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Representations of China in Transnational Documentary Cinema

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BA, MA

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis examines the representations of China in transnational documentary cinemas, analysing the filmmaking techniques utilised in and the political-economic discourses of a corpus of relevant films. In this thesis, I draw on Bill Nichols's conceptual work on documentary modes to develop my analysis on the diverse modes of Sino-foreign transnational documentary films. I also employ formalist film theory to develop the analysis on cinematography styles and editing techniques. Meanwhile, by use of the concept of frame theory, I categorise the modes of visual representation in relation to 'Powerful China', 'Beautiful China', 'Superpower of China', 'Amazing China' and 'Marginal China' for the establishment of the structure of the thesis and its participation in the aesthetic imagination, political strategies and cultural cooperation in cinematic discourses.

The first chapter, which serves as an introduction, introduces the research questions and the structure of the thesis, and also includes the literature review and methodology. The second chapter examines the mode of Chinese-British transnational documentary, both including co-operation mode and assistance-mode. It argues that the particular techniques, such as re-enactment, dramatic editing and immersive participation, are integrated into the quality of non-fiction in documentary films, establishing the representation of 'Powerful China' on cultural sense. The third chapter examines the mode of Chinese-American co-production documentary and argues its representation of 'Beautiful China' on the combination of the approach of ethnographic film and contemporary Chinese discourse of 'Beautiful China'. The fourth chapter examines the mode of Chinese-Korean transnational documentary based on Korean Production and argues its representation of 'Superpower of China' is based the discourse of 'China Threat Theory'. The fifth chapter makes a comparative analysis on Chinese state-documentary, taking the genre of 'industrial documentary' as an example, and independent documentary, both transnational and non-transnational. It argues that the state-documentary inherits the cinematographic style of 'China films' from Joris Ivens, shaping the representation of 'Amazing China'. It also illustrates how the independent documentary relies on the construction of personal interactions between the filmmakers and subjects in shaping the representation of 'Marginal China' in its depictions of Chinese modernity.

Then the thesis argues that the different cinematic representations of China from

these diverse modes of Sino-foreign transnational documentary cinemas illustrate the diversity of documentary filmmaking and which demonstrates the elasticity of China within cinematic space in recent years. That is, the concept of 'China' can be stretched to accommodate multiple - even conflicting - perspectives, which are shaped by the socio-economic factors at play and the dominant aesthetic traditions in the countries involved in producing the films.

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I would like to end with the words of Oscar Wilde, 'We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.' Many thanks to all of the people above.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis presented is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degrees at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Jingmei Ouyang

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the topic of cinematic representation of China in transnational documentary cinemas. As the field of Sino-foreign co-produced documentary benefits from both academic theories and industrial experience in documentary filmmaking and transnational documentary, the thesis builds an analysis on the basis of scholarship from academia in both the English and Chinese language in terms of transnational filmmaking. It will essentially draw on an approach from Western film theories, employing classic formalist film theory to examine transnational documentary films made between China and external countries. It will also examine the latest developments in transnational documentary filmmaking in China to summarise the modes and characteristics of officially conducted Sino-foreign transnational documentary in recent years. The goal of the thesis is to identify diverse narrative strategies in the construction of China, and how these modes of cinematic representation of China are shaped in transnational documentary cinema, to study political discourse and meaning-production in different modes of representation of China. Apart from classical and contemporary film theories, the thesis will use the concept of frame theory to categorise the modes of visual representation and accommodate the filmmaking techniques taxonomically. The utilisation of film theory in the context of film production contributes to examine how the aesthetic imagination, political strategies and cultural cooperation create cinematic discourses that occur between international narratives and China's national narrative on screen.

Specifically, the core research question of the thesis is: what kinds of representation of China on screen have been constructed in the recently produced transnational documentary films? And among the frequent transnational co-operations between Chinese filmmakers and external filmmakers who come from the UK, the US, South Korea, etc., what are their cinematic representations of China respectively and how do these filmic constructions utilise filmmaking techniques? More effectively, the subsequent research questions lie on, in chapter 2, that what representation of China has been built in the mode of Chinese-British transnational documentary filmmaking, taking the selected film texts as examples? And how does the cinematic depiction that participates in the construction of stories of China draw on non-fiction filmmaking techniques; in chapter 3, what representation of China has been created in the Chinese-American transnational documentary filmmaking practices and how do the

cinematographic aesthetics and new technology effect the screen construction; in chapter 4, that what representations of China are produced by the South Korean dominated transnational documentary films involving the depiction of China on screen? How do these films construct a cinematic image of China via particular film techniques to resonates with the political installation on the topic of China in a Korean society; in chapter 5, that what are the representations of China in the state documentary films and in those independent (transnational) documentary films which involve international filmmaking resources? How do the different filmmaking techniques utilised in these films work to build the different depictions of China in terms of the stories of China's modernisation? These research questions will be illustrated through examining a series of Chinese-foreign transnational documentary films in the following chapters.

As an introduction to the thesis, the chapter explores the academic context and topic of the research, introducing the approach and process in how to achieve the research goal in the chapters. Consequently, the chapter will develop from these sections, the research context, literature review, methodology and conclusion.

Research Context

Since the topic of the thesis is contemporary development in Sino-foreign transnational documentary filmmaking in the Chinese film industry, this section in advance provides the background of Chinese film industry in its new stage, which has featured more commercialism and internationalism since 2000. Additionally, the section examines some essential ideological ideas and discourses in contemporary China, in order to examine later how these political discourses integrate with Sino-foreign documentary filmmaking in chapter 2 to 5. Moreover, a diagram of the research structure will be used below to illustrate how the films that are to be examined in the thesis are categorised, and how the chapters will be developed.

This thesis focuses on the latest stages of Chinese documentary in the twenty-first century. Since China has officially announced its embrace of a market economy and received international recognition with the confirmation of membership of the WTO in 2001, the changing model of the Chinese economy has deeply shaped the fate of the Chinese documentary. In the thesis, I argue that the development of the Chinese documentary has entered a market-oriented period, one in which the ideas of commercialism have been widely circulated in Chinese society and political ideology relies on commercial strategy in order to reach customers. Specifically, this ideology is

not associated with typical political activities, such as political slogans and demonstrations, but rather is packaged as a product and consumed. One of the obvious types of evidence is that this stage of documentary in China is driven by the commercial logic of the film industry which gradually expresses concerns in commercial profits, for instance, capital inputs in filmmaking projects and audience ratings on streaming media.[1] The Chinese documentary contains two categories according to the taxonomic tradition in Chinese academia, the state documentary and independent documentary. State documentaries have grown earlier than independent documentaries, experiencing some changes in the operation of filmmaking. and are now booming in the trajectory of the commercial industry. Independent documentaries are mainly related to a group of independent directors and their filmmaking in the 'New Documentary Movement' in China. The Chinese independent documentary focuses on two types of topic, problematic issues in Chinese society and political activism. Most independent documentary films are directed by China's well-known independent documentary filmmakers and are inspired by realistic themes in the social transition of China. These film topics usually include politically sensitive events, such as the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and Anti-Rightist Movements (1957); or they explore the wounds of society through framing social problems, for example, filming the fall of 'Ruhr of the East' (1990s), observing the trend of rural migrant workers (1980s to the present), narrating the social problem of 'left-behind children' under the structure of China's urbanisation.[2] To revisit some natural disasters have also become fertile soil for Chinese independent filmmaking. For example, many independent documentary films themed around the disaster of the Wenchuan earthquake (2008) were produced after that catastrophe, with independent directors questioning the local government. Apart from this, Chinese independent documentary films have developed topics relating to marginalised groups; for example, some of them have filmed LGBTQ people to present their lives and inner worlds.

However, the thesis mainly focuses on the current boom in officially supported

[1] Tongdao Zhang. (2021) The Research Report of the Development of Chinese Documentary in 2020. Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 43 (08): 110-115. 张同道. (2021) 2020 年中国纪录片发展研究报告.现代传播(中国传媒大学学报), 43 (08): 110-115.

[2] 'Ruhr of the East' is the alternative name of 'West of the Track/Tie Xi Qu', where once was located the heavy industries of China and experienced the wave of unemployment in China in the 1990s. The name can be seen used in the titles of coverage reports. See here: - Xu Liu. (2021) Tie Xi Qu: "Ruhr of the East" Restarts, Witnessing the Revival of the Development of Chinese Industry. https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_12022983 Accessed on 18-04-2022. Shiyang Liu. (2019) Tiexi Qu, Shenyang: 'Ruhr of the East' Are Far Away. http://www.infzm.com/contents/159223 Accessed on 18-04-22.

Sino-foreign transnational documentary production; therefore, it examines nationally initiated Sino-foreign co-produced documentary films and foreign produced transnational documentary films made with assistance from China. For that purpose, several representatives of independently produced Sino-foreign transnational documentary film and Chinese independent documentary films will be reviewed in chapter 5 for comparison between national narratives and marginal narratives.

Contemporary Chinese Discourses

This section examines the political - social ideas, terms and discourses which are in circulation in China today, including the 'China Dream', 'main-melody', 'Beautiful China', 'the Belt and Road', etc. The section illustrates how these ideological ideas are connected with the topic of the thesis, namely, the representation of China through cinema, and how these particular Chinese discourses participate in the officially conducted process of Chinese transnational documentary filmmaking.

Given that the term representation is interdisciplinarily ambiguous (for instance, one can develop a discussion of representation on a level of cultural studies, arts studies, mathematical studies and political studies), in order to anchor the discussion of representations of China in an appropriate location, the term representation is located to 'media representation', and the content will be re-organised to make it adaptable for the theme of this thesis. In order to concentrate the discussion of representations of China in transnational documentary films to make a practical point, the conceptualisation of China in the films under discussion will be examined through their visual and cinematic construction. This will be achieved in the sphere which has witnessed the filmic manifestation of debate over a state narrative by China versus the 'One-Dimensional China' narrative from external sources.

Here I provide a background for China's current political-social ideology in order to better understand China's state narrative, which has participated in the shaping of cinematic representations of China. This is developed in relation to the officially initiated Sino-foreign transnational documentaries in Chapter 2 and 3 and the Chinese state documentaries in Chapter 5. According to news information released through official media and speeches delivered by Chinese President Xi Jinping in national conferences, it seems that China has tried to establish an official narrative where the government thinks it can best represent China's latest ideologies to construct a narrative

of China.[3] Therefore, it would be better to briefly introduce these ideologies that occur in China's post-reformation era and works, in the process of cinematically constructing China in order to tell the stories of China well in the internationally society.[4] These distinctive terms include 'socialist core values', 'harmonious society', 'eco-civilisation', 'Beautiful China policy', 'responsible power', 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation', 'the new era of China led by President Xi Jinping', 'the Belt and Road', etc. I use the 'China Dream' as a condensed term to demonstrate how contemporary Chinese discourses work in the film industry, due to the fact that these related political and social ideologies could be classified under the concept of 'China Dream'. The 'China Dream', a political concept clearly proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, refers to 'The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'. Specifically, the embodiment of the 'China dream' lies respectively in the prosperity of the country, the renewal of the nation, and the well-being of the people', promoting China on the road of economic reformation, political reformation and the Two Centenary Goals.[5] Consequently, as I will demonstrate in the thesis, the cinematic representation of China in those officially supported Sino-foreign documentary films are engaged with the state's narrative, one in which the idea of the 'China Dream' works throughout to participate in the process of cinematography and meaning-production in the films. On the other hand,

[3] Xi Jinping: Tell Chinese Stories Well and Spread Chinese Voices Well. 2013-09-04. http://www.scio.gov.cn/zhzc/10/Document/1345245/1345245.htm Accessed on 20-04-2022. Tell Chinese Stories well and Strengthen International Communication. 2021-08-30. https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2021-08/30/nw.D110000gmrb_20210830_2-06.htm Accessed on 20-04-2022. Tell Chinese Stories Well, Spread Chinese Voices well, and Show a True, Three-Dimensional and Comprehensive China (Xi Jinping Tells Stories). 2021-12-30. http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2021-12/30/content_25896222.htm Accessed on 20-04-2022.

[4] Post-reformation era refers to the period of reform declared in official documents by China's central leadership. It emphasises how social issues will be dealt with by following a series of further reforming measures, including economic reform, administrative reform, the market system, taxation system, urban-rural integration, building a new system for an open economy, strengthening the construction of the socialist democratic political system, promoting the construction of a rule of law and legal reform, anti-corruption, innovation in culture and arts, reform of social sectors, innovation in social governance, the construction of the eco-civilisation system, reform of national defence and the military. See more here: Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Several Major Issues of Comprehensively Deepening Reform. Issue Date: 19-11-2013. Organization: The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. http://www.scio.gov.cn/32344/32345/32347/32756/xgzc32762/Document/1415757/1415757_14.htm Accessed on 20-04-2022.

[5] Xi Jinping. (2013) Excerpts from Xi Jinping's Speeches on Realizing the Chinese Dream of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation. Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House. pp.55 – 63. The original expression in Chinese is '中国梦的内涵是国家富强、民族复兴、人民幸福，最终实现中华民族的伟大复兴'. Robert Lawrence Kuhn interprets 'China Dream' from four aspects, 'strong China (economically, politically, diplomatically, scientifically, militarily); civilized China (equity and fairness, rich culture, high morals); harmonious China (amity among diverse classes and social segments); beautiful China (healthy environment, low pollution, attractive cities, innovative arts)'. See his article published online on China Daily interpreting 'China Dream' here: http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2013-07/19/content_16814756.htm Accessed on 21-04-2022. 'The Two Centenary Goals' were to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by the time the Communist Party of China celebrated its centenary in 2021; and to turn China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious by the time the People's Republic of China celebrates its centenary in 2049.

international narratives establish a 'One-Dimensional China' narrative from their individual dimension, and shape their stories on the fragmentation of Chinese society rather than accepting a Chinese representation fully according with the state's mainstream ideas and values. Both aspects of native and non-native narratives onscreen have created conflicts. This comparison will be developed in detail in the following chapters.

Dealing with the concept of the 'China Dream', this is raised to depict a blueprint for social construction and to call on the unity of Chinese people at home and abroad, encouraging them to fight for what the Chinese state or government presents as a brilliant future for their country. During the working process of the 'China Dream', more relevant ideological meanings and values that coincided with national interests were produced and transmitted in press and social media platforms; for example, 'Beautiful China'. The discourse of 'Beautiful China' refers to the political dream of the establishment of a high-level eco-civilization in Chinese society which emphasises new forms of relationship between ecology and post-industrialisation, focusing on the environmental benefits and sustainable development for people. The thesis develops the related discussion of 'Beautiful China' discourse and its engagement in officially supported Sino-American transnational documentary films in Chapter 3. Under the grand discourse of the 'China Dream', the national authorities have attempted to involve the Chinese people in their passionate narrative of a new politics of China through successive leadership. Through the use of emotive stories narrated on screen to the audience is invited to participate in a political blueprint designed by the CCP's leadership group. The purpose is to internally construct political ideological recognition of how to develop today's China, and more specifically how to move on accelerate China's reformation and diplomatic strategies. This is to politically strengthen the unity of the nation, by having a common national goal, to better encourage people from different social hierarchies to work hard for the rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation. This idealised recognition of the domestic situation is an important reason why officially initiated Sino-foreign co-produced documentary films have been booming in the Chinese film industry in recent years. Therefore, the subject is of significance for the thesis, indicating the necessity to observe the ongoing phenomenon of Sino-foreign co-production in the Chinese film industry.

Research Structure

The chapter employs a diagram of the research structure to show which frameworks

have been formed with regard to Sino-foreign documentary film, and how subsequent chapters will develop this concept through exploration of the modes of cinematic representation in China.

The thesis chooses representative cases that are produced in diverse modes of Sino-foreign transnational filmmaking in order to demonstrate the originality of the officially initiated Chinese-foreign co-production mode which is active now in the film industry of China. Meanwhile the thesis also examines transnational documentary films produced through other approaches, such as foreign films produced with Chinese assistance, including independent documentaries and non-independent documentaries. This facilitates examination of the dynamics of co-production in Sino-foreign transnational documentaries, and the diversity in representation of China in those films. In particular, the thesis chooses some typical cases of Chinese state documentary to be examined in chapter 5, which helps identify the characteristics of these films. This also serves to demonstrate the distinctive aspects of independently produced documentary, including the modes of transnational co-production and independent films produced with external assistance, to convey the complexity of constructing China on screen.

The production details of these documentary films are as below. *Confucius* (2016) is a transnational cooperation between the British TV company Lion TV and Chinese media companies, China's CCTV (China Central Television), CITVC (China International Television Corp.), and Dazhong News Group.[6] This film had its international premiere during the state visit of Chinese president Xi Jinping to the UK in October 2015, then its domestic premiere at GZDOC (Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival) in December 2015.[7] Next, *Confucius* was transmitted on the television channels CCTV in China and ARTE in France in 2016.[8] *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School* (2015) is in the mode of British TV shows produced with Chinese assistance. This film was screened on the BBC 2 and iQIYI, one of the three biggest streaming media in China in 2015.[9] *Chinese New Year: The Biggest*

[6] "*Confucius*" is the First Sino-Foreign Co-production of Documentary on the Theme of Confucius So Far. Date: 21-10-2015. http://kejiao.cntv.cn/2015/10/21/ARTI1445412147007828.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022.

[7] Chinese-Anglo Joint Documentary Production Premieres in London, Highlights Confucian Culture. Date: 30-10-2015. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/m/shandong/shandongculture/2015-10/30/content_22313818.htm Accessed on 21-04-2022. The Documentary of Confucius in the UK. Date: 09-12-2015. http://kejiao.cntv.cn/2015/12/09/ARTI1449625809490893.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022.

[8] Confucius Documentary Screened on CCTV. Date: 14-01-2016. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/culture/2016-01/04/content_22924699.htm Accessed on 21-04-2022. La Chine, selon Confucius. https://boutique.arte.tv/detail/chine_selon_confucius Accessed on 21-04-2022.

[9] Open University Digital Archive: Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School.

Celebration on Earth (2016) is a film made in the mode of officially initiated Chinese-British co-production, with the participation of BBC 2, Lion TV and CICC (China International Communication Centre).[10] It is distributed by BBC 2 in the UK and by Chinese streaming media platforms, including iQIYI, Tencent Video and Bilibili in 2016. *China from Above I* (2015) and *China from Above II* (2018) are films in the mode of officially supported Chinese-American co-production. They are jointly produced by China's CICC and US's National Geographic Channel, and both seasons are distributed on Chinese streaming media platforms, Tencent Video, Bilibili, and the American National Geographic Channel. *Super China* (2015) is made in the mode of Korean documentary produced with Chinese resources by the filmmakers of KBS (Korean Broadcasting System). It is distributed by the channel KBS in South Korea, and on channels CCTV-9 and CCTV-1, iQIYI in mainland China in 2015. However, *Super China* was also screened twice on TVB (Television Broadcasting Limited) in Hong Kong in 2016 and 2017.[11] *China's Mega Projects I* (2012), *China's Mega Projects II* (2016), *China's Mega Projects III* (2017), *China's High-Speed Railway* (2016) and *The Belt and Road* (2016) are cases of the mode in state documentary which are primarily distributed on CCTV channels and streaming media platforms, Tencent Video and Bilibili, for their Chinese audience.[12] *China's Mega Projects I* was later distributed on RTL in Germany and on Discovery Channel (Italian Television Channel) in Italy and on FJTV 1(Fiji Television), including the channel of Sky Pacific in Fiji in 2014.[13] The

https://www.open.ac.uk/library/digital-archive/program/video:FKAD655S Accessed on 21-04-2022. BBC's Acclaimed Documentary "The Chinese Teacher is Coming" is Exclusively Launched on iQIYI's VIP Member Channel. Date: 13-08-2015. http://www.iqiyi.com/common/20150826/934ea958eee2ff11.html Accessed on 21-04-2022.

[10] The participants of production in Chinese New Year can be found on the closing credits.

[11] KBS-Documentary: Super China. http://global.kbsmedia.co.kr/contents/content_view.php?num=1074 Accessed on 21-04-2022. TVB-Super China. https://programme.tvb.com/lifestyle/superchina Accessed on 21-04-2022. CCTV-9 Super China: The Documentary by South Korea Films the Rise of Chinese Economy. http://jishi.cctv.com/2015/04/05/VIDE1428167008023158.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022.

[12] CCTV-Documentary Column: China's Mega Project I. http://tv.cctv.com/2012/12/10/VIDA1355149961979490.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022. CCTV: China's Mega Projects II to Be Released on Our Channel. http://news.cctv.com/2016/09/30/ARTI5sAzHFjAxXFkwyUwb4mB160930.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022. CCTV: Focusing on the Unknown Mega Projects: China's Mega Projects III to be Released on 18th Oct on CCTV's Channel. http://jishi.cctv.com/2017/10/14/ARTIVzwkantgDmS3neowEKfG171014.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022.
CCTV: The Documentary "Belt and Road" to Be Premiered on CCTV's comprehensive channel. http://www.cctv.com/2016/09/07/ARTIyRSVYUdaKBK8quxorFwW160907.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022. CCTV-Documentary Column: China's High-Speed Railway. http://tv.cctv.com/2016/09/29/VIDAAID96f4x5ICBmoS7gM2r160929.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022.

[13] Chinese Documentaries are Popular Overseas, Productions like 'Bite of China' Hit the Records of Selling. http://news.cntv.cn/2014/04/11/ARTI1397208049014880.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022. Domestic Produced Documentaries Have entered the 'Blockbuster Era' Witnessing the Development of Five Years. http://news.cctv.com/2017/08/11/ARTIp6ZhpKgW9OD54dT7XFpn170811.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022. The

Arabic version of *China's Mega Projects III* was distributed on the channel MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Centre) for Saudi audiences in 2018.[14] *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks/À l'ouest des rails* (2002), a Chinese independent documentary assisted by international resources due to its nature, was premiered at different international festivals. The film screened at festivals including Lisbon International Documentary Festival (Grand Prize) in 2002, Yamagata Festival du Film (Grand Prize), Marseille International Documentary Festival (Grand Prize), Festival des 3 Continents in Nantes (Montgolfiere d'Or Juried Prize for Documentary), Rotterdam International Film Festival and Toronto International Film Festival in 2003.[15] It was also released in French cinemas and was a box-office success in France.[16] *Last Train Home* (2009) is a Chinese-Canadian transnational co-produced independent documentary, premiered at some international festivals. These festivals include Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival (Best Feature-Length Documentary) in 2009, Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival (Grand Jury Prize, Special Jury Prize), Sundance Film Festival (Nominee), Santa Barbara International Film Festival (Nominee) and Shanghai International TV Festival (Nominee) in 2010.[17] It was then distributed in the form of a DVD in the US.[18] *The Iron Ministry* (2014) held its premieres at both European and North American film festivals, including Festival del film Locarno, Vancouver International Film Festival, New York Film Festival and in 2014, FIFE Il de France, and Edinburgh International Film Festival in 2015.[19] *Along the Railway* held premieres at Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (Winner of New Asian Currents-Special Mention and Nominee of Ogawa Shinsuke Prize) in 2001 and Jeonju Film

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Premium Products of Chinese TV Documentary and Series, 'Bite of China', 'China's Mega Projects I', 'Beijing Love Story', are distributed in Fiji. http://news.cntv.cn/2014/11/19/ARTI1416366640818494.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022.

[14] The Arabic Version of 'China's Mega Projects' holds the premiere in the Middle East. http://news.cctv.com/2018/11/15/ARTIIicGpQAU1DsYdLbxVebl181115.shtml Accessed on 21-04-2022.

[15] For more information about the circulation of *West of the Tracks* to the international audience see here: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0389448/releaseinfo?ref_=tt_dt_rdat Accessed on 22-04-2022. https://store.der.org/west-of-the-tracks-p250.aspx Accessed on 22-04-2022. *West of the Tracks* is not widely screened domestically. See an interview to the director Wang Bing on the backstage story of the filmmaking. https://m.thepaper.cn/rss_newsDetail_15057511?from= Accessed on 22-04-2022.

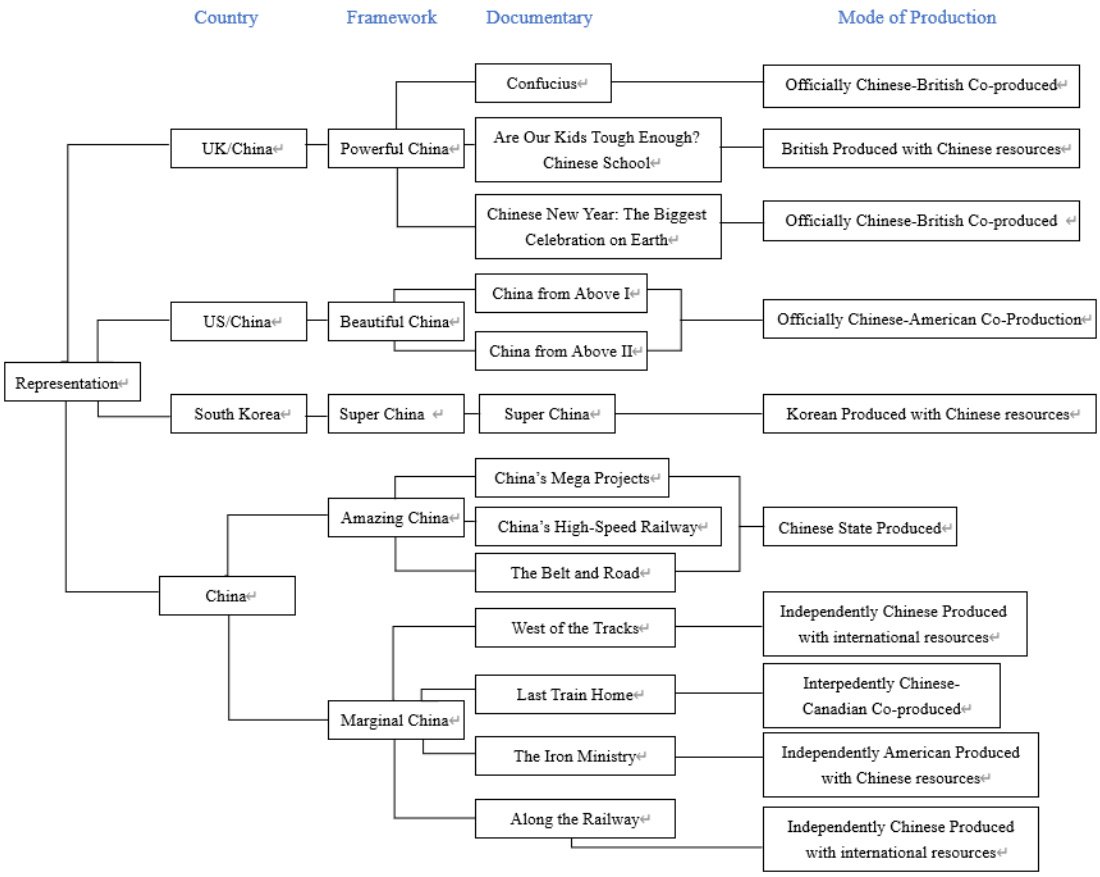
[16] Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks. http://bt.wenming.cn/ztlm_2015_index/20150916lddyx/20150916lddyx01/201509/t20150921_2000978.shtml Accessed on 22-04-2022.

