaign. But it is clear evidence of the existence of a certain national consciousness and of concerns with historical-territorial concepts of the current nation. As seen from previous analyses, the concept of a national

territory is very different to one that is ethnic in conception, tending to transfer the criterion of identity from people (the ethnic conception) to places. As a consequence, the place, the national territory, becomes a shorthand term for a complex network of ideas relating to the nation. What these ideas are can therefore only be worked out by considering the claims that are made in relation to the national territory. Here, the term *being Chinese* or *Chineseness* has become set up as an artificial moral boundary. Hence, the concept of nation in this TV drama therefore refers to the national territory, but does not in any way shape the values and actions of those who hold power.

With regard to identifying Chinese nationalism, it is to be noted that the current Chinese authority has made little reference to a distinct cultural identity to justify their claims. On the one hand, the state's support for Chinese tradition can be explained by its desire to draw upon the wellsprings of national pride at a time of political uncertainty, and to distance itself from both the radical iconoclasm of the Maoist era and the more recent critiques of Chinese civilization levelled by intellectuals. On the other hand, the fact remains of a growing sense that a return to traditional virtues might help China in its time of spiritual crisis, when market-inspired greed and corruption appear to be rampant throughout the Mainland. Perhaps the most important reason for the state's inward search is to seek a belated recognition of Chinese tradition as against Western-inspired modernisation, as Breuilly observes: '[m]odern anti-colonial movements have seen themselves in relation to an allegedly superior Western culture and have sought to counter it by elaborating accounts of their own, non-western cultures. This conception of an indigenous culture is used in part to underpin political claims.'[52] An example of this kind of strategy is apparent in Jiang's public championing of traditional Chinese virtues in 1997 in his speech to the 15th Communist Party Congress, when he urged the following: '[it is] imperative that we should uphold and improve this fundamental political system, instead of copying any Western models.'

Thus the political message embodied in *Shi Lang* reflects Jiang's thought, suggesting a kind of xenophobia under the pressure of globalization. Hence, despite reform and the open door policy, the Chinese government are seemingly seeking to re-establish their own identity as a way of facing challenges from the outside. This process is apparently happening across all fields, where there appears to be an attempt to rethink history with the intention of seeking the value of *being Chinese* as a nation. It is important to note, however, that here, nationalism as pitched by the Party can refer to extending the territory of the state into areas which are believed

to belong to it, such as Taiwan. At the same time, nationalist actions have been directed by the CCP against specific groups or individuals such as those who are anti- or non- Han national activists.

To sum up, then, the genre of PHTD encodes both fictional and factual content. The TV drama *Shi Lang* has examined the notion of Chinese national identity, finding this concept to be fused with the term of loyalty. There are often multiple readings of these identities such as irredentism, ethno-nationalism, or cultural nationalism. Thus, an important point to make is that although identity and behaviour are partly genetic, they are also configured by the context and choice. In terms of politics, however, they are resources waiting to be used by politicians and their supporters for their own advantage. Put another way, although *being Chinese* is a vital dimension of this national identity, the risk is that politics may subvert this dimension into the basis for nationalism.

6. Chapter Conclusion: Nation – a Cultural or Political Phenomenon?

In chapters IV and V, I have focused my attention on the study of genre with regard to the definition, purpose, conventions, and the codes of content in PHTD. It has been shown that by looking into the genre narratives, a genre territory can be established through the following considerations: how PHTD tells stories, and how those stories engage with Chinese sociocultural contexts. As well as tracing its history, the study has further stepped into the realms of generic verisimilitude and generic hybridity in Chapter VI. In this chapter, I have chosen the focus of the concept of nationalism as an ideology through which to study the genre texts and the political, historical and cultural contexts of the TV drama *Shi Lang*. The chapter began with a series of reviews based on my interview with the director and screenwriter of *Shi Lang*, which confirm the very specific genre purpose in producing this individual dramatic material: the study therefore concludes that its production was driven by particular political and global contexts. Following this analysis, I have distinguished between the records of this historical figure, the input of star icons in *Shi Lang* and a second TV drama entitled *Kangxi*, one part of which narrates the same story-line. In this, I have investigated the key role played by Chinese intellectuals in implementing changes in input, and thus reconstructing the memory of Chinese history. I have then examined the intellectual traditions that govern how they exercise historical interpretation in order to mirror the contemporary realities. The central research undertaken in this chapter therefore lies in just this difference

between reality and simulating that reality, and (in turn) how fictional texts and factional contexts can be counterbalanced.

In this regard, the concept of Chinese nationalism has become the focus of the case of *Shi Lang*, which provides a straightforward sample for studying cultural verisimilitude not only in this case, but also with application to the whole genre of PHTD. It can be seen that Chinese nationalism might appear culturally simple: from a societal perspective, China is a nation; it has its own government; the government represents the nation-state; and the demand for statehood is rooted in the national spirit. In order to interpret the concept of Chinese nation, then, the realm of history has become a form of shorthand to demonstrate the achievements and frustrations of forming a nation. In this, the concept of nation has been visually represented in *Shi Lang*, but (importantly) this is a concept that engenders multiple readings. Verisimilitude in this TV drama narrative from culture to politics is created by portraying the nation at one moment as a cultural community, and at the next moment as a political community. National identity as given here is demonstrated, however, as a pseudo-solution to the problem of the relationship between state and society, with its plausibility being shown as also driven by the intellectual in responding to this task.

I have proposed that the appeal of this pseudo-solution is that it enables the nationalist to construct from various practices and sentiments so as to contribute to the idea of a national identity prevailing in a particular territory, and further to transform this idea into a political claim. The ambiguities between culture and politics, society and state, and private and public, thus give the TV drama *Shi Lang* access to a whole range of sentiments, idioms and practices, which are then turned into the values underlying political action. The concept of national identity is thus applied in this TV drama (and in this genre) in order to exercise the existing political values in a new way and to enhance their political significance. I have suggested that this emphasis on cultural similarity and identity has particular advantages in a situation where it is possible to mobilise mass support or collaborate with Chinese intellectuals for achieving political goals. In a global context, therefore, *Shi Lang* as well as this entire genre offers a window on the world through national self-determination. Culture is further added to legitimacy, which in turn helps to provide the basis of support for a nationalist movement that stakes its particular claim to state power credibility.

Last but not least, national identity has its roots in intellectual responses to the modern problem of the relationship between state and society. This response in *Shi Lang* (above all in the form of historicism) was a serious attempt to deal with the problem and to rebuild what are seen as the falsehoods of analysis based on allegedly universal standards of reason, then turned into ideology by means of notions such as authenticity and teleology, at the same time combining in a powerful but illogical way with purely political values. The net result in this TV drama was to transform certain important ways of understanding human affairs into a type of political ideology which is beyond critical examination. At the same time the historicist concern with history and popular culture was channelled into various symbolic and ceremonial forms. These had a particularly powerful appeal because of their quality of self-reference and the way they took existing sentiments and actions and transmuted them into political ideology. This appeal in turn was grounded upon the claim to link cultural distinctiveness with the demand for political self-determination. Such claims had to be related to specific interests and only worked in particular sorts of political situations. Furthermore, no particular element within this ideology can be automatically regarded as decisive among supporters. But, with these qualifications, ideology can still be regarded as a powerful force which was essential in the work of co-ordination, mobilisation and adding legitimacy to what was carried out by a national movement.

Conclusion

Towards a New Confucian China

As my study comes to its conclusion, then, it will be seen that the Chinese TV drama industry has developed rapidly over the last four decades, as discussed in detail in the previous chapters of the investigation. Indeed, China is currently one of the biggest producers and consumers in this area of media production. At the present time, those dramas domestically produced cover various genres such as detective, police or hospital series, Revolution-based dramas, and period or costume pieces. As shown, one of the principal findings to emerge from this investigation is the constant developing and reshaping that has taken place across these genres during the period analysed, in order to accommodate particular cultural, ideological, and moral values in the changing political and social contexts of contemporary China.

We have likewise noted a second important finding that the academic study of Chinese TV drama has lagged behind writer-researcher scholarship in America and the West, even though the industry of Chinese TV Drama itself is flourishing, as above. It is of interest that scholars from Mainland China are more likely to focus on the areas of technology or textual analysis, for example. It is in order to rectify this currently undeveloped approach to studying TV drama in China, then, that this PhD thesis has proposed the genre of PHTD as a research mechanism with which to investigate this genre through its complex definitions, conventions and generic and cultural verisimilitudes. The point being made is that applying the new approach proposed to the scrutiny of the PHTD genre has revealed a holistic picture of Chinese TV production that opens out to incorporate the intellectual and political forces which effectively drive this genre.

A further point to be made is that my period research of research has been a long one, dating back to 2005. It will be seen from my study that during this long research period, both China and its TV industry have changed dramatically. For example, television has progressed technically to incorporate digital services as well as internet and mobile-based platforms. In responding to these changes and challenges presented domestically and globally, the Chinese authorities have therefore in turn adapted their policy on TV drama, in ways that have caused the emergence of new issues. While these are issues which (to an extent} have challenged my initial research plan, on the other hand, the changes investigated have also provided me with a unique opportunity to

examine the development of the Chinese TV industry and the genre of PHTD in particular across fluid and fluctuating political and historical contexts.

In this concluding chapter, my overall aim is to summarise my scrutiny of the PHTD genre as well as to raise a series of questions for future and further research. First of all, I begin with a summary of the value of my doctoral research, to include the genre features inherent to PHTD which highlight the significance of this study. In order to do so, I will evaluate my research by revisiting the following issues:

- How can a genre be researched in the light of Chinese political and cultural contexts?
- What is new in this thesis for the study of the PHTD genre?

This revisiting will demonstrate that a number of questions raised in my research remain unanswered, which await further investigation. These questions result from the fact that a genre study of Chinese TV has not yet been undertaken in detail. These unanswered questions will hopefully attract other scholars who might wish to work with me to push forwards the frontiers of genre study, and, in particular, to take forwards the study of the PHTD genre.

1. The Value of Researching the PHTD Genre

As detailed earlier, the research procedure began with the initial collection of raw data and materials, then (subsequently) the cross-referencing of this data with the administrative policy of SARFT in the final stages of written analysis. In terms of using the method of genre as an approach to the analysis of PHTD, the investigation has therefore consisted of two main research hypotheses: firstly, the validity of genre as a methodological approach to *generic* television studies and (secondly) that applying this approach to PHTD provides a valuable tool for the holistic investigation of the political and cultural implications of the movement towards Neo-Confucianism in contemporary China. Accordingly, it has been seen that genre study is still a new theory for scholars in China, in contrast to its relatively long history in the West. It is hoped therefore that a study of this kind may open the way for Chinese scholars to build upon the research carried out. Such scholarly development has become all the more important since I began this research, given that even more TV programmes with clear genre features have now emerged in the Chinese TV industry, including examples such as the recent highly

popular reality shows, talk shows, and quiz shows. It is suggested that these newly emerging TV forms, have (to an extent) been influenced by the global TV industry. The important point to be made here therefore is that such newly noted forms underscore the increasing value of ongoing investigation and analysis of television genres.

As seen, the thesis began with the proposition of applying genre as a method in studying Chinese TV drama. In this, the two aspects of genre *text* and *institution* taken from Lacey's tripartite model for defining a genre (section 2, Chapter I) have provided a useful structural lens through which to examine the texts produced in the complex political and economic system of China, and how these texts have been processed in this singular cultural context. Of specific interest has been Lacey's understanding of genre within these two aspects; his corresponding discourse, for example, speaks of 'an interconnected network of user groups and their supporting institutions, each using the genre to satisfy its own needs and desires'.[1] Thus, selectively applying Lacey's model to the specific cultural and political contexts of China has opened the way to situating genre within its microcosm and wider macrocosm, thus providing support for the later scrutiny of the generic and cultural verisimilitudes of the genre under investigation.

With the help of the theoretical framework set up in Chapters I and II, then, my research has focused on the genre of PHTD in order to demonstrate how this genre has engaged with the revived concept and ideology of patriarchal Confucian society. In this, I have investigated the production, censorship, and genre definition of PHTD as well as providing a detailed analysis of the genre's structure and narratives. These are telling analyses that contribute to the political and cultural discourse at work in the creation of this genre which (as seen) increasingly entwines modern Chinese nationalism and traditional Confucianism.

To summarise the value of my research in studying the genre of PHTD, the following three main issues are pinpointed.

1.1. Testing the Methodological Application of Genre Study to Chinese TV dramas

Referring back across the structure of the thesis in its entirety, chapter I historically and literarily reviews genre theory and analysis, while chapter II further structures the method through applying the lens of genre to the specific Chinese TV drama of PHTD. In later chapters, this research focus concentrates particularly upon genre definitions (chapter IV); genre conventions and the codes of content (chapter V); and generic and cultural verisimilitudes (chapters VI and VII). Hence, very specifically, the theory of genre in the two aspects of

institution and *text* provides the theoretical framework for my study of PHTDs. In other words, the application of genre in recurring formulaic patterns is regarded as a *process* rather than a classical stereotype or inflexible category. It is for this reason that I have adapted the concept of television genre from the West in order to counterbalance it with an investigation of the research tradition of Chinese scholars. A further telling finding to emerge here is that these scholars exclusively devote their academic attention to the analysis of norms, while I have instead (importantly) regarded genre as a *cluster*. In other words, I have studied the genre of PHTD through the approaches of definition and interpretation, combining these various aspects across political and cultural forces, genre texts, propaganda, and intellectual functions.