[17] More information about the release and awards of *Last Train Home* sees here: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1512201/awards/?ref_=tt_awd Accessed on 22-04-2022.

[18] See the distribution information here: https://www.allmovie.com/movie/last-train-home-v507161/releases Accessed on 22-04-2022.

[19] More information about the premieres of *The Iron Ministry* in global film festivals see here: https://www.theironministry.com/screenings Accessed on 22-04-2022.

Festival (Nominee for Daring Digital Award) in 2002.[20]



As the diagram displays, the thesis develops five frameworks to deal with transnational documentary films in relation to China. These documentaries, from the perspective of distribution channels, comprise films circulating on TV channels and streaming media, such as *China From Above*, or released in theatres, like *Last Train Home*. From the viewpoint of transnational filmmaking, the thesis categorises four types of Sino-foreign co-production in documentary filmmaking, and argues that these types of transnational co-production respectively create diverse modes of cinematic representation of China on screen; namely, culturally 'powerful China', 'beautiful China', China as a 'super power', 'marginal China'. The thesis examines transnational documentaries which are co-produced by different approaches. Some of them are processed in the manner of Chinese state officially supported co-productions with external countries, such as the *China from Above* films, which are conducted in the mode of official Chinese - American co-production. This exemplifies how contemporary Chinese discourses can be fused with mature filmmaking techniques

[20] See the information of premieres of *Along the Railway* here: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2518416/awards/?ref_=tt_awd Accessed on 22-04-2022.

imported from the West. The other films were essentially conducted and produced by external countries but involved Chinese resources, including the subjects, channels of distributions, and staff in charge of post-production. For instance, *Super China* was produced by South Korea but with Chinese personnel and distribution in mainland China and Hong Kong. The discussion of the above modes of representation of China forms the basis of the following chapters 2, 3 and 4. Meanwhile, China maintains its own cinematic representation, mainly relying on the construction of state documentary. The thesis examines those popularly circulating Chinese state documentary films which features within the genre of 'industrial documentary' at home, and argues that a mode of representation of China in terms of 'amazing China' is constructed by the national discourse. This is illustrated in detail in chapter 5. In addition, for comparison of state narratives and opposing narratives, the thesis also examines independent films, both in a transnational co-produced mode, such as *Last Train Home,* and films from independently produced modes with external resources, like *West of the Tracks*, are included. The thesis demonstrates how both these representations - of the 'amazing country' and 'marginal country' - are framed in these different narratives in chapter 5.

Literature Review

This section reviews the core literature with regard to the field of Sino-foreign transnational documentary, Chinese independent documentary and independent transnational documentary. It suggests the current output of the relevant studies and demonstrates how these resources help build the analysis of officially conducted Sino-foreign transnational documentaries in the next chapters. Meanwhile, this section reviews the scholarship on visual representation of China in the disciplines of media studies, cultural studies, visual studies and film studies, to serve the development of demonstration in terms of cinematic representation of China in the main chapters. Therefore, this section will summarise the main ideas, viewpoints and arguments produced among these categories, and highlight their connection with my research.

Sino-Foreign Transnational Documentary

When documentary filmmaking is concerned with transnational cooperation, these cases arguably deserve more attention and discussion, for they are practicing a new method of filmmaking in the Chinese film industry, as a number of scholars have argued. Thomas Waugh has examined Joris Ivens' *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* (1976), a transnational documentary film that dealt with the ongoing cultural revolution

of China. Waugh argues that this film archives the convergence of technical potential and revolutionary subject matter, since Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan represent the agricultural production and economic construction through the sequence shot. By comparing Joris Ivens and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Chung Kuo, Cina* (1972) in their approaches to filming China, Waugh argues that Ivens holds on opening close up shots which assist the subjects to achieve self-expression on screen with candour and spontaneity, providing a cinematic democracy. Whereas Antonioni frames their subjects between vegetables and poultry with a hidden camera which mythologises and colonises the subjects in front of the camera, while serving the filmmaker's ego, displaying the inequality that the filmmakers themselves place upon the subjects to be filmed.[21] Thomas Waugh's analysis of these two films in their types of shot and directorial styles helped inspire the analysis of this thesis regarding the aspect of filmmaking techniques. For example, the thesis develops the discussion about the relation between camera movements and films' themes.

Tongdao Zhang also examines the Antonioni and *How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, regarding the former as a cinematic travelogue, due to Antonioni's filming the faces of Chinese people on the street he observed. Among these numerous faces, some are factory workers with enthusiastic attitudes reading the little red book of quotations from Chairman Mao, while others are rural peasants with facial expressions ranging from dull to fearful, staring at the camera. For *How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, Ivens spent several years visiting factories, schools, troupes, battalions, shops in the city and fields in rural areas, filming the ongoing event of social construction. Tongdao Zhang argues that *Chung Kuo, Cina,* captures more of the private expressions of Chinese people during the singular occasion of the Cultural Revolution, while *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* films primarily the public expression of China during this political event. Both the private and public spheres refer to the authenticity of people's experiences under certain historical situations.[22]

Hongyun Sun also reviews these two films from aspects of a filmmaking background, cinematographic style and their reception in China. Sun states that

[21] Thomas Waugh. (1976) How Yukong Moved the Mountains Filming the Cultural Revolution. *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 12/13, pp. 3-6. https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/jc12-13folder/yukongmovedmt.html Accessed on 22-04-2022.

[22] Tongdao Zhang. (2009) The Facial Expression of China – Interpreting the Image of China by Antonioni and Ivens. *Contemporary Cinema*, (3): 94-96. (The referenced article in Chinese is 张同道.(2009)中国表情—解读安东尼奥尼与伊文思的中国影影像.*当代电影*, (3): 94-96.)

Antonioni is highly skilled in building the relation of subjects and surroundings on screen, which results in the employment of panning shots for framing the subjects with impressive facial expressions in their environment, consequently producing metaphors in the scenes. However, Ivens takes a subjective perspective to film the entire process of the events in *How Yukong Moved the Mountains*. Moreover, the different emotional attitudes of these two directors also have a bearing on their commentary style. For instance, while filming the Huangpu River and boats in Shanghai, the commentary on *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* states, 'We like Shanghai, which is the kind of metropolis that we had been familiar with.' Whereas, on the same scene, *Chung Kuo, Cina* states, 'The name of Shanghai reminds one of murder, drug addiction and corruption.'[23] The scholarship in relation to the directorial styles and cinematography is worth assessing for developing the thesis. In particular, the comparative discussion about long takes and commentary is valuable for the development of chapter 4.

Yang Xi examines two Sino-Soviet co-produced documentary films, *The Victory of the Chinese People* (Leonid Varlamov, 1950) and *The Liberated China* (Sergei Gerasimov, 1950), to demonstrate how these two films documenting the early state-building of a new China facilitated focusing on the patriotism of Shanghai's people, restoring their national memory.[24] Yang Xi argues that the Soviet style of cinema influenced the style of filmmaking in China, resulting in the circulation of the idea of 'documentary as a visualised political theory' originating from Lenin. Yang Xi comments that although from today's viewpoint, the two films are obsolete because of their dogmatic narratives, they helped build the legitimation of a new government from the dimension of public opinion. Meanwhile, they enhanced the political recognition of Shanghai's people in a new China in conditions whereby the red regime had ended the period of concession in Shanghai, and transformed it to a city led by the Socialists.[25] The scholarship on the political aesthetics of early co-productions between China and foreign countries helps to open viewpoints in terms of the current phenomenon of Sino-foreign co-production in transnational documentaries, based on their mature commercial patterns and industrialised experience of filmmaking.

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[23] Hongyun Sun. (2009) Two China? Joris Ivens' Yukong and Antonioni's China. Studies in Documentary Film, 3 (1): 45-59.

[24] The Russian title of *The Victory of the Chinese People* is 'Победа китайского народа' and the Chinese title is '中国人民的胜利'. The Russian title of The Liberated China is 'Освобождённый Китай' and the Chinese title is '解放了的中国'.

[25] Yang Xi. (2018) Transformation of Shanghai at the Beginning of the New China: Observations from Two Sino-Soviet Co-productions. Desde el Sur, 10 (2), pp.363-376.

Chinese Independent Documentary

Tianqi Yu's 'Camera Activism in Contemporary People's Republic of China: Provocative Documentation, First Person Confrontation, and Collective Force in *Ai Weiwei's Lao Ma Ti Hua* (2009)' raises discussion around the act of provocative documentation and collective force embodied in Ai Weiwei's first-person film. Tianqi Yu explores how Ai Weiwei, as a director and activist, uses his camera as tool to confront political authority. Yu takes Ai's film and story as a case to testify the possibility of 'camera activism' (Tianqi Yu 2015) practiced by Ai, for the public to act as a watchdog when facing social problems. Jing Meng's study 'Personal Camera as Public Intervention: Remembering the Cultural Revolution in Chinese Independent Documentary Films' sets off another discussion of the public and the private, to compare contestations between the official and the non-official, the mainstream and the independent, when it refers to the image memories of the Cultural Revolution. Jing Meng argues that the participatory practice of private recording provided more angles and diverse discourses for both officials and the public to rethink this historical political issue. (Jing Meng 2015) This scholarship of independent films relates to the perspective of private experience from independent directors to make their observations of history facts and political events, suggesting the attempts of filmmakers to express their arguments in their works. This is worthwhile in considering that independent directors tend to focus on marginal people, or in another word, disadvantaged groups, which helped develop my thesis in relation to the representation of 'marginal China' presented by transnational independent documentary films.

Wanning Sun's study, 'The Cultural Politics of Recognition: Rural Migrants and Documentary Films in China', sets the subject of rural migrants and documentary filmmaking in the political-economic context of China. In the context of the Chinese government publishing a policy of social harmony, Sun focuses on how a new political recognition is working on filmmaking, and how it is shaping directors' styles, aesthetics, themes. Sun mentions several documentaries including *Last Train Home* (Lixin Fan, China/Canada, 2009), *The Train to My Hometown* (Xiaoming Ai, China, 2008), and *When the Bough Breaks* (Dan Ji, China, 2011). Sun's study examines the selected documentaries to raise the issue of rural workers in Chinese society, and to articulate a cinematic conversation on Chinese rural workers' problems from a positive, constructive perspective. Wanning Sun takes as an example similar types of study in terms of Chinese documentary to display an aspect where, in the discourse of social

harmony, the figure of rural migrant workers in the 'main-melody' stylised documentary films are configured in the framework of a constructive narrative. (Wanning Sun 2013) This provided considerable value for me in developing my analysis in terms of the cinematic representation of China in accordance with the discourse of the 'China Dream'.

Stijin Deklerck, Marina Svensson and Xiaoming Ai all pay attention to Chinese independent documentary. Stijin Deklerck focuses on the changes in Chinese independent documentary, and argues that gender topics have been a subject for independent documentary for some time in China. Svensson's studies on Chinese independent documentary are more intensely connected with social movements. Xiaoming Ai is both an independent documentarian and a scholar working on Chinese independent films, having made several documentaries, who tends to make an exploration of counter-state narratives and to practice independent documentary as a powerful tool for revealing the 'truth' behind contemporary disasters or social events (for example, the re-depiction of Anti-Rightist Movement in Ai's *Jiabiangou Elegy: Life and Death of the Rightists*, 2017). These place considerable emphasis on the ability of independent documentaries to give power to ordinary individuals, as in the examples of Marina Svensson's study 'Digitally Enabled Engagement and Witnessing: the Sichuan Earthquake on Independent Documentary Film' and her co-authored work with Dan Edward, 'Show Us Life and Make Us Think: Engagement, Witnessing, Activism in Independent Chinese Documentary Today'. For the former, Marina Svensson addresses documentary practice when it functions as a witness of China's social events. Taking as an example the earthquake which struck in Southwestern China in 2008, Svensson examines different independent documentaries, *Who Killed Our Children* (Pan Jianlin, China, 2008); *One Day in May* (Ma Zhandong, China, 2011), *Tears in Ashes* (Jia Yuchuan, China, 2009)*; 1428*(Du Haibin, China, 2009)*; Our Children* (Ai Xiaoming, China, 2009); *Citizen Investigation* (Ai Xiaoming, China, 2009); *The Next Life* (Fan Jian, China, 2010); *Fallen City* (Zhao Qi, China/US, 2011); *One Child* (Mu Zijian, China/US, 2013) where the modes range from poetic, through observational, to expository, participatory and performative (Marina Svensson 2017), noting that ordinary citizens began to use mobile phones to record the earthquake, which provides a possibility for documentary filmmaking to be a witness to disaster, trauma and public memories. (Marina Svensson 2017) The latter article, 'Show Us Life and Make Us Think: Engagement, Witnessing, Activism in Independent Chinese Documentary

Today', argues that at the point of being a witness of and a participant in social events, Chinese independent documentaries are constantly working against the state-sanctioned public discourse (Marina Svensson 2017; Dan Edward 2017). For Marina Svensson, this signifies that these independent documentarians have tried to reveal the facts that have been hidden behind the state narrative systems, using the tools of documentary. As this scholarship is on the function and modes of documentary, it benefits the thesis to taxonomically develop these discussions in relation to different transnational independent documentary films. In chapter 5, where transnational cooperation is examined in independent filmmaking, the thesis examines four cases of transnational independent documentary films. It investigates the extent to which filmmakers intervene in the documentation, and the manner in which they frame their subjects, who are usually regarded as marginalised groups.

Independent Sino-foreign Transnational Films

Shan Tong's 'Sino-Canadian Documentary Coproduction: transnational production mode, narrative pattern and theatrical release in China', examines three documentaries, *Up the Yangtze* (Yung Chang, Canada, 2007) a Canadian-made documentary, and *Last Train Home* (Lixin Fan, China/Canada, 2009) and *China Heavyweight* （Yung Chang, China/Canada, 2012), which were both co-produced by Canadian and Chinese documentarians. Shan Tong notes that the practice of Sino-Canadian coproduction is based on various factors, including increasing transnational exchange, China's booming film market and China's documentary movement. She emphasises that the "production technology" (Shan Tong 2018: 239) will be helpful in establishing a new mode for Chinese documentaries. This new mode means organising China's story with a "figures in history" narrative (Shan Tong 2018: 241) and a character-centred mode, and with both technological and financial help coming from the international documentary market, it becomes necessary to consider the preferences and expectations of international audiences. This is especially evident in *China Heavyweight*, which reveals the exploration of efficiently assembling materials, economic and creative resources and the action itself as a practice of forming a new, highly polished production mode, extending into a greater market. Shan Tong's analysis of the 'figures in history' narrative, which is extracted from the Sino-Canadian documentary, inspired me to consider the 'narrative pattern' in different modes of transnational co-production, and to form comparisons in terms of narrative strategies

between state-supported transnational documentary and independent transnational documentary. In this thesis, I will closely examine the 'narrative pattern' in a number of Sino-foreign co-produced documentary films.

On the road to international circulation, not only do these independent Sino-foreign transnational documentary films compete for awards at international film festivals, but also domestically Chinese-organised international documentary films have gained increasing recognition. Tianqi Yu's 'Going Global-Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival 2013' notes that Chinese independent documentaries have screened and won prizes at international documentary festivals (Tianqi Yu 2014) (Lixin Fan's *Last Train Home*, Best Feature Documentary at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam 2009; Bing Wang's *West of the Tracks*, Robert and Frances Flaherty Prize at the Yamagata International Documentary Festival 2003; Liang Zhao's *Petition*, Best Director at the Bratislava International Film Festival 2009, etc.). In China, a group of local film festivals has also emerged (China Independent Film Festival in Nanjing, Beijing Independent Documentary Film Festival, etc.), offering routes into the market and supporting the development of the documentary industry, with the aim that it will eventually function as one of various communicational and cultural strategies. Tianqi focuses on the origination and development of Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival (GZDOC), which operates as a forum for meeting, information exchange and investment for independent documentary filmmaking.

In the field of transnational documentary films in China, one special section is devoted to 'director studies', referring to director-oriented studies peculiarly examining these directors' filmmaking styles and representative films, which can cover filmmakers who work both with fiction films and non-fiction films. Jia Zhangke, Wang Bing, Fan Lixin, Hu Jie, Ai Weiwei and Ai Xiaoming are amongst the Chinese directors who appear frequently in researchers' output. Given that these favourably discussed filmmakers are basically independent documentary directors who have achieved international fame through their documentary films being taken as a witness to or participant in particular social events during a period of change in a transitional Chinese society, the discourse around these films usually develops with their audience in terms of social change as well as relations with authority in the activist texts. For instance, Elena Pollacchi's article 'Extracting Narrative from Reality: Wang Bing's Counter Narrative of the China Dream (2017)', explores Chinese documentary director Wang

Bing's famous documentary films (*West of Tracks/Tiexi qu*, 2003; *He Fengming*, 2007; *The Ditch/Jiabiangou*, 2009; *Three Sisters/San zimei*, 2012; *Til Madness Do US Part/Feng ai*, 2013; *Bitter Money/Ku qian*, 2016). Pollachhi argues that in his films, Wang Bing establishes a counter state narrative to the Chinese governmental narrative which is not an open oppositional action against state propaganda, but personal observation with a handheld camera. (Elena Pollacchi 2017) Pollachhi defines this process as 'extracting narrative' from reality, arguing that Wang Bing's documentaries observe those social characters who are usually left outside the mainstream narrative of the state, and that these marginal characters represent the obverse of Chinese economic success. (Elena Pollacchi 2017)

Differing from the above director-oriented studies, my thesis will focus on filmmaking techniques of Sino-foreign documentary cinema, rather than directors. This is because in government-produced transnational documentary films, the director's personal style is not so obvious; indeed, to some degree, the director is invisible in transnational filmmaking, and the greatest impression made on viewers is the content of stories, ideas and concepts spread by these films. Behind these transnational documentaries is a consensus produced by teams that work to shape China's representation through frameworks, further producing significant discourses. Therefore, compared to existing director studies, my exploration, focusing on Sino-foreign documentary films and their meaning-production, seeks to offer an original perspective in the research field on transnational Chinese documentary cinemas.

Representation of China

Given that analysis of the representation of China is a crucial aspect of this thesis, in this section I clarify the definitions, content, sphere and boundaries of the concept. After reviewing relevant literature on the subject of representation, I suggest that the concept of representation has been studied in numerous forms, including political representation (for instance, the electoral system) the representative and the represented (Ian Shapiro 2009; F. R. Ankersmit 2002; Howard Schweber 2016), art representation, for instance, exhibition and collection (Hannah Feldman 2014; Susan Scott Parrish 2011; Maurice Berger 1987; Gudrun Ahlberg-Cornell 1992), gender representation (Michael Prieler & Dave Centeno 2013; Leslie A. Schwindt-Bayer 2018), media representation (Mary Talbot 2007; Deborah A. Macey & Kathleen M. Ryan & Noah J. Springer 2016). Since my research questions lead the exploration into three levels, the depiction of different types of China's representations on screen, how these representations are narrated

within cultural and political discourses and the production of meaning in a film context through cinematic signifiers, the discussion of representation will be appropriately placed in the field of media representation, in particular, cinematic representation.

In this section I begin by examining the work of key scholars working on media representation, focusing on Stuart Hall. Drawing on Hall allows me to develop my part that the representation of China in transnational documentary films is able to work and produce meaning in certain aspects of discourse.

Stuart Hall depicts the concept of representation based on an understanding of culture and meaning production. From his circuit of culture (see figure 1), language is the beginning of every part of this circulation; it operates as a representation system, using a wide range of signs or symbols whether they are sounds, handwritings, images, music notes, exhibition objects – that enables humans to have, the capacity to communicate their feelings, emotions, intentions, values, ideas and concepts. Here the language Hall mentions is not language at a linguistic level but a mediated form of representation which can include film, exhibitions, newspapers and books. For Hall, when representation works, it produces meanings.

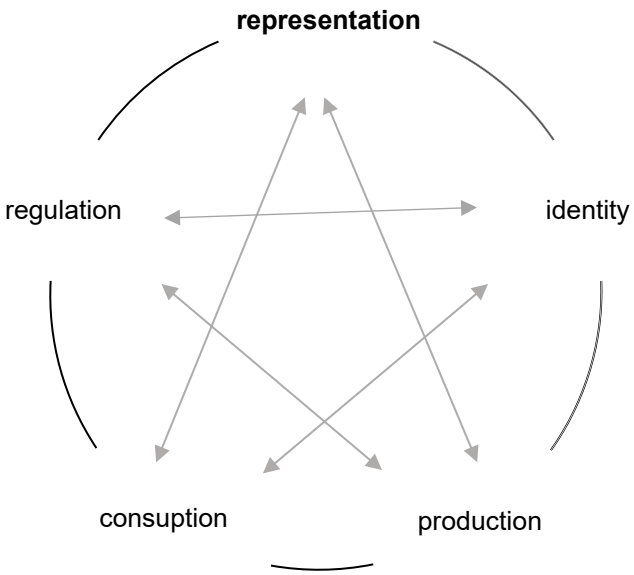


Figure 1 A Circuit of Culture[26]

Hall argues that how we represent things is how we construct meaning. He suggests,

In part, we give objects, people and events meaning by the frameworks of

[26] Stuart Hall. (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publications in association with the Open University.

> interpretation which we bring to them […] In part, we give things meaning by how we represent them - the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them (Hall, 1997: 3).

Hall's theories of representation locate the construction of meaning within specific cultural formations and identities that utilise language and representation to construct meaning. He argues:

> "Members of the same culture must share sets of concepts, images and ideas which enable them to think and feel about the world, and thus to interpret the world, in roughly similar ways. They must share, broadly speaking, the same cultural codes. In this sense, thinking and feeling are themselves 'systems of representation' […]" (Hall, 1997: 4).

Although Hall was developing these theories in the 1970s, his work continues to be utilised by contemporary media scholars. For instance, Hah Foong Lian argues that in Malaysia's 2016 Sarawak State Election, 35 videos posted online by major political parties enhanced ideological beliefs through cultural texts, symbols and signifiers that represent Sarawakian identity, which boosted Sarawak nationalism during the election (Hah Foong Lian 2018). Lian's study was guided by Hall's notion of representation and concerns the link between media representation and ideology.

Hall's theories of identity are the key concept in this thesis, in particular, how they are connected to the production of current ideological meaning, that is, recognition as achieved in films. The concept of 'state' to some degree is regarded as an ideological unity of politics, which indicates a broad accepted political recognition (or consensus) in accordance with the historical, current, 'objective' condition, which means that this political recognition as it has existed in the past and exists at present is not invariable. Rather, it keeps changing and being revised so that it is always best suitable for the latest era, which provides the possibility to examine this concept in flux in relation to representations of the state in cinemas.

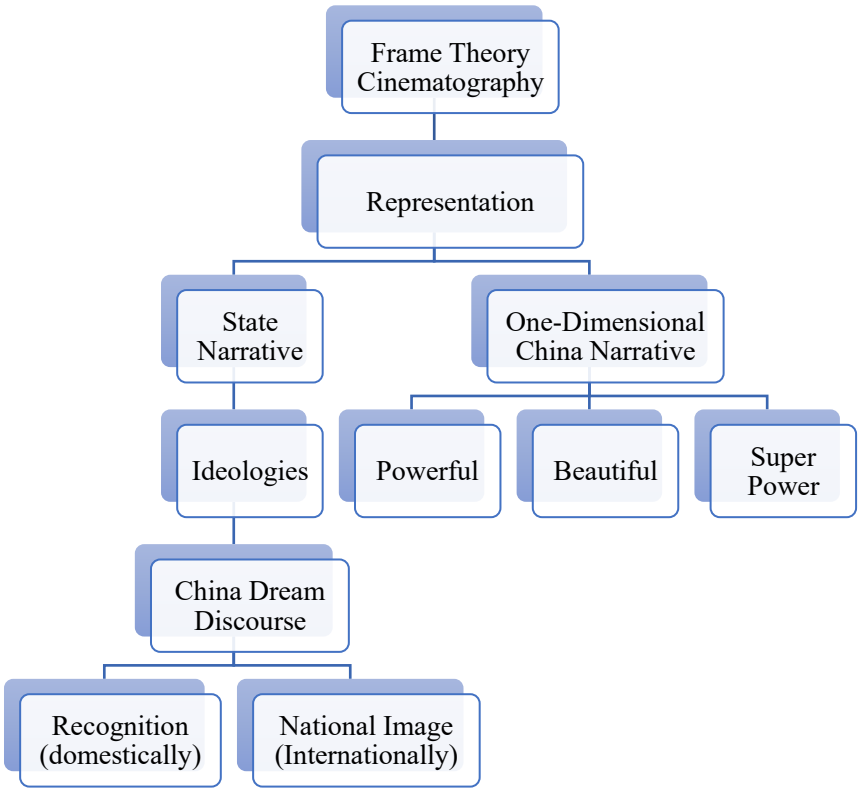
Moreover, since the process of filmmaking in Sino-foreign transnational documentary involves the relation of meaning-production and ideological discourses - for instance, the diverse modes of representations of China on screen are integrated with different discourses - it necessary to examine Hall's definition of the meaning of

discourse. He argues:

> "Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society." (Hall, 1997: 6).

For Hall, then, 'discourse' is a space constituted with a gathering of meanings, in the forms of signs, symbols, image, sound, gestures, 'language' and meaningful elements acting in this space in an order, or at least led by a mainstream ideology.[27] This aspect of Hall's work is applicable to films dealing with the discourses participated in the Sino-foreign co-produced documentary films, such as the discourse of 'China Dream'. As such, I return to these concerns in chapter 2, 3, 4, 5.

Utilising Hall's diagram, I have developed a more exact diagram that maps out the relationship of representation, ideology, recognition, state narrative and 'One-Dimensional China' narrative that will be expanded in the thesis.



[27] Linguistic languages as well as other forms that can express one's attitude, judgement, viewpoints.

Figure 2 Structure of Representation

In the diagram, I attempt to use the knowledge of framing developed below in the methodology section to trace the frameworks and representations of China in these selected films. After an initial review, I argue that these representations come from two patterns of narrative, namely the state narrative and 'One-Dimensional China' narrative. These two narratives are driven by different methods of conceptualising China on screen. The state narrative is more likely to conceptualise China as a political subject, so that the narrative produces special ideologies – the 'China Dream' discourse as a representative – in films, and to Chinese viewers emphasises a sense of political recognition, while to foreign viewers it intends to project the national image of a reliable country in international affairs. The 'One-Dimensional China' narrative regards China as an object to be regarded within a given dimension, conceptualising it as an aesthetic object, following a certain type of ideology.

On the issue of ideology, Hall suggests that ideology is utilised to identify the organisation of meaning and the framing of social reality. He states, 'By ideology I mean the mental frameworks - the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation - which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works.' (Hall, 1996: 26). The analytical context mixed with representation, ideology, language, meaning production and discourse provides an appropriate theoretical structure for the thesis, one that utilises Hall's understanding of representation to address the thesis's research questions.