The value of applying the theory of genre in this thesis therefore lies in projecting an overall view of specific PHTDs. In other words, the application of genre means this research no longer focuses on one exclusive area, but intends to unpick the relationship between this media text and the social-ideological, political, cultural and intellectual realities where this media phenomenon functions.

1.2. Exposing the Unique Features of the PHTD Genre

In this regard, chapters I and II have focused on the rationale for applying Western television genre studies to Chinese TV dramas, while chapter III provides the background knowledge for a fuller understanding of the current Chinese television industry in itself. Chapters IV and V have further exercised genre theory in analysing the specific category of PHTD, providing a review of the features unique to this genre. Chapter VII then provides a case study for working out those theories. The main contribution of my study to the burgeoning work on Chinese media is, therefore, to propose a new way of approaching the scrutiny of PHTDs.

In this, the role of Chinese intellectuals (and the relationship between this group and the state) are particularly developed and discussed in chapters III, IV and VII. Through these studies, it emerges that Chinese intellectuals seem to act both as poachers and gamekeepers, meaning that they play a key role in contributing to the development of PHTD as well as challenging political power and shaping the direction of this genre.

Referring back to the research tradition of Chinese scholars and those in the West (as seen in section 3 of chapter I), it will be seen that the current focus of Chinese television studies is either on the area of political and cultural studies, or on the area of isolated textual analysis. In contrast, the value of the present research lies in

seeing genre in terms of clusters, which leads in turn to examining the unique features of PHTDs from a an all-embracing and holistic perspective.

As seen, then, this concept of the genre cluster opens the way to including textual analysis as well as incorporating the larger scale of political, historical, and cultural contexts of China. The research focus of chapters IV and V is therefore from the perspective of traditional analyses of genre, and (in turn) upon the textual studies of the PHTD genre in order to question definitions, interpretations and history. Accordingly, in chapter VI and VII, I then examine the cluster as a discursive construction, with the help of Mittell's five principles of cultural genre analysis, as follows:

1) Genre analyses should account for particular attributes of the medium;

2) Genre studies should negotiate between specificity and generality;

3) Genre histories should be written using discursive genealogies;

4) Genre should be understood as cultural practice;

5) Genre should be situated within larger systems of cultural hierarchies and power relations.[2]

Through the lens of Mittell's five principles, then, section 2.1 of chapter V examines the concept of genre purpose in order to determine the *rationale* of this genre production. This examination is taken further in chapter VI, where the generic verisimilitude noted as present in the PHTD genre is used a tool to scrutinise generic similarity and its hybridity across other TV genres. In contrast, in chapter VII it is found that genre is a cultural product, and that the unique genre features identified between fictional text and factional context emerge as the core basis for investigating the cultural verisimilitude of this genre. This exploration of generic and cultural verisimilitude (as well as the study of norms and genre conventions) demonstrates that the genre of PHTD is exercised within a larger system of cultural and political hierarchies, and that this genre is itself a production of the changing nature of power in contemporary China. In the light of this finding, the study of this genre then moves to the analysis of its relation to power within the political hierarchy in which it is situated.

The thesis uses a number of case studies in order to verify the two hypotheses given in the introduction and re-stated above. In particular, the final case study of the TV drama *Shi Lang* in chapter VII not only helps to explore cultural verisimilitude, but also provides an opportunity to work through other issues discussed in

chapters IV and V, such as full-length vernacular fiction, genre purpose, convention and codes of content. Chapter VII then develops the investigation from a three-fold perspective: the first of these is the political and historical background for the production of this TV drama; secondly, following on this background discussion, textual analysis leads on to scrutiny of the political and intellectual power behind the TV drama industry; thirdly and lastly, the critical debate surrounding Chinese nationalism is revealed to validate the generality of the deeper implications that emerge across this genre.

1.3. About the Chinese Nation: the Purpose and Signification of the PHTD Genre

The methodological application of television genre theory to the analysis, then, has laid the theoretical foundations for studying Chinese TV drama in this thesis. Through the lens of the concept of genre, PHTD represents the research target of the thesis, in the sense that investigation of its texts and institutions opens the door to a fuller understanding of the genre purpose and significance, as well as the political, cultural and intellectual forces that empower its successes.

In this, one of the explicit aims of the thesis has been to focus on a specific genre study that employs a textual approach in order to situate the genre itself within the larger systems of power relationships in the Chinese context, in line with Altman's point that a genre in fact behaves like a nation, given that:

> [n]either genre nor nation is a single coherent concept referring to a single coherent referent. The very notions of genres and nation depend on constant conflict among multiple competing but related notions, based on diverse user needs and varied parameters.[3]

In brief, then, this analysis of the PHTD genre has enabled us to further apprehend the discourses of China as a nation. Chapter IV in particular has examined the moral and political orientations of this genre, which are shaped and directed by the political events in contemporary China, as well as the forces which follow: the multi-messages of the cultural heritage of Han; the desire for government that is emphatically anti-corruption; and the moral value of sacrifice for the nation – all these complexities are addressed and given bodily and dialogical form in this genre. This powerful narrative has created a national sentiment of sacrifices and tragedies which leads to celebrate the joy of witnessing national achievement and a patriotic self-expansion of being Chinese.

In brief, then, the genre of PHTD has served as a means of projecting the changing political and economic landscape of China during the last four decades. For example, under constant shaping and reshaping by the political administration of SARFT, it will be seen that the genre purpose underlying PHTD concerns the increasing significance of Confucianism,[4] signifying (in turn) that this genre is a favourite vehicle through which to convey the current orthodoxy of nationalism and Confucianism.[5]

Specifically, it is the narrative of PHTDs which implicitly advertises this favoured orthodoxy in ways which fit with the political purposes of the current state authorities. The intent is that the twin notions of nationalism and Confucianism should combine to mask the covert building of a patriarchal society. As seen, however, these are re-evaluated political tactics to ensure that the Party maintains the central power and leadership of the country, as demonstrated in the analysis of genre conventions and language in Chapter V, and through the case study of *Shi Lang* in Chapter VII.

In the same way, the analysis of the particular genre purpose (see Chapter V) and of cultural verisimilitude (see Chapter VII) mirrors this changing political discourse in China, as scholars Ge and Zhou comment:

> [those television dramas] advocate the rule of individual, class division, kin relationship [people network]; they infuse a message of the power of sage leadership, in other words, if we have a sage leader, every problem will be solved, and any illegal and violent authoritarianism then become an anthem, which is indeed and totally against the modern civilization of democracy and legality.[6]

The consistent focus on sage leadership in the genre of PHTD is indeed closely tied to the notion of social hierarchy. It will also be seen that the scholarly opinion expressed above confirms the scrutiny of codes of content, as carried out in Chapter V. From this perspective, the PHTD genre as a whole becomes a process of representation in producing cultural and political signification. In other words, the genre is driven by political forces which are in turn bound up with power relationships. Thus, the genre of PHTD is in this sense a tool for reinforcing the notion of a patriarchal society, following the economic reform of the 1980s. In brief, then, traditional social mechanics have entered a period of transition given the impact of the new economic system, which in turns cause new ways of thinking. Since 1989, these new schools of thought have caused in turn not only intellectual change but also intellectual divisions between scholars, writers, and so on, as seen in Chapter V.

New intellectual, economic and political forces thus act contiguously as powerful tool in controlling potential social conflict and maintaining the status quo.

In summary, then, three main issues have been dealt with (and focused upon) in my doctoral research. Through the lens of genre as a methodological tool, I have investigated the particular genre of PHTD by examining its narratives and production, which in turn has revealed the underlying political power network discussed above. As seen, this network includes the relationship between the state and the intellectual classes; the new propaganda of neo-Confucianism and nationalism; and the nature of patriarchal society in contemporary China. An important point to be made in this regard is that the appropriacy of the theoretical framework of genre has made possible the depth and complexity of the research. However, I am conscious that the nature of such a research project could lead to more questions than can be addressed fully within a single doctoral thesis, and will for this reason put forwards below those questions worthy of further research attention.

2. Proposed Questions for Future Research

As seen, the concluding evaluation at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates the methodological validity of the concept of genre as a tool for the analysis of a particular group of Chinese TV dramas. This is a methodological theory, moreover, that recommends a practical approach to the scrutiny of PHTDs in particular, and that (as shown) opens out to encompass the complex realities of contemporary China. However (as I have consistently emphasised) my research focus has been upon only two important components of Lacey's tripartite relationships of a genre; namely, *text* and *institution*. Hence, although the study of audience is also crucial to the investigation of genre, it does however fall outside the scope of this thesis. In this section, I therefore recommend below four future research questions which I have either only lightly touched upon, or have not mentioned. Specifically, it is hoped that those questions raised might inspire others to take forwards the study of genre in the Chinese television industry.

2.1. A Genre Approach for the Study of Other Chinese TV Programmes

As discussed earlier, it has been an important part of my aim to adapt from well-known Western theories those concepts of genre that enable me to study in the Chinese context a certain type of TV drama on a far-reaching

scale. Thus, PHTDs as my chosen research target have been examined through a cluster of discursive practices in texts and industries under the specific political, historical, and cultural contexts currently seen in contemporary China. The value of studying the PHTD genre using the methodology set out above is therefore to open up a window that connects the understanding of these contemporary realities with the interpretation of the unique relationship between the government and the intellectual classes.

From my point of view, the genre approach here mapped out could be also applied to other television programme studies with an emphasis on context in general. The approach has been demonstrated as methodologically and theoretically valid, and can thus (it is suggested) act as a concept to be used as a cultural category to examine our everyday experiences in media, to uncover specific answers to the questions that Mittel puts forwards, as follows: 'how genres work to shape our media experiences, how media work to shape our social realities, and how generic categories can then be used to ground our study of media texts'.[7] Applying this methodology to probe such questions could therefore be a way of bridging differentiated disciplinary areas of research across western and Chinese scholarship.[8]

2.2. Investigating the Complexities of Audience Behaviour

Referring back to Lacey's tripartite relationship for defining genre, I have stated above that his third component of audience study falls outside the scope of the present research. This is not to detract from the value of investigating the complexities of audience roles with regard to to the genre of PHTD, however. In fact, audiences play an integral part in contributing to this genre, through a double-layered set of expectations, as detailed in section 2.1 of chapter I.

As an important element of genre study, therefore, this third element of Lacey's tripartite construct merits in-depth investigation, although in my opinion, the evaluation of audience reception does need to be supported by an appropriate theoretical framework. It is also recommended that rather than simply focusing on patterns of viewing figures, critics need to question audience behaviour from a number of perspectives. Pursuing audience surveys can be problematic under the current political regime of China, but a qualitative research survey of audience feedback carried out in a social media context could provide rich evidence. For example, the research question could consider how Chinese audiences are able to use genres as cultural categories. Furthermore, such

an audience study should also include those who do not even watch (or take an interest in) the genre of PHTD. From this perspective, audience comments could, to a great extent, help to explain and delimit the specifics of a genre. A broad based theorisation of audience should thus be included in future academic research, alongside theories centring upon traditional textual analysis.

It is further recommended that the study of audience reception be extended and draw greater research attention in the future, including, for example, how we might try to understand audience participation in helping to shape a particular genre, and how audiences categorise the genres of contemporary television. One possible avenue could be to explore the traditional method identified by Mittel whereby 'text plus theory equals audience practice', which (in my opinion) needs to be further developed to uncover the conditions and possibilities of audience analysis.[9] In other words, the power of context is crucial to our understanding of television genres, where the hypothesis for studying target audiences in the PHTD genre needs to particularly consider two overlapping imagined communities: 'Greater China' and the Mainland China. It would thus be very interesting to examine to what extent the PHTD genre itself contributes to the cultural and moral 'homogenisation' of Mainland China and other Chinese communities,[10] for example. One suggestion is therefore that both qualitative and quantitative research projects need to be carried out in audience reception groupings amongst these communities in order to provide a logical conclusion to my initial study in examining the impact of a national regulatory framework on production and genre convention.[11]

Moreover, it is proposed that genres would be more successful when they work as a crucial site linking cultural assumptions to specific texts for audiences, who do not simply take genres as given. Rather, audiences engage in discursive practices that work to constitute the various assumptions of definition, interpretation, and evaluation that form genres as cultural categories. A research focus on audiences in the context of Chinese television is certainly needed in future especially as, in turn, such new research would help to better define, interpret, and provide value to a specific genre.

For example, research by CCTV on the audiences of the TV drama *Toward the Republic* identified this viewership as having the feature of 'three high'. That is, 78% of the audiences surveyed were distinguished by a qualification of higher education; most of the subjects had a comparatively high income; and the finding of 'high age' indicates that viewers normally fell between the ages of 30 and 49. In addition (interestingly) male

viewers were more prevalent than female viewers.[12] Thus, in this case, a genre demonstrates that its operations are an important means of communicating information to prospective audiences, helping to frame audience expectations, which (in turn) contributes to cultural identity and brings out the concerns of gender, class, age, education, and social values. This is a point that Mittel confirms, as follows: 'categories of high and low culture are not universally grounded in aesthetics, but have their roots in social power and contingent historical forces.'[13] A viewer's relationship to TV dramas thus helps us to understand ideology at work, and present a structural relationship within the wider scale of nationhood.