The diagram refers to how language and representation work, with two approaches outlined. One is semiotics, being the study of 'science of signs and their general role as vehicles of meaning in culture, known as a semiotic approach (Stuart Hall, 1997). In this sphere, representation is considered as the production of meaning of the concepts in our minds through 'language'. The other is known as a discursive approach, relating to the effects of representation. The important difference between the two approaches is that semiotic studies explores how representation produces meaning, while a discursive approach examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge of discourse connects with power, regulates conduct, constitutes or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the manner in which subjects are represented (Stuart Hall 1997). It is easy to perceive that the discursive turn of cultural analysis opens a broad prospect, providing more possibility

of interpretations to representation in the circle of culture, because it inserts 'discourse' into the discussion, and provides a theoretical context for subjects and objects, transforming the study of practices concerning participators into a social sphere for exchanging viewpoints, rather than only research limited to linguistics. This is related to the thesis in that the study of cinematic representation of China is built on the foundation of a combined discussion between narrative, politics and aesthetics.

Hall argues that there are two systems of representation in our minds participating in our process of input/output toward outside information when we perceive the world, and attempt to transmit the concept and ideas of the reflection of things out there. Hall suggests;

> "There is the 'system' by which all sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or mental representations which we carry around in our heads […] it consists, not of individual concepts, but of different ways of organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts, and of establishing complex relations between them." (Hall, 1997: 17).

For Hall, this is the first step to gain access to external agents and to establish a link between them and concepts. This also contains a step of giving meanings, whereby people develop concepts which soon gather to become a conceptual map. This is the start of the second system of representation. In this circle, 'language[28]' is the core character, not only because it refers to different means (film, photography, image, sound, writing, objects, exhibitions, etc.) of carrying out meanings, which are automatically accompanied with a set of vocal, visual, digital, electronic signs or symbols, but also on account of its role of being an aspect of making representation. Hall continues:

> "Language is the second system of representation involved in the overall process of constructing meaning […] The first system of representation enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondences or a chain of equivalences between things - people, objects, events, abstract ideas, etc.- and our system of concepts, our conceptual maps. The second one depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of

[28] Unless I particularly point out, all the terms of language used in this section refers to a group of forms that people use to express individual opinions, attitudes as well as information exchange, such as sound, writing words, drawings, pictures, images, films, exhibitions, etc.

signs, arranged or organized into various languages which stand for or represent those concepts. The relation between 'things', concepts and signs lie at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call 'representation'." (Hall, 1997: 19).

I will raise two examples to make this clear. For the first one, when we look at a tree in nature, we are able to observe the leaves, trunk, branches and the root, which we cannot see under the ground, but can imagine its shape and texture. And we know that in the spring the leaves are light green, and in summer are dark green, and in autumn they will fade and fall to die. These features lend it the meaning of a plant. And if we assign to it a certain concept, how are we to express this concept and refer to our knowledge about this object? We name it 'tree' by writing words, /tri:/ in vocal pronunciation, in English language; '树' in the simplified Chinese writing system. We also assign an image - usually a drawing of a green covering as the tree-crown and a stem in brown - to stand for the concept of 'tree' in our mind. These are signs and 'language' acting in systems of representation to express the nature of things in a simple relatively stable state. However, apart from natural objects, there are man-made products and abstract qualities which operate in both these systems, and are involved in the fluid meaning of production relying on 'language'. The 'language' in documentary films is filmmaking techniques.

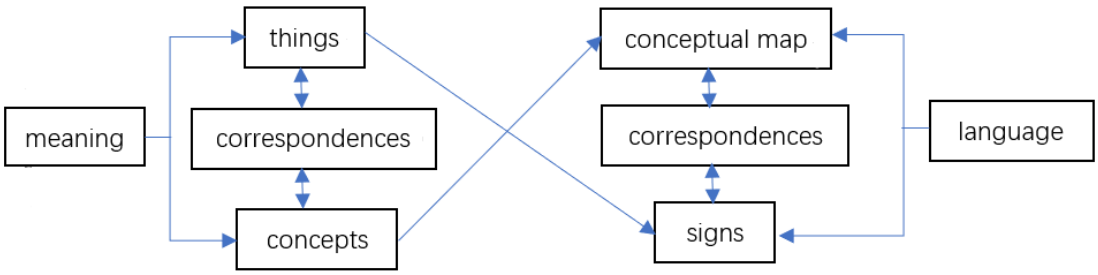


Figure 3: System of representation 1 System of representation 2

This is the second example, which is relevant to my project topic. If one considers 'China', as a typically man-made, abstract property, one might naturally consider it as a sovereign and independent modern country located in Asia, facing the western coast of the Pacific Ocean, having neighbouring countries like Russia, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, etc. When one looks back over time, one might think about the country's long history and a series of dynasties and emperors of the country. One might also think about The First Opium War (First Anglo-Chinese War), Second Opium

War (Anglo-French Expedition to China), Anti-Japanese Invasion War (the far east battlefield of WWII), Civil War, etc. Moreover, other noteworthy features of the country might well come to mind; perhaps The Great Wall, Forbidden City, Yellow River, Yangtze River, Chinese high-speed railway (CHR), Chinese calligraphy, traditional Chinese painting, Chinese medicine, Kung Fu, Tai Chi, Chinese faces speaking Mandarin or Cantonese, Shanghai, Beijing, Confucius, Chairman Mao, Deng Xiaoping, President Xi Jinping, etc. All the above elements gather up a concept that is conjured in the mind. It is 'China' in the English language and '中国' in simplified Chinese, and 'Zhong Guo' in pinyin – a Chinese pronunciation system, like phonetic symbols. We connect this relevant content in this conceptualised understanding with the sign (in writing - words) *China*. And accompanying 'China' is a wide range of signs with abundant forms (sound, pictures, images, music, exhibitions) which are represented in filmic languages, creating difference in meaning-production.

This material is relevant to the thesis, as it examines the process of the representation of China through cinematic frameworks and the meaning-production on 'China' on screen. In this thesis, I treat documentary film as a language which has a range of visual and sound signs, and a language which has been used to finesse the practice of cinematic representation. The images highlighted in the preceding paragraph correspond with the word 'China'.

The diagram below illustrates an attempt to integrate Hall's theories on representation with Said's work on Orientalism as utilised in the thesis.

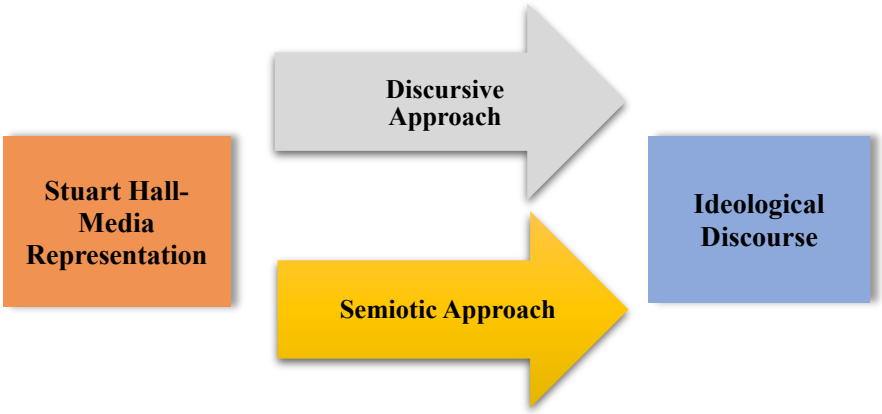


Figure 4 The Formation of China's 'State Narrative'

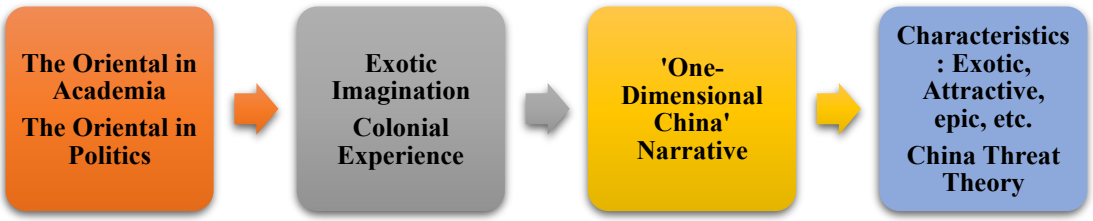


Figure 5 The Formation of the 'One-Dimensional China' Narrative

The two diagrams illustrate how the local narrative and non-local narrative are developed to be associated with the diverse representations of China in transnational documentary films. Figure 4 shows that the thesis extracts Hall's ideas of media representation so as to develop the analysis of particular significant discourses in the thesis through the two pairs of relationship, symbols vs. metaphor, ideological discourse vs. meaning-production, in the form of cinematic techniques. This indicates the progress of China's state narrative that has participated in the filmmaking practice of Sino-foreign co-production. Figure 5 shows the 'One-dimensional China' narrative, which is taken by the thesis to refer to characteristics of the tendency for external narratives in Sino-foreign transnational documentary films, including the modes of 'powerful China', 'beautiful China' and 'Super China' that are developed in detail in the following chapters. Next, I will explain how these two structures are integrated with the development of the thesis.

In this thesis, a system of representation that occurs in some certain historical conditions - as well as knowledge production involving power and subjects - will be used in the development of the 'China Dream' discourse. The 'China Dream' discourse works as both a theoretical situation and an ideological conversation space to produce knowledge of domestic recognition and a national image of China in the international community through shaping ideologies of current China's society with cinematic form.

When a director intends to make a film about China, cooperating with a Chinese

film team, there is a strong influence from Occidental impressions of the east, leading to a representation of 'the other' in filmmaking. Of course, through different historical periods, China has been framed in documentary films in terms of different cinematic representations. In Sino-foreign co-produced documentaries, foreign cameras attempt to provide a 'local lens' by capturing the vividness of China's society. However, in many cases, the viewer can still find that the representation begins from an already existing impression (e.g., a conception that foreign filmmakers think it should be like this). For instance, for Westerners, China in past decades was a site filled up with particular Chinese signifiers – such as the gorgeous palaces of the emperor, the fall of the Qing dynasty, and Chinese Kung Fu - as exemplified by *The Last Emperor* (Bernardo Bertolucci, UK/Italy/China, 1987), *I Am Bruce Lee* (Pete McCormack, Canada, 2012), *Kung Fu Panda* (John Stevenson and Mark Osborne, US, 2008), *Kung Fu Panda 2* (Jennifer Yuh Nelson, US, 2011), *Kung Fu Panda 3* (Jennifer Yuh Nelson and Alessandro Carloni, US, 2016). In these films, viewers encounter various objects which act as obvious signifiers of 'Chineseness', such as ancient man-made spectacles (The Great Wall and Forbidden City), traditional martial arts culture (Shaolin Kungfu), infrequent ethnic custom and traditions (e.g., Uighur mud brick blocks to air dry grapes represented in *China from Above*) to shape their representation of China according to the aesthetics of acceptance from Western eyes. These films project an image of China on screen as simultaneously somewhat primitive, unique, and exotic, which can be termed 'Becoming Oriental'. For a foreign camera, when it tries to record as many as possible 'local scenes', it unconsciously utilises an angle of orientalism to pick up on particular objects and frame those represented before the camera following Westernised Chinese characteristics.

On the question of the representation of an Eastern country in a Western context, the subject of the West viewing the East will draw upon knowledge of Orientalism. Edward Said argues the meaning of 'the orient' in his *Orientalism* (1978):

> "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences." (Said, 2003, p.1).

Edward Said usually deals with Middle Eastern countries, or regimes working under Islam, as the major research objects of his oriental system. Said argues that there

is not a real existing 'orient'. Instead, 'the orient' is a concept invented and constructed by the West. Regarding current scholars' perception on the question of 'the West viewing the East' or the expression of 'the West vs. the other', an argument that the West is apparently influenced by the colonial experience is popularly accepted. Carles Prado-Fonts argues that 'scholarship on the representation of China in the West generally assumes a direct interaction characterized by a colonial dynamics' (Carles Prado-Fonts 2018). Western viewers naturally construct their imagination of the East based on their colonial history. Accompanying the Western colonising imagination to these Eastern countries, there is a feeling of national priority, of being a developed European country, looking down upon the Eastern countries. In the representations of China which have been influenced by an Orientalist aesthetic, Western viewers encounter a cinematised China in a space which has been circulated through Orientalism. In this space, Eastern countries are usually placed into a logical system of an epistemology of the 'natural' (the West) and the Other (the East), observing the East through an Oriental eye, focusing on their difference from Western culture, which manifests in cinematography in practically framing aspects of underdevelopment, primitive rituals and customs, local scenery which bear distinctive regional characteristics. Moreover, the Orientalist method emerges from a contrast, 'we Europeans' and 'non - Europeans'. In Edward Said's formulation, Orientalism refers to cultural texts produced by Westerners. This is a quite different, contrary locus to the unity of location, society, tradition, customs and history in the Western world. Westerners summarise their experiences about the Oriental world, making Orientalist texts particularly deal with Eastern countries. In the context of Orientalism, Oriental countries and people living in these countries are 'the Other', as representations of the 'non-European', while 'we Europeans' are the centre of the discourse, and correspondingly, all European elements, including history, culture, political system, economic pattern are superior to those of 'non-European' communities. Orientalist aesthetics in transnational documentary films participate in the construction of cinematic representations of China, deciding many filmmaking techniques in practical terms. For instance, the Chinese-American co-produced documentary films *China from Above I* and *China from Above II* work through the method of ethnographic film, observing China with an ethnographic perspective. Today, in a Western context, an ethnographic film is a traditional means for Westerners to explore an unknown location and culture, especially for observing non-Western people. In this ideological structure,

China is naturally cinematised as a venue for sightseeing and tourism, which is the fate of most Asian countries such Japan, Thailand, Singapore, etc., in the Western society, rather than a trustworthy cultural and political partner like France, or any other important country from the leadership of the European Union. As such, Said's work remains a valuable resource for this thesis.

In relation to what one might describe as 'oriental elements', there is a question connected with the context of the understanding of 'the oriental', namely, 'the oriental' in academia, and that in politics. In the former, one means an interpretation of 'the oriental' based on literary texts, including legends, exotic history, romantic poetry, novels and art and culture more broadly which results in an Orientalized subject incorporating fantasy and myth. A classic example would be *The Travels of Marco Polo,* which describes Dadu City, the Capital of the Yuan Dynasty, a marvellous place that was covered by millions of gold decorations, jewellery, porcelain. This is a perspective from which Westerners observe the Orient, inherited from the Orientalist ideas of Europe, especially the British and French (Said, 1978). The latter is concerned with the colonial history of Oriental countries. If Western viewers observe Eastern countries from this perspective, a framing of 'the Oriental' is often connected with disorder, weakness, lack of democracy, and a subject that cannot rationally express itself, so it needs to be presented by Westerners. From this perspective, and only in this way, can the oriental - as 'the Other' and intrinsically inferior - be clearly seen. The relevant evidence about this point can be observed in Edward Said's citation from Cromer's lines about understanding of Orientalist wisdom, concerning accuracy[29]:

> Sir Alfred Lyall once said to me: "Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian should always remember that maxim." Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind.
>
> The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic […] The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description.

[29] Lord Cromer, England's representative in Egypt, Egypt's master, 1882-1907.

In Edward Said's circle of 'the oriental', China, as a late power in the Far East, is quite different from those representative Eastern countries he often mentions to set out an argument on the issue of 'the Oriental and the Occident'. For the case of China, there wasn't a historical precedent for the growth of 'the Oriental' in culture. Namely, in the distant past, in the Orientalist conception of the English and French, China was not included in those countries that frequently occurred in the writing of scholars, poets, playwrights and novelists, due to in those early times, this exotic type of Oriental subjects was located in Middle Eastern countries, such as Persian (Iran), Egypt, Arabia. China, as a country located in the Far East, only gradually came into European sight in the late 18 century. However, when Western viewers comment on any situations involving China, they still habitually observe and comment on China as they do on Middle Eastern countries. That is to say, they consciously put China into the ideological frame of 'an Oriental imagination'. These Orientalist aesthetics in relation to Western observations towards China are expanded in the analysis of cinematography in chapters 3 and 4.

Additionally, compared with other colonised Oriental countries, China has never been colonised by a European country, which results in a clash when the European viewer places China into an Orientalist perspective, and frames the country in a mode of 'the Oriental in politics'. Based on the Europeans' long or short colonial occupation of India, Egypt or Arabia, for European experiences, these texts invite the viewer to imagine these countries as not highly civilised subjects like 'we Europeans'. They conjure a sense of national superiority due to a colonial historical experience inscribed in their memories as being the master of these dependent Eastern countries. This is the content of 'the Oriental in politics' in colonial relationships. However, due to the fact that China never completely became a colonised site in both the First Opium War (Anglo-Chinese War) and Second Opium War (Anglo-French expedition to China), and although China (Qing Dynasty) suffered defeats in battles with the British and French armies, the Qing Empire and its government always maintained control of the country, making China remain a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society.[30] As a result, the European conception of the Oriental in politics, originating from the colonial

[30] 'A semi-colonial and semi-feudal society' is a Marxist concept from Chinese historiography, which means that the feudal state and sovereignty remains in form, but in aspects of economy, politics, culture, the state is substantially controlled by foreign capitalist countries. Semi-colonial society is a term that, compared with a full colony, describes a lighter degree of being colonised; semi-feudal society refers to the fact that although it is still a feudal system and government dominated society, elements of capitalism have emerged into the environment.

experience in the Middle East, is not precisely suitable for imagining China. China is not such an Oriental subject as traditionally existed in the Western discourse, so here 'Orientalism' cannot be accurately framed in a perspective derived from a colonial relationship. At the same time, China is gradually becoming one of the major powers internationally, one whose political system is not capitalism, which reinforces the tendency that the Westerners regard China as 'the Other' and even as a rising threat to the Occident. This is evident in Western fears of the 'China Threat Theory', as evidenced in the BBC documentary film *The Chinese are Coming* (2011) where the on-camera journalist attempts to spread his hostile attitude towards China's economic interaction and raises concerns among the audience in relation to China's globally expanded economic influence.

Representation of China in Chinese Language Scholarship

The representation of China on screen is usually connected with studies on the national image in Chinese academia and in the space of Chinese language scholarship. This 'representation of China' is adapted as 'the national image of China' to be developed in the knowledge-production of arts and social science disciplines, significantly including the fields of media studies, cultural studies and political science. As one of the most appealing research topics among Chinese scholars, the national image of China currently promotes knowledge-generation from several disciplines, including international relations, journalism and communication studies, Marxist studies, diplomacy studies, foreign language studies. It contributes to the emergence of interdisciplinary methodologies, multimodal discourse analysis, symbolic politics analysis, semiotic analysis and narratology analysis, in relation to the research field of the national image. The significant academic output on the topic falls into two dimensions: one is related to the development of theoretical knowledge, including the definition, content, characteristics and mechanism of the state image of China within diverse forms; the other focuses on the application, for instance, of the practices of the establishment of the state image of China in diverse contexts on multiple platforms. Among all kinds of case studies in relation to the national image of China, discussion upon the forms of representing China has focused on mediated channels, such as different media platforms: newspapers, journals, new media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, Tik-Tok, etc.), TV, Streaming media (Netflix), film and theatres. Chinese scholars study how the national image of China is built on and by these mediated forms. Below, I detail some of the key texts dealing with the

construction of the national image of China through the form of cinema in Chinese-language scholarship. It is important to note that the 'image' here is not only the literal concept in a literary context or the object when gathering ideas from social science disciplines, but rather the wider construction of how the stage image of China is represented in media and culture.

In relation to the discussion of representations of China in documentary films, Xiaoyu Zhu and Yang Xu examined a special documentary series themed *the Belt and Road* produced by the CCTV channel 4 using a narratology perspective. They argue that as an economic strategy 'the Belt and Road' provides a cultural positioning and a relation of family-nation in the film context, and presents the audience with small stories (the family story) in the larger policy (the development of the nation) (Xiaoyu Zhu & Yang Xu 2018).[31]

> "讲好中国故事，不仅要讲历史故事，更要讲好当代'大战略'下人们的小故事，赋予'大战略'生命自觉和家国传承以情感温度。这样的中国故事，才会最大限度地产生良好的传播效果，才会激发人们的认同感和凝聚力，于家国同构中传播'共赢'的理念。比如在坦桑尼亚，40 年前，50000 名中国人修筑坦赞铁路；40 年后，坦桑尼亚关于坦赞铁路的友好记忆，承载着中坦两国人民的深厚情谊。" (To tell the stories of China well, not only the focus should be put on history stories, but also on the stories of ordinary people's daily life supported by the national policies. In this way, humanity and family-ship are able to be attached to constructional plans, thus China's story can be successful in catching viewers' attention, stimulating the mass emotion of recognition and solidarity, promoting the political ideas convened by the story and creating a 'win-win' initiative within the structure of family-national relation. For example, (in the special series of *the Belt and Road* in CCTV Channel 4) it traces back the historical case where 50,000 Chinese workers kindly built TAZARA railway for Tanzanian and Zambian people four decades ago, and meanwhile depicts the friendship that emerged from the Chinese-African cooperation.[32]) (Xiaoyu Zhu, Yang Xu, p44)

[31] Xiaoyu Zhu and Yang Xu. (2018) Telling Chinese stories well and shaping the country's image——Take "A Home in a Distance · One Belt One Road" as an example. *China Television*, (11): 42-46. 朱晓彧, 徐阳. (2018) 讲好中国故事, 塑造国家形象——以《远方的家·一带一路》为例. 中国电视, (11): 42-46.

[32] Translated by the writer from Chinese Mandarin to English.

They argue that the filmmaking practice of documentary is supposed to bear the function of education and information, which means it should integrate the goal of 'telling the story of China well' with the filmmaking techniques. Wujian Dan and Daoli Jian have focused on changes in the national image of China and cultural recognition over time by examining a series of Chinese films, *Yellow Earth* (1985) and *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) by Chen Kaige; *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), *Hero* (2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (2004), *Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006) by Zhang Yimou, *Operation Mekong* (2016) and *Operation Red Sea* (2017) by Lin Chaoxian, *Wolf Warrior II* (2017) by Wu Jing. The period of production of these films crosses the stages of the development of the Chinese film industry since China's reformation and opening-up in 1978. They argue that the shaping of the national image of China in these film contexts has experienced two phases of 'recognition from the other' and 'recognition in symbols', and is now in the early stages of creating an ideological recognition based on Chinese values. They suggest the national image of China should be formed on the foundation of Chinese cultural concepts, while they should be considered to provide a warmly emotional image of China, rather than only attempting to shape a strong political figure (Wujian Dan and Daoli Jiao 2018).

> "自 2008 年世界金融危机爆发，出现后全球化转向以来，中国电影也逐渐摸索出国一系列讲当代中国故事、弘扬中国精神的路子，国产电影中的中国国家形象及由此引发的文化认同也出现了相应的转向。其中，代表性的影片有《湄公河行动》《战狼 2》《红海行动》等…影片中所展现的'坚毅刚卓''集体主义''明知不可为而为之'等深埋于中华民族思想深处的'集体无意识'亦被影片唤醒和激活，进一步提升国内观众对中华文化及价值观的认同度。" (Since the worldwide breaking of the economic crisis in 2008, under the context of post-globalisation, China's film industry has gradually stepped into a mode of storytelling concerning current China's society as well as Chinese values. In this course, the change on the national image of China and its cultural identity has been made in domestic filmmaking. Among the movies, the most typical films are *Operation Mekong* (2016), *Operation Rea Sea* (2017), *Wolf Warrior II* (2017), etc. A sense of collective unconsciousness - like the spirit of toughness, collectivism, braveness, will to do the impossible- is awoken by these films. Furthermore, it strengthens the domestic viewers' emotional recognition of Chinese culture and values.) (Wujian Dan, Daoli Jiao, p166)

The scholarship on Chinese values in the contemporary film industry discussed by Wujian Dan and Daoli Jian was beneficial for me in considering the development of chapter 2, in relation to Confucianism and the folk customs of China in the officially initiated Chinese-British co-produced documentary films *Confucius* (2016) and *Chinese New Year* (2016).

Huilin Huang and Zhuofan Yang argue in 'The International Communication of Chinese Film and the Construction of the National Image of China' that there is still a large space for films from the Chinese film industry to be circulated to international viewers, and that it helps provide an opportunity to favourably exchange a positive image of the country on screen. Their study emphasises the contribution of shaping and spreading a form of Chinese values on 'family-nation' relations through film symbols. However, they criticise the popular strategy of employing Wushu (martial arts), Kung Fu and emperorship elements extracted from traditional Chinese culture - which have been often used in the history of filmmaking- as it increasingly enhances international viewers' prejudices about an old China and the modern China. They suggest that Chinese films should base their content on the Chinese nation's spirits and values against the background of the new era, and should pursue better international circulation as well as acceptance, rather than only high profits in the domestic film market (Huilin Huang and Zhuofan Yang 2018).

Yue Shen and Baoguo Sun discuss the disadvantages and approaches in the construction of a national image through documentary film. They examine a group of television documentary films which have received success in the domestic market, including *The Road to Revival* (2007), *When the Louvre meets the Forbidden City* (2010), *The Power of Corporations* (2009), *Hong Kong's Decade* (2007), *New Journey of Silk Road* (2015). [33] Shen and Sun argue that at present China's documentaries, which particularly provide a function of exploring the substance of China's society, morality, values and culture, resemble a succession of audio-visual political speeches for the audience, due to their lack of film aesthetics. Therefore, they suggest to focus the narrative on China's national image and develop it from the context of the latest economic policy 'the Belt and Road'. Then, the political concept of a 'community of a

[33] These TV documentary films are released in Chinese for domestic market. Their original title in Chinese are *复兴之路* (2007), *当卢浮宫遇上紫禁城* (2010), *公司的力量* (2009), *香港十年* (2007), *对望：新丝路旅程* (2015). Their English titles here are translated by the writer.

shared future' will be able to operate in the above context, bonding China and central Asian countries influenced by 'the Belt and Road' economic initiative through the form of documentary (Yue Shen & Baoguo Sun 2018). Meanwhile China should enhance cooperation with these countries by means of the channels of cross-cultural communication, especially actively participating in Silk Road International Film Festival, eventually making it a widely known brand for the screening of documentary films.[34] Additionally, the study argues that China should enhance transnational cooperation with BBC, ITV, NGC, and NHK.[35]

This suggestion is a footnote to the increasing cooperation between China and international reputational broadcasting companies on the content-production of Chinese transnational cinema, film and video. Evidently, it is now an expanding trend in China's film industry, particularly in documentary production.

> "'一带一路'及'中国梦'的宏伟蓝图背景下，纪录片作为讲好中国故事的对外宣传媒介，对于树立正面积极的国家形象，在国际社会中构建国家形象的柔性传播，可以说是机遇与挑战并存…纪录片在构建国家形象中的作用将会愈发显现。[36]" (Against the background of 'the Belt and Road' and 'China Dream', documentary as a mediated approach to tell the stories of China well and complete the communication of soft power in the international community, shaping a positive national image for China is both an opportunity and a challenge… in the future, the function of documentary in constructing national images will be seen more clearly.) (Yue Shen, Baoguo Sun, p90)

On another dimension, a series of explorations have been made through comparative studies with regard to positive and negative representations of the national image of China. The positive images usually depict China as a country characterised by scientific and technological innovation, highlighting the success of China's digital finance, rail-based technology, productivity and logistics services, new energy vehicles,

[34] Silk Road International Film Festival was initiated in 2014 by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of China to promote cultural exchange and communication among countries whose geographical location is along the 'silk road' in China's 'The Silk Road Economic Belt' and '21st-Century Maritime Silk Road' economic concepts.

[35] ITV is UK's Independent Television; NGC is USA's National Geographic Channel; NHK is Nippon Hoso Kyokai, Japan's largest and most influential broadcasting organisations.

[36] Yue Shen and Baoguo Sun. (2018) An Exploration on Communicative Approaches of China's image in Chinese Documentary film under the perspective of the strategy of the Belt and Road, *Chinese Editors Journal*, (6), 86-90. 沈悦 & 孙宝国. (2018) "一带一路"视域下的中国纪录片国家形象传播路径探析. 中国编辑, (6): 86-90

smartphone technology and artificial intelligence, whereas negative images depict corruption in China and regard the rapid development of China as a threat to Western countries[37] (Yijiang Zhang 2018). Guo and Jia argue that on account of the national image of China from the confrontational side, China is constructed in the text as 'threatening China', a hostile interpretation of China's investments in Africa as economic penetration. Taking Zambia as an example, Guo and Jia demonstrate that the negative structure of 'threatening China' indicates that Zambia's local industry is being destroyed by Chinese entrepreneurs, and the needs of ivory collectors in the Chinese market may also cause illegal hunting of elephants[38] (Yanmin Guo, Feiyang Jia 2018).

Analysis of this material suggests that a consensus has been reached in terms of the issue of the national image of China, both in Chinese academia and society, where the establishment of a positive image of China and its circulation of representations of China across the mainland and beyond its borders is as important as any other national policies in politics. Several studies have shown these efforts in the improvement of communication strategies. For instance, Xianhong Chen and Weiwei Jiang summarise a favourably accepted story-telling Chinese mode in their study of 'the USP' (Unique Selling Proposition) concept and strategic analysis of the international communication of China's Spring Festival[39]. The study takes China's Spring Festival in the context of using a USP strategy to arrange short stories about Chinese people celebrating Spring Festival that appears in documentaries. Chen and Jiang suggest that this is a future direction for the Chinese TV documentary industry to shape a national image of a cultural China, and to employ a double-layered narration in films. They argue that the first thing that needs to be done is seizing the rituals and traditions of celebrating Spring Festival, taking them as the meta-narration of festive stories; the second layer of narrative is contemporary story-telling, which is handed down through ancient traditions, but revived in the economic and social context of modern society. Consequently, the national image of China will be shaped as an attractive subject filled with unique cultural characteristics[40] (Xianhong Chen, Weiwei Jiang 2018).

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[37] Yijiang Zhang. (2018) A Study on China's National Image Presented in Influential Spanish Newspapers, *Youth Journalist*, (18): 93-94. 张一江. (2018) 西班牙主流报纸视野下的中国国家形象评述. 青年记者, (18): 93-94.

[38] Yanmin Guo & Feiyang Jia. (2018) The Shaping of China's National Image on a 'The Other' Perspective: A Case Study on 'China: The Time of Xi' Produced by US Discovery Channel, *Media*, (7): 62-65. 郭艳民,贾飞扬.(2018) 他者视域下的中国国家形象建构——以美国探索频道纪录片《中国:习近平时代》为例. 传媒, (7): 62-65.

[39] USP (Unique Selling Proposition) is the author's term, meaning an especially attractive topic that can be exhibited to the viewers (buyers of the market of TV programmes).

[40] Xianhong Chen & Weiwei Jiang. (2018) An Analysis to USP Strategy for the Dissemination of China's Stories

Kun Zhang summarises the changes in China's state image over four decades, arguing that the shape of China' s national image has shifted from focusing on poverty to prosperity, from blocking to opening-up, an undeveloped agricultural country to an advanced industrial country. However, Zhang also suggests that the absence of a Chinese voice in the international community when it faces what China regards as fake news and unfair criticism undermines the effect when China attempts to establish a friendly national image through public diplomacy. Therefore, Zhang states that China should strategically optimise multiple channels of communication in public diplomacy to enhance the positive influence of China's state image[41] (Kun Zhang 2018).

In reviewing scholarship on the representations of China in Chinese-language academia, it is apparent that the debate of the representation of China is narrowed to the subject of the national image of China. In this sphere, screen representation, political representation and cultural representation are developed in a mix by the scholars. They analyse how linguistics function in the shaping of the national image of China in newspapers, and also examine how ancient and modern stories of China is narrated in TV documentary films for a good national image. However, they minimise the sphere of representation of China to the national image of China, developing relevant discussions within their limited space of conception in relation to the term of national image. In order to draw back the debate over the representation of China and set up the discussion in the thesis in a broader space, the representation of China will be developed on the base of cinematics, which includes the meaning of national image, and also beyond it. In my context, 'representation of China' is a concept that means a unity of constructed reflection on China, including the national image of China on screen, the conceptualisation of China from the geographical concept, framing China on screen, practices of producing meaning, as well as forms of discourse. Therefore, the thesis explores cinematic representation of China, rather than being limited to the national image of China.

Methodology

on Spring Festival, *Media*, (15): 61-64.陈先红,江薇薇. (2018) 中国春节故事对外传播的 USP 理念与策略分析.传媒, (15): 61-64.

[41] Kun Zhang. (2018) Ideal and Reality: Changes in China's National Images over the Past 40 Years, *Frontiers*, (23), 84-91. 张昆. (2018) 理想与现实: 40 年来中国国家形象变迁. 人民论坛·学术前沿, (23): 84-91.

Before illustrating the theoretical approach, the principles upon the selecting of film texts in the thesis and the consideration of the relationship of film/cinema and television/broadcasting/streaming media should be the supplementary here. Since the research topic of the project lies in the Sino-foreign transnational documentary, the thesis chooses the transnational films which are both popularly circulated in China and relevant countries. For example, *Confucius*, a successful film in the cooperation of Chinese and British filmmakers, is released both in the film festivals and theatres in China and it also has its premiere in London, UK and then been distributed to television companies of the UK, France, the US, Germany, Australia and Japan so it can be watched by both Chinese and international audiences. At the same time, in order to analyse the most recent transnational filmmaking in the field of Sino-foreign documentary films, the thesis primarily selects those transnational films which are released in the past 5 ~ 7 years. For example, *Chinese New Year*, *Chinese School*, *China from Above* and *Super China*, these films are all produced and circulated publicly after 2015. This is to help the readers vividly feel the current trending of transnational documentary filmmaking in China. Therefore, through examining these selected examples conducted in different modes of state-initiated Chinese-foreign co-production documentary, the thesis provides a really vivid perspective for the English world to observe contemporary transnational documentary filmmaking practices in Chinese film industry.

Considering the nature of television and cinema as the primary channels for distributing documentary films, increasingly, smaller screens are being utilised via iPads, laptops and smartphones, as streaming increases the range of documentary films reaching audiences, with the possibility of online self-distribution aiding exposure, alongside the burgeoning of independent documentary festivals. This makes it possible for documentary films to be seen by audiences at their convenience, on their laptop or even smartphone, to be consumed like any other cultural product. The scale of mobile internet users in China is 557 million, and the rate of mobile internet users of the total netizen population had reached 85.8% by 2015.[42] Comparing the amount of large and small screens, the amount of smartphone provision for the market was 457.4 million in 2015, which means that these smartphone screens have the potential to be the carriers

[42] Statistical Report on Internet Development in China. Date of Release: January 2015. http://www.cnnic.com.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/201507/P020150720486421654597.pdf Accessed on 02-10-2022.

for consuming documentary films.[43] However, although benefitting from the boom in a prosperous domestic film market, which is experiencing a period of rapid expansion, the total of cinema screens in Chinese theatres is approximately 27,000.[44] Meanwhile, films that are presented in mainstream cinemas and gain a healthy box office are mainly fictional narrative movies, rather than documentary films. As evidence of the data from Chinese theatres, the total amount of box office profit climbed to close to 30 billion (CNY) in 2014, of which, the profit contributed by documentary films was merely 20 million (CNY).[45] In addition, a mixture of channels in distributing all cultural products, including broadcasting, television programmes, films and videos, is under construction with suggestions from a governmental level, which contributes to the form of the mixed situation whereby documentary films are released through all media platforms and theatres.[46] This means that documentary films are regarded as one form of cultural products to be placed into the industry of content-generation and the trajectory of media distribution, where they are produced and consumed regularly as quotidian goods. Simply, due to the potential aspect of a large increase in distributing documentary films through cinemas, and the impressive profit from advertisements and paying subscribers on documentary channels of TV and streaming media platforms, Chinese documentary and transnational documentary films are primarily distributed through TV and all media platforms.

Temporarily leaving the point of convenience for accessing these resources, in comparison with those documentary films which are produced for release in cinemas, TV documentary films tend to be more artless in their aesthetic tendencies. Television was once regarded by some people as a 'relay device' (Corner 1991：13), as a medium that was short of the quality to provide serious, informative content.[47] One of the concerns was that TV audiences were not able to engage in profound thought through

[43] The data is from 'China Internet Industry Development Trend and Prosperity Index Report'. Date of Release: September 2021. http://www.caict.ac.cn/kxyj/qwfb/bps/202109/P020210923338177677850.pdf Accessed on 02-10-2022.

[44] The Rapid Expansion of China's Film Market: 'Internet +' Has Made Great Contributions. China Daily. Date: 20-08-2015. http://caijing.chinadaily.com.cn/2015-08/20/content_21660092.htm Accessed on 02-10-2022.

[45] Tongdao Zhang. (2015) China Documentary Development Research Report. *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, 38 (05): 111-116. (The referenced article in Chinese is 张同道. (2015)中国纪录片发展研究报告.现代传播(中国传媒大学学报), 38 (05): 111-116.)

[46] The National Radio and Television Administration of China and DocuChina.cn jointly publish Report on the Development of Chinese Documentary (2021). Date: 28-06-2022. http://www.docuchina.cn/2022/06/28/ARTIz19cBgj8hbF9nmL76P7U220628.shtml?spm=C70862.P63064538962.E34251409585.1 Accessed on 02-10-2022.

[47] John Corner. (1991) *Popular Television in Britain: Studies in Cultural History*. London: BFI Publishing.

their TV-watching activities, which could be taken to justify the weakness of the content of TV programmes.[48] However, as TV was a new media in its time, it was bound to be employed by the filmmakers of the time for some new experiments in filmmaking projects, similar to the practice whereby people circulate films via streaming media platforms today. In the 1950s in the UK, John Grierson and his *This Wonderful World* (1960) was a trial ground for the new practice traversing films from cinema to TV.

Grierson was producing this documentary television programme with his unique idea that documentary filmmaking ought to implement the educational function through the involvement of realistic themes, contributing to a form of worldwide understanding.[49] In each episode of *This Wonderful World*, Grierson would take the viewers to watch documentary films from all over the world and give his comments on camera. This programme gained huge success, reaching the top 10 most viewed TV programmes in 1960.[50] Although *This Wonderful World* was constituted from various episodes, and each episode focused on a certain topic, a fixed routine was applied. For example, the episode which aired on 1 January 1960 started from a scene of clouds with the opening credits 'Scottish Television Presents', followed by the title 'John Grierson In', then Grierson himself was framed in the scene facing a tellurion, with a zoom out shot. Grierson gained the attention of the audience, to be followed with a zoom in shot towards the screen on which a documentary was showing. Audiences would then start watching the documentary together with Grierson. This similar arrangement provided the distinction of television documentary, in that these films are episodic and reproducible. This is essentially the same process as *Super China* (2015), one of the film texts examined in the thesis. *Super China* is made up of 6 episodes, each of which develops a separate theme, on the economy, culture, the military or politics. Each episode opens with a certain question that the filmmakers hope audiences can pay attention to. For instance, in an episode where the topic is the Chinese population, during the opening sequence, the Korean narrator directly raises the question, "How does their population of 1.3 billion make China the strong? In this episode we will verify the strength of 1.3 billion people" to heavily dramatic music. Then, audiences follow the camera to remote towns to see what is happening because of the Chinese

[48] Paul Rotha. (1956) *Television in the Making*. London: Focal Press.
[49] Jo Fox. (2013) From Documentary Film to Television Documentaries: John Grierson and this Wonderful World. *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 10 (03): 498-523.
[50] Bernard Sendall, Jeremy Potter, Paul Bonner & Lesley Aston. (1982) *Independent Television in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

population. This indicates that documentary films which are produced and distributed through the medium of television are more similar to a type of imitable and reproducible product being consumed, because their stability of production can be completed by adhering to a certain daily routine. Precisely, the nature of the industrial replication of filmmaking destroys the peculiar aesthetics of cinema. The Korean audiences of *Super China* gave feedback on their surprise at perceiving Chinese strength, and feeling a sense of crisis, while positive comments indicated that *Super China* provided a cinematic encyclopaedia for Korean people to learn about China.[51] However, very few comments were concerned with an aesthetic critique of the film itself. In contrast, *Night Mail* (Harry Watt, Basil Wright, UK, 1936), a documentary film produced and released decades ago, has continually received attention from film critics and scholars since its release. Ian Aitken argued that this film 'represents the inter-dependence and evolution of social relations in a dramatic and symbolic way' (Aitken 1990: 191), and indeed practices the principal function of the documentary film, both sociologically and aesthetically.[52] Scott Anthony argues that the poetry of W. H. Auden offers striking effects as the rhyme of lyrics and the speed of delivery match with the film clips, producing 'the interaction between words and visuals' (Anthony 2007: 65).[53] Ken Dancyger emphasises that both the sound and music in *Night Mail* have contributed to its success.[54] This is the apparent distinction of aesthetic characteristics between documentary films and TV documentaries. The former are granted immortality due to their artistic quality, while the latter achieve the purpose of transmission information in the most part to the masses.

The film texts in the thesis not only involve the passage between film and television, but also relate to the changing distribution channels from theatres to streaming media platforms. Taking *China from Above II* (2018) as an example, besides its release via TV documentary channels, it has also been purchased and distributed exclusively through Bilibili, having 4.043 million plays by VIP subscribers. This documentary film series primarily engages with the technology of Ultra HD 4K aerial videography, capturing various landscapes among cities and towns. Its coupling with

[51] "Super China" in the Eyes of Koreans. Date:25-02-2015. http://xhgj.api.zhongguowangshi.com/wap/share.aspx?docid=82863 Accessed on 02-10-2022.
[52] Ian Aitken. (1990) *Film and Reform*. London: Routledge.
[53] Scott Anthony. (2007) *Night Mail*. London: BFI.
[54] Ken Dancyger. (2018) *The Technique of Film & Video Editing: History, Theory, and Practice*. New York: Routledge.

streaming media has attracted enormous amounts of paying subscribers to seek out visual entertainment by watching the beautiful shots which record the scenery of a pastoral scene and the lives of people living on the land. However, this is far from critical thinking regarding social reality, the attraction being the combination of drone technology and filmmaking techniques providing new possibilities for visual aesthetics. Indeed, it is difficult for the type of documentary films like *China from Above* to keep looking at realistic themes, as *West of the Tracks* (2002) did – to record the reality of life directly, and record it subtly, with simply long take shots. As a result, on the level of textual analysis, those films which have been commissioned and distributed by streaming media are automatically, and ironically, removed from the representation of reality.

Nevertheless, given that the documentary films to be examined below are produced following certain ideas and methods of documentary filmmaking, the thesis then still treats all of them as film texts, developing the analysis from the dimension of cinematography and filmmaking techniques. The thesis creatively integrates the frame theory of Erving Goffman and the classic approach of formalist film theory to examine different Sino-foreign transnational documentary films. The thesis on the one hand utilises insights developed from Goffman on the idea of frame theory to practically form the taxonomy in terms of the structure, where there develop diverse modes of representation of China in transnational co-production. This promotes the building of each chapter in the thesis. On the other hand, the idea of framing contributes in the thesis to develop thinking on 'certainty' in the screen representation of China, and its agenda setting in the form of cinematography. It draws on the mindset of sociological analysis for the film analysis, and raises up consideration of the relation between information, footage and editing. The thesis argues that in the selection of film techniques – footage, narratives, editing, scene and sound – these Sino-foreign co-produced documentary films follow principles of accommodation which are equal to the act of 'classification' in frame analysis detailed below.

Frame theory was developed by the American sociologist Erving Goffman in *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (1974). In this book, he defined the "frame" as a structure of perception, one through which individuals can access reality and understand experiences of social life. This kind of perception structure will help its users to locate, perceive, confirm and name the events that seem

to be innumerable and ambiguous [55](Erving Goffman 1974). Frame analysis is related to the method of handling the relation between 'appearance' and 'representation' in reality. Because of the existence of preferences in constructing and spreading the 'representation' of objects, it is possible to examine how the practices of working on representation are accomplished, namely, how the representation is processed in the framing. As the combinational use of frame theory and filmmaking techniques in the thesis helps understand what kind of filmmaking techniques are utilised to categorise cinematic representations of China, it is also reasonable to explore how these representations of China are created by framing techniques in film analysis, and what kind of meaning-production exists in the discourse.

From the account of the function of frame in sociology, it is regarded as a paradigm that is used to deal with external information when people perceive some new information. It also sets up some certain principles that help individuals transform experiences of social life to private perception, working as an effective tool of managing and balancing social life and personal life. Generally, only a limited number of social events take place, as they have been planned, and most of them actually have some fortuitousness and uncertainty. Every day people open their eyes to meet these 'uncertainties' in daily life. In order to eliminate this kind of 'uncertainty' or at least try to give it a 'certainty' that is easier for individuals to seize, people employ a 'frame' to finish the process of the input from sense organs (visual sense, auditory sense, tactile sense) to human beings' brains. Here, there is 'input', which accordingly implies in the system of framing that there is an act of 'output'. Usually 'output' is concerned with the construction of a framework, and is a series of steps to spread the 'framework', following with a common link of agenda setting and absolute keynote. Currently the common appearance of frame theory, including frame analysis and agenda setting in the circulation of information, is the industry of news media and the studies of media and communication.

The idea of frame theory employed in this thesis will be developed from three aspects, building the categories of filmmaking in Sino-foreign transnational documentary, agenda setting of 'the certainty' related to the representation of China on screen, and the frameworks that are formed in footage and editing among those

[55] Erving Goffman. (1986) *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Boston: Northeastern University Press.

documentary films. This first step of employing the idea of framing is completed by building the research structure of the thesis, which allows the thesis to be developed in the four chapters which examine different modes of Sino-foreign co-production and forms diverse representations of China on screen. The second step of frame theory operates in the thesis on the analysis of cinematography, which helps expose the 'certainty' of the representation of China in some Sino-foreign transnational documentary. For instance, the fiction-style editing which participates in the approach to direct cinema in *Last Train Home* helps the director Lixin Fan to suggest the hardship of rural migrant workers. On the aspect of cinematography, this editing style emotionally enhances the effect of the observation of a 'fly-on-the-wall' technique, and the depiction of marginal people on screen is the 'certainty' provided by the film. This is developed as the appearance of film analysis in the following chapters.

Conclusion

The original contribution of the thesis lies in the knowledge-production that summarises the latest phenomenon of the Chinese film industry in terms of diverse modes of filmmaking in Sino-foreign co-production. Meanwhile, on the methodology, the thesis creatively proposes a mixture of engagement in the idea of frame theory from sociology and formalist film theory from film studies, achieving an inter-disciplinary approach. The thesis finds that against the complexity of China's economic reforms moving on to an advanced stage, and the Chinese film industry going international, the new mode of Sino-foreign transnational documentary emerges via the synergy of Chinese-foreign commercial markets, mature experience of film production from their external partners, Chinese-Western film aesthetics and ideologies. Namely, the officially initiated Sino-foreign co-produced documentary films. The documentary films produced in this mode feature mutual products that combine the mainstream discourses of politics, economics and culture in Chinese society, and the industrialised success of the filmmaking capacity of Western countries. These officially Sino-foreign co-produced transnational documentary films domestically enhance cultural recognition among Chinese people of being part of the Chinese nation, which is based on the history, relics, traditional culture and customs, and national memory that have been constructed on screen in these films. They represent a charming or adorable image of China on screen for international audiences as well; for example, the Sino-British co-produced *Confucius*, the Sino-American co-produced *China from Above*, are works

as such.

Apart from this introduction, the thesis includes four chapters and the conclusion. Chapter 2 focuses on Sino-British transnational documentary films, examining cases based on the mode of officially initiated Sino-British co-production and British films produced with Chinese resources, to demonstrate the representation of a culturally powerful China. Chapter 3 summarises the mode of Sino-American co-production, examining the representation of beautiful China on screen. Chapter 4 analyses the mode of Korean-produced documentaries with Chinese resources, and illustrates how the representation of China as a superpower is constructed from the perspective of South Korea. Then, chapter 5 compares different modes, Chinese state documentary, independent documentary, independently produced Sino-foreign co-produced documentary, and demonstrates contradictory narratives on 'amazing China' and 'marginal China' through examining several films which are produced in the above three modes.

Chapter 2

Revisiting Non-Fiction: A Powerful China Framed in Confucianism, Socialist Norms, Folk Customs

The chapter focuses on the transnational documentary films that are produced in the mode of Chinese-British cooperation. Through the point that how the film techniques involving the nature of non-fiction in relevant film texts are utilised to construct the stories of an impressive China on the dimension of cultural power, the chapter responds to the research question that what cinematic representation of China is being built recently in Chinese-British transnational documentary filmmaking. Among documentary films co-produced by China and the UK, the dominant representation of China which has been created and conveyed is what I have termed 'powerful China'. In scholarship on the topic of Chinese power, the word 'power' is usually associated with soft power (Callahan, 2011; Voci & Hui, 2018), such as cultural and political influence (Huisken, 2009; O'Neill, 2019), as opposed to hard power, such as military force (Kirchberger, 2015; Kong, 2017). In this chapter, however, I will be examining power in terms of the ability of governance exerted by the state on social mentality within a cultural community, and how this type of power works on the basis of cultural recognition. Through examining relevant transnational documentary films co-produced by filmmakers in China and the UK, the chapter aims to explore how the documentary film has been employed to portray the Chinese cultural consensus. These commonly shared Chinese values and morality are based on history and traditions and conveyed by ordinary Chinese people to discipline themselves in proper behaviour. This facilitates the thesis to frame the representation of China in terms of cultural power, observing that this cultural recognition works to build images of social groups and communities, and provides the motivation to reach an ideological consensus on Chinese society. My analysis of the Chinese-UK co-produced documentaries examined here illustrates how the films refine a type of recognition of social ideology among Chinese people, by indicating how this was born and developed in the areas of history, education, and tradition. The selected documentary films represent China from a perspective of cultural influence, in which they create a dialogue between images of a powerful China in cultural texts, portraying the shift from ancient Confucian ideology to socialist modernity. Looking at the topics of the selected transnational documentary films, whether the theme is the legendary story of an ancient sage, *Confucius* (Yan Dong, Hugo Macgregor, UK/China, 2016), a contemporary look at the Chinese education system, *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School* (Harjeet Chhokar, UK/China,

2015), or the happy occasion of a modern Chinese family celebrating the Spring Festival, *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth* (Giulia Clark, Michael Rees, Paul Nelson, Stuart Elliott, UK/China, 2016), these film texts place an emphasis on the construction of cultural power in Chinese society.[56] These documentaries are not describing Chinese power on screen as a force of hegemony for territorial expansion, but rather defining it as a subtle but strong social mentality that works to solidify the Chinese people and their society. Ultimately, these films suggest that the cultural power of China lies in its ability to guide social opinions in public, and that members of society approve these relevant values and moral norms, driving them to take the desired action in accordance with the form of consensus reached within Chinese cultural recognition. In the chapter, I will demonstrate how the films suggest that these elements help China's society develop in ways aligned with its political system, through stories of both ancient and modern China.

The chapter examines three films, *Confucius* (2016), *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School* (2015), *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth* (2016), to analyse how Chinese-UK transnational documentary films position the cinematising of the cultural power of China through different themes and stories in relation to Chinese traditional and modern culture. Before I proceed to detailed analysis, I offer a brief overview of the three films. *Confucius* recounts the legendary story of Confucius (551 BC to 479 BC), the Aristotle of the Eastern world. The film welds Confucius's political life and teaching life with the richness of Confucian ideology in ancient China, and its inheritance in modern China. In the ancient story, the documentary traces Confucius's birth, childhood, youth period and private schooling, to become the King's constant companion. Moreover, *Confucius* demonstrates that during this period of being a teacher and royal official, Confucius collected literature and wrote the classic texts of the Confucian School. In the modern story, the documentary takes examples of how ordinary Chinese people in modern society benefit from Confucianism, guiding their daily behaviours on the basis of respecting Confucian values, which shape their lives to positive effect. The film ends with the death of Confucius, in his era, and the continuous influence of Confucianism on Chinese people. *Confucius* utilises the method of re-enactment to present the life of Confucius in the historical section, reconstructing historical episodes to contrast them with a non-fiction narrative, indicating the cultural power of Confucianism and illustrating how Confucian values participate in building mainstream ideology in China, how these people go about living with the ideas of Confucianism. The film cinematises Confucian ideas in terms of

[56] Spring Festival (春节 in Chinese character), also known as China's Lunar New Year, Chinese New Year.

the philosophy of *Li*, through actors playing Confucius and his students, and by the stories of Confucius relating his education practices, early family life, and political ideals.[57] In the modern stories, which involve several ordinary people who adhere to Confucian values, the film observes them quoting pieces of Confucian thought on a train, and also utilises talking head interviews, suggesting that Confucian values have built the foundation of Chinese people's morality and sociality, influencing people to think and behave in accordance with Confucianism. These have always been powerful measures undertaken by ancient emperors for ruling, and provide strong support for the formation of national identity. *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School* records the story of five Chinese teachers teaching British students in the Chinese teaching style in Bohunt School, in Hampshire, England. The film integrates modes of documentary and mainstream narrative storytelling to present the five Chinese teachers' journey in an English junior school. It conveys the freshness and excitement of new modes of teaching in the classroom, as well as the double cultural shock that Chinese teachers feel while teaching in the UK as British students respond to Chinese teaching methods, obstacles and solutions in class, through which the film maps the education system of socialist China, which is shown to be significantly different from the English teaching mode. As I will demonstrate below, *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School* constructs the reality of China in relation to the concepts of centralism through its performative expression of cinematic space, and unfolds the cultural power of a collective consciousness that works in Chinese teaching practices, one which is particularly associated with order, authority, conformity, collectivism and socialism in China's education system. The film applies a series of expressive montages to present a pattern of Chinese schooling with socialist norms. By the representation of Chinese teaching and the comparison between Chinese teaching and English teaching, *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School* successfully shapes a powerful screen image of China based on collective consciousness and its influence on Chinese education. The final film, *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth,* utilises the participatory mode of documentary to explore several festive events of the Chinese Spring Festival that are organised in all parts of the country, cities and provinces from Beijing, Guangdong and Hong Kong to Yunnan.[58] The film follows several hosts travelling in diverse destinations in China during the

[57] The philosophy of *Li* is the core range of Confucian philosophical thought. *Li* is pinyin (Chinese phonetic alphabet). The corresponding simplified Chinese character of *Li* is 礼 which means rituals, ceremony, courtesy. It is different from the 'Li' of Li Tongyun in later writing on China's power in folk customs.