2.3. Genre as a Monitor of Political Change

Generally speaking, television is (on the one hand) a media that responds rapidly in order to reflect a current society and the tastes and concerns of its audiences. On the other hand, however, individual TV programmes can just as rapidly fall out of fashion and be forgotten. Such fluctuations in the life span of a genre have become particularly apparent to me during my research into PHTD, which has covered almost a decade. Thus (it is suggested) such fluctuations (often politically influenced) would in themselves be a fruitful avenue for research. It became clear to me, for example, that some TV dramas, such as *The Great General Shi Lang* caused huge debate when produced and shown. However, with changes in the political situation, such as the President of Taiwan's advocacy of a policy of 'no reunification, no independence, and no war', the political message in *Shi Lang* found itself at odds with this new political context.[14] Hence, as a result of this contemporary Cross-Strait relationship, *Shi Lang* can appear to contradict to the Party line, working against the state policy regarding bringing peace to the Straits.

From a broader perspective, then, genres are born and mature under specific circumstances but will eventually disappear because of changes in political and cultural contexts. Thus I believe that the genre of PHTD with strong Chinese characteristics will ultimately vanish from the screen and become a part of history. This was a genre born shortly after the Chinese 'open door' policy, maturing during the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, when questions had to be faced about the concept of nationalism under the apparent threat of globalisation. It is likely, then, that the genre of PHTD will not be popular forever. Its ultimate disappearance might be accelerated by a clearly established consciousness of Chinese national identity, for example. Nevertheless, this is usually a process which occurs over a long period, and which would need to be

recognized as taking place within the community of 'Greater China'.[15] In this sense, Chinese identity within this community is a cultural construct, which is underpinned by the political monopoly of the ruling class in the Mainland. Fully achieving the objective of a Greater China requires not only the continued strength of China's role in global economics but also political stability and social harmony to ensure the sustainable power of the mainland Chinese government. When this objective has been achieved, then (in my view), the genre of PHTD will have fulfilled its ultimate purpose, and will fade away into history.

2.4. How far the Notion of Neo-Confucian China can Stretch

As I have discussed in chapters III and V, a new socio-economic class has resulted from the economic and political reforms following the 1980s, which lends new insight to the construction of economic and political power.[16] The political and ideological orientation of Mao's era—socialism, the people's dictatorship, and the Marxist-Leninism in Mao Zedong's philosophy—is therefore no longer applicable to contemporary China. The Party, the newly formed class, and some Chinese intellectuals hence need to constantly reaffirm the theoretical rethinking which supports a one-Party society. Thus, Confucianism has again become the 'new' practical solution. When this 'new' thinking is in turn applied to the production of TV dramas, it contributes to the development and maturity of the genre of PHTD. However, the question inherent to this thesis which requires further examination is the extent to which new approaches to Confucianism can succeed in the two imagined communities. I shall close my study, then, by illustrating this dynamic with reference to *Toward the Republic* (*Zuoxiang gonghe*, dir. Zhang Li, 2003).

Müller and Zhu provide an account of the changing historical interpretations of certain historical figures in this TV drama. Interestingly, the state has encouraged and recognised these interpretations as representing a new political discourse, which challenges the traditional and historical view of key figures in the late Qing Dynasty and early Republican eras.[17] Indeed, such revisions provide an alternative view of modern Chinese history. However, both critics agree that the *rationale* for the re-establishment of historical figures from these two periods has been a rehabilitation exercise to meet contemporary needs. More explicitly, the historical and political contexts of *Toward the Republic* have close links with contemporary Chinese politics, specifically in the transition period from Jiang Zemin to President Hu Jintao.

Nevertheless, although Müller studies the viewing groups of this TV drama in relation to ordinary Chinese audiences as contrasted with Chinese intellectuals, she has seemingly missed a very important component in her analysis of political authority, as Shao points out: namely, the political implications of this TV drama through the expression of 'the collective unconscious' of the 'new conservatism'.[18] Shao then goes on to claim that the programme, from production to airing, suffered from its liberal interpretation of history. It will be remembered that (as I discussed in chapters II and III of my thesis) Chinese media (and in particular the television drama industry) are still effectively regulated and legally controlled under the administration of SARFT. Thus, although *Toward the Republic* was mainly funded privately, it nevertheless needed state-provided production licences and was censored regularly by SARFT. Hence, even though historians and critics claim that this programme challenged the traditional and official interpretation of history, SARFT and other influential authorities allowed this version to remain in the early stages of production. Ultimately, then, as Shao has demonstrated, many within the Party supported and protected this revisionist historical interpretation.

The rehabilitation of historical figures, then, especially the ones who maintained power in the *Qing* court, demonstrates a relationship between an 'old' idea and a 'new' class in contemporary China. Specifically, this 'old' idea is based on the moral and cultural function of Confucianism, while the new school of thought is derived from those of the 'New Left', neo-liberalism, and neo-authoritarianism. It is this 'new class' espousing an 'old idea' which has caused a further ideological watershed among Chinese intellectuals,[19] some of whom therefore stress the division between fictional text and factional context, for example. The motivation here is that, although some TV dramas claim historical facts, we should be aware this historical fact is sometimes shaped by current social and political contexts.[20]

In Chapter IV, I have pointed out that the government is not entirely comfortable with some opinions supported by Chinese intellectuals. It is for this reason that the intent is instead to seek an approach to influence 'normal' viewers (or the ordinary Chinese), as Müller hypothesised. As a result, *Toward the Republic* was re-edited before its broadcast on Mainland China. In other words, even though the expectations of genre played a substantial role during the debut of this TV drama, the authorities and SARFT hold the power of decision in filtering the political messages of the PHTD genre through legal regulations.

3. Final Thoughts: What does Genre Teach us about Nationhood?

By way of a concluding recommendation for further investigation, it is important to note here that those scholars or critics who turn their attention to television and TV dramas often premise their academic research on their rethinking of specific issues such as format imitation and inspiration. As an example, Chan observes that the British TV programme *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, having passed from Japan and Taiwan to Mainland China, represents one kind of significant resource to inspire the TV industry in China.[21] In other words, programmes from around the world are thought to supply readily available models to Chinese television producers, who then apply and adapt them. From this perspective, the transformation and convergence of television format and content can thus can be taken to occur via diffusion.

A significant point to be made therefore (as Michael Keane confirms) is that Chinese TV drama has failed to penetrate the global market in the 21st century as a result of just the imitation and adaptation process above, as well as through factors such as poor quality of dramatic content, 'institutional imbroglios', and an 'ideological emphasis which militates against reception'[22]. Keane's suggestion is thus that Chinese TV dramas should adopt 'new content', which will then open the way to promoting their productions on a multiple market basis, in this way pushing producers to create new trends and genres.[23] Applying this argument to the genre of PHTD, for instance, Keane makes the following suggestion:'rather than just churning out seemingly endless and often predictable historical television dramas, Chinese producers need to acknowledge that popular modern stories are the most lucrative model, particularly with regard to attracting advertising', as they are more easily green-lighted by SARFT, and by entrenched conservatism.[24] Here, an important point needs to be made, however: the format of imitation and inspiration noted by Chan, and the 'endless', 'predictable' and 'entrenched conservatism' of historical TV dramas criticized by Keane, are just those qualities inherent to the PHTD genre that I have identified as being worthy of research, as it is this genre that is uniquely reflective of the political and cultural complexities of contemporary China.

As will be seen, then, the investigation of PHTD in my study engages with its use in the specific context of China and its historical, political and cultural complexities. Keane's point above concerning the issue of 'good content' (meaning not to produce too much of the same or similar TV drama) could therefore be as important as the genre text. On the one hand, a genre needs to follow a norm or conversation to distinguish it from another; on the other hand, a genre should not be fixed into a stereotype, which is to suggest that each one is also

constantly remade through generic and cultural verisimilitudes. Thus, my thesis has (as a principal intent) attempted to address how genres participates in their definitions by mapping their relationship to one another. From this perspective, the genre itself proposes a methodological route or an approach for academic researchers and critics, audiences, and for the television industry to define, interpret and evaluate.

From an academic perspective, then, genre is proposed as the methodological means for identifying one group as distinct from another. From the perspective of political decision or production (including programming and transmission), however, the genre plays the role of significantly contributing to the growth and maturity of the television industry. Chinese TV channels in the new century focus more and more upon a certain group of TV programmes with similar structures, which aim to target specific genres such as sports, economics, news, and music in order to expand a niche-market into a sustainable community of audiences. In other words, rather than over-criticising the 'content' of television dramas, we should focus more on the role of genre within a complex web of production, political agendas and audience dynamics. In my opinion, the vital importance of Chinese TV dramas in the context of Greater China is not to rush to compete with new trends or genres, but rather to capitalise on the strength inherent in a genre with a historical narrative. As I have noted throughout the thesis, PHTD has become a mature genre, as Keane confirms. Thus, while the history of Mainland China's earliest successes in exporting historical TV drama to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the other regions begins in the 1980s, by the first decade of the twenty-first century, Chinese historical TV dramas had recorded strong sales in Taiwan— particularly in regards to *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*, a series fully investigated in chapter IV.[25]

In brief, then, the genre of PHTD in the cultural and political contexts of China has been broken down into discrete and comprehensible segments in this thesis for the purposes of analysis. In this, the concept of genre as a methodology has provided a theoretical platform for fully understanding the current political propaganda and the new national images of Confucianism, all of which transcend the entertainment value of this genre. Again, as Altman notes: '[g]enres are not the real world, but a game that we play with moves and players borrowed from the real world.'[26] Hence, from this perspective, the concept of nationhood in fact simulates genre, in the sense that it is 'born through a process that does not disappear with that birth. The imagining of community, like the gentrification process, always operates dialectically, through the transformation of an already existing community/genre.'[27]

In the sense above, therefore, the study of the PHTD genre throughout this thesis has provided us with an opportunity to witness this process of 'nation-building,' a process which (in accordance with this analysis) has spanned the last four decades, and which embodies changing political and economic landscapes both within China itself and globally. Traditional Confucianism has thus been revived (it is suggested) for the effectiveness of its role in reconstructing and consolidating the party leadership in Mainland China, as a means of bridging its ideological divergences from other Chinese communities. The genre of PHTD thus becomes a special project which visually and cinematically delivers and reinterprets this ideological change. The investigation of this genre likewise becomes a means of demonstrating the changing history of the direction of official culture in contemporary China as well as the nation's map of political power.

In conclusion, it is suggested that the following question needs to be asked in the present context: what are the political implications of the current Chinese state in the new century, as articulated in the genre of PHTD? It is significant in this regard that (under the leadership of President Hu) China ostensibly aims to construct a so-called 'harmonious society'. This is a concept, however, which is borrowed semantically from the Confucians, and which was also applied to China's external relationships with other nations. However, the point to be made is that the essential meaning of this concept carries with it the notion of passivity, which in turn implies that any activity or potential criticism levelled against the central government will be dismissed. Thus, what the community observes is a clean, non-oppositional society. This is a political purpose which is demonstrated clearly in the PHTD drama *Toward the Republic*, for example. The initial ending of the series was to culminate with a speech given by Sun Yat-sen, reinforcing the importance of the 'Three People's Principles', with a modern interpretation stressing nationalism, democracy and socialism. Furthermore, he was to emphasise the power of the people, who are entitled to directly participate in matters of politics. However, (interestingly) this final scene was cut out during its showing on CCTV, demonstrating explicitly the covert process and objective of 'nation-building' behind the twin strategies of nationalism and Confucianisation, as led by the 21st century Mainland authorities. However, it will be seen that the goal of this 'nation-building', just like the truncated final scene of *Toward the Republic*, has been largely witheld from the public view, as Hard and Negri argue. Nation-building thus begins:

> (…) as soon as the nation begins to form as a sovereign state, [and] its progressive functions
> all but vanish… With national "liberation" and the construction of the nation-state, all of the

oppressive functions of modern sovereignty inevitably blossom in full force… The concept of nation and the practices of nationalism are from the beginning set down on the road not to the republic but to the "re-total", the total thing, that is, the totalitarian overcoding of social life.[28]

Hence, in an age of mass media where Chinese political discourse is perhaps at its most effective when embedded in popular cultural texts, 'totalitarian overcoding of social life' is arguably nowhere more significant than in the narratives of a genre which have been central to the Chinese television landscape: Political History TV Drama.

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[5] For the detail argument and the theoretical base, refer to section 2 in Chapter IV.

[6] Currently, especially in China, most critics and even the Chinese authorities agree a historical line of 1911, as 1911 is the milestone. In other words, they believe that any TV drama setting the narrative background in the period before 1911 should be defined as 'historical TV dramas'. The SARFT specially highlight this period of time as 'Imperial TV dramas' according to its administrative regulations. For further details on how the SARFT categorizes Chinese television dramas by means of periodical division, refer to Chapter IV.

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[105] Ying Zhu, Michael Keane and Ruoyun Bai, (2008)

[106] Gotelind Müller, *Representing History in Chinese Media: the TV Drama Zou Xiang Gonghe (Towards the Republic)* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007)

[107] ibid., 14-17.