[58] Participatory mode is a term of the conceptual structure created by Bill Nichols for descripting the documentary modes. It refers to the filmic engagement from the filmmakers to the subjects in the process of making non-fiction films. The modes stand for the 'I speak with them for you' formulation, in which the bodily presence of filmmakers on the scene satisfies the expectation from viewers that what they are seeing and hearing is hinged on the nature and quality of the encounter between

period, developing festive stories of China through various dimensions, through which the film seeks to demonstrate that Chinese people are united by the harmonious atmosphere, and invites viewers who might come from other cultures to feel the nature of original Chinese folk customs. The film suggests that traditional Chinese folk customs facilitate its people with an entertaining way to achieve family reunion and spiritual reunion, which, in turn, operate to develop national unity. Furthermore, *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth* suggests that China's traditional customs bond different areas amongst metropolises, villages and social classes, bringing peasant labourers, the salariat and millionaires together, building equality of faith in the national culture of the Spring Festival between underdeveloped economic groups and wealthy groups, within which a cultural dialogue of 'Da Tuan Yuan' (great reunion) is created. This dialogue operates in a manner filled with tenderness, warmth, joy and satisfaction, which attracts people to voluntarily help maintain the harmonious situation of the big family – the nation.

The chapter will show how these transnational documentary films successfully construct screen representations of a powerful China with regard to their cultural community which share common ideas foregrounding memories of national history, family relationships, educational attitudes, festive folk customs and emotions. The chapter also demonstrates that these China-UK co-produced documentary films, despite their differences, limit the discussion to a powerful representation of China with a typical Orientalist impression, which is accompanied with eastern philosophy, customs and rituals that are exotic to the Western cultural gaze, as well as the morality and norms of a communist society.[59]

Confucianism: Re-enactment, Concept and Cinematising

Although Confucius - as the most representative sage in the cultural history of China - may have died centuries ago, as a cultural icon he has never been far away from the memory of the Chinese. In *Confucius*, Confucius and his thoughts on Confucianism appears again, by means of re-enactment. With the approach of re-visiting imagined reality in accord with historical resources and documents which have survived, *Confucius* depicts the core of Confucius's philosophy, *Li*, explaining the meaning of *Li* and its significance for social ruling in ancient China through the story of the life of Confucius, and his promotion of *Li* practices in different kingdoms. As *Li* is a concept from ancient Chinese philosophy, it may be difficult to understand

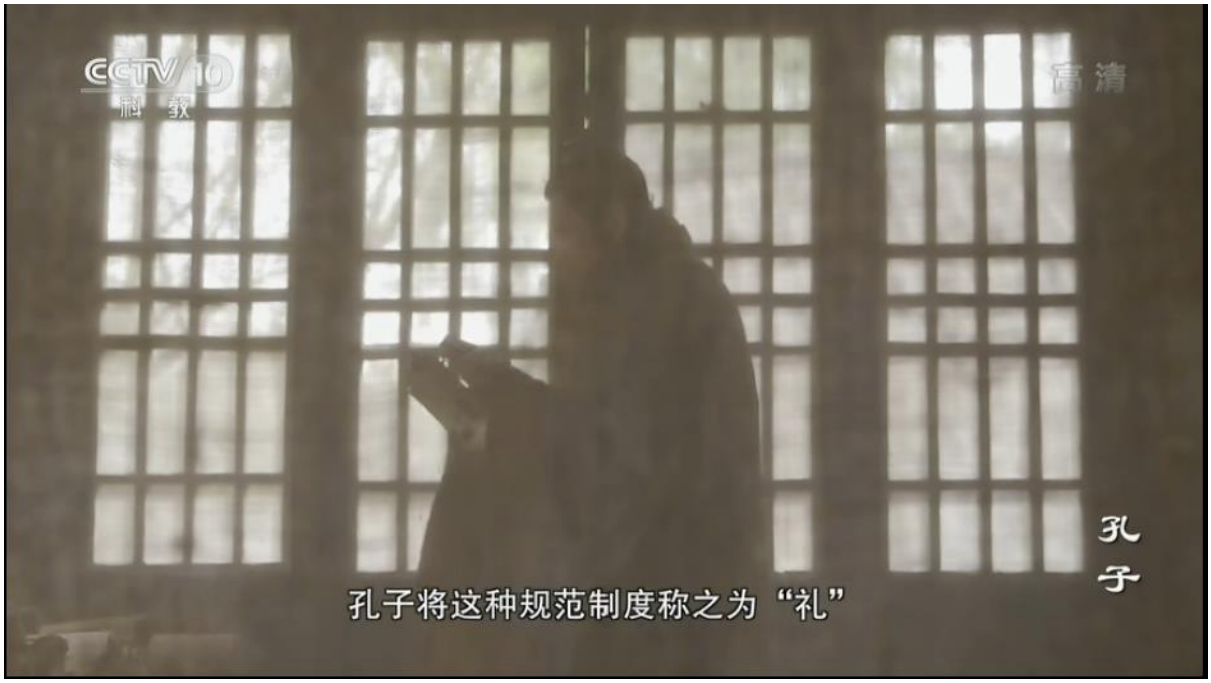
filmmaker and subject (Bill Nichols 2017: 137-140).

[59] 'The Orientalist impression' appears in the film. For instance, *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth* (Giulia Clark, Michael Rees, Paul Nelson, Stuart Elliott, UK/China 2016) utilises a cluster of unique symbols – red lantern, paper scrolls, Beijing's ancient bell tower and drum tower – to deliver a sense of Eastern tradition for Western viewers.

for viewers who do not possess a cultural background in Chinese history. *Confucius* makes an attempt at cinematising *Li*, adapting it as two branches of different stories in relation to ancient China and modern Chinese people. *Li* for ancient China is represented in the stories of ancestor worship in practice and political function theoretically, being described as an inner tool for the emperor's sovereignty. For instance, to explore the story of *Li* in ancient China, cross-cutting is utilised in the sequences where the film narrates how *Li* contributed to the rule of the Kingdoms in the early history of China. The sequence contains four sections of footage to form the narration of the political nature of *Li* as a primitive law based on philosophy and morality. First, footage which is completed via the approach of re-enactment is presented to the audience. In the scene, Confucius, the figure being played by an actor, is observed walking behind an antique screen with a texture of silk (Fig.1). The character is focused on by the camera, and can be seen moving back and forth in their room. His gesture of accessing bamboo and wooden slips is captured.[60] With the obstruction of the silken screen, the character is filmed in a hazy visual effect. Meanwhile, the footage is matched with the voice of the narrator, 'Different from the chaos of warfare in the age when Confucius is living, Confucius thinks that the previous stable regime of the Zhou dynasty (1050-221 BCE) relies on a set of principles in relation to social relationships that are accepted by the Zhou people. This set of principles which consolidates the society of the Zhou dynasty are named by Confucius as *Li*.'[61] The voice-over informs the viewer how Confucius deals with the relation of *Li* and rule of the kingdom, suggesting the origins of *Li* as a philosophical concept to evolve and grow as an idea of political governance. The scene where Confucius is walking behind the screen also raises a metaphor, where he is seeking a method to deal with the times of warfare he is facing, by tracing from the successful experience of the Zhou dynasty although he still has not achieved a clear insight.

[60] Bamboo and wooden slips were the carriers of information and knowledge, as the bearers of text read by ancient Chinese people at that time.

[61] The English subtitles are translated by the author from Mandarin Chinese. The original subtitle is '与孔子所处的战乱时代不同，他认为周朝之所以稳定，很大程度上是由于被国人尊奉的规范制度将周朝社会凝聚了起来。孔子将这种规范制度称之为礼'.



(Fig.1 Confucius, the actor, paces back and forth behind the silken screen.)

Next, footage of an interview with Jeffrey Riegel and footage of children smiling to the camera are edited together, which the voice of Riegel accompanies, off-screen. In the scene where Riegel is introduced with his title and organisation, in Chinese as ‘王安国教授，悉尼大学（Professor Jeffrey Riegel from University of Sydney）’ on screen, weight is given to his interpretation of the essence of *Li* (Fig.2).[62] With his words, ‘It also refers to what we think of more generally as customs and social practices. What I say when I greet an old friend. What I say when I express reference for a teacher or parent. Confucius pointed out the very importance of those customs and social practices as the glue of society keeping us together’, the audience can see the smiling faces of children and their parents on the screen. A little girl who is embraced against the chest of her parent smiles to the camera (Fig.3). This asynchronous linkage of sound and scene realises the implications of the benefits of harmonious social relationships from social governance based on people’s faith in the principles of *Li*.

[62] Jeffrey Riegel is a scholar who researches in the Chinese studies, the author of The Annals of Lü Buwei (2001) and Mozi: A Study and Translation of the Ethical and Political Writings (2013).

(Fig.2 Jeffrey Riegel is interviewed to explain the function of *Li* in contemporary China.)

(Fig.3 Matched with the off-screen words of Jeffrey Riegel, a kid is captured being embraced by her parent.)

(Fig.4 Confucius, played by the actor, recites the lines from *the Analects of Confucius*.)

With another sequence of re-enactment footage in which the actor performs the scene where Confucius theorises his ideas about *Li*, we can see the actor speaking very famous lines from Confucianism regarding political governance on screen (Fig.4). In the scene, Confucius is observed to open a volume of bamboo slips and being ready to write something down on them, while he thinks a while then produces the words, 'if people are ruled by laws and punishment, they will try to escape punishment by obedience. However, they have no sense of shame. If people are ruled by *Li* and influenced by the principles of morality, they will be willing to behave properly because of their sense of shame.'[63] In this footage, Confucius is observed without the obstruction of the silken screen in front of the camera while speaking. The audience can observe his thinking and writing clearly. Being in contrast with the preceding footage, this scene also suggests that the formation of *Li* gradually come into being in Confucius's mind. The four pieces of footages are edited in an order of cross-cutting in this sequence to imply why *Li* facilitates ruling a kingdom in ancient China, and how it is still possible for *Li* to work in the life of modern Chinese. Next, in the section on modern stories of *Li*, *Confucius* employs a similar strategy of cross-editing to inform the process of *Li* participating in modern social relationships in China. *Confucius* provides evidence through its audio-visual language to claim that a powerful China lies in the belief in Confucianism, that Confucian ideas are participating in the construction of the mainstream ideology of Chinese

[63] This is translated by the write from Mandarin Chinese to English. The original Chinese lines appeared on screen is '道之以政，齐之以刑，民免而无耻。道之以德，齐之以礼，有耻且格'.

society, at least on the level of cultural consciousness, and helping to form a stable recognition for common people in the current social situation. For instance, *Confucius* includes several scenes in which people behave in regard to Confucianism, suggesting that even after two thousand years, Chinese people still respect Confucian philosophy and absorb it in their quotidian living. In one of these scenes, the viewer encounters children learning the classics of Confucianism, presenting these basic Confucian values as they are arranged in elementary education, which is popular in Chinese classes. Here Confucius employs two pieces of footage that relate to students learning the Confucian classics, *The Analects of Confucius*, and suggests the continuation of Confucian ideas circulating in the Chinese people. The first piece of footage film ancient students who are played by actors reading the lines of *the Analects of Confucius* that are engraved into a stone. With a slow zoom out, the components of the stones are exposed on screen, and the actors framed among these stones. The scene provides the possibility for the audience to imagine how ancient Chinese students learned Confucianism in their time. The second piece of footage is of a class where a course in relation to *The Analects of Confucius* is being delivered in modern times. The camera moves horizontally in a tracking shot, to capture the kids dressed in modified traditional costumes seated line by line in the room where there are modern objects, including paper-printed books, desks, ballpoint pens, a glass window. The camera movement forms a sense of passing through ancient history to modern society psychologically, which suggests the continuity of the faith in Confucian ideas amongst Chinese people. As such, *Confucius* follows Chinese people observing their actions to show how Confucian philosophy has become the basis of their words, thoughts and behaviours.

Confucius constructs a representation of China that underscores the positive aspects of the old civilisation and the humanistic sentiments of current society by revealing the Chinese philosopher's legendary status and life, and to subtly circulate his cultural influence.[64] It structures the content through several segments: Confucius's thoughts on education, politics, the establishment of Chinese people's understanding of family values and the development of society. Through the use of extensive narration, *Confucius* details Confucius's life and ideas from his birth and philosophy to educational practice, indicating how Confucian ideas were developed in imperial China, and their inheritance in modern China. For example, as

[64] Before the public release of *Confucius*, the directors and producers of this film were interviewed by news media. Here is a piece of news reporting from Xinhua News Agency and reprinted online by the website of state council information office of China. See it here: The Global Launch Conference of the Sino-British Co-production Documentary '*Confucius*' Was Held in London. http://www.scio.gov.cn/wz/Document/1452662/1452662.htm Accessed on 25-04-2022. This article states the role of Confucius being the most iconic symbol in Chinese culture.

Confucianism levels up 'filial piety' to top place, equal to 'heaven', 'ground', 'emperor' and 'teacher', the film records Zhang Yanyang, a rural migrant worker in a sequence filmed on the train, traveling home to regularly accompany their elders, which indicates how some ideas of family relationships in ancient people's practices associated with Confucianism have passed down to today. Eventually, *Confucius* shows how *Li* (礼), as an embodiment of China's cultural power absorbed from feudal codes of ethics, works on the cultural community of the Chinese nation.[65] In order to narrate the birth of Confucius, through miracles and his early private education, developing political theory based on Confucianism, *Confucius* uses a synthesis of filmmaking techniques, mixing talking-head interviews, re-enactments, and voice-over to represent Confucius fulfilling his life in pursuing his political dream. With a chronological narrative of the life of Confucius, the documentary uses interpretations given by specialists and explanations by the narrator to highlight the key concepts of *Shi* (士/common gentleman), *Li* (礼/ritual and courtesy), *Junzi* (君子/exemplary person), *Xiao* (孝/filial piety) which are picked from Confucian ideas.[66] The documentary connects these Confucian concepts with current Chinese people's social mentality to provide a cultural representation of China which is strongly shaped by Confucius and his Confucianism, as I outline below.

Conceptualising Li Practices in Defamiliarising Narrative and Talking Head Interview

A defamiliarising narrative is used in *Confucius* to create fresh interpretations on the concept of *Li*. *Confucius* includes several talking-head interviews with Western scholars who research Chinese culture and politics to present a Western perspective on Confucian terms. It recounts a story of China through international expression and completes the circulation of the literary content of *Li* academically.[67] This is favourable for visualising *Li* in the practice of ancient Chinese people by the re-enactments and non-fictional modern stories, depicting the growth of *Li* as a philosophy and its iconic importance in ancient Chinese society, as well as the application of *Li* in modern times. The two sides are respectively discussed below in the sections on 'defamiliarising narrative' and 'the non-fiction story'.

Reviewing the relevant scholarship on the topic of film narrative, there are various types

[65] '*Li*' is literally rituals or courtesy. More often in this thesis it is a Confucian concept which means Confucius' political philosophy, especially when I use *Li* to refer to *Li* Practices which are extracted from Confucianism.
[66] The four Confucian concepts Shi, Li, Junzi and Xiao respectively refer to common gentleman, ritual and courtesy, exemplary person and filial piety in an English context.
[67] The saying is from a news report on Yan Dong, the Chinese director of *Confucius* (2016). In this article, Yan Dong states an argument of documentary filmmaking that tells the stories of China from an international perspective.
Weblink: http://m.iqilu.com/pcarticle/2650745 Accessed on 25-04-2022.

of narrative in Chinese film and transnational film which depict stories of China. Examples include the patriotic narrative[68] (Richard, 2019) in the *Ip Man* (film series, Wilson Yip, Mainland China and Hong Kong, 2008, 2010, 2015, 2018, 2019), counter-narrative[69] (Pollacchi, 2017) in *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* (Bing Wang, China, 2003), *Three Sisters* (Bing Wang, China, 2012), *Til Madness Do Us Part* (Bing Wang, China, 2013) and *Bitter Money* (Bing Wang, China, 2016), the 'figures in history' narrative[70] (Tong, 2018) in *Up the Yangtze* (Yung Chang, Canada, 2007) and *Last Train Home* (Lixin Fan, Canada/China, 2009), the 'zhuxuanlv/main melody' narrative[71] (Sun, 2013) in *Documenting the Pi Village* (Minjie Qian, China, 2012), etc. However, *Confucius* does not follow any one of the above types. Rather, it utilises a narrative extracted from Hollywood heroism for organising the fragments of stories of Confucius during his long life. This genre of heroic narrative is usually applied in biographical films, such as *The Iron Lady* (Phyllida Lloyd, UK/France, 2011). The representation on screen of shaping a hero of the nation in Hollywood has developed over decades. In the early time of Hollywood heroes on screen, they were individuals physically shaped in relation to notions of 'man' and masculinity, such as Schwarzenegger, Stallone and other representative action stars.[72] Later, the heroes of America in Hollywood narrative films were engaged with the refashioning of the representation of American intelligence[73], such as in *Zero Dark Thirty* (Kathryn Bigelow, US, 2021) and *Argo* (Ben Affleck, US, 2012), and political ideologies relating to US national policies and popular social issues, such as 'modern nomadism' in *Nomadland* (Chloé Zhao, US, 2020). Since China's State Council conveys the strategy of 'telling China's story with an international perspective'[74] in the official document 'On the Guidance of Enhancing China's International Cultural Trade'[75], it follows a trend where filmmakers try new practices on film production and transfer their method of filmmaking from local-based expression to an international perspective.[76] Following this trend, the

[68] Stevey Richards. (2019) The Patriotic Narrative of Donnie Yen: How Martial Arts Film Stars Reconcile Chinese Tradition and Modernity. *Celebrity Studies*, 10 (2): 276-284.
[69] Elena Pollacchi. (2017) Extracting Narratives from Reality: Wang Bing's Counter-Narrative of the China Dream. *Studies in Documentary Film*, 11 (3): 217-231.
[70] Shan Tong. (2018) Sino-Canadian Documentary Coproduction: Transnational Production Mode, Narrative Pattern and Theatrical Release in China. *Studies in Documentary Film*, 12 (3): 239-255.
[71] Wanning Sun. (2013) The Cultural Politics of Recognition: Rural Migrants and Documentary Films in China. *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 7 (1): 3-20.
[72] Richard Sparks. (1996) Masculinity and Heroism in the Hollywood 'Blockbuster': The Culture Industry and Contemporary Images of Crime and Law Enforcement. *British Journal of Criminology*, 36(3): 348-360.
[73] Tony Shaw & Tricia Jenkins. (2017) From Zero to Hero: The CIA and Hollywood Today. *Cinema Journal* 56 (2): 91-113.
[74] Translated by the writer. The original official expression is '中国故事，国际表达' in Chinese.
[75] Translated by the writer. The original official document is released on the web of the State Council as '国务院关于加快发展对外文化贸易的意见'. (On the Guidance of Enhancing China's International Cultural Trade, the State Council of PRC, No.: 000014349/2014-00029, 03-17-2014).
Weblink: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2014-03/17/content_8717.htm Accessed on 28-04-2022.
[76] The strategy of Sino-foreign cooperative filmmaking is a popular choice. At present, China has released several co-produced

international aspect of *Confucius* is utilising Western viewpoints to interpret Confucianism, bringing a different perspective with the de-familiarisation strategy on screen. A defamiliarised narrative refers to the 'perspective of a stranger' which operates in *Confucius,* observing and explaining Confucian ideologies based on their external cultural context.[77] When the film introduces Confucius to audiences, it avoids exploring the content via the position of Chinese people's understanding of Confucius, and their impression of Confucian thought; instead, it employs a thread whereby Western viewers learn about this Eastern philosopher and observe a Chinese lifestyle influenced by a belief in Confucianism, locating the stories of Confucius and Confucianism in the background of modern China. For example, in the sequence of the origin of *Li* as the principle for political governance, *Confucius* employs an interview with Jeffrey Riegel to present the concept that, in Riegel's understanding, *Li* is the glue that acts to solidify society's members and their relationship. This sequence with Jeffrey Riegel has been examined in detail previously. Next, the chapter takes another two sequences as examples which involve re-enactment and talking head interviews with Western Sinologists, to analyse how the approach of re-enactment and non-fictional stories achieve visualisation of the concept of *Li* practices via a defamiliarised strategy.

Four interviews with authoritative Sinologists in *Confucius* define *Li* practices both as the emperor's tools for ruling and as soft power for maintaining peace in contemporary society of China. Interviews with Michael Nylan and Roger Ames provide viewers with an introduction to the term *Li* from a literary level. For instance, in describing ritual practices as religiosity to the family and the emperor of Zhou Dynasty, Nylan says:

> When we talk about many of the rituals, what we are talking about is blood sacrifices, offering the blood and wine and offering to ancestor gods in heaven. The ancestors live in heaven and become themselves gods in the afterlife. But one doesn't just set out meat and wine. In each case, when offering them, one has to bring into a particular attitude of reference. The reimagining of the ancestors in a sense of bringing them back to life with each offering.

Here Nylan is referring to rituals involving early primitive ritual practices with the

transnational documentaries or ongoing filmmaking projects with filmmaking partners (e.g., BBC, Discovery Channel) from different countries. They've also started an international documentary filmmaking platform, The Belt-and-Road Initiative Documentary Consortium, which was organised by China in 2019.

[77] In the same interview to Yan Dong, he explains the thread of explaining Confucian ideas in the film through foreign understanding. That is his strategy to take interviews with a number of international scholars who are specialists in Chinese studies. See the article here: http://m.iqilu.com/pcarticle/2650745 Accessed on 26-04-2022. I summarise Yan Dong's ideas of presenting Confucianism through Western eyes and term it the 'perspective of a stranger'.

spiritual comfort given by Confucianism on the practical level. The worshipping of ancestors, which is the basic meaning of Confucius's *Li* practices, may be a process which is well known in China, but largely unknown to most Western viewers.

(Fig.5 Michael Nylan interprets the ritual meaning of *Li* practices.[78])

With the talking head interviews (Fig.5), *Confucius* utilises Nylan's explanation to provide an essential interpretation regarding the ritual event of ancestor-worship as one of the components of *Li* practice in ancient China. As a Western source to explain the Confucian term, Nylan, with stacked bookshelves in the background signifying their intellectual status, not only connotes authority and reliability to a Western audience, but also provides a fresh theoretical perspective for Asian viewers who are already informed by Confucian ideas and modern understanding by Asian scholars. To further emphasise that *Li* is worthy of academic discussion, and to illustrate its effect on the development of Chinese civilisation and East Asian culture more generally, *Confucius* interviews Roger Ames (Fig.6) who explores *Li* from its origins in relation to the techniques and aesthetics of smelting and forging the bronze vessels to influence on Chinese culture and aesthetics.

[78] Michael Nylan is a professor of history who researches the early history of China. Nylan is also the author of relevant books, *The Five "Confucian" Classics* (2001) and *Lives of Confucius* (2010).

(Fig.6 Roger Ames explains the relation of *Li* and the formation of human civilisation)

(Fig.7 Bronze ritual vessels of elegant quality for the occasion of *Li* practices)

Referring to footage showing a soldier using a sword, Ames says: "What happened in that period was the beginning of the stabilisation of human culture.[79] Lifting the human being out of our animality and making an ascent of something that is elegant and enchanted. Confucius, beginning of a real troubled period, tries to re-establish the *Li* that had factored as

[79] The Bronze Age, referring to a period of human cultural development in regard to archaeology, marks the skilful use of bronze techniques. Bronze instruments took important roles in daily use and ancient agriculture at that moment. Historical evidence has proven that the use of bronze upgraded the productivity in ancient society, leading people to pursue the aesthetics beyond the materials.

China became increasingly involved in wars." *Confucius* follows Ames's statement about *Li* with footage of ritual vessels (Fig.7) - the camera moves to drinking vessels made of bronze for worship, displaying curved figures on the surface of vessels and suggesting these early aesthetics were formed in the event of performing *Li* practices. This raises the ritual aspects of *Li* to a higher level, that of forming civilisation. As the voice over describes bronze casting techniques for the use of ritual purposes and making weapons, it introduces basic elements of the past to Western viewers, who are likely to have little knowledge about Chinese history, to consider bronze casting techniques and correspondingly The Bronze Age of Chinese culture. For those people who are unaware of the Bronze Age, the scene in which Ame is interviewed in the passage on a bronze ware museum suggests archaeological evidence for his explanation of *Li* forging human civilisation.[80] When Ame explains this, his social status of being a professor at University of Hawaii appears on screen.[81] In this manner, *Confucius* lends credibility and authenticity to his interpretation of the association of *Li* and human culture. Immediately with a time lapse shot, *Confucius* moves the location of stories to the busy modern society of China. In the time lapse shot, the audience can see the clouds move in a rapid speed in the sky while the neon lights from the windows and LED billboard on the wall of skyscrapers switch over rapidly, implying the flying times. Then next footage which shows modern Chinese people quickly walking on the street enters the audience's eyes. *Confucius* turns to a different sequence which is the interview with Daniel Bell to shift the spotlight on *Li* from the Bronze Age to contemporary life. Bell's words connect *Li* and a sense of belonging to serve a second layer of positioning *Li* in a cultural context in the film, namely, that *Li* works as a social contract for modern China. Bell says:

The aim of *Li* is to generate the sense of community and caring within the participants of that ritual, so you have rituals, like group eating. You know when you have eating rituals with your family, the elder person must eat first. When you have drinking rituals including the family and teacher, the students are supposed to drink like this, without facing a teacher. They are hierarchical rituals. So again, the ultimate purpose is to develop a sense of caring among the participants. They would not otherwise be the case.

[80] Bronze Age culture is associated with the bronze technique which was directly born from the need of worshipping in accordance with *Li* Practices. Gradually the bronze technique was regarded as a symbol of human development on the level of tool-producing; as that age is named The Bronze Age, so is the culture.

[81] Roger Ames is professor at the University of Hawaii and also the Chair Professor at Peking University in Beijing. He has the reputation of making contributions to Chinese studies and comparative philosophy. He is the author of relevant books, including Sunzi: *The Art of Warfare* (1993), *The Art of Rulership: A Study of Ancient Chinese Political Thought* (1994), *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (2011), *Confucian Role Ethics: A Moral Vision for 21st Century?* (2016).

To persuade the viewer that *Li* works in modern China, *Confucius* not only uses voice-over narration to directly state that *Li* has been inherited by the modern Chinese, but also utilises Bell's interpretation delineating that *Li* influences the contemporary quotidian life of Chinese people through building their social norms and guiding their manners. Now that *Li* has been explained on screen both literally and philosophically through talking head interviews via a de-familiarisation strategy, the film proceeds to the visualisation of *Li* on screen.