[108] ibid., 14-17.

[109] Ying Zhu, 'Transnational Circulation of Chinese Language Television Dramas', in *TV China*, p.226.

[110] Michael Keane, 'From National Preoccupation to Overseas Aspiration', in *TV Drama in China*, pp.145-156.

[111] Nick Lacey, p134.

[112] Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1993), p.38.

[113] Ruoyun Bai, p.36.

Chapter II

[1] Jane Feuer, 'Genre Study and Television', in Robert Allen, (1992), p. 144.

[2] Rick Altman, (1987), p. 13.

[3] Nick Lacey, (2000), p. 133.

[4] Anne Dunn, 'The Genres of Television', in *Narrative and Media* ed. by Helen Fulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.125-139 (p.126).

[5] GM Plooy, 'Genre Analysis', in Pieter Fourie, (2001), p. 61.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Anne Dunn, 'The Genres of Television', in Helen Fulton, p. 127.

[8] GM Plooy, 'Genre Analysis', in Pieter Fourie, (2001), p. 73.

[9] Ibid., p. 74

[10] Ibid., p. 62.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Harold Lasswell, 'The Structure and Function of Communication in Society', in *The Communication of Ideas*, ed. by Lyman Bryson (New York: Harper and Row, 1948), pp.37-52.

[13] Charles Wright, 'Functional analysis and mass communication revisited', in *The uses of mass Communications*, eds., by Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1974), pp. 197-212.

[14] GM Plooy, 'Genre Analysis', in Pieter Fourie, (2001), p. 62.

[15] Ibid., p. 75.

[16] Ibid., p. 76.

[17] John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992)

[18] Anne Dunn, 'The Genres of Television' in Helen Fulton, p. 130.

[19] Ibid., p. 131.

[20] Steve Neal, 'Questions of Genre', *Screen*, 31.1 (1990), 45-66 (pp.47-48).

[21] Anneli Lehtisalo, 'As if Alive before Us: the Pleasures of Verisimilitude in Biographical Fiction Films', *New Reading*, 11(2011) < http://ojs.cf.ac.uk/index.php/newreadings/article/view/44 > [accessed 04 June 2015] (p.101).

[22] Ibid., p. 102.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Steve Neal (1990), pp.47-48.

[25] Anneli Lehtisalo, (2011), p. 102.

[26] GM Plooy, 'Genre Analysis', in Pieter Fourie, (2001), p. 65.

[27] Perry Link, Richard P. Madsen and Paul G. Pickowicz eds., *Popular China: Unofficial Culture in a Globalizing Society*, (Lanham, MD; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, c2002)

[28] ibid,. p.3.

[29] ibid.

[30] ibid.

[31] The notion of the public sphere was a place between private individuals and government authorities where people could meet and have rational-critical debates about public matters. Habermas contributed this notion of the public sphere in his major work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. His view also influenced Chinese scholars in the 1980s. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, c1989)

[32] For further detail, see Jürgen Habermas, 'Civil Society and the Political Public Sphere [1996]' in Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff and Indermohan Virk eds., *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007, 2nd Edition), pp.388-408.

[33] Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, *Public Secrets, Public Spaces: Cinema and Civility in China*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000)

[34] Yi Wang, 'Intellectuals and Popular Television in China: *Expectations* as a Cultural Phenomenon', (1999), 222-245.

[35] Peter Dahlgren, 'The Public Sphere and the Net: Structure, Space, and Communication' in *Meidated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*, eds., Bennett, Lance, and Entman, Robert, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 34.

[36] Ibid., p. 35.

[37] Colin Sparks, 'A Global Public Sphere?', in *Electronic Empires*, ed. D. K. Thussu (London: Arnold, 1998), p.122.

[38] Latest publication on this topic is Ming Wang, ed., *Emerging Civil Society in China, 1978-2008*, (Leiden: Brill, 2011)

[39] Michael Keane, 'Television and civilization: the Unity of Opposites?', *The International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2.2 (1999), 247-248, p.251.

[40] Angela Crack, *Global Communication and Transnational Public Spheres* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 54

[41] Wang Hui (2003), p.179.

[42] Ibid., p. 26.

[43] For further detail of the Western view of TV in the public sphere, see Peter Dahlgren, *Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 1995) and James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, 7th edition, (London: Routledge, 2010)

[44] Perry Link, Richard P. Madsen and Paul G. Pickowicz (c2002), p.7.

[45] James Curran and Myung-Jin Park, eds., *De-Westernizing Media Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 2.

[46] Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press: the Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should be and Do* (Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 1963)

[47] K. Robins , J Conrnford. and A. Aksoy, 'Overview: from Cultural Rights to Cultural Responsibilities', in K. Robins, ed., *Programming for People* (Newcastle: University of Newcastle and European Broadcasting Union, 1997)

[48] James Curran and Myung-Jin Park, (2000), p. 6.

[49] Eric Hobsbawm, *Ages of Extremes* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), p. 15 and Anthony Giddens 'Comment: the 1999 Reith Lecture. New World without End', *Observer,* 4.11 (1999), p. 31.

[50] James Curran and Myung-Jin Park, (2000), p. 11.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[53] E. Bens, M Kelly and M. Bakke, 'Television Content: Declassification of Culture?' in K. Siunne and W. Truetzscher, eds., *Dynamics of Media Politics* (London: Sage, 1992)

[54] Jason Mittell (2004), p. xi.

[55] GM Plooy, 'Genre Analysis', in Pieter Fourie, (2001), p. 60.

[56] Ibid.

Chapter III

[1] Here, the studies of Hong Kong and Taiwan television in this study mirrors the recent academic study of stressing these three political regions as the important constituent parts in studying the transnational circulation of Chinese television and TV dramas. For further reading, see Zhu Ying (2008), pp.101-125. Joseph Chan 'Toward Television Regionalization in Greater China and Beyond' in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry (2009), pp. 16-39.

[2] CCTV, *Profile of CCTV*, <http://www.cctv.com/profile/intro/index.shtml> (in Chinese) [accessed 13 December 2006]

[3] China Education Television (ETV) is an educational TV station in the People's Republic of China. Its network was found at 1 October 1986, and the central station is located in Beijing. Its programmes are often broadcasted through the existing television network and cable television.

[4] The figures which demonstrate the development of Chinese television in 2005 above are from <www.china.com.cn/zhuanti2005/text/2006-04/30/content_6197886.htm> [accessed 11 October 2006], and Baoguo Cui, *Zhongguo chuanmei chanye fazhang baogao (Report on the Development of China's Media Industry)* (Beijing: Social Science Press, 2006)

[5] For further detail of the beginning stage of Chinese television industry, see Hong Yin, 'Yiyi, shengchan yu xiaofei: dangdai zhongguo dianshiju de zhengzhijingjixue fenxi' (Evaluation, Production and Consumption: the political economic study on contemporary Chinese television dramas), *Xiandai chuanmei (Modern Communication)*, 5 (2001), 15-27.

[6] Cinema is introduced to China by one of Lumière cameramen/showmen in the late 19th century from the West. Although the Chinese started to produce their films as early as 1905, half a century earlier than Chinese television, the western influence on the rise of Chinese cinema has left the medium bound up with ideological arguments about colonialism and cultural imperialism. For further detail, read Yibin Zhong and Wangnam Huang, *Zhongguo dianshi yishu fazhanshi* (*The History of the Development of Chinese television Arts*) (Zhejiang: Zhejiang People Publishing, 1995), and Ibid.

[7] Sheldon Lu, 'Soap Opera in China: The Transnational Politics of Visually, Sexuality, and Masculinity', *Cinema Journal,* 40.1 (2000), p. 25. However, although the rising of Chinese television has often described as 'indigenous phenomenon' and 'not an act of imitating the foreign', this 'indigenous phenomenon' should be considered to include Soviet as China shared the same ideology in the Cold World War in the 1950s.

[8] The other two are Shanghai Television Station and Harbin Television Station (Today's Heilongjiang Television Station) which was established at 1st October and 20th December in 1958 respectively.

[9] For consistency, I will use pinyin throughout my entire thesis, even though where some names, such as Chiang Kai-shek (Chiang Kai-shek) are better known by their earlier Wade-Giles versions.

[10] For further detail, see Bin Zhao, 'Greater China' in *Television: an International History*, 2nd edn ed. by Anthony Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 247.

[11] For full detail, see Yu Huang and Xu Yu, 'Broadcasting and Politics: Chinese television in the Mao era, 1958-1976', *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 17.4 (1997), p. 3.

[12] For further detail of the early development of Chinese television, see James Lull, (1991), pp. 20-23.

[13] Bin Zhao, 'Mouthpiece or Money Spinner', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2.3 (1999), 291-305

[14] For further detail, see Yu Huang and Xu Yu, (1997), p. 4.

[15] James Lull, (1991), p. 21.

[16] In the early stage of China's socialist market economy till the 1970s, the Chinese government divides state-owned units into three types: administrative units, non-profit units and profitable enterprises. Administrative units receive guaranteed funding from the government, while profitable enterprises are gear for profits. In theory, media organizations are considered to be non-profit units as ideological apparatuses of the state. For further detail, see Yu Huang and Xu Yu, (1997), p. 9.

[17] Yaogui Xu, ed., *Shijie Chuanmei Kailan* (*Media in World*) (Chongqing: Chongqing Press, 2000), p. 206 and pp. 210-211.

[18] For further study on the comparison between Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland Chinese television, see Joseph Chan, pp. 15-35.

[19] Yaogui Xu, (2000), p.206 and pp.210-211.

[20] Ying Zhu and Chris Berry, (2009), pp.243-249.

[21] Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.149.

[22] Hong Yin, (2001), p. 17.

[23] The figures of Table 2.1 come from Tongda Zhang, 'Chinese Television Audience Research' in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry, (2009), p. 173.

[24] For further detail of the development of television stations and television set ownership in China till 1997, see: Yaogui Xu (2000), pp. 188-189, and

<www.screendigest.com/reports/mini/2006/chinese_cable_television_profile/06-10-f3/view.html>
[accessed on 18/01/2007]

[25] James Lull, (1991), p.23.

[26] Lull suggests that this increasing consumption on television around the 1980s of China is similar to what happened in the United States in the 1950s, which nearly every family bought a TV set. Ibid, p.20.

[27] L. Sun, 'Chinese Television: An Update on its Development and Related Systems', *PTC Quarterly*, 8 (1987), 20-22.

[28] Qiang Song and Hong Guo, *Zhongguo dianshiju wushinian jishi* (*The Documentary on 50 years of Chinese television drama*) (Guilin: Lijiang Press, 2009), p. 38.

[29] For the full details of the CCTV channels available in the 1980s and the ones have been added since, refer to Appendix 2 the development of Chinese CCTV channels.

[30] For further detail of status of Chinese television stations in the 1980s, see James Lull, (1991), p.24. and Junhao Hong, Yanmei Lü and William Zou, 'CCTV in the Reform Years: A New Model for China's Television?' in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry, (2009), pp.40-55.

[31] James Lull, (1991), p. 22.

[32] ibid. p. 26

[33] Wusan Sun, 'A Small Chinese Town Television Station's Struggle for Survivial: How a New Institutional Arrangement Came into Being', *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 3.1 (2006), 42-57

[34] Ibid, p. 42.

[35] Junhao Hong, 'Reconciliation between openness and resistance', in *The New Communications Landscape: Demystifying Media Globalization*, eds. G. Wang, J. Servaes and A. Goonasekera (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 288-306.

[36] Yik-chan Chin, 'China's Regulatory Policies on Transnational Television Drama Flow', *Media Development: Journal of the World Association for Christian Communication,* 50.3 (2003), p. 17.

[37] The State Council is largely synonymous with the General People's Government and is the chief administrative authority of the People's Republic of China. It is chaired by the Premier and includes the heads of each government department and agency. There are about 50 members in the Council. In the politics of the People's Republic of China, the Central People's Government forms one of three interlocking branches of power, the others being the Communist Party of China and People's Liberation Army. The State Council directly oversees the various subordinate People's Governments in the provinces, and in practice maintains an interlocking membership with top levels of the Communist Party of China creating a fused centre of power.

[38] In March 2013, the State Council announced plans to merge the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television with the General Administration of Press and Publication to form the *State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television* (SAPPRFT). As this research focuses on TV productions made before 2010, the title of SARFT will be applied in this thesis in order to indicate the historical timeline.

[39] Brantly Womack, 'Editor's Introduction: Media and the Chinese Public', *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, 18 (1986), 6-53.

[40] For further detail of the major categories of broadcasting regulations formulated by the SARFT, see Yik-chan Chin, (2003), p.18.

[41] Local governments automatically view their own placement and meet their interests on television, and it often cause a conflict between the local authority and the SARFT, for the further example, see Wusan Sun, (2006), pp. 44-45.

[42] Yik-chan Chin, (2003), p. 21.

[43] This diagram was designed and concluded by the author of this thesis, according to the current situation of Chinese television system.

[44] Screendigest, <www.screendigest.com/reports/mini/2006/chinese_cable_television_profile/06-10-f3/view.html>
[accessed 18 January 2007]

[45] Ibid.

[46] For further detail, see Ying Zhu, (2008), p. 115.