Cinematising Li in Re-enactment and Non-Fiction Story

Confucius utilises extensive re-enactments to present a sense of Confucius's times as realistically as possible for viewers.[82] It contains 43 instances of re-enactment (lasting approximately 23 minutes), which recount key moments in Confucius's life: birth, childhood, private schooling, proposing *Li*, becoming a practitioner of *Li* philosophy, travelling across kingdoms, returning to his hometown, starting education on *Junzi*, delivering a Six Skills course and editing the Five Classics. This re-enactment of the life of Confucius, helps set the audience in the historic environment, engaging them imaginatively in the history of early China to understand Confucian concepts, norms and the social background behind these ideas. I will take an example of re-enactment regarding ancestor-worship to demonstrate how the documentary presents *Li* practices as guidelines for ancient rituals in feudal China, and another example of a non-fiction story to examine how the documentary suggests that *Li* currently functions as a social contract in the country.

From 18: 52 to 29:28, the film employs scenes of re-enactment (Fig.8-Fig.12) that illustrate how ancient Chinese people performed solemn rituals to worship their ancestors as examples of behaviours where ancient Chinese have been guided by the norms of *Li*.

[82] In an interview to the director Yan Dong, he says 20% of the whole story of Confucius should be presented with re-enactments, and this decision was commonly confirmed after the UK and Chinese filmmaking team discussed them. This is the website published interview content in Chinese.
http://jishi.cctv.com/2016/12/01/ARTIseteG2CUzfrVFn2CvFgj161201_2.shtml Accessed on 10-03-2022.

(Fig.8 Re-enactment. Characters play the roles of ancient Chinese who are worshipping ancestors following the requirements of *Li*.)

Characters perform rituals depicting how ancient Chinese people expressed their belief in *Li* and lived in accordance with its ethics, for instance, performing ancestor-worship. *Confucius* immerses the audience in the environment of ancient Chinese people worshipping, presenting the re-enactment of steps of worship to form a sense of observing the reality of these events from the ancient history of China. Utilising fixed shots and dolly shots, *Confucius* illustrates the details supposed to have taken place in a normal ritual event of ancestor worship. In particular, the dolly shot works effectively in this section, since it moves around the ritual room, showing viewers how the ritual of worshipping ancestors is conducted from an omniscient point of view. The set of dolly shots creates a ritual condition for the audience to enter the space where they are able to imagine this esoteric form of culture. I number the shots from 9 to 12, and choose the stills that can be most representative from each to analyse how the dolly shot works here. Fig.8 to Fig.12 are stills taken from the corresponding dolly shots. Fig.8 and Fig.9 are representatives of dolly shot 1 within the re-enactment of worship.

(Fig.9 Still picture from dolly shot 1 of ancient worship.)

In dolly shot 1, the camera moves from the right to left, revealing a series of ritual tools, slowly moving from the back of ritual participants who are kneeling in a square array, wearing Han style clothing (Fig.9). The items that appear in ancient worship, including bronze vessels, sacrificial offerings, candlelight, totems on the wall, waving silk curtains, are presented on screen. This camera movement displays many items with relevance to the content of worshipping ancestors. and creates a ritual environment with Oriental style.

(Fig.10 Still picture from dolly shot 2 of ancient worship.)

Fig.10 represents dolly shot 2, in which the image is never brought into focus, and the characters and other objects in the room are continuously blurred. It is only possible to recognise the spark of candlelight with the blurry cinematography connoting a sense of holiness and the unknown.

(Fig.11 Still picture from dolly shot 3 of ancient worship.)

The camera continually moves slightly around the ritual room, finally facing the participants who are bending knees and kowtowing, filmed from the position of the ritual platform (Fig.11). The camera movement gradually allows the faces of the characters to be seen by viewers. Their faces in dim light, which occupy the top part of the frame, and offerings which appear at the bottom of the frame, match together to create a space for viewers to contemplate life and death, which corresponds with the off-screen voice of Nylan, as she states: "The reimagining of the ancestors in a sense of bringing them back to life with each offering."

The final dolly shot here is a repetition of the ritual behaviours of worshipping ancestors. With the inclusion of shots of the participants repeatedly bowing (Fig.12), *Confucius* indicates the extremely respectful attitude provided by descendants to their ancestors, revealing how ritual practices of *Li* were important in ancient Chinese social life.

(Fig.12 Still picture from dolly shot 4 of ancient worship.)

In addition to these dolly shots, the film utilises fixed-camera shots to present details of the facial expressions of participants, the beautiful patterns on the vessels and Chinese chime-bells, and sacrificial offerings such as pork, grain and wine. These particular elements – faces imbued with religiosity, bronze ritual vessels, food as sacrifice – present a strong impression relating to *Li* practices in earlier times.

Confucius employs re-enactment of an ancient ritual with reference to the requirements from *Li* practices to visualise the literal meaning of *Li,* locating it in a practical dimension. Given that the core substance of *Li* emerged in the Zhou Dynasty, where people were supposed to hold faith toward the heavens and the ancestor gods (Jing Tian Fa Zu), to repeatedly assure the behaviour of ancestor-worship is to enhance a belief amongst common people in the emperor in ancient China.[83] In this way, *Confucius* suggests that traditional cultural power in ancient China has grown from *Li* practices to operate as a ritual tool for Chinese emperors to govern the population.

But how is power associated with *Li* operating in modern China? *Confucius* utilises several non-fiction stories to suggest that *Li* works as a social contract, one that is followed by ordinary people to build an emotional link between individuals and their society. I shall take an instance from the film, of the non-fiction story of Yanyang Zhang, an extremely ordinary

[83] Zhou Dynasty, a Chinese dynasty from 1046 BC – 256 BC; The term of 'Jing Tian Fa Zu' in Chinese character is 敬天法祖, which is delivered by the voice-over narrator and the subtitle in *Confucius*. This is a ritual tradition associated with the legitimation of royal power of ancient emperors as Chinese emperors all hold the legitimation of ruling by the claim that they are sons of heaven and they rule the country on behalf of heaven.

person in China, to explore how the story is utilised to achieve the goal of visualising *Li* as a social contract for modern China. *Confucius* sets the beginning of Zhang's story on the train, and when the camera frames him, he is observed to be seated near a window reading a book titled *The Classic Filial Piety*.[84] In the segment of Zhang's story, the camera records three scenes – Zhang is reading aloud sentences from the book on his hand on the train home; Zhang delivers a short conversation on the topic of filial piety with another traveller, and Zhang worships in his hometown and enjoys a meal with the elders in their shabby home. The off-screen voice from Zhang tells the audience that what connects these slices of life his belief in filial piety. As Zhang says: 'I miss my mom. I consider it that I violate the morality of filial piety when I work as a migrant worker far away from my home, leaving my mom on her own. My dream is to restore the poor hovels and provide my mom with a modern house for her use as residence.'[85] With Zhang's voice, the scene of him and his mother having a simple meal is captured. In a close shot, Zhang's mother is framed taking a chopstick of food from her plate, smiling with her wrinkled face. This implies that it is filial piety that motivates ordinary people living at the bottom economic level, such as Zhang, to temporarily leave their work to return home for reunion on a regular basis, demonstrating their love and respect to their living elders and deceased ancestors. With this story, which responds to the previous statement by Jeffrey Riegel on *Li* as custom and social practice, 'What I say when I express reference for a teacher or parent, is, as Confucius pointed out, very important that those customs and social practices are the glue of society keeping us together', *Confucius* suggests that an ordinary person who is not in a socially mobile condition holds faith in *Li* philosophy, and takes action following *Li* norms in modern life, which proves that the power of *Li* works to constrain every single person into correct behaviours.

In the narration of the story of Yanyang Zhang, relating to the theme of 'Xiao' (filial piety), the film sets up a conversation among several travellers who are strangers on a train. The train provides a locale for the story to happen and a psychological space in the sense of a cultural text. Compared with the re-enactments which represented the practical meaning of *Li* in the lives of ancient Chinese people, taking the ritual event of ancestor-worshipping as an example, a train here acts a symbol of modernity, illustrating *Li* in contemporary Chinese society, and how it works for modern Chinese people. *Confucius* films the scene in the limited

[84] *The Classic Filial Piety* is the book that interprets the concept of filial piety in Confucianism, containing basic suggestions on proper behaviours with regards to show respect to the elder.
[85] The translation is made by the writer from Mandarin Chinese to English. The original words appeared on the screen in Chinese are '我想我妈妈。一个人在家其实就是不孝。我最大的心愿是把这个古老的房子解决了，让我妈妈住上洋房，享受现代式的清福'.

space of one of the carriages of the train which effectively portrays the lives of ordinary Chinese people and their faith in *Li*, exploring the essence of cultural power in relation to Confucianism in a modern lifestyle. One scene conveys how Xiao – one of the moral norms of *Li* – works in the minds of the Chinese people who accept the ideas of Confucianism, and how they are driven by this form of Confucian expectation to behave in accordance with the social contract of *Li*. I begin with an analysis of a scene in which a conversation takes place on the carriage involving the main character, Yanyang Zhang, his wife and daughter and a stranger who's travelling with them about nostalgia and filial piety.

(Fig.13 Angle 1. The corridor of the train)

(Fig.14 Angle 2. Yanyang Zhang is reading aloud sentences from *The Classic of Filial Piety* on the train)

(Fig.15 Angle 3. Yanyang Zhang's family and other travellers on the train)

(Fig.16 Angle 4. The traveller who is seated at the opposite side talks with Yanyang Zhang)

As can be seen in the four shots taken from the film (Fig.13-16), *Confucius* visualises the modern form of *Li* Practices in the scene of an ordinary Chinese man taking the train and his conversation with fellow passengers. The camera presents the detail of the inner environment of this carriage through different perspectives. The first shot records a scene in the corridor (Fig.13). Viewers can see a member of the crew who is pushing forward a small trolley filled up with food, several travellers who are seated leaning against the wall, and on the left part of the frame, beds equipped on the train. In the second shot (Fig.14) we see Yanyang Zhang, a construction worker, who is reading *The Classic of Filial Piety* leaning on the window. The third shot (Fig.15) gives a parallel comparison of Yanyang Zhang's family and other travellers through a larger frame, and the fourth (Fig.16) shows another traveller[86], who is seated on the other side, talking with Yanyang Zhang. These shots from different angles show the conversational situation in the carriage from right to left. The triple layers of couchettes, the simple table, the salesman, passengers who are on the same carriage and sharing a space by accident, while the camera moves capturing the scenes, all these items suggest a transitory gathering of strangers from almost the same economic stratum. The movement of the camera here delineates a space on the train, within which the travellers are people from a lower socioeconomic class. Viewers can see that the beds on the train are equipped on every two sides, and three levels of bed are fixed at each side, so that travellers who take this train have almost no privacy when sleeping. This indicates that most travellers taking this train belong to the

[86] A strange traveller whose name is not informed on the screen.

group of blue-collar workers in their social status. *Confucius* sets the conversation on filial piety in this social group, and such a space, to suggest that the thoughts of *Li* from Confucius's reach Chinese people well. Even people from the lower rungs of society, such as Yanyang Zhang who works as a physical labourer, have faith in *Li* and gracefully behave to submit himself to the Confucian ideology. Moreover, the documentary uses the shift of camera framing among different objects – from the right corridor to the sleeping berth, and from the single seat to the left corridor – to visibly enlarge the inner space of the carriage, absorbing enough light in the scene to present a clean and bright environment inside the carriage. This works to provide viewers with a sense of comfort and suggest visually and psychologically that Confucian ideology makes people transcend their narrowly stagnant life in reality, and expand their inner space in spirit.

In summation, what I have sought to illustrate through my analysis is how *Confucius* utilises a legendary person of Confucius, and his representative thought, to visually express how a sage can influence a country by his political philosophy from past to present. Moreover, I illustrate through the cinematic representation of *Confucius*, how this dominant ideology of Confucian values, which is still active in China's traditional culture and contemporary mainstream culture, impacts on people's behaviours, and participates in the construction of reality in Chinese society. The co-production of *Confucius* was between Chinese producers, including China Central Television, China International Television Corp., Dazhong News Group, and the British producer Lion TV. Consequently, the keynote of *Confucius* in relation to ideological discourse is set to be cultural symbols which gather splendid elements of Chinese traditional culture, while the cinematic techniques are decided by both sides in the process of filmmaking.[87] As such, the film constructs a vision of Powerful China in the present, one which is significantly informed by the past.

Are Our Kids Tough Enough? **Chinese School: Performative mode, Hollywood Storytelling and Collective Consciousness**

Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School (abbreviation below, *Chinese School*) is a BBC produced documentary with Chinese assistance.[88] It contains three episodes that narrates

[87] Yan Dong, the Chief Director of Confucius: Understanding China Through Confucius. Website: http://news.iqilu.com/kongzi/20151231/2650745.shtml Accessed in 12-03-2022. In this interview with Yan Dong, he states the argument that the filmmaking of *Confucius* helps cultural exchange between China and the world; meanwhile, he narrates the filmmaking experience of *Confucius* where his Chinese team worked with a British team.

[88] 'Be Serious Please, No laughing' The Story Behind the BBC Documentary. https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/_-2MHNMsqEhxVdLq4XT95A Accessed on 15-03-2022. This piece of in-depth reporting on the making of Chinese School informs us that BBC gained support from two public schools in China, Nanjing Foreign Language School (南京外国语学

the story of five Chinese teachers teaching a group of British students from Bohunt School, England, showing a pattern of school life with centralist characteristics which are copied from Communist China. The film is comprised of three untitled episodes. Episode 1 depicts the confrontation between Chinese teachers and British students in teaching practice. Episode 2 shows how those Chinese teachers take diverse actions to control the class order and make it run in a Chinese manner, including organising a dumping-making event, getting aid from Bohunt's staff and the cooperation of British parents. Episode 3 shows the result of final exams and the students and teachers saying their farewells. Across the three episodes, it presents China as a subject with features of 'popular authoritarianism' (Brady, 2009) an ever–present aspect of Chinese education. The documentary reveals how socialistic centralism creates an authority-centred model for classes, and how these ideas including authority, order, discipline, conformity and obedience, work under a centralising doctrine in Chinese education. As I outline in my analysis below, *Chinese School* employs the performative documentary mode to present the Western viewer with the harshness of the Chinese educational system. As Bill Nichols argues, 'the performative documentary gives added emphasis to the subjective qualities of experience and memory', emotional involvement, questions of value and belief, commitment and principle leading representation regarding real life, which is usually conducted through the understanding from the filmmaker (Nichols 2017).[89] Since the essence of performative documentary is its stress on the complexity of the filmmaker's knowledge of the world, it naturally becomes an approach with which to question the values and test the effects of Chinese teaching methods in *Chinese School*. BBC filmmakers have stated that the purpose of producing *Chinese School* was to examine the difference between British and Chinese education, as China has gained a double champion in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) which the UK also participated in.[90] Before the start of the making of Chinese School, the BBC team visited Nanjing Foreign Language School, where Aiyun Li actually taught in China, and were surprised that these Chinese classes apply a situational teaching method which involves interactions between the teacher and student. This is contradictory with the imagined scene of Chinese education, featuring cramming teaching in the minds of the filmmakers. However, in order to highlight the differences between Chinese

校) and Hangzhou Foreign Languages School (Original Chinese title: 杭州外国语学校). The former provided permission for Aiyun Li, who has the honour-title of teaching and employee of the school, to participate in the making of *Chinese School*. The latter school provided Hailian Zou the opportunity to participate in the documentary, taking the role of maths teacher in Bohunt School in *Chinese School*.

[89] Nichols, Bill. (2017) *Introduction to Documentary*. Third ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

[90] BBC Documentary *Chinese School*: A Comparison Which Is Inapplicable. http://zqb.cyol.com/html/2015-09/01/nw.D110000zgqnb_20150901_1-05.htm Accessed on 25-04-2022.

teaching and the British method of teaching, the filmmakers advised the Chinese teachers filmed in *Chinese School* to perform the traditional face of Chinese education.[91] With the presupposition of the Chinese way of teaching, which is built on a combination of conformity and high pressure, the BBC filmmakers raised the plan of *Chinese School* and conducted their process of filmmaking, which coincided with their thoughts on traditional Chinese education. *Chinese School* then employs Hollywood-style storytelling to depict an involving story through the conflicts of dramatic structure. It uses different sorts of expressive montage shots to establish a powerful image of China in terms of socialistic norms; for instance, *Chinese School* inserts footage in which students are requested to gather on the playground for compulsory exercise between their courses, and convinces the audience that this is the ideology of political collectivism working in the campus. On the other hand, *Chinese School* uses a mechanism whereby it shapes the cultural power of China on the base of collective consciousness, satisfying the Western imagination with the socialist aspects of Chinese society, but it breaks with this powerful influence, and suggests the invalidation of some Chinese teaching principles by means of the use of contrasting montage in later stages when the teaching is transferred to Britain. Ultimately, these two methods of representation of Chinese teaching on screen would indicate that it is incompatible with dominant British ideologies. For example, in the structure of dramatic conflicts, *Chinese School* sets up plots revolving around conflict in teaching, and shows the Chinese teachers losing their initiative when they encounter British students with rebellious spirits. With this arrangement in storytelling, *Chinese School* suggests that although the power of collective consciousness runs the Chinese campus, this type of ideology might not suit the British environment.

The attribute of centralism from communist China is visualised in *Chinese School* by the inclusion of scenes of a Chinese campus, for example, the students performing a flag-raising ceremony once a week, showing their cultivation in a collective sense, through national identification in an authority-centred community, as well as their corresponding values and behaviours. These values include respect for the national flag, conformity before authority and the spirit of sacrifice. For instance, in episode 1, *Chinese School* uses a metaphorical montage to present the sense that the collective consciousness penetrates school life by means of showing the compulsory morning exercise on a Chinese campus. In quick succession we see images of students dressed in school uniforms standing row by row on the playground, marking time on the spot, waving their hands uniformly, to connote a sense of collectivism. In the

[91] Chinese Teachers in the BBC Documentary: Quality Education Was Cut, Leaving only the Footage of Conflicts. https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1375611 Accessed on 25-04-2022.

segment of raising the national flag in episode 2, the documentary uses repeating montage and metaphorical montage together to prove that the weekly event of flag-raising in Chinese campus as one of the effective approaches employed by socialistic China to establish national identification in Chinese students' minds. In this instance, images of students dressed in black holding the national flag with a goose-stepping pace, and one of the soldier-like students unfolding the flag in the air, effectively convey the politics of rituals. This scene, which signifies the political recognition trained in normal practices of a Chinese campus, implies the differences to the British school.

In episode 2, Chinese teacher, Hailian Zou, delivers a maths class to students sitting under the teaching desk who are losing concentration as he is repeating maths formulas. The film utilises cross-cutting to present lessons from Hailian Zou, Bohunt's head of maths Pete Whitworth and Bohunt students, showing a chaotic maths lesson where students are not listening, Hailian Zou is losing the class's attention, and Pete Whitworth is shocked by Zou's teaching. At the end of this scene, the film mixes shots of Bohunt students' lively behaviour after class and their bored facial expressions during Zou's teaching, alternately appearing on the screen to convey the impression that the Chinese education system is rigid and boring. In episode 3, the documentary uses a set of parallel montage shots in which Bohunt students are taking academic exams and a Chinese PE test, experiencing the ruthless competition in Chinese teaching. On the other hand, *Chinese School* utilises some contrast montage shots (e.g., raising the flag on the Chinese and England campus, Maths teacher Mr Hailian Zou's teaching feedback in the Chinese classroom and Bohunt classroom, Bohunt student Josh's kettle and Mr Zou's Chinese discipline, Science teacher Miss Jun Yang's early confident attitudes on Chinese and British teaching, and her introspection about education methods at the end of day of the teaching experiment) to dissolve the power of collectivism which was shaped early by *Chinese School* through the montages. With several types of montage, *Chinese School* conveys fragments of campus life in fundamental education in China, presenting a socialistic view of Chinese education which conforms to the dominant view of China in the Western imagination. Later, in episode 1 and 3, *Chinese School* employs Hollywood-style filmmaking techniques, including a reliance on close-ups, and many reaction shots to reduce the influence of collective consciousness, which originated from socialistic norms performed in a Western environment.[92] I will examine an instance of the sequence of national flag-raising to analyse how *Chinese School* uses metaphorical montage and repeating montage to construct a representation of

[92] David Bordwell. (2006) *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

China on screen in relation to the concept of centralism, from the point of school life, and how it later uses contrast montage to deconstruct cultural power from national recognition upon the collective consciousness, and make it look weak in a British context.

(Fig.17 Chinese students are gathering for collective morning exercise)

(Fig.18 The students in a Chinese campus are doing morning exercise in the procession)

Chinese School employs a series of montage shots (Fig.17-24) which contains symbols, for instance, the national flag, regarding the political ideology of socialism. Through the utilisation of repeated appearances of the scenes where Chinese students experience campus life in the collective manner, the metaphor of imagining collectivism is impressed upon the

audience. The documentary uses scenes of group exercise, a method for the purpose of improving the physical ability of Chinese students which has been implemented for years in junior and high schools in China, as the visual metaphor of collectivism. As the sense of collectivism is an abstract political concept whereby an individual belongs to the group, the society and the state, or put simply, where individual interests should serve the whole (Gao & Bischoping, 2019), the camera takes two steps to visualise this. *Chinese School* uses two shots (Fig.17 and Fig.18) to show students who are exercising on the playground in queues, leading the audience in their understanding of collectivism from the huge number of participants and the collective manner of participating in an event. To present the concept of collectivism on the base of ideological domination, *Chinese School* employs talking head interviews with Science teacher Jun Yang and Maths teacher Hailian Zou to propose a socialistic norm that fits oneself into the group from their childhood. For instance, Jun Yang says: "all the people doing the same thing at the same time, it always reminds us we belong to each other. We are a member of this team." Hailian Zou develops this argument when he says: "Morning exercise is a way to train the collective sense. We do something together and we need to do something together properly." *Chinese School* uses their words to match the scenes in which students exercise together on the playground, in this instance morning exercise, as one of the simple activities on campus associated with these interpretations of socialistic ideology. This illustrates how these actions strengthen participants' link emotionally to the group, the society and the state. In this way, the documentary suggests that this is the way that socialist China inserts political ideology into normal school activities.

(Fig.19 Chinese students dressed in school uniforms doing flag-raising)

(Fig.20 Honour guard soldiers walk through Tiananmen square.[93])

To enhance the impression of ideological collectivism on the Chinese campus, *Chinese School* continually employs the repeated appearance of shots which have similar content to the theme of authority. In the sequence of flag-raising on campus, *Chinese School* frames the procession of students in the manner of the Chinese army to achieve the effect of metaphorical montage, suggesting how China is inserting political dialogue – national identification – into their schooling. The camera frames the procession of students with a fixed camera. In the shot, students who wear school uniforms and have a firm look on their faces are doing a goose-step (Fig.19) which exactly coincides with the image of the Chinese army that has been shaped on news coverage (Fig.20). *Chinese School* employs previous ways of framing Chinese students wearing unified black uniforms to produce a similar cultural-political implication of the Communistic characteristics of China, namely, that community members are dressed in accordance with certain principles and hold similar facial expressions, keeping the same pace both in steps and in mind. This scene of a student procession marching forward like the army indicates an ideological training by China through the power of centralism. The set of static shots (Fig.19) delicately presents the symbol of collectivism in clothing, the upraised national

[93] 2019 The military parade for the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. The picture is from Xinhua News.com. http://www.xinhuanet.com/2019-10/20/c_1125128803.htm Accessed on 22-04-2022.

flag waving in the air and the sound of steps accompanied by the uplifting background music, setting students in an atmosphere where they are like troops in review before their general. As a result, it creates a metaphor that to some degree Chinese students are trained as soldiers under the influence of the power of centralism. *Chinese School* employs interviews with Jun Yang and Hailian Zou to illustrate how the construction of China's national identification is completed. Yang says: "We teach them how to be sensible, responsible citizens of the country because we serve our country… We are raising the flag because it reminds you, you are a citizen of China and you have the responsibility to serve this country where you've grown up and to make this country better, richer, so every day raising flags, singing the national anthem, that gives you that sense of responsibility." Zou develops this point further when he says: "For flag-raising first is a way to show the respect to the country, a sense of belonging." The two quotes from the Chinese teachers are used as footnotes to the previous shots of Chinese students raising the flag to suggest that flag-raising is a daily part of Chinese campus life which motivates students to have a sense of belonging, responsibility and service to the state. *Chinese School* uses such metaphorical montage to present the power of centralism dominating the sphere of thought in school life, and insert China's national identification effectively into students into the course of their very ordinary days. This suggests the tension and pressure brought by political collectivism in the atmosphere of Chinese education, which totally differs from the British education system, which emphasises individualism and freedom in public schools, such as Bohunt School in *Chinese School*. This is precisely the reflection that the filmmakers intend to present on screen of traditional Chinese education.

On the cinematic construction in relation to the ideological training of conformity in the Chinese classroom, *Chinese School* takes the requirements of conformity in the practice of Chinese teaching as a derivation of centralism that works in China's political system. It shapes teachers, parents and the Chinese school as subjects of authority in the circle of Chinese education, where, in this net of powerful relations, students are under their management and supposed to follow their guidance. *Chinese School* employs voice-over and close-shots to complete the depiction of 'high pressure' in Chinese education. I demonstrate how each of these aspects operate in the section which follows different cinematic techniques and editing.

(Fig.21 Chinese students and parents are at the gate of their school)

(Fig.22 Chinese students go to school under the escort of parents)

In the voice-over, *Chinese School* suggests that Chinese students are fully controlled by their parents and the school. Through a succession of scenes in which students are surrounded by their parents and are stuck in the classroom, *Chinese School* expresses the predicament that Chinese students experience in Chinese education. In one sequence (Fig.21and Fig.22) Chinese parents take an authoritative role and perform surveillance when students are out of campus. The camera frames students and parents together, suggesting that students are continuously under the watch of Chinese parents (the authority). Students are only shown with a part of their

body – for instance, the back, the upper body and the side of their face – in the shots. The documentary, through the composition of the frames, implies that students who live under a conformity-centred culture are lacking. Indeed, these shots suggest that caring for individuals is absent in a community which is dominated by strict centralism.

(Fig.23 Chinese students are doing extra homework)

(Fig.24 Chinese students get their heads down and write)

Chinese School employs a set of close-shots which set the scene to show in an average Chinese classroom what Chinese students will be like. The close-shots (Fig.23 and Fig.24) gain increasingly closer psychological proximity with the visual effect which invites the audience

to feel the reality of the pressure on the shoulders of the students. In shots (Fig.23 and Fig.24), the documentary provides an angle of monitoring students from a window into the inner space of the classroom, by which it suggests that 'watching' happens in this way on campus, covered by the ideology of centralism. In the centre of the scene, students are framed between the window and the wall, which makes these students look like they are trapped in some uncertain structure. As such, the cinematography effectively conveys the idea that individuals are under high pressure due to the conformity-centred environment: they are blocked into the structure of ideological power which trains them to behave in accordance with the principles of collectivism and centralism, as well as compliance. After depicting Chinese campus life as a gathering of rigorous socialistic criteria, *Chinese School* presents different scenes in which these principles are not working in Bohunt. On the Bohunt campus, *Chinese School* uses the scene in which Aiyun Li delivers a social education course to her British students to present how the Chinese teacher normally uses socialistic norms in education to train obedient students.

(Fig.25 Aiyun Li is delivering a course in Bohunt School)

(Fig.26 Reaction Shot 1. The different reactions from Bohunt students)

(Fig.27 Reaction shot 2. Angelina, the Bohunt student is expressing disagreement)

(Fig.28 Reaction shot 3. The other students applaud Angelina for challenging authority)

Chinese School employs reaction shots (Fig.25 to Fig.28) to present completely different student performance between a Chinese class and British class. When Aiyun Li delivers an argument in terms of Confucian thought, the Bohunt students do not perform obedience and acceptance. Instead, their different voices react to Aiyun Li, which interrupts her manner of teaching. The three reaction shots (Fig.26, 27, 28) show that Bohunt students break strict doctrines that work in Chinese teaching methods, and express their own arguments when facing authority. For example, as seen in fig 21, after the words, 'parents are always right', coming from Aiyun Li, a full shot is employed to film the situation of the class. These students are seen with different emotional reactions when the figure of Aiyun Li is filmed from behind, in which the method of framing implies the audience that what matters here is the answers from the students. Next, a set of close-up shots on individual students are utilised to present in detail how two or three students from the group rebel against the authority of the teachers, and how Angelina, as a representative from the group, defends their position in a public way. In fig.26, two students are filmed with suspicion on their faces and are ready to give an opinion about the speech from Aiyun Li. Immediately, in fig.27, a close-up shot to Angelina while she states her disagreement with Aiyun Li, which constructs how the battle around 'whether parents are always right' goes in the class. The final shot of the sequence, in which other students are clapping and applauding as a positive response to Angelina, whereas Aiyun Li folds arms with a reluctant facial expression (fig.28), suggests the triumph of Bohunt students over their training by a Chinese teacher inured to compliance to authority. The utilisation of reaction shots

on behalf of the filmmaker here questions the Chinese way of teaching, concentrating on students' behaviour, which encourages the audience to reflect on both educational styles.

I have examined the way in which *Chinese School* uses expressive montage to demonstrate the soft power of China, which originates from centralism and is embodied in some socialistic norms. Now I shall develop the analysis on how *Chinese School* deconstructs this type of power in an English environment. It employs contrast montage shots to dissolve the effect of the ideological power of the Chinese method of teaching on Bohunt campus. Some examples can be found in scenes involving flag-raising on the Chinese and English campus, positive and negative feedback on the class of Maths Teacher Hailian Zou, the contrast between the English PE class and Chinese PE class, the casual attitude of Bohunt students compared to the rigorous discipline operating in Chinese modes of education, Science teacher Jun Yang's different comments on both ways of teaching, etc. To make a comparison with the previous discussion of the reinforcement of national identity through flag-raising on the Chinese campus, I will take the example of the flag-raising ceremony, a common but indispensable event in almost every school in China, to analyse how *Chinese School* uses contrast montage shots to deconstruct its significance on Bohunt Campus.

(Fig.29 Flag-bearers walking in a relaxed atmosphere)

(Fig.30 Bohunt Students waiting for flag-raising with bored faces and frozen shoulders.)

(Fig.31 The flag-raising is preceded by an irreverent atmosphere among the Bohunt students.)

Compared with the previous scene of the flag-raising ceremony that had been presented through metaphorical montage shots to suggest the building of collective consciousness on the Chinese campus, *Chinese School* presents a scene where Bohunt students are guided by the Chinese teacher to raise the union flag to feel some national emotion, such as patriotism. However, here *Chinese School* employs close-shots, particularly reaction shots, to show the audience that in the British situation, the ideology of collective consciousness does not work well, a process which is demonstrated through contrast montage.

It frames a series of scenes in which a number of Chinese students are sitting in procession, watching the flag-raising with a facial expression signifying honour, which suggests students are encouraged to regard flag-raising as a ritual to demonstrate the individual's respect for the state. The film compares these scenes with British students sitting casually, demonstrating a relaxed attitude to attending the ceremony, by which it creates a contrast to the previous scenes amongst Chinese students. On the soundtrack, the film makes a contrast between Jun Yang's words "serve this country", which is edited with Chinese students raising their national flag, and the interview with Bohunt student Phoebe who says, "I don't see the point in raising our flag", which contrasts advocacy versus a questioning attitude. Specifically, diverging from the solemn atmosphere on the Chinese campus, the documentary uses these reaction shots (Fig.29, Fig.30, Fig.31) to present Bohunt students performing flag-raising in an irreverent atmosphere, which suggests the futility of training British students with principles from Chinese ideologies. In the segment which contains reaction shots, from the aspect of sound design, *Chinese School* amplifies the diegetic music of *God Save the Queen* to remove the sounds of whispers from students, but showing their laughing faces to contrast with the national anthem. Their joyous facial expressions eliminate the seriousness of political ritual.

As I have demonstrated, *Chinese School* constructs a representation of Powerful China in terms of the national perception of collective consciousness through its narration of the story of Chinese teachers teaching in the UK. Within the mode of performative documentary, *Chinese School* observes the educational experiment that takes place in Bohunt School with conflicts of dramatic structure which are produced by the editing through montage. This creates narrative disunity in storytelling, which raises a psychological challenge to the audience.[94] As such, *Chinese School* invites the audience to question these two types of education.

Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on the Earth: Participatory mode and the Dialogue of Da Tuan Yuan

Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on the Earth (abbreviation below Chinese *New Year*) presents how the residents of the cities and villages of Kunming, Harbin, Beijing and Hong Kong, in China, make preparations for celebrating the Spring Festival, otherwise known as the Chinese New Year. In analysing this festive presentation, the programme employs the mode of participatory documentary, capturing the five hosts travelling through different places in China, and their experiences of celebrating the Chinese New Year with local people,

[94] Todd Berliner. (2017). *Hollywood Aesthetic: Pleasure in American Cinema*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

conveying the idea that these different areas, different social levels or groups, whether in capital cities or remote villages, are bound together by China's traditions and customs, in the concept of 'Da Tuan Yuan' (the great reunion) derived from Confucian values.[95] *Chinese New Year* extracts the form of cultural consensus of Da Tuan Yuan from festive stories regarding celebrations and events in the Spring Festival. It suggests, first from the aspect of family life, that Da Tuan Yuan entails that all family members from all districts in China are supposed to attend a gathering at a particular moment. On the occasion of the Spring Festival, the Da Tuan Yuan engages all people (individuals and family throughout society) to meet in the conviviality of a festive environment, which helps obscure the gap between rich and poor, complaints about the difficulties of making a living or other social problems, such as corruption, to create a carnivalesque atmosphere of joyous gathering across the entirety of Chinese society. As I indicate in my analysis below, the documentary creates a festive dialogue around Da Tuan Yun through the strategy of multiple narratives and across different locales. In this story of average Chinese people having a reunion with their families, the film records two characters, Tongyu Li, who is located in Surrey, UK and Yongjian Liang, a rural migrant worker whose hometown is based in the rural area of the province of Henan, China. It also records their hosts, Ant, attending an ice-snow festival in Harbin, Simon and Dave joining their local friend Su for a private hotpot in Beijing, Kate attending a flower auction in Kunming, Sijing watching a traditional performance of 'Tree Flowers' – part of the heritage of Shanxi - while Ant and Kate participate in a festive carnival in Hong Kong, and so on. This cross-cutting and parallel editing of footage involving five hosts participating in diverse journeys and events in different places in China enhances the interests of storytelling, presenting more entertainment elements in festive activities. With the utilisation of hosts who directly appear on screen and sometimes speak to the camera giving 'man in the situation' style, *Chinese New Year* provides the audience with a strong sense of participation. As one of the hosts experiences a certain activity, the audience can feel the satisfaction of watching them raise their torch or boarding a decorated float in the parade. On the other hand, every change in host onscreen is accompanied by a change of location, due to the fact that these hosts are participating in festive events in different places and time zones. These changes of space and location bring scenes of excited people and attractive events happening in different places on different dates and times all over China, giving viewers a sense of the intense joy felt in relation to the Spring Festival and Da Tuan Yuan on screen. Through the happiness and unity in affection that have been conveyed in the

[95] 'Da Tuan Yuan' is literally great reunion. Abstractly, a state of the happy ending, pursuing a sense of satisfaction and joy.

multiple narrative lines and alternative loci of space and time, *Chinese New Year* suggests that an irresistible spiritual power arises from these folk customs, which drive Chinese people to reinforce their faith in the Spring Festival, and to take actions correspondingly to obey the principle of reunion. This works wherever they are and whoever they are, as the Chinese people tend to accept the cultural perception of the Spring Festival, developing their own festive stories in terms of returning home to familial love. The documentary narrates different stories of characters and presents the trips of the five hosts, examining many folk customs which operate during the Spring Festival, and the way these folk customs bond people together to form a social environment. The analysis of this section helps place the discussion of powerful China in relation to social mentality, illustrating how cultural texts operate from the point of folk customs.

Chinese New Year consists of three hour-long episodes. Episode 1, *Migration*, utilises five storylines, Tongyu Li family's journey, Yongjian Liang's journey, the Harbin Ice-Snow Festival, an art performance of creating canopy flowers with melted iron, and seeing a snub-nosed monkey, to depict scenes of ordinary Chinese people's journeys home, and warm-up events before the Spring Festival.[96] I shall analyse two storylines in *Chinese New Year* on the journeys of Tongyu Li and Yongjian Liang, one a successful expat flying back to Beijing, the other a migrant worker travelling back to their village on a motorbike, both of whom are observing reunion in accordance with Confucian expectations. In episode 2, *Reunion*, there are six stories involving several hosts and the characters they encounter; Dave and Simon enjoying the Beijing-style hotpot at Su's place, Ant drinking Chinese liquor in a local tavern, Kate trying the auction business of the flower industry, Ant and Kate experiencing the rehearsal of a Spring Festival Gala and burning incense in Hong Kong Wong Tai Sin Temple, etc., to show the audience that the theme of reunion has been achieved psychologically in these activities which Chinese people perform with their family and friends. I shall take the two examples of the hosts Simon and Dave participating in Yan Zhang's traditional family dinner, and their attendance at Su's private hotpot dinner to analyse how *Chinese New Year* employs style, specifically, the method of framing objects, to create a psychologically shared space for participants, and involve others into this shared space of emotion. In episode 3, *Celebration*, which is also

[96] The 'Li' (李 in Chinese characters) of Tongyu Li is the surname of the Character in *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on the Earth* (Giulia Clark et al., 2016, UK/China), which is different from the word '*Li*' (礼 in Chinese characters) in terms of the philosophy of *Li*, a concept of Confucianism discussed previously; Tongyu Li is a character in *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth*. In her story, the film records her journey from Surrey, England to Beijing, China, as a representative of the group of transnational marriage in China, showing China's folk customs – Spring Festival traditions – calling Chinese overseas to achieve their family reunion with regard to spiritual solidarity.

introduced by these hosts, a series of representative local activities is displayed for the audience. It briefly tells six stories, Kate trying Chinese longevity noodles, Ant participating in traditional fishing in Chagan Lake, Kate watching a rehearsal of the lion and dragon dance, Dave and Simon walking around at Beijing Temple Fair, Kate and Ant experiencing the Hong Kong night parade and seeing the fireworks in Liuyang and Victoria Harbour, presenting the interest of these festive events on screen. My analysis will focus on the Hong Kong night parade to analyse how the documentary creates an exciting festival situation with the utilisation of multi-camera shots.

Spring Migration, *Chinese New Year* narrates the stories of Li and Liang's families to suggest the importance of returning home for their reunion in the Spring Festival amongst most Chinese families. The first story of homecoming happens at Tongyu Li's house in Surrey. She is packing her suitcase and getting ready to take her British family back to China, for a gathering with her relatives in Beijing. Another story follows Yongjian Liang, a migrant worker, who returns to their village and family by motorcycle to arrive home before New Year's Eve, to devote a section to the positive aspects of Da Tuan Yuan.[97] In many narratives in the media, when referring to migrant workers, the news agenda is usually associated with social issues, whereby migrant workers are considered as subjects that need to be helped to improve their economic situation.[98] Sometimes the group of migrant workers, such as Yongjian Liang, are even described as being destabilising elements, and more often appear in independent documentary films which take interest in marginal societal topics (Sun, 2013). These people are seldom placed in grand narratives which focus on questions of national ideology. However, *Chinese New Year* engages them in the Da Tuan Yuan dialogue, which is part of the cultural soul of the nation. The documentary observes how migrant workers like Liang act as harmonious elements in a festive occasion, and use them to serve the ideology of solidarity in the dialogue of Da Tuan Yuan. In the narration around family reunion, besides presentation of their preparations before taking the journey and talking-head interviews on the topic of

[97] The migrant worker is a social phenomenon that has arisen in a rapidly urbanised China. Through the transformation of China from an agriculture-centred country to an industrial country, an increasing need for labour to construct growing large cities has called many peasants to leave their rural land and work in cities. However, according to the current household registration system, they are still identified as peasants, not city workers, so they are called by this term - migrant worker or peasant worker - in China's sociology studies. They usually belong to the bottom part of China's social class, when regarded from the perspective of economic strength. See more here: Shaohua Zhan. (2011). What Determines Migrant Workers' Life Chances in Contemporary China? Hukou, Social Exclusion, and the Market. Modern China, 37 (3): 243-285. Thomas Peng. (2011) The Impact of Citizenship on Labour Process: State, Capital and Labour Control in South China. Work, Employment and Society, 25 (4): 726-741.

[98] Migrant Workers Recognise their Living Conditions but the Remained Problems to Be Settled. http://tjj.cq.gov.cn/zwgk_233/fdzdgknr/tjxx/sjjd_55469/202002/t20200219_5273757_wap.html Accessed on 23-04-2022. This is an analytical article released on the website of Bureau of Statistics of Chongqing, which states the main problems of rural migrant works, including their low-income, the insufficiency of working skills, the poor condition of residence.

nostalgia, *Chinese New Year* places emphasis on the techniques of framing, delivering a sense of reunion which is extracted from Confucian ideology. This is evident in the scenes of Tongyu Li's family sitting around a table watching their children drawing, and in the scenes of Yongjian Liang's family seated at a table for a simple but warm family dinner. *Chinese New Year* frames these characters in the shape of a circle. The 'circle' in Chinese is written as '圆' which refers to the state of being round literally, and reunion on a psychological level. In this context, the peculiar composition of items in the scenes stimulates the sense of producing unity of family. Concretely, these scenes provide two levels of meaning. One refers to the round shape formed by the way the subjects are standing or seated on the screen. Roundness itself has been used as a metaphor of perfection, reunion, a quality without flaw or regret which emerges from the primitive worship performed by ancient Chinese to the round moon.[99] The other meaning refers to a satisfactory attendance at a family gathering in front of the camera. For example, in Li's house in England, family members appear around the table, providing a sense of familial love. In Liang's version, *Chinese New Year* situates him in the environment where he is receiving the warmest welcome from his family at the door of their mud house. I analyse two of these scenes to demonstrate how *Chinese New Year* utilises the way of framing subjects within the shape of roundness in capturing and conveying the concept of family reunion to present a pattern of an ideal family relationship, regardless of economic difference.

[99] Peijuan Wang. (2015). Seeing the Chinese Traditional Aesthetic Psychology from the Ancient People's Worship on Roundness. Shandong Social Sciences, (05): 62-65. 王培娟.(2015).从古人圆形崇拜看中国传统审美文化心理.山东社会科学, (05): 62-65.

(Fig.32 Tongyu Li's children are drawing a portrait of both British and Chinese relatives)

When Tongyu Li and her husband assemble at the table to watch their son drawing and to listen to their daughter imagining each member of this transnational family (Fig.32), the camera frames the four characters – mother, father, daughter and son – at a corner, which connotes a sense of warm family atmosphere that flows among family members. They are seated around a table, shaping a circle in the picture. All the family members face a wooden board which is used for drawing. This way of framing the family occasion not only presents a metaphor of a close family relationship, but also a reference that family members need to always get together to complete something, for example, drawing a portrait of the whole family. This sequence employs asynchronous editing which combines images of Tongyu Li's son and daughter drawing and her sound, connoting the close family relationship in her home. As seen in images of the daughter pointing at drawings and the son colouring figures on the paper, Tongyu Li's comments that 'In a traditional Chinese family, having a family portrait is very important' are matched on screen. This asynchronous editing here presents diverse components of the family members participating in the action of drawing family portraits, which provides cultural legitimation in relation to their journey from the UK to China for the family reunion at the Spring Festival.

There is a similar framing in capturing Liang's family dinner, which happens in a room which is not well-decorated with furnishings, but with warmth and kindness (Fig.33). The same round-circle structure is used to present a scene of family reunion at Liang's place. A slight difference is that Simon and Dave join in this reunion as special guests. Although they are not Liang's relatives by blood, Simon and Dave are also framed as important members in this picture, being seated near the eldest. The two hosts sit with other characters around the table, creating a semi-circle for the camera and the viewers. This composition visually presents a sense of family reunion with all members getting around a table, while the vacant seat left for the camera gives the illusion for the audience that they are also participating in this reunion and feeling the Da Tuan Yuan atmosphere in an ordinary Chinese peasant's house.

(Fig.33 Simon and Dave are enjoying a New Year' Eve's dinner with Liang's family)

For the story of *Reunion*, *Chinese New Year* utilises different types of depth of field in framing food, and people who are enjoying the food, and through changes of cinematic techniques, the film creates an emotional space shared by characters, inviting the audience to engage in the process of cooking food, talk and dining etiquette. Through the changes in depth of field in the framing, the alteration of the centre of the frame has been naturally completed, *Chinese New Year* suggesting the emphasis of different points during relative segments. As I demonstrate below, at the start of the sequence, the camera displays a shallow depth of field, showing details of the food, to invite the viewer to come into the warm situation. Then it displays a wider depth of field to film the scene of the whole room, drawing the audience's attention to the comfortable dining environment and pleasant atmosphere amongst the diners. The former involves viewers with the emotional presentation of objects in detail, while the latter leaves viewers with a sense of pleasure in the festive moment.

(Fig.34 Shallow Depth of Field 1, Food)

At the beginning of Dave and Simon's traditional hotpot dinner with Su, *Chinese New Year* employs a shallow depth of field (Fig.34) to capture the food in detail, crown daisy, highlighting the theme of eating in the segment. As the centre of the frame is placed at the bottom left part, leaving the three diners out of focus, the camera directly forces viewers to concentrate on the food.

(Fig.35 Wide Depth of Field, Dave 1, Simon and Su have traditional hotpot)

A wide depth of field (Fig.35) is utilised to guide the audience to view the characters and their environment. A wider image is beneficial here for displaying the relationship between the

subjects, food and their environment, and naturally the attention is altered to the manner in which the subjects enjoy traditional hotpot, Beijing style. The characters, food, copper pot, tableware and decorations on the wall together form a triangle. In addition, the gentle lighting gives the scene a sense of warmth in a domestic setting.

(Fig.36 Shallow depth of field 2, Food)

Following the previous wide depth of field, *Chinese New Year* immediately uses a shallow depth of field when getting close to the food from the hotpot. The use of shallow depth of field in the scene where Dave and Simon are picking up beef slices from the boiling hotpot (Fig.36) is employed to place the focus on food. With the exchange of wide and shallow depth of field, *Chinese New Year* invites viewers into a sense of joining in this dining ritual, which enhances the sense of entering a shared dining space in Su's place and the mutual satisfaction gained through the event.

(Fig.37 Wide depth of field 2, Simon and Dave talk about the joy of family dinner)

Finally, *Chinese New Year* employs another close shot with a wide depth of field in the framing, in which Simon and Dave face the camera while talking (Fig.37), to end the sequence of their Beijing Hotpot trip with Su. The two subjects are captured in the main part of the frame, and the food partly concealed, which alters the focus from the food to the two hosts, since they are having a short conversation about why this type of traditional hotpot is eaten by thousands of Chinese families before New Year's Eve. With several close-up shots of images of the boiling hotpot being edited in, we can see the slices of cabbage and mushrooms boiling inside the hotpot and the fire burning outside under the bottom of copper pot, as Dave says "Cooking and eating together at a table is just fantastic. No wonder this is a New Year's favourite. This is a great thing to do at home. Get something a little burned, little pot." The film then frames the two hosts with a medium shot, as Simon says "Get family around", Dave adds "Don't burn yourself", signifying the cosy atmosphere of attendance to the hotpot dinner for the viewer. From the images presented of food, characters, festive decorations, sweet talks and the conversation on reunion, *Chinese New Year* completes the circulation of the cultural mentality on the topic of the Spring Festival in the use of different changes of depth of field.

Celebration, *Chinese New Year* utilises several cameras from diverse positions to present different perspectives on the festive scenes of the Hong Kong night parade on the site, showing the enthusiasm of people celebrating the Spring Festival. In this way, the documentary suggests that people love to celebrate Spring Festival with these festive events and have faith in the dialogue of Da Tuan Yuan, and in the morals and values behind the cultural heritage of Chinese

festivals.

(Fig.38 Ant stands on a decorated vehicle, Location Shooting Position 1, Camera A)

When it presents the enthusiastic Hong Kong night parade in the scene where the host Ant turns their back to the live audience and faces the camera (Fig.38), *Chinese New Year* employs a close-shot framing of Ant amongst the sea of enthusiastic attendees. I will call this Camera A in the following paragraphs. Camera A is fixed to a vehicle, moving forward at the same pace. It focuses on Ant introducing the parade as it is happening. As the visual focus of this frame, Ant exhibits a radiant facial expression, and with his thrilled voice, he conveys his excitement at the parade to the audience.

(Fig.39 Ant and Camera A on the vehicle, Location Shooting Position 2, Camera B)

The scene in which Ant stands on the decorated vehicle looking for another camera position is captured by Camera B, from a higher vantage point on the platform (Fig.39). It gives a full – size picture of the happy night parade, including the delicately decorated vehicle, Ant and the man who holds Camera A. Camera B gives a full sense of the live performance, conveying an impression of the pleasure brought by this New Year's festive parade. Moreover, by employing Camera B to capture the position of Camera A, it reminds the audience that this is an ongoing event, which emphasises the synchronisation of happiness.

(Fig.40 Kate in the crowd, Location shooting Position 3, Camera C)

In the scene where Kate is struggling to move in the sea of faces (Fig.40), we are shown how Camera C works. As with the other shooting positions, Camera C is fixed on ground level to record thousands of attendees on site, and performers walking in the procession. When it moves left, Camera C shows the audience a sea of people flowing around the street. The film shows a large number of people becoming involved in the excitement of the Spring Festival celebration, implying a spiritual power born from festival traditions and local customs, that links individuals together in the moment.

(Fig.41 Lion dance in the procession, Location shooting position 3, Camera C)

Camera C continually moves right a little, recording actors and their performances in detail (Fig.41). The audience can see the costumes and props through the close-shots. Swinging the camera from framing the attendees to the actors who are performing in the parade, Camera C uses the close-shot of a lion dance as a contrast to the previous shots by the major camara, which records the whole joyous scene.

As my analysis has demonstrated, *Chinese New Year* employs the participatory mode of documentary to depict several short stories that are involved in festive events, folk customs, celebrations and food by people who celebrate the Spring Festival. Within the multiple narratives, the five hosts invite the audience to experience the diversity of interests in the Spring Festival celebrations. Behind these festive activities and customs, *Chinese New Year* suggests that the discourse of Da Tuan Yuan works to produce happiness and provides the motivations of the subjects who aim to achieve their family gatherings in the film. Ultimately, with the alternation of space and location in the film, *Chinese New Year* presents how the euphoria of Spring Festival reaches everywhere in China, ignoring the differences in people from different economic conditions, and the gap of regional development between the village and metropolis, suggesting a perfect world under the ideology of Da Tuan Yuan. As such, it fits into discourses of Powerful China by the cultural texts of festival traditions and folk customs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter has responded to the research questions raised in the very beginning

that what and how cinematic representation of China are built in Chinese-British transnational documentary films. My analysis of the three documentary films under scrutiny has shown how China has been represented as a powerful force on screen in diverse ways. Based on *Confucius*, China is constructed as a powerful subject which absorbs strength from Confucianism, and the traditional morality and values that are advocated by Confucian ideology. This documentary film employs re-enactment and a defamiliarising narrative strategy to visualise Confucius performing *Li* Practices in the history of ancient China. Furthermore, it uses non-fiction stories to demonstrate how *Li* works as a social contract in modern China to guide people's behaviours, and lead their value-orientation into a direction that the government thinks proper. *Confucius* presents how the power of China, which is extracted from Confucian culture, has worked to achieve governance both in ancient and modern China, through visualisation of the philosophy of *Li* on screen. Ultimately, *Confucius* reveals China's special means of ruling in terms of morality by narrating stories of transforming political ideology into ordinary life. Based on *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School*, a powerful China whose attribute of centralism is subtly focused is presented from the aspect of the education system. The documentary presents Chinese campus life as one which is deeply influenced by communistic norms, such as collective consciousness. It defines the power of centralism in the Chinese campus through an intensive representation of the sense of the collective, national identification and authority-centred community in the film. The film suggests the penetration of communistic political dialogue into school life, with the presentation of collective activities that students are supposed to attend weekly, and the Chinese way of teaching in Bohunt school under the structure of communistic Chinese education. *Chinese School* uses expressive montage to acquaint viewers with recognition of the authority-centred culture Chinese people raised by, and its strong ability of shaping individuals within the requirements of communism on the Chinese campus. Based on *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth*, an image of powerful China is framed as an influential cultural subject, which impresses the external world with its folk customs and traditions. *Chinese New Year* employs the participatory mode of documentary to develop stories of the Spring Festival, and suggests the influence of Da Tuan Yuan in the multiple-line narrative and alternate spaces and times explored. Through cinematic techniques, such as changes of depth of field, framing and multiple camera positions, *Chinese New Year* conveys to the audience how happiness overcomes people's social status. In the festive dialogue of Da Tuan Yuan, *Chinese New Year* narrates different versions of stories of returning home and festive events for the Spring Festival celebrations; it utilises multi-line narratives and alternate spatial and temporal locations to create a sense of all Chinese people celebrating their big

ceremony, ignoring the territorial distance, distinctions of social class and the gap between rich and poor, which emphasises the importance of Da Tuan Yuan in the cultural context of Chinese community. Moreover, the use of different types of depth of field to create a shared emotional space invites the audience to indulge in the atmosphere of Da Tuan Yuan. On the use of multiple camera positions, *Chinese New Year* presents a full-scale scene of festive carnival from different angles, highlighting wide coverage of the ideology of Da Tuan Yuan. Therefore, *Chinese New Year* unfolds the power which is hidden in festival customs, and works to bond the major cities and remote villages of China, as well as rich and poor, in such an involving way, removing the increasing social discrepancy between groups from different economic levels, which consolidates the Chinese social structure and economic system. These documentary films shape the cinematic representation of China from different angles (the historical character, modern fundamental education, festive customs and traditions) and construct a powerful image of China which owes its strong capability to building a public social mentality. The powerful representation of China in the cultural text based on these documentary films is quite different from previous examples in other scholarship - communistic China and the religious issues (Wang, 2019; Topgyal, 2017), China and communist party (Brødsgaard, 2018; Pieke, 2018), China's expansion in Africa (Jenkins, 2018), a problematic China in regard to human rights issues (Primiano, 2018; Primiano & Xiang, 2016), etc. This proves that the increasing dimensions of building on representations of China and its power from a broader perspective are developing since the rapid increase of Sino-foreign cooperation in the documentary filmmaking industry.