[47] Junhao Hong, Yanmei Lü and William Zou, 'CCTV in the Reform Years: A New Model for China's Television?' in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry, (2009), pp.40-55.

[48] Ibid.

[49] The figures came from Research Centre of the SARFT, (2009), p. 96, and Research Centre of the SARFT, (2010), p. 108.

[50] Zihua Zhi, ed., *Guanyu 2009nian shenhua jingji tizhi gongzuo de yijian quanwen* (*The Proposal on Economic Reform of 2009*) <http://www.china.com.cn/news/txt/2009-05/25/content_17830810_3.htm> [accessed on 29/12/2010]

[51] Mingpin Yang, '*dangqian guangdian wangluo fazhan de tiaozhan yu duice*' ('*The Challenges Faced by and Reactions to the Development of the Current SARFT Network*'), *China Radio Film and TV*, 438 (2009), 10.

[52] For the detail of the figures, see Lang Lang, *The processor of the merger of three networks: a battle between two state councils* <http://tech.sina.com.cn/t/2010-12-25/00035026589.shtml> [accessed 29 December 2010].

[53] China Telecom Corp. Ltd. ('Zhongguo dianxin') is the largest fixed line service and third largest mobile telecommunication provider in Mainland China. The company is formerly a state-owned company, but now is divided into largely autonomous provincial branches, but the Chinese government still retains majority ownership.

[54] Mingpin Yang, (2009), p. 10.

[55] The SARFT, 'Guangbodianshi bochu jigou weigui chuli banfa' ('The new Regulation on the Penalty for the Illegal Administration of Radio or Television Stations'), *China Radio Film and TV,* 438 (2009), 22-25.

[56] Hong Yin, (2001), pp. 15-17.

[57] The figures come from Research Centre of the SARFT, (2010).

[58] For the example of regulations being boycotted at the local level, refer to the case study in Wusan Sun, (2006), pp.42-57.

[59] The SARFT, *Guangdianzongju fabu tongzhi tingbo dianshiju Hongwenhao* (*The Public Notice from the SARFT in Relation to TV drama Red Question Mark*) <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/09/24/20070925155111420400.html> [accessed on 29 March 2008]. For further details, see Bin Zhao, (1999), pp. 291-305.

[60] For further detail, see Michael Keane, 'Television and civilization: the Unity of Opposites?', (1999), 247-248.

[61] CCTV, <http://www.cctv.com/profile/intro/index.shtml> [accessed on 13 December 2006].

[62] It is the literary translation of *zhu xuanlü* advocated by the authority. Keane translated the term into 'mainstream melody'. This expression came into usage in 1987 and displaced the term socialist realism in describing works that reflected normative behaviour and values. For the further explanation, see Michael Keane, 'Television Drama in China: Remarking the Market', *Media International Australia (Culture and Policy)*, 115 (2005), p. 3.

[63] Recognising the different types of investment and other key changes in the political economy of recent Chinese television, Keane has suggested a division of Yin's third stage or 'commercial period' into a 'market' phase (1990-2002) and an 'interpersonal' phase (2003 onwards)[63]. In Keane's terms the 'interpersonal era' is based on a revised commercial relationship between production units and television channels in which advertising revenue has become the main source of funding for the production of television dramas. For the detailed discussion, see Michael Keane, (2005), p. 82. And Yin's three developing stages of Chinese television industry see Hong Yin, (2001), pp. 16-21.

[64] Yu Huang and Yu Xu, (1997), p. 9.

[65] Sheldon Lu, (2000), p. 25.

[66] Yu Huang and Xu Yu, (1997), p. 9.

[67] Ibid., p.5.

[68] Yik-chan Chin, (2003), p. 19.

[69] *The Man from Atlantis* (Dir. Lee H. Katzin, 1977-1978) is produced by NBC network. The original title is translated into *The Man from the Bottom of Atlantic* in Chinese and shown on 1980.

[70] For further detail on the foreign television dramas on Chinese television, see Sheldon Lu, (2000), p. 26.

[71] Michael Keane, (2005), p. 4.

[72] Sheldon Lu, (2000), p. 26.

[73] The SARFT, <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/36/2704.html> [accessed 10 May 2006]

The SARFT, <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/36/3174.html> [accessed 10 May 2006]

The SARFT, <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/36/3494.html> [accessed 10 May 2006]

[74] Research Centre of the SARFT (2010), pp.78-83.

[75] Yanbing Zhang and Jake Harwood, 'Modernization and Tradition in an Age of Globalization: Cultural Values in Chinese Television Commercials', *The Journal of Communication,* 54.1 (2004), p. 160.

[76] Hong Yin, (2001), p. 20.

[77] Ibid, p.21.

[78] For the report on the Sino-USA relation around 2001, see BBC, *China Blasts Bush Policy* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1309441.stm> [accessed 02 January 2011].

[79] For the report on the clash between US spy plan and Chinese fighter, read BBC, *Chinese Press Slams US 'Arrogance'* < http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/media_reports/1257908.stm> [accessed 02 January 2011].

[80] Yin Hong, (2001), p. 19.

81 This discourse recalls the Mao-era anti-western ideology in the Mao period. Hanban, <http://english.hanban.edu.cn/english/2002/Mar/29138.htm> [accessed 11 October 2008] and For further discussion, see Shida Zhu, *China and the US: A Unique Relationship* <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2002/Mar/29138.htm> [accessed 02 January 2011]

82 See Appendix of *Origins of imported television dramas, 2000-2001* at the end of this thesis. The SARFT details from 2001 and 2002 are cited in Yik-chan Chin, (2003), pp. 18-19.

83 The figures come from Dong-Hoo Lee, 'From the Margins to the Middle Kingdom: Korean TV Drama's Role in Linking Local and Transnational Production' in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry, (2009), p.190.

84 The Korean TV drama *Jewel in the Palace* previously is shown on Hunan TV at 10:00pm on 1 September 2005, and later becomes the top one in the rating chart with 14% in 31 cities across China. Even Chinese President Hu Jintao tells Hee-sang Moon, the leader of the ruling Uri Party, it is shame to miss one episode because of his busy schedule. The popularity of this Korean television drama is believed the romantics in the love story, the ambitious inspired by the strong will of central character Jangeum, gourmets absorbed in the food, and the spirit of national pride.

85 The SARFT, *Yinjin jingwai jingshiju ji qita jingwai dianshi jiemu shenpi* (*The regulation of importing oversea TV dramas and TV programmes*), <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2008/04/30/20080925163203500923.html> [accessed 07 November 2008].

86 The SARFT, *Xingzheng fagui diertiao* (15/06/2000) *dianshiju guanli guiding* (State Council Decree No.2 (15/06/2000) Regulations governing the administration of television dramas) <www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/20/994.html> [accessed 07 March 2007].

87 Ibid.

88 For further detail, see the SARFT, 'Guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang yingjinju, hezuo dianshijiemu de tongzhi' ('Notices on Further Strengthening the Regulations of Importing, Co-producing and Broadcasting Television Dramas', no.5) (04/01/2000), cited in Yik-chan Chin, (2003), p. 20.

89 The SARFT, *Zhongwai hezuo zhizuo dianshiju guanli guiding* (*Regulations on governing the co-operative TV dramas production with outside border No.41*) <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2004/10/21/20070924102503420551.html> [accessed 02 January 2011]

90 Yik-chan Chin, (2003), p. 20.

91 Hsiu-Chuang Deppman, 'Made in Taiwan: An Analysis of *Meteor Garden* as an East Asian Idol Drama' in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry, (2009), p.107.

92 Those comments were used to identify western culture during the Mao's era. For the detail of the complains from Chinese parents on the Taiwan idol drama *Meteor Garden*, see BBC, *Beijing Bans Taiwanese Drama* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv_and_radio/1868693.stm> [accessed 02 January 2011] and Hsiu-Chuang Deppman, pp. 90-110.

93 It has been a conscious strategy in all aspects of growing the Chinese economy. For instance, on January 18, 2002, CCTV 4, the Phoenix America channel teamed up, and Hong Kong-based Cantonese broadcaster TV Asia to provide a Chinese language package for DIRECTV's Chinese service, which reports worldwide news and current affairs and explores issues of interest to Chinese communities in the US and ensure the community of 'Greater China' globally. For the further detail of this example, see Zhu Ying, p. 115.

94 The SARFT, *Guangbodianshijiemu zhizuo jingying guanli guiding, No.43* (Regulations governing the production of television dramas No.43) <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2003/10/21/20070920161659520454.html> [accessed 04 January 2011]

95 Here, the permanent license refers the production units can produce any television drama within two years. The provisional license means the production units/companies only produce one certain television drama in agree with SARFT and start its actual production within 180 days. For further detail, see the SARFT, *Guangdianzongju guanyu 2007niandu quanguo "dianshizhizuo xukezheng (jianzhong)", "guangbodianshijiemu zhizuojingying xukezheng" jiguoxingkuang tonggao* (*The Report on the management of permanent and provisional licenses 2007*) <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/04/16/20070921155602480628.html> [accessed 04 January 2011], and Yuexuan Xie, (2008), pp. 5-7.

96 The SARFT, *Dianshiju guanli guiding dier* (*Decree No.2 Regulations governing the administration of television dramas*) <www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/20/994.html> [accessed 07 March 2007]

97 Later, the title *The Sunrise from the Desert* changed into *Empress Feng of Northern Wei*. For the detail, see Television dramas Consulted at the end of my thesis. see The SARFT, <http://211.146.6.3/manage/publishfile/177/3743.html> [accessed 07 March2007]

98 The SARFT, *Dianshiju shencha guanli guiding* 27, (*Regulations governing the administration of television dramas' Regulation 27 in State Council Decree No. 40*)

<http://www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/20/2206.html> [accessed on 07 March 2007] and The SARFT, *Dianshiju guanli guiding 13*(Regulations governing the administration of television dramas Regulation 13 in State Council Decree No. 2) <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/20/994.html> [accessed 07 March 2007]

[99] Maureen Fan, *China's Party Leadership Declares New Priority: 'Harmonious Society'* <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/11/AR2006101101610.html> [accessed 04 January 2011]

[100] One of the best examples is the most popular programme CCTV's 2006 *Spring Festival Gala* advocates Hu's 'Harmonious Society' through the show. For the further reading, see Xinyu Lu, 'Ritual, Television, and State Ideology: Rereading CCTV's 2006 *Spring Festival Gala*' in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry, (2009), pp. 111-125.

[101] For an account of the rise of the Tabgatch and the formation of the empire of the Northern Wei, see Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 190-193.

[102] Yuexuan Xie, (2008), pp.11-14.

[103] Ibid.

[104] The SARFT, <http://www.sarft.gove.cn/manage/publishfile/21/1075.html> [accessed 08 June 2007].

[105] Mingchu Zhang, *Dalu dianshiju Qing Shi Huang weishenme bei xuechang le liu nian* (*The secret of TV drama Qin Shi Huang halts for six years*) <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/23560445.html?si=2> [accessed 20 May 2010].

[106] Yuexuan Xie, (2008), pp. 13-14.

[107] The Emperor Jiajing (1507-1567) was the 11th Ming Dynasty Emperor of China and ruled China from 1521 to 1567. He is famous as the one to be a cruel and self-aggrandizing emperor who ignores state affairs. His imperial court is famous with the corruption and ruthlessness.

[108] Hai Rui (1514-1587) is a famous Chinese official of the Ming Dynasty. His name in Chinese history becomes a symbol of honesty and integrity. He is the one of the only few who intends to crack down the corruption.

[109] In 1959, Communist Party official Han Wu wrote an article entitled 'Hai Rui Dismissed from Office', which later was made into a Beijing Opera play. However, this play accused by the later Gang of Four member Yao Wenyuan as an allegorical work with the honest moral official Hai Rui representing disgraced official Peng Dehuai, who had fallen foul of Mao for his outspoken criticism of the Great Leap Forward movement and the corrupt emperor representing Mao Zedong. In 1956, an article in a prominent Shanghai newspaper, "A Criticism of the Historical Drama 'Hai Rui Dismissed from Office'" (*Ping xinbian lishiju "hai Rui baguan"*) was regarded as the spark that ignited the Cultural Revolution. For the full detail, Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 120.

[110] Xinxin Zhou, *Woguo dianshijiemu de bochu yu choushi* (*The Exhibition and Audience of Chinese Television*), *China, Radio, Film and TV,* 436.5 (2009), p. 43. In the same year of 2008, the exhibition of news, advertisement, popular entertainment, documentary were 12.13%, 13.28%, 8.13% and 10.54% separately. The figures come from Research Centre of the SARFT, (2009), p. 242.

[111] The figures come from Xinxin Zhou, (2009), p. 43

[112] For further detail, see Junhao Hong, Yanmei Lü and William Zou, 'CCTV in the Reform Years: A New Model for China's Television' in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry, (2009).

[113] Xiaoting He, 'Dianshiju zhiyuan de shiyong celue' ('The Method for Using the Source of Television Dramas'), *China, Radio, Film and TV,* 436.5 (2009), 84-85.

[114] Michael Keane, (2005), p. 87.

[115] Dai Lin and Lu Baojun, 'The Cultural Studies on the Divisions of Chinese television dramas' ('Dianshiju de wenhuaxue fenlei') in ibid., p.284 and pp.282-296.

[116] ibid., p.284.

[117] Junxing Yi, *Wenhua zhexue shiwu jiang* (*The Fifteen Topics from Cultural Philosophy*), (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), pp.49-50.

[118] Hui Wang, (2003), p. 171.

[119] ibid., p.174.

[120] Yi Wang, 'Intellectuals and Popular Television in China: *Expectations* as a Cultural Phenomenon', (1999), p. 223.

[121] Wang Hui (2003), p. 10.

[122] For further study on the notion of Chinese intellectuals, also read Ibid., p.11.

[123] Yi Wang, 'Intellectuals and Popular Television in China: *Expectations* as a Cultural Phenomenon', (1999) p. 224.

[124] Ibid., p. 224.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

[127] It might be true of all languages in which the spoken languages are primary and prior to scripts. Scripts are only secondary devices for recording them. But there is always a linguistic gap between spoken language and writing in Chinese language. Victor H. Mair, 'Language and Script', in *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. by Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 19-20.

[128] The difference between the literary (script) and vernacular (spoken Chinese) is like that 'between classical Greek and Demotic Greek, between Classical Latin and Modern Italian', for further details, see ibid., p. 20.

[129] Yi Wang, 'Intellectuals and Popular Television in China: *Expectations* as a Cultural Phenomenon', (1999), p. 223.

[130] Ibid., p. 230.

[131] Ibid., p. 231.

[132] Ibid., p. 228.

[133] Here, I need to be clear that traditional Confucianism originally was opposed, or unacceptable to the Chinese Communist Party, the power of Mainland China, and its official and ideological culture. Before Deng's reform policy, the Party conformed to a 'revolutionary cultural' identity, which located the communist and socialist ideals opposite to the culture of the past (such as Confucianism) and to the culture of the West. However, this cultural phenomenon has dramatically changed since the well-known Social Movement of 1989. This great cultural transformation has been fully investigated through the perspective of 'nationalism as the ideology of politics' in Chapter V of this thesis.

[134] The speech 'On the Party's Journalism Work' in 1985 by the General-Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Yaobang cited in Michael Keane, 'Television and Civilization: the Unity of Opposites?', (1999), pp. 246-247.

[135] Junhao Hong, Yanmei Lü and William Zou, 'CCTV in the Reform Years: A New Model for China's Television' in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry, (2009), p. 52.

Chapter IV

[1] Jane Feuer, 'Genre Study and Television', in Robert Allen (1992), p. 144.

[2] Pieter Fourie, (2001), p. 61.

[3] See the SARFT, 'Dianshiju paishe zhizuo bei'an gongshi guanli zhanxingbanba'('Contemporary Regulations on the Publicity Record of the Television Dramas Production'), <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/07/25/20070919141825580657.html> (in Chinese) [accessed at 18 January 2010]

[4] Evidence for this compulsory requirement issued by SARFT on the subject matter is shown in two forms (Table 3.7 in this thesis and Appendix 4. Monitoring Form for Domestic Television Dramas)

[5] The SARFT, 'Guangdianzongju dianshijusi guanyu quxiao 'guanchandianshiju ticai guaihua lixiang shensha' xingzheng shenpi xianmu de xingguang shuoming' ('Notice of the changing censorship on the subject matters of Chinese television dramas'), <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2010/09/01/20100901152709980505.html> (in Chinese) [accessed 05 January 2011]

[6] Here, the English names for each period of time are translated by me, as the author of this thesis. The literary meaning of 'dangdai' (1979 to the present) is actually 'contemporary'; 'xiandai' (1949 -1979) refers to 'modern', 'jindai' (1911 to 1949) 'near to modern', and 'gudai' to 'tradition'.

[7] I need to clarify the reading of time period divisions as defined by Chinese authorities. There are three important year dates which are regarded as milestones in this format – 1911, 1949, and 1979. The Chinese Revolution of 1911[7] was the turning point in towards putting an end to the Qing Dynasty (1649-1912) and to over two thousand years of imperial rule. The year of 1949 was a stone mile for both the Communist Party and Guomingdang, as the one founded the People's Republic of China in Mainland China, while the other moved the central authority to Taiwan. The year 1979 is an additional watershed for Mainland China as the infamous Cultural Revolution finally came to an end.

[8] The SARFT, 'Dianshiju paishe zhizuo bei'an gongshi guanli zanxingbanfa', [accessed on 05/08/2009].

[9] Table 4.1 is laid out by the author of this thesis according to SARFT's regulations. For details, see ibid. The examples for each sub-category are compiled by the author. It can be seen from the table, however, that some categories have no examples, as the author is currently unable to find matching television dramas.

[10] Pieter Fourie, (2001), p. 61.

[11] Xie Yuexuan (2008), p. 11.

[12] Nannan Zhao, 'The SARFT Encourages the Production of Television dramas on Contemporary Themes', <http://xh.xhby.net/mp1/html/2006-03/28/content_239179.htm> (in Chinese) [accessed 01 January 2011].

[13] The table is devised by the author of this thesis, using figures from the SARFT, 'Guangdianzongju guanyu 2008nian eryue quanguo paishe zhizuo dianshiju bei'an gongshi de tongzhi' ('Notice of the production of Chinese television dramas in Feb 2008'), <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2008/02/25/20080225133940880183.html> (in Chinese) [accessed 10 September 2009].

[14] The SARFT, 'The Report on the Production of Chinese television dramas in Feb 2008', <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2008/02/29/20080229173340650597.html> (in Chinese) [accessed 10 September 2009].

[15] The table is summarized by the author, using figures from the SARFT, ''Guangdianzongju guanyu 2008nian eryue quanguo paishe zhizuo dianshiju bei'an gongshi de tongzhi', [accessed on 10 September 2009]

[16] Ibid.

[17] Graeme Turner, 'Genre, Format and 'Live' Television', in Glen Creeber (2001), p.7.

[18] Xie Yuexuan (2008), p. 3.

[19] *Zhongguo yinxiang shangwu wang* in Chinese, the official website is <http:// www.cnave.com> (in Chinese) [accessed 09 July 2009].

[20] *Guojia yinxiang shuzi jiaoyi zhongxin* in Chinese. For the official website, see <http:// www.cndre.com> (in Chinese) [accessed 09 July 2009]. For further details of its founding, read Xiaochun Guo, 'The founding of National Audio & Video Digital Right Exchange, the solution to the digital piracy' ('Guojia yinxiang shuizi jiaoyizhongjin qidong, jiejue wangluo daoban wenti') <http://it.sohu.com/20061116/n246425301.shtml> (in Chinese) [accessed 05 January 2010].

[21] Genre categories in table 4.4 are derived from the official website of CNAVE <http:// www.cnave.com> (in Chinese) [accessed on 09 July 2009].

[22] The television drama *My Own Swordsman* is one of the most successful recent sitcoms in China. The story is located in a local restaurant in an unspecified ancient time. All the protagonists of the story claim they are fabulous martial arts masters, and behave like a group of gangsters without fear in their day-to-day existence. However, beneath the violence and brutality, the characters are friendly, warm-hearted or even cowardly on occasions.

[23] This nature of hybridity and overlap also applies to the genre Chinese political history drama, which I have discussed further in Chapter VI.

[24] , See Jane Feuer, 'Genre Study and Television', in Robert Allen (1992), pp. 138-160.

[25] See Robert Allen, 'Bursting Bubbles: 'Soap Opera', Audiences, and the Limits of Genre', in *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, eds. by Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner, and Eva-Maria Warth (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 44-54.

[26] Rick Altman, 'What role do genres play in the viewing process?' in Rick Altman, (1999), p. 151 and pp. 144-165.

[27] Ibid., p. 151.

[28] Ibid., p. 163.

[29] Graeme Turner, 'The Uses and Limitations of Genre' in Glen Creeber (2001), p. 5.

[30] Jason Mittell,, (2004), p. 13.

[31] Michael Keane, 'Television Drama in China: Remarking the Market', (2005), pp. 83-84.

[32] Ibid., p. 84.

[33] Michael Keane, 'Television Drama in China: Remarking the Market', (2005), p. 84.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Michael Keane, 'Television and civilization: the Unity of Opposites?', (1999), p. 254.

[36] Yi Wang, 'Intellectuals and popular television in China: Expectations as a cultural phenomenon', (1999), p. 224.

[37] For further detail, see Qingrui Zeng, *Shouwang dianshiju de jingshen jiayuan* (*Supervising the Spirit of Chinese Television Dramas)*, (Beijing: The Press of Communication University of China, 20050 (in Chinese), p. 13.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Weiguo Wang, Lixin Zuo, and Ali Zhang, (2006), pp. 103-108.

[40] Suling Wu and Ali Zhang, (2008)

[41] Guo's comments on the term 'historical drama' are translated by the author of this thesis. For further detail, see Moruo Guo, *Guo Moruo lun chuangzuo (Guo Moruo on Creative Writing)*, (Shanghia: Shanghai Wenyi Press, 1983) (in Chinese), p. 509.

[42] For example, Xiao contrasted the definition of 'history' with 'modern', and gave the example of Italy, whose modern history begins in 1860, when the country became united. For further detail, see Shengli Li and Jinghong Xiao, (2006), pp. 5-8.

[43] Ibid., p.8.

[44] *Xinhua Chinese Dictionary* (*Xinhua zidian*), (Beijing: Shangwu yin shu guan, 2001, 3rd) (in Chinese), p. 633.

[45] The genre of 'historical parody' (xishuo lishi) came originally from the television drama *The Chronicles of Emperor Qianglong* (*Xishuo Qianlong*, dir. Fan Qiuming, 1991), which was a co-operative venture between Taiwan, Hong Kong and Mainland China, regarded as a loan word from Cantonese. In order to distinguish this type of historical television drama, Chinese mainland scholars thus created the term 'zhengshuo'. For further detail, see Shengli Liand Jinghong Xiao, (2006), pp. 15-16.

[46] Youth Time, 'The discussion on the art: the embarrassment of mainstream historical dramas' <http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/feature/338408.htm> (in Chinese) [accessed on 17 January 2011]

[47] Ibid.

[48] The rock singer Jian Cui and writer Shuo Wang represent the rebellious young urban culture of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Cui's music became the banner for a generation in search of the essence of life and who were opposed to mainstream culture. Wang's fiction satirizes and rejects traditional civilization and values.

[49] Runsheng Ma, 'On the Epic Character of Historical Teleplays in China', *China Television*, 2(2001), (in Chinese), p. 20.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Shengli Li and Jinghong Xiao, (2006), p. 23.

[52] In the same year, the film *The Last Emperor*, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, won nine Academy Awards including Best Picture and Best Director across the Pacific Ocean.

[53] Shen'ai Hu, 'The Method for recording history: talking about the television drama', *The Last Emperor*', *China Television*, 2(2007), p. 25.

[54] Revolutionary drama within the category of 'important subjects' drawn up by SARFT demonstrates its political and ideological orientation. This type of television drama can also be found in the category 'Military/Revolution' divided by CNAVE. For the table, see administrative regulations for Chinese television dramas (issued by SARFT) in the previous chapter.

[55] Geremie R Barmé, *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 116.

[56] This table is laid out by the author of this thesis, inspired by and compared with Barmé's four-principle blueprint for defining Chinese revolutionary dramas.

[57] Quoted in J. Mason Gentzler, ed., *Changing China: Readings in the History of China from the Opium War to the Present* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), p. 135.

[58] Rick Altman, (1999), p.16.

[59] Ibid., p.17.

[60] Ibid., p.18.

Chapter V

[1] Pieter Fourie, p.61.

[2] Jason Mittell, "A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory", in Gary R. Edgerton and Brian G. Rose, (2008), p. 39.

[3] According to her study, serial narrative is a structure which covers a various range of genres. The mini-series is one category of serial narrative. For further argument, see Zhu Ying, (2008), p. 65.

[4] Glen Creeber, (2001), p. 35.

[5] Carl Gardner and John Wyver, 'The Single Play: From Reithian Reverence to Censorship and Cost-Accounting', *Screen*, 24(1983), 4-5, p. 118, cited in Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen* (London: the British Film Institute, 2004), p. 2.

[6] Zhu Ying, (2008), p. 63.

[7] Nell Schemid, 'Tun-huang Literature' in Victor H. Mair, (2001), p. 972.

[8] For a further study of the role of political force in 'fortifying history' and 'advocating Confucianism', read Li Shengli and Xiao Jinghong, (2006), pp. 140-146.

[9] The opinion for paralleling political history drama with Chinese fiction and the literary genre of history is also found in ibid., pp. 139-151.

[10] Ibid., pp. 139-153.

[11] *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, which was written by Luo Guanzhong in the fourteenth century, is a historical novel based on the turbulent events near the end of the Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms Era of Chinese history (c. 169-280). The story was composed partly of history, legend, and myth in chronicling the lives of feudal lords and their retainers, who tried to restore or replace the dwindling Han Dynasty. Its most successful adaptation into Chinese television drama was by director Wang Fulin in 1994.

[12] For further study on the adaptation of Chinese fiction into television drama, see Xiao Jinghong, "The narrative tradition as 'fortifying history and devaluing myth'" in Li Shengli and Xiao Jinghong, (2006), pp. 137-158.

[13] Wai-yee Li, 'Full-length Vernacular Fiction' in Victor H. Mair, (2001), p. 621.

[14] Zhu named the different generic territories as 'transnational circulation'. For further detail, see Zhu Ying, (2008), p. 105. For full detail of the transnational circulation of Chinese language television dramas, see ibid., pp. 101-125.

[15] Ibid., p. 105. For full details of the transnational circulation of Chinese language television dramas, see ibid., pp. 101-108.

[16] Idol dramas ('Ouxiang ju') are one type of popular Taiwanese dramas. Those dramas typically focus more on romance than other television dramas. The most popular singers and actors or actresses, most of whom are in their late teens or 20s, regardless of actual acting experience become the leading characters. The idol dramas cater primarily to the teen or 20s age group.

[17] Of course, since Hong Kong returned to mainland China in 1997, the reproductions of martial arts dramas by CCTV join the competition, and have been achieving enormous successes since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

[18] Philip F.C. Williams, 'Twentieth-Century Fiction' in Victor H. Mair, (2001), p. 732.

[19] Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng*) is one of China's Four Great Classical Novels. It was composed sometime in the middle of the eighteen century during the Qing Dynasty. It is a masterpiece of Chinese vernacular literature and is generally acknowledged to be the pinnacle of classical Chinese novels. This novel is remarkable not only for its huge cast of characters and psychological scope, but also for its precise and detailed observation of the life and social structure typical of eighteenth-century Chinese aristocracy. It was adapted into television drama for the first time in 1987 by the director Wang Fulin. The second adaptation was by Li Shaohong in 2009.

[20] *Journey to the West* originally was published anonymously in the 1590s during the Ming Dyansty. Since the twentieth century, its authorship has been ascribed to the scholar Wu Cheng'en. The novel is a fictionalised account of the legendary pilgrimage to India by the Buddhist monk Xuanzang. It has a strong background in Chinese folk religion, mythology, and a traditional value system; the pantheon of Taoist and Buddhist bodhisattvas is still reflective of some Chinese folk religious beliefs today. The masterpiece adaptation was aired by CCTV in 1988. It was recently remade by director Zhang Jizhong in 2010.

[21] *Water Margin* is one of the four great classical novels of Chinese literature, which was attributed to Shi Nai'an. The novel details the trials and tribulations of 108 outlaws during the Song Dynasty period. It was based on the outlaw Song Jiang and his thirty-six companions. The group was active in the Huai River region and surrendered to the government in 1121. The most influenced adaptation in Chinese television drama was directed by CCTV in 1996. More recently, it has been remade in 2010.

[22] Zhixian Yu and Yaoting Zhu, *Chengjisihan* (*Genghis Khan*) (Beijing: Beijing Press, 2000)

[23] Andrew Ross, 'Use of Camp' in his *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1989), p. 139.

[24] Geremie R Barmé, (1999), p. 116.

[25] For the further discussion on the cultural genre analysis, see Jason Mittell, 'A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory' in Gary R. Edgerton and Brain G. Rose, (2008), pp. 57-58.

[26] Wang Hui, (2003), p. 21.

[27] Ibid., p. 23.

[28] Here, I should make a clear that this genre of 'new historicism fictions' is not the well-known western literary and critical theory 'new historicism' which developed in 1980s. Chinese 'new historicism fictions' is a pure cultural phenomenon within Chinese contexts after 1989. . In fact, this literary genre is much similar to the literary genre of realism, but interpreted as neo-realism by most of Chinese critics which is the 'rethinking' on the contemporary China projected into the field of history study. For further detail, see Li Shengli and Xiao Jinghong (2006), pp. 208-212, and Min Yan, 'Crash and Reconstruction: the decadent historical sense – new historicism fictions', *Contemporary Chinese Literature Studies*, 2(1998) (in Chinese), 106-107.

[29] Joseph Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen: The Politics of Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 113-114.

[30] New Leftists can usually be divided into two main groups – ones believes in either postmodernism or Mao's interpretation of Marxism, and the others devote their academic attention on the notion of Chinese nationalism. In present, New Leftism is seen as being more appealing to students than current other liberalism or neoliberalism (*xin ziyouzhuyi*).

[31] They are originally from earlier liberals who concerned mostly with resisting the leviathan state.

[32] Wang Hui (2003), p. 28.

[33] It should be kept in mind here, despite the heat of those debates created after 1989, 'the government is not comfortable with either side, and has unofficially announced its intention to monitor it closely, evidently afraid of the extent to which candid discussion concerning the fundamentals of political economy will rock the boat of the fragile social assent it has gathered for its economist policies.' For the further detail, see Wang Hui, (2003), p. 29.

[34] One fine example is the book *China Can Say No! Options for Politics and Emotions in the Post-Cold War Period*, 1996 (*Zhongguo keyi shuo bu: leng zhan hou shi dai de zhengzhi yu qinggan jue zhe*) by a group of malcontent young journalists, whose publication was tacitly approved by the Jiang leadership.

[35] Helmut Martin, 'China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan during the 1980s and 1990s', in Victor H Mair, (2001), pp. 771-772.

[36] Michael Keane, 'Television Drama in China: Remarking the Market', (2005), p. 86.

[37] For further detail, see Yibin Zhong and Wangnam Huang, (1995), p. 370 cited in Michael Keane, 'Television and civilization: the Unity of Opposites?', (1999), p. 249.

[38] Zhu Ying, (2008), pp.29-35.

[39] Ibid., p.23.

[40] Here, I need to point out that this fabulous box office of the film *Confucius* has been seriously questioned by the general public for the accuracy.

[41] Sina, 'Kongzi piaofang ni xubao, ruhefenbianzhenjia'('*Confucius* and the False of Box Office'), <http://www.dahe.cn/xwzx/mrdkt/zxzx/t20100201_1741387.htm> (in Chinese) [accessed 07 July 2010].

[42] *Guanyu tiaozhen zhongda geming he lishi tichai dianying, dianshiju lixiang ji wansheng pian shengcha banfa de tongzhi* in Chinese. This notice was taken effect on any television dramas which have been produced after 16th July 2003. <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/35/846.html> (in Chinese) [accessed 29 August 2007].

[43] The Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China is an internal division of the Communist Party of China, and therefore is not formally considered to be part of the Government of the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, it is the highest office to enforce media censorship and control in China, as well as in charge of the propaganda in the People's Republic of China, even though no state law explicitly gives it such authority.

[44] Chunming Zhang, 'Dalu dianshiju *Qin Shi Huang* weishenme bei xuecang le liunian' ('The Reasons for the belated show of the TV drama *Qin Shi Huang*') <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/23560445.html?si=2> (in Chinese) [accessed on 20 May 2010].

[45] John Whitney Hall, *Japan from Prehistory to Modern Times* (Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle, 1971), p. 40.

[46] *Han* Chinese is an ethnic group indigenous to China and the largest single human ethnic group in the world. *Han Chinese* constitutes about 92 per cent of the population of the People's Republic of China with substantial genetic, linguistic, cultural and social diversity.

[47] *Zhonghua minzu* refers to the notion of a Chinese nationality transcending ethnic divisions in the Chinese term. It certainly identifies China as a whole, and includes people who have historically interacted, contributed and assimilated to various extents with Chinese civilization.

[48] For full explanation on the official orthodoxy of 'Three Guiding Principles' and 'Five Constant Regulations', see Xingzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 34-38.

[49] Zhu Ying (2008), pp. 30-31. The concept of 'clean officials' has also been fully studied by Bai Ruoyun, '"Clean Officials", Emotional Moral Community, and Anti-corruption Television Dramas' in Zhu Ying, Michael Keane and Bai Ruoyun, (2008), pp. 47-60.

[50] Zhu Ying, (2008), pp. 30-31.

[51] Ibid., p.31.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p.37.

[54] Ibid., p.38.

[55] Quoted from Hu Mei in ibid., p. 30.

[56] Ibid., p.30.

[57] China Daily, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-01/12/content407995.htm> (in Chinese) [accessed on 15 June 2010].

[58] Junqiu Wang, 'The Tradition of Political Tactics Culture and the Popularity of Royal TV Dramas and Films of the Qing Dynasty', (2008) (in Chinese), pp. 102-105.

[59] For further study on Western thinking on Machiavellian intelligence, see Andrew Whiten and Richard W. Byrne, eds., *Machiavellian Intelligence II: Extensions and Evaluations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

[60] Confucius (translated by Arthur Waley), *The Analects* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996), p. 81.

[61] Ibid., p. 201.

[62] Yao Xingzhong (2000), pp. 195-196.

[63] Baoguo Chen, 'Why I like the television drama *King Goujian of Yue*', *Fresh Reading*, 31(2006), 39.

[64] The figures above came from the investigation of SARFT, China. For full detail, see: <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/36/2704.html>, <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/36/3174.html>, <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/manage/publishfile/36/3494.html>, (in Chinese) [all accessed 10 May 2006]

[65] Figures comes from Baidu, 'Sanguo yanyi' (*Three Kingdoms*) <http://baike.baidu.com/view/2372.htm> (in Chinese) [accessed 01July 2010].

[66] The quotation is translated by the author of this thesis. For the primary text, see Jun Yang, *Xianzai yu 12 wei meijieren de duihua* (*The Conversation with 12 Directors*) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), p. 145.

[67] Ibid.,

[68] For full detail of these two revolution dramas *Mao Zedong, the Founder of China, The Long March* and *The East is Red*, see *Television Dramas Consulted* at the back of this thesis.

[69] Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London: British Film Institute, 1986), p. 2.

[70] The only one produced before 2000 is the television drama *Mao Zedong: the founder of China* in 1999. For the full detail, see *Television Dramas Consulted* at the back of this thesis.

[71] Although audiences might argue by listing a handful television dramas which focus on the emperors' wives, consorts, or others in the imperial family and heavily address on the female figures, they are often considered as costume drama by the CNAVE or the CNDRE, and are considered to be in the 'Imperial' category of the format 'Tradition' by the SARFT. The political history dramas which concern SARFT in terms of social impact are categorized into the format of 'Important Subject'.

[72] Christine Gledhill, (1997), p. 360.

Chapter VI

[1] Rick Altman, (1999), p. 60.

[2] Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture,* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), p. 42.

[3] Ibid.

[4] The table is created and designed by the [author writer of this thesis.

[5] Along with [the] other similar subjects or themes with the Qing Dynasty as their period background, some Chinese domestic scholars then collected and named them as 'Qing palace drama' or 'Qing drama'. Criticism based on the term 'Qing palace drama' can be seen in Junqiu Wang, 'The Tradition of Political Tactics Culture and the Popularity of Royal TV Dramas and Films of the Qing Dynasty', *Research of Chinese Literature* 3(2008), (in Chinese), 138-141. Ming Hua, 'The Discussion on Historical dramas and Qing Palace Dramas', *Journal of School of Chinese Language and Culture Nanjing Normal University,* 1.3(2002), (in Chinese), 23-27. Wei Yang, 'Three Questions on Qing dramas', *Journal of Literature and History*, 4(2002) (in Chinese), 15-17. Liangqing Shen, 'A Clarification on Qing Palace Drama' in *Tribune of Social Sciences*, 1(2003), (in Chinese), 73-77. And for the term 'Qing drama', see Zuozhe Feng, 'A Discussion on the "Parody" of Qing Drama', <http://www.qingstudy.com/data/articles/a04/78.html> (in Chinese) [accessed 14 December 2010].

[6] Ying Zhu, (2008).

[7] Rick Altman (1999), p. 68.

[8] Ibid., p. 65.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Shengli Li and Jinghong Xiao, (2006), p. 22.

[11] The features of martial arts, legend, and fantasy television dramas mentioned here, to some extent, are quite similar to British costume dramas. In order to compare (and for further analysis), see Amy Sargeant, 'Making and Selling Heritage Culture: Style and Authenticity in Historical Fictions on Film and Television', in *British Cinema, Past and Present,* eds. Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 301.

[12] Five seasons of *Kangxi weifusifang ji* were produced from 1999 to 2007. The drama, based on the legend of the great emperor Kangxi of the late Qing dynasty (1644-1911), created a series of stories in which the undercover Kangxi investigated his territory and brought justice to the people suffering at the bottom end of society.

[13] Jiangnan Time*, 'Kangxi Incognito Travel'* <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/paper447/8226/775978.html> (in Chinese) [accessed 27 May 2010]

[14] http://wwww.jxnews.com.cn/oldnews/n12097/ca834336.htm (in Chinese) [accessed on 27 May 2010]

[15] The TV series *Returning Princess Pearl* is a television adaptation of the Taiwanese romance writer Qiong Yao's serial novel of the same name, and was a co-production between Taiwan and the Mainland China. The story is about the legend of Princess Huanzhu of the Qing dynasty as well as the long reign of the Emperor Qianlong, both of whom served as initial inspiration for the author. Even though some of the characters and the premise of the plot are based on real historical events and figures, considerable artistic license was employed and the series is largely fictional. The first two seasons are presented with heavy elements of comedic parody.

[16] This is according to Yin Hong, cited in Michael A. Keane, 'Television Drama in China: Remarking the Market', (2005), p. 89.

[17] Runshen Ma, 'Zhongguo lishi ju de shishi xing', 2(2001), 20-23.

[18] For full production details for both, see 'Television Dramas Consulted' at the back of my thesis.

[19] The Xiongnu were a confederation of nomadic tribes from Central Asia with a ruling class of unknown origin. Chinese sources from the third century BC report them as creating an empire under Modu Chanyu, stretching beyond the borders of modern-day Mongolia. When the Han Emperor Wu dispatched the explorer Zhang Qian to explore the mysterious kingdoms to the west, the Han Dynasty made preparations for war. The Sino-Xiongnu War has been taken as a series of battles between 133BC and 89AD. For full detail of Sino-Xiongnu relations, see Jerry Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 29-67.

[20] Jason Mittell, 'A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory' in Gary R. Edgerton and Brain G. Rose (2008), p.41.

[21] The figures come from the report on the television dramas 'The Great Revival and The King Goujian of Yue', *Modern Express* (in Chinese), 27 December 2006, p. A34.

[22] The SARFT, 'Dianshiju paishe zhizuo bei'an gongshi guanli zhanxing banfa' ('Decree on the management of pre-production of Chinese television drama') <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2006/04/11/20100309151225850447.html> (in Chinese) [accessed 12 July 2010].

[23] The interview with Qiu Xiaojun on the changing decree on the management of pre-production of Chinese television drama <http://www.sztv.com.cn/samgnews/index.do?i=3604&m=0404&a=detail> (in Chinese) [accessed on 12/07/2010].

[24] *Modern Express* 27 December 2006, p. A34.

[25] Jason Mittell, (2004), p. 8.

[26] For further details of the rebirth of a phantom genre and its examples of women's films, see Rick Altman, (1999), pp. 72-77.

[27] Helmut Martin, 'China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan during the 1980s and 1990s', in Victor H Mair (2001), p. 773.

[28] Jason Mittell, (2004), p.10.

[29] E. D. Hirsch Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), and Ibid., pp. 37-64.

[30] Jane Feuer, 'Genre Study and Television' in R. Allen, (1992), p. 142.

[31] Ibid., p.40.

[32] Cited from Gledhill in Natsu Onoda Power, *God of Comics: Osamu Tezuka and the Creation of Post-World War II Manga* (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), p. 144.

Chapter VII

[1] Jane Feuer, "Genre Study and Television" in R. Allen (1992), p.138.

[2] Jason Mittell, (2004), p. 5.

[3] Ibid., p. 1.

[4] Ibids.,

[5] Jason Mittell, 'A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory' in Gary R. Edgerton and Brain G. Rose, (2008), p. 45.

[6] The quotation of director Qing Haiqing during his interview with CCTV, www.cctv.com/teleplay/special/C15453/20060317/100837.shtml (in Chinese) (accessed on 27/03/2009)

[7] Ibid.

[8] For the further information on the brief contemporary history of Taiwan and its emergence of national identity, see Henrietta Harrison, *Inventing the Nation: China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 262-264.

[9] For full Text of Jiang's Speech at CPC Anniversary Gathering, see <http://english;peopledaily.com.cn/english/200107/01/archive.html> (in Chinese) [accessed 08 May 2005].

[10] New Daily, 'Ming Chen jiu *Shi Liang Dajiangju* dianshiju da Xinkuaibao jizhe wen' (Chen in Answering the Questions in Regard to *Great General Shi Lang*), <http://www.confucius2000.com/admin/list.asp?id=2352> (in Chinese) [accessed 29 April 2006].

[11] Although during my interview with the screenwriter of *Great General Shi Lang* later in 2009, Zhang Xiaotian pointed out that the wrong message has been given by Dr. Chen which confused the media greatly. The Dr. Cheng Ming's proposal was based on the novel *Megaton on Taiwan Strait*, which is not original script of this television drama. However, what I can observe is the media successfully stirred an atmosphere around the topic of recovering Taiwan reaches the consensus of the intellectual debates.

[12] Wei Ling, 'Dianshiju *Shi Lang Dajiangjun daoyan Ning Haiqiang de hua*' (The Inview of Haiqiang Ning, the Director of *Great General Shi Lang*), <http://www.cctv.com/teleplay/special/C15453/20060317/100837.shtml> (in Chinese) [accessed 27 March 2009].

[13] Ibid.

[14] For [the] further detail, see the interview with screenwriter Zhang Xiaotian in the appendix of this thesis.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Yi Wang, 'Intellectuals and popular television in China: Expectations as a cultural phenomenon', (1999), p. 224.

[17] Minglu Gao, ed., *The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art* (Beijing: Timezone 8/ The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 2006), p. 197.

[18] Ibid., p. 198.

[19] Hui Wang, (2006), p. 143.

[20] Ibid., p. 144.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Hui Wang, (2006), p.202.

[23] For further detail, see Junhao Hong, 'The Role of Media in China's Democratisation', *Media Development: Journal of the World Association for Christian Communication*, 1(2002), 19-22.

[24] Jason Mittell, (2004), p. 15.

[25] Domestic Chinese scholars are still developing their research into narrative study in order to explore the well-balanced relationship between historical veracity and fiction in Chinese historical drama. This research interest has divided critics in the Western research community on Chinese historical drama as will be fully studied in the next chapter. Furthermore, this academic tradition of both the Chinese literary study of vernacular fiction and political history dramas helps to prove my argument that political history drama is derived from literary fiction, in contrast to Zhu Ying's emphasis on 'pingtan'.

[26] Xin Wang, *Zai lishi yu yishu zhi jian: zhongguo lishiticai dianshiju wenhua shixue yanjiu (Between History and Art: the Cultural and Poetic Study on Chinese Historical and Political Dramas)* (Beijing: Communication University of China Press, 2008), p. 32.

[27] Shengli Li and Jinghong Xiao, (2006), pp. 134-136.

[28] Ibid., p. 135.

[29] Wai-yee Li, 'Full-length Vernacular Fiction' in Victor H. Mair, (2001), p. 621.

[30] Ibid., p. 622 and p. 626.

[31] Ibid., p. 622.

[32] During the forum on the television drama *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in 1994, Qingrui Zeng proposed an essay called 'Buzuoxing, bushishen, zhuiqiudianshijude zhenshanmei—dianshilianxuju "*sanguoyanyi*"gaibian zuoyi' (in English, translated as 'Without Losing the Shape, Without Losing the [Sprite] Spirit, A Consideration on Veracity, Morals, and Artistry: A Discussion on the Rewrite of the Television Drama *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*'). After this forum, he published two articles 'Lishirongshensui, shijuchangyaorao—dianshiju '*Taipingtianguo*' lishi yu yishu de hexietongyi' (in English, 'The Spirit of Historical Veracity, the Beauty of Historical Drama: The Harmony between History and Art in Television Drama *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*') and '*Wencheng gongzhu*': yanyigudai aiqinggushi de qishi' (or 'The Inspiration for the Classical Romance in *Princess Wencheng*). For further reading, see Shengli Li and Jinghong Xiao, (2006), p. 254.

[33] For further details of this interview, see the appendix.

[34] Falun Gong is a system of beliefs and practices founded in China by Li Hongzhi in 1992. It emerged at the end of China's qigong boom, a period of growth and one in which similar practices grew in popularity. Its teaching includes concepts from qigong as well as Buddhist and Taoist traditions, but it greatly emphasizes morality and the theological nature of its teachings. The movement grew rapidly in China

between 1992 and 1999. In 1999, a silent protest was held around the residential compound of China's leaders, which was illegal under Chinese law. In July of the same year, the Chinese government banned Falun Gong.

[35] Dore J. Levy, 'Literary Theory and Criticism' in Victor H. Mair, (2001), p. 622 and p. 921.

[36] Shengli Li and Jinghong Xiao, (2006), p. 149.

[37] Wei Yang, *'Qingshi ju de sange wenti'* ('Three Questions on Qing Dramas'), *Journal of Literature and History*, 4(2002) (in Chinese), 15-17.

[38] Refer to <http:// www.yuandao.com> (in Chinese) [accessed 29 April 2006].

[39] China Daily, 'The heated debate upon the television drama *The Great General Shi Lang*; 'the traitor to Han' address to the neo-Confucius of the Mainland' <http://news.china.com/zh-cn/domestic/945/20060414/13245815.html> (in Chinese) [accessed 12 May 2009].

[40] For a further report on the beginning stage of this debate, see China Daily, 'The heated debate upon the television drama *The Great General Shi Lang*; 'the traitor to Han' address to the neo-Confucius of the Mainland', [accessed 12 May 2009].

[41] China, with over five thousand years history and covering over 9.6 million square kilometres, has 56 ethnicities, the majority of which are Han Chinese. Han Chinese is an ethnic group native to China, and constitutes about 92 percent of the population of the People's Republic of China (mainland China), 98 percent of the population of the Republic of China (Taiwan). The Han Chinese began migrating from south-eastern coastal provinces of mainland China to Taiwan in the 17th century. Today, over 22 million Han Chinese are in Taiwan. The Han Chinese is a subset of the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*). An alternate name that many Chinese people use to refer to themselves is 'Descendants of the Dragon'. Or many Han and other Chinese also call themselves 'Descendants of the Yan Di (Yan Emperor) and Huang Di (Yellow Emperor)'. In English language, the Hans are often referred to as simply 'Chinese', which is not accurate.

[42] Gu Yanwu (1613-1682), also known as Gu Tinglin, was a Chinese philologist and geographer. He spent his youth in anti-Manchu activities at a time when the Ming Dynasty was overthrown. He never served the Qing Dynasty. His criticism of Neo-Confucianism had a huge influence on later scholars. His works include *Ri Zhi Lu*.

[43] Nandu Weekly, 'Jiu "Shi Lang" dianshiju sanda jizhe wen' ('QA to the television drama *The Great General Shi Lang*') from <http:// http://www.confucius2000.com/admin/list.asp?id=2375> (in Chinese) [accessed 02 May 2006].

[44] Ibid.

[45] For [the] further detail, see the interview with screenwriter Xiaotian Zhang in the appendix of this thesis.

[46] Nandu Weekly, 'Jiu "Shi Lang" dianshiju sanda jizhe wen' ('QA to the television drama *The Great General Shi Lang*'), [accessed 02 May 2006].

[47] James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1991), p. 10.

[48] John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 1.

[49] Ibid., p. 2.

[50] James G. Kellas, (1991), p. 33.

[51] Michael Keane, 'Television and civilization: the Unity of Opposites?', (1999), p. 253.

[52] John Breuilly, (1993), p. 7.

Conclusion

[1] Rick Altman (1999), p. 195.

[2] For further details, see Janson Mittell, 'A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory' in Gary R. Edgerton and Brain G. Rose (2008), pp. 54-59.

[3] Rick Altman (1999), p. 205.

[4] For detail on the political administration of [SARFT, see chapter I, section 3.2.2, and chapter II, 1.1.

[5] This political and cultural message encoded in political history drama is elaborated in chapter III, section 3. It is further tested in case studies of *The Great General Shi Lang* in chapter VII.

[6] This quotation is translated by the writer of the present thesis. For the original comment, see Ge Jianxiong and Zhou Youbin, (2002), p. 56.

[7] Jason Mittell, 'A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory' in Gary R. Edgerton and Brain G. Rose (2008), p. 59.

[8] For [the] further discussion of contemporary Chinese television and genre studies, see chapter I.

[9] For further details of this traditional method on audience research, see Jason Mittell (2004), pp.95-96.

[10] This is mainly presented by narratives on the genre of political history drama. For full detail of such narratives, see chapters III and IV.

[11] For details, see chapter II, section 2.

[12] Gotelind Müller, (2007), p. 24, and Xiaoxiang Daily, '*Zouxiang gonghe* guanzhong sangao: xueligao shourugao nianlinggao' ('Three highs in *Towards Republic China*') <http://ent.sina.com.cn/v/2003-05-19/1026150077.html> (in Chinese) [accessed on 06 December 2010].

[13] Janson Mittell, (2004), p. 101.

[14] Xingzhou Daily, 'Taiwan, jiuzhiyanshuo qiangdiao butong budu buwu, Jingjiu Ma huyu liang'an xieshang' (President Ma Promotes A dialog between Tianwan and Mainland), <http://news.sina.com/int/sinchewdaily/105-103-102-101/2008-05-20/02332912835.html> (in Chinese) [accessed on 20 June 2011].

[15] For a detailed discussion of the Sino-logical community within 'Greater China', see chapter V, section 3.

[16] For further details, see chapter V, section 2.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Cited from Shao by Müller, for further detail, see ibid.

[19] This watershed moment among Chinese intellectuals is also elaborated in chapter II, section 2.2.

[20] Shengli Li and Jinghong Xiao, (2006), p. 184.

[21] Joseph M. Chan, 'Toward Television Regionalization in Greater China and Beyond', in Zhu Ying and Chris Berry, (2009), p. 27.

[22] Michael Keane, 'From National Preoccupation to Overseas Aspiration', in Zhu Ying, Michael Keane, and Bai Ruoyun, (2008), p. 145.

[23] Ibid., pp. 145-156.

[24] Ibid., 155.

[25] See chapter IV, section 2.1.

[26] Altman, (1999), p. 157.

[27] Ibid, p. 206.

[28] This opinion comes from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their book *Empire,* cited by Wang in Hui Wang (2003), p. 33