Chapter 3

Between Ethnographic Seeing and Aerial Videography: Framing China in the '*Xiě Yì*' Aesthetic and Beautiful China Policy

The chapter concentrates on the research questions concerning what representations of China have been created in the Chinese-American transnational documentary filmmaking practices and how the traditional style of cinematography and new technology engage with the screen construction to form a special visual experience when reading the diverse layers of Chinese stories. This chapter examines two documentary films, *China from Above I* (Kenny Png & Klaus Toft, China/US, 2015) and *China from Above II* (Kenny Png & Klaus Toft, China/US, 2018), to explore how a mode of Chinese-American co-produced filmmaking projects work to contribute to the cinematic representation of China, in terms of how beauty in a visual sense can be used as political discourse.[100] *China from Above* employs the method of ethnographic film, and in particular uses aerial videography shot above the land of China to capture natural landscapes and human relics, which show both the beauty of the mountains and rivers, as well as the urban architecture and financial centres of China. In distinct narrative strands, *China from Above* builds on stories of the beauty of China from the perspective of social formation, which has been profoundly decided by their modes of production. It develops a representation of the beauty of China in terms of the nation's and the people's achievements in relation to handcrafts, architecture, agriculture, industry, arts and culture from three dimensions; namely, agricultural civilisation, industrial civilisation and post-industrial civilisation. This chapter develops an analysis of *China from Above* from these three dimensions. The chapter will also illustrate and analyse how *China from Above* creatively adapts '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetics, which were originally derived from Chinese painting, and combines this with the technique of drone videography, forming the special aesthetic characteristics of the film's cinematography. The '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic foregrounds the priority of conveying ideas in these shots, and the creation of artistic conception in the individual scenes. As suggested by Briessen, '*Xiě Yì*' is literally understood as the 'writing ideas' of the artists, a traditional genre of Chinese painting which emphasises spiritual expression rather than physical similarity in the process of artistic creation.[101] Simply, the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic is more concerned with the presentation of the artist's

[100] Unless specified otherwise, this means the single films *China from Above I* or *China from Above II*. When the writer uses 'China from Above', this refers to the two seasons of the relevant documentary films.
[101] Fritz van Briessen. (1962). *The Way of the Brush: Painting Techniques of China and Japan*. Rutland (Vt): Tuttle.

understanding the world at a subjective psychological level. When a work is conducted via the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic, it is essential for the viewer to read the ideas behind the scene, the shape, the line. Additionally, the artistic conception is the substance that cannot be neglected in '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic. The artist seizes fragments of real life to express their inspiration in creation, and their imposing of their imagination upon reality through a certain form of art, in this case, by painting. Xie He, the Chinese painter and theorist who first raised the six principles of Chinese painting, argues that the essence of the spiritual element in painting and the embodiment of inspiration for the artists are both conveyed by the brushwork in the art forms of painting and calligraphy.[102] My contention is that *China from Above* updates these ancient techniques to the modern era and achieves an analogue of the effect of brushwork by the movement of the drone hovering in the air. This chapter develops three sections in accordance with the relative narrative strands highlighting specific examples from *China from Above I* and *China from Above II* to analyse how the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic adapted from Chinese painting techniques has been integrated with cinematic techniques. The chapter also examines how the textual concept of beauty within the dimensions of agricultural civilisation, industrial civilisation and post-industrial civilisation is defined in the film's cinematography, forming a representation of beautiful China on screen. I also argue that the term 'Beautiful China' possesses a significance beyond its literal meaning, namely, being one of the political concepts that orients the social pattern of eco-civilisation that has been positively initiated in recent years in China. To understand the concept of 'Beautiful China', it is necessary to consider Chinese politics in 2012, the year that the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party was held. Before the idea of 'Beautiful China' was written into a political blueprint at the national congress in Beijing, the social wave of 'ecological civilisation' had already appeared and been circulated in the 1980s in Chinese academia, then gradually entering the political discourse (Marinelli, 2018). Soon, the term 'Beautiful China' as a political concept had been placed into the nation's 'Five-Year Plans', in 2015. Chinese President Xi Jinping has stated that the primary principle of 'Beautiful China policy' is developing China as an eco-friendly state in the next five years. President Xi Jinping explained the content of a Beautiful China in the 'Outline of the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for China':

Improving the quality of the environment is the core task; solving problems in the eco-

[102] He Xie. (1991) *Gu Hua Pin Lu*, Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House. 谢赫. (1991) 古画品录. 上海：上海古籍出版社. Xie, He (谢赫 in Chinese character), the Chinese painter, theorists and critic in the ancient China, lives in the history period of Southern Qi (479-502).

> field is the priority of government administration, as well as increasing efforts to protect the eco-environment and to improve the efficiency of resource utilisation. We must provide more premium ecological products for our people and speed up the building of Chinese society to be a prosperous and beautiful country.[103]

To accelerate the work on 'Beautiful China', Xi Jinping stressed the necessity to accelerate the pace of establishing Chinese eco-society and promote integrated reform at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017.[104] The trend of 'Beautiful China' rapidly flowed into other industries, including the filmmaking industry. In *China from Above I* and *China from Above II*, the political concept of 'Beautiful China' also informs the narrative and the establishment of the cinematic representation of China, regarding the depiction of beauty from the natural environment on the surface to the social civilisation of eco-industry and the value of co-existence of technology and nature. Finally, the chapter reconsiders the practice whereby *China from Above* employs an ethnographic film mode to contemplate the landscape of China. It argues that under the theoretical structure of postcolonialism, the act of simplifying the screen image of China as a beautiful subject for sightseeing satisfies the interest of the West seeing China in relation to the psychological motivation of consuming exoticism; however representing China in accordance with Western aesthetics leads to some degree to a misunderstanding of China.

China from Above, a popular series of documentary films, consists of two seasons (four episodes in total): *China from Above I* includes episode 1, titled *The Living Past*, and episode 2, titled *The Future is Now*, released in 2015. *China from Above II* has two episodes, titled *The Dynamic Coast* and *Land of Mountains and Rivers*, released in 2018. The films cover three aspects of China in interlinked narrative threads: agricultural civilisation, industrial civilisation and post-industrial civilisation. As I outline below, *China from Above* builds a screen representation of China in these three contexts, defining a 'beautiful China' in the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic through drone cinematography. In the narrative structure of the theme of agricultural civilisation, China is shaped as a poetic object involved with the Western imagination. We see

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[103] Translated by the writer. The fragment quoted from the original text in Chinese is '以提高环境质量为核心，以解决生态环境领域突出问题为重点，加大生态环境保护力度，提高资源利用效率，为人民提供更多优质生态产品，协同推进人民富裕、国家富强、中国美丽'. See full text here: *Outline of the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China*. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-03/17/content_5054992.htm Accessed on 01-03-2022.

[104] *Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era – A Report by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China*. See more on the official website of state department: http://www.gov.cn/zhuanti/2017-10/27/content_5234876.htm Accessed on 02-03-2022.

this in the first episode of *China from Above I*, titled *The Living Past*, which portrays a beautiful image of China, if one as a society characterised by low-productivity; however, it is not marked by poverty, unemployment, bankruptcy or corruption, offering instead numerous scenes which depict pastoral beauty. The concept of the poetic beauty of China is specifically virtualised as the beauty of natural scenery, stunning historic relics and the harmonious relationship between the natural and the human. For example, in the sequence of local farmers cultivating rice on the Hani Rice Terraces, a shot filmed from a drone frames the farmers and their cattle among the mountains and waters. It not only presents a picture of the natural environment in the southwestern part of China, but also shows the way in which Chinese farmers who live in the mountains have fed themselves for many centuries. Ultimately, episode 1 suggests praise for the ancient Chinese people who have achieved the success of innovating the farming method practiced on the Hani Rice terraces. In contrast, episode 2 of *China from Above I*, titled *The Future is Now,* produces an alternative narrative of urban culture, basing the beauty of Chinese society on technological rationality irrigated by industrial achievements. In the framework of the industrial narrative, a beautiful China means an urbanised country which grows on iron and steel, and thrives through modern science and technology. Since these situations happened in the prosperous cities where the field of engineering was representative of successful industries, China is depicted as a superior subject which is able to solve different complex social problems, relying on advanced technology and national governance in the course of proceeding modernisation of the country. Additionally, *China from Above* develops the third dimension of post-industrial narrative to define the beauty of China, upon the conceptual sphere of industrial ecology. When talking about post – industrialism, the concept of industrial ecology should be highlighted, since it raises ideas that accommodate materials and resources in accordance with the industrial process, and makes a balance between the industrial system and the eco-system. The common point of industrial ecology and post – industrialism lies in pollution control (Erkman, 1997). Therefore, based on the value of coexistence produced from a post-industrial narrative, the screen image of China in *China from Above II* is shaped by the stories which present the events, activities and phenomena regarding the coexistence of human, technology, natural environment. The new type of beauty of China under the structure of post-industrial narrative emphasises that the ideology of ecology influences a further stage in the urbanisation of China, one that depicts Chinese society as a community where concepts of industrial ecology circulate and governing capacity and environment protection cooperate well. In the stories narrated in *China from Above II*, the audience are invited to observe how the new understanding in industrialism and eco-civilisation are coupled, contributing to the balance of human

technology and natural power in Chinese society. I will demonstrate that the three strands of the narrative indicate that the representation of a beautiful China on screen is consistently under construction and open to ongoing revision. Specifically, the chapter examines how drone videography is conducted in accordance with the principles of '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic in these short stories narrated in *China from Above I* and *China from Above II*. From the three dimensions of the narrative strands about agricultural civilisation, industrial civilisation and post-industrial civilisation, *China from Above* captures natural sceneries and artificial landscapes to convey the social thoughts that work behind these scenes. It gradually defines the beauty of China from the visual sense of seeing objects to the conceptual idea of an ideal society which is doubly driven by technologism and ecologism. Within the structures of narrative, the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic not only works to present a Chinese way art form in the shots, but also continually 'writes ideas' in the later narrative, of an ideal society which holds a balance between history and tradition, modern technology and humanistic values, as a beautiful one, a 'Beautiful China'.

Framing the Beauty of China in the Narrative Strand of Agricultural Civilization

China from Above I primarily frames the beauty of China in terms of the stunning scenery of the country's nature, and magnificent statues and architectures in the early stages of its history, which proves to be an elementary level of visual beauty based on spectacle. It is completed under the structure of the narrative strand of agricultural civilisation, although compared with the developed levels of modern times, some of the characteristics of ancient agricultural society are low-productivity, manual labour and limited material possessions. *China from Above* depicts the lives of ancient Chinese people as poetic, and employs drone cinematography to emphasise the artistic quality of rural life through the method of framing influenced by the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic, ignoring the privations of the means of production. In *The Living Past*, the representation of a beautiful China is visualised as a Utopian agricultural society filled with poetic feeling, in which there are a series of old cultural elements with an Eastern background which are familiar to the Western imagination, including martial arts, Kung Fu, Buddhism and the Great Wall, and which circulate as symbols of Chinese culture in the Western context. Beyond the scenery, *The Living Past* suggests the ancient philosophical idea of 'the Unity of Heaven and Humanity' (Tu, 2001; Chen, 2016) which exists in the farming pattern of Hani terraces, and inform the way in which ancient Chinese people lived. In particular, *The Living Past* films the events and traditions that occur in the areas where the ethnic minorities live. It emphasises these 'primitive' and 'exotic' characteristics through their framing onto group

rituals, ethnic clothing and archaic festival celebrations. For example, two events involving Chinese ethnic groups, the Water-Sprinkling Festival of the Dai people and Heavenly Horse Festival of Kazak, are presented as a kind of cultural spectacle on screen.[105] Actually, framing these tribal rituals or behaviours of members are typically in the manner in which Westerners regard people living in the East, a point established by Emile Durkheim in 1912 but also more recently by Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss. On the other hand, the appearance of ethnic groups of China in the film provides some details of the traditional events in relation to their local lifestyles. To some degree, this attracts the Western audience to experience a kind of culture that they might have never been drawn into. For example, episode 2 of *China from Above II*, titled *Land of Mountains and Rivers*, captures a scene of a branch of Tibetan people living in Gongpo holding their traditional whistling arrow competition. It shows Gongpo people dressed in Tibetan costumes shooting arrows, and invites the audience to feel the ethnic atmosphere and present the life of a tribe with a long history in China. From the aspects of nature and ancient culture, *China from Above I*, exemplified by this scene, builds the cinematic representation of beautiful China on the foundation of visual perception.

Religion, Myth, Saga of Heroes: The Western Imagination on the East

In this section, I will expand on the analysis above and examine how *China from Above I* completes the depiction of a beautiful China within the narrative strand of agricultural civilisation. *China from Above I* employs the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic connecting ancient China with the artistic perception of religions, myths, the sagas of heroes and other legends. By filming these iconic objects, such as Shaolin Temple monks who are practicing martial arts, Buddhism and the Giant Buddha statue, the Great Wall, it depicts the appearance of ancient China during the age of cold weapons.

The Shaolin Temple, Chinese monks and martial arts are naturally linked with the ancient heroes and their legendary stories. To some degree, martial arts are probably the most obvious characteristics which have been given to Western audiences in the representation of China or Chinese culture. From Kwai Chang Caine[106] in the television series *Kung Fu* (Jerry Thorpe, US, 1972-1975), the Panda named Po in the *Kung Fu Panda* films (John Stevenson & Mark

[105] Dai and Kazakhs are both ethnic groups living in China. In total, there are 56 ethnic groups currently living in China, which are legally considered as members of the Chinese nation. A consensus of 'Chinese Nation with Multi-ethnic Groups' has already been reached and circulated as one of the dominant ideologies in the society. See more here: Fei, Xiaotong. (1999). *The Pattern of Diversity in Unity of Chinese Nation*. Beijing: China Minzu University Press (费孝通. 1999. 中华民族多元一体格局. 北京：中央民族大学出版社).

[106] The leading character – a Shaolin monk travelling through the American Old West in Kung Fu, an American TV series.

Osborne, US, 2009) to the main figure of the Jedi Knight in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (Jeffrey Jacob Abrams, US, 2015), there has been much attention paid in films relating to Chinese martial arts by American directors.[107] Martial arts, as one of the representative artistic perceptions of Chinese culture, have been written into the West's understanding of China for a long time. Similarly, as a China-US co-produced documentary film project, *China from Above I* also seeks to explore martial arts on screen. It takes martial arts as a kind of traditional cultural heritage, and suggests the aspects of martial arts that have been passed on to us today. Therefore, it captures scenes where the monks of Shaolin Temple practice martial arts to remind us that some Chinese people still live in this manner, from the pages of early Chinese history.

In the section on Shaolin Temple in episode 1, *The Living Past*, the film first narrates a piece of the history of Shaolin Temple, via an offscreen voice and a talking head interview with the Shaolin monk, Yan Hong. It recounts how Shaolin monks practice martial arts as their daily self-cultivation for long years, and how historically they created Chan Buddhism with a combination of martial arts and Buddhism. The legend that one of the senior monks recounts relates to how Li Shimin, an emperor of the Tang Dynasty, drew on the force of Shaolin monks to build his military power.[108] In order to show the epic background of Shaolin Temple and its people, *The Living Past* combines voice-over and drone videography to enhance the fascination around ancient history and Chinese Kung Fu. In this episode, the narrator states:

> Buddhism wasn't always about peaceful meditation. More than a millennium ago its priests had to learn how to defend themselves in China's warlike past. According to legend, this secluded monastery is not only the birthplace of Chan Buddhism, but also where the legendary Shaolin monks trained. This fifteen-hundred-year-old fusion of Kung Fu and religion is kept alive by the neat order of monks that inspired over a hundred martial arts movies.

This historical overview is followed by aerial shots which move vertically across the main temple and also show monks on the ground. With a flying forward shot (Fig.1), Shaolin Temple comes into the audience's gaze to immerse them into the environment of the story. Then, a long take films the main temple in line with the horizontal angle, showing the roof, layers and

[107] Kung Fu Panda is A computer-animated wuxia action film series produced by DreamWorks Animation and distributed by Paramount Pictures and received outstanding box office after the release in US and Canada.
[108] Li Shimin, the second emperor of the Tang Dynasty in ancient Chinese history. In the legendary story regarding his competition for the qualification of becoming emperor with his elder brother, Li Jiancheng, Li Shimin was said to employ the military power of Shaolin warrior monks.

foundation (Fig.2). It keeps the continuity of capturing the subject in the scene, for the audience to feel and access this reality. Particularly, this long take is completed by a drone, so that another characteristic of the scene is that the fly-down shot by drone videography extends the space visually, and gives a different feeling on the relation of architectures and space, conjuring a visual sense of spectacle.

(Fig.1 The drone flies to the group of Shaolin Temples. Fly-Forward Shot.)

(Fig.2 The drone descends to film the structure of the main tower of Shaolin Temples. Long take)

(Fig.3 The drone frames the roof of the temple. Overhead shot)

The final overhead shot (Fig.3) frames the roof of the main tower amongst trees and low courtyards, which presents the characteristic symmetry of this ancient wooden architecture. Although the method of framing in this overhead shot places objects on the same spatial plane, and breaks the sense of perspective produced by the structure in the environment, as the drone flies upward away from the monks on the ground, it still gives the visual rhythm of movement. It suggests the end of the brief introduction on the historic background of Shaolin Temple and its monks, preparing the audience for new sections of the narrative, involving a Shaolin disciple as the leading character. This is the individual story of Yan Fei, who is displayed as a representative of the Shaolin monks on screen, showing the audience the life of a young monk. In the section on Yan Fei, the film explores how Shaolin Kung Fu is a compulsory course for these Shaolin disciples, and suggests that the discipline of Shaolin martial arts has gone beyond the monks to become the cultural inspiration for artists, musicians and the filmmaking industry.

China from Above I shows Yan Fei undergoing an examination by his master Yan Cen, who teaches triple-staff skills in Shaolin Temple. Although it employs simple shots, such as overhead shots and circling shots, which are now common due to the use of drone equipment, it is able to film the subjects through the movement of the drone to provide impressive scenes, conveying the meaning of Shaolin martial arts. For example, in the scene where Yan Fei engages Yan Cen in combat with triple-staffs, the two subjects are framed in the forest of stone towers with full body shots, which gives a visual effect of men engulfed by nature. The aesthetic style in terms of Chinese martial arts here is shaped in the relationship between the

subjects and their environment in the shots. It places an emphasis not on the techniques of Shaolin Kung Fu, but on the sensory conversation between martial artists and the external world. As a result, the advanced method of presenting martial arts on screen is achieved by framing martial arts practitioners in their natural environment. This could be also observed in the scenes of martial arts combat (Fig.7) in films such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee, Mainland China/Hong Kong/Taiwan/US, 2000).[109] The crucial idea in conveying the sense of Chinese martial arts in the film lies not on the details of fighting, through close-up shots, but on the relationship between the subjects and their environment, completed by the full long shots. Similarly, this principle is employed in the sequence of triple-staff combat in *China from Above I*, which is demonstrated with examples below.

China from Above I utilises drone footage to start the triple-staff examination segment by an overhead shot (Fig.4), filming from a birds-eye angle, capturing the towers and trees standing tall on the ground, employing circling shots to film the scene where Yan Fei contends with his master Yan Cen in the forest of stone towers (Fig.5 and Fig.6). When the drone hovers in the air around the two characters, the audience can see more details of the environment, and are able to feel the changes in spatial structure. At this moment, the gestures and body movements of the two characters swinging the triple-staff are not that important; instead, the focus is on the fact that this battle takes place in the environment of Shaolin Tower. This stone architecture and landscape have become part of the iconography of Chinese martial arts films.

[109] *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, a martial arts film, won over 40 awards and was nominated for 10 Academy Awards in 2001, including Best Picture, and won Best Foreign Language Film, Best Art Direction, Best Original Score and Best Cinematography.

(Fig.4 The drone flies over the forest of Shaolin towers. Overhead shot)

(Fig.5 The drone hovers to capture the two characters fighting surrounded by the towers. Circling Shot)

(Fig.6 The drone flies and circles around the two characters. Circling Shot)

(Fig.7 Two characters are framed in the environment of bamboo. Still frame from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* by Ang Lee)

(Fig.8 The drone is reversing away from the characters. Circling shot)

As Briessen suggests, '*Xiě Yì*' as a genre of Chinese painting is literally 'writing ideas' by focusing on the aesthetic expression of the creator. From the discipline of fine arts, this style is performed on the surface of Xuan paper with a brush, in accordance with the painting techniques.[110] However, it is completed in drone videography by the movement of the drone

[110] Xuan paper refers to a unique paper production with a handcrafted technique originating in the Tang Dynasty, and is the exclusive stationery for the creation of Chinese ink painting.

hovering in *China from Above I* and *China from Above II*. When the drone frames the subjects involved in their surroundings as it hovers in the air, the drone changes the position of figures in their environment, and creates a relationship between the subjects and their background. For instance, *China from Above I* films monks on the mountain practicing martial arts among the trees by a circling shot (Fig.8) when the drone is flying backwards away from the subjects. The drone keeps hovering in the air, and with a slightly circling movement, creates depth in the shot. This contributes to construct a relationship between the spatial structure and the subjects, enhancing the effect of perceiving the concept of martial arts. A contrary assumption is created in the scene which is completed in the modern buildings of a busy city with close shots focussing on the faces and bodies of actors. This suggests to the audience that these are martial arts performers demonstrating Kung Fu at an event, but *China from Above I* builds the relationship between subjects and their natural environment with the framing of the drone hovering, which produces a discourse whereby the great masters of martial arts engage in conversation with the universe through the form of martial arts. This is a variation on the cultural interpretation of martial arts, which is a component in traditional Chinese society that *China from Above I* has built into the beauty of China, developing how the seductive characteristics of martial arts have developed beyond physical exercise towards philosophical depictions.

Another sequence in *China from Above I* films a giant buddha statue, located in Leshan, China, to present visual spectacle on screen and to display the building techniques of architecture and engineering in ancient times. Here the film primarily employs drone footage to circle around the statue, capturing the Buddha with a combination of circling shots and panning shots. The drone first flies facing the Buddha statue from right to left, completing the circling shots (Fig.9 and Fig.10). In one scene the appearance of the Buddha statue inlaid in a mountain is presented by an aerial circling shot, exposing the statue sitting in the indented body of the mountain, and staring straight ahead. This circling shot provides a panoramic view, horizontally showing the whole body of the Buddha statue, which displays the grandeur of ancient Chinese engineering.

(Fig.9 The drone flies around the giant buddha. Circling shot. Right side.)

(Fig.10 The drone flies around the giant Buddha. Circling shot. Left side.)

(Fig.11 The drone flies upwards to frame the toes of the giant Buddha. Panning up shot.)

(Fig.12 The drone tilts up to capture the head of the giant Buddha. Panning up shot.)

(Fig.13 The drone hovers filming the statue from top to bottom. Overhead shot)

Utilising drone panning shots (Fig.11 - Fig.13), *China from Above I* films the Buddha statue with the tilt-up shot when the drone flies upwards. This way of framing underscores the comparison between the size of the human body and the giant statue, which indicates the sense of awe that people living in ancient times had built such an engineering achievement. This view is completed by an overhead shot from the top of the Buddha statue (Fig.13) as the narrator states, "It took three generations of workers an incredible 90 years to chip away into mountain and complete this colossus. The middle finger alone is the height of a three-story building". This stresses again the statue as a unique architectural relic of ancient China.

China from Above I shoots the Great Wall as another artistic symbol to lure the audience to establish their cultural imagination associated with the long history of China, myth, sages and heroes upon the nation's architectural heritage. The Great Wall has been one of the most powerful signifiers of China for a long time, and has been celebrated by diverse arts forms, from the poem *On the Frontier*[111] by Wang Changling in the Tang Dynasty to the 1982 popular song *The Great Wall Will Never Fall Down* by Michael Lai and Jimmy Lo Kwok Tsim.[112] The Great Wall has also aroused much interest in the Western world. For example, an attempt has

[111] The title of *On the Frontier* is translated by the writer. The original title in Chinese characters is '出塞' and the lines of the poem are '秦时明月汉时关，万里长征人未还，但使龙城飞将在，不教胡马度阴山'. The content of *On the Frontier* is a description of how, since the Qin and Han Dynasty, the moon has hung over the Great Wall on the frontier for years; however, as time goes by, the soldiers who were many miles away from home weren't allowed back. If the military General Wei Qing and Li Guang were alive, they wouldn't allow the horses of the enemy to cross the north border of China. The defence function of the Great Wall is stated in the poem of Wang Changling.

[112] The title is translated by the writer. The original Chinese title is '万里长城永不倒' which is also a line of the main verse in the song. In this song, the Great Wall has become the psychological symbol of the Chinese nation, referring to the spirit of resistance to external invasion and patriotic emotion.

been made to accommodate the Great Wall in Hollywood storytelling, narrating the story of the Western hero saving China on the background of the Great Wall during Song Dynasty in the fictional narrative film *The Great Wall* (Zhang Yimou, China/US, 2016).[113] In *China from Above I*, by employing drone videography and framing the Great Wall from diverse angles (Fig.14-17), it presents a scene of the Great Wall lying across the mountains stretching forward, providing a stunning visual sense of the Great Wall as a world heritage site.

(Fig.14 The drone flies along with a diagonal line)

(Fig.15 The drone flies towards one of the beacon towers on the Great Wall. Circling shot.)

[113] Song Dynasty is the imperial dynasty of China that starts from the year 960 and ends in 1279.

(Fig.16 The drone flies approaching the beacon tower facing the front side. Circling shot)

(Fig.17 The drone flies backwards from the beacon tower. Circling shot.)

The drone flying along with the diagonal line of the frame (Fig.14), leads the audience into the narrative related to the Great Wall. When the drone rolls forward, it completes the scene with a tracking shot to display the striking length of the ancient engineering structure, depicting the scenery where China's Great Wall lies on a mountain peak. Then, the drone employs a series of circling shots (Fig.15, Fig.16 and Fig.17) to reveal the components of China's Great Wall. The drone flies around the beacon tower of one section of the Great Wall, filming the walls and ridge extending across the sky. This highlights the quality of the Great

Wall as one of the greatest ancient architectural achievements in the world, and suggests the cultural connectivity between the Great Wall and the Chinese nation. In the scene, as the narrator says, "Today the horde still descend on the wall, ten million annually … as a local saying goes 'one who fails to reach the Great Wall is not a true man'. From all corners of the country, they come to pay tribute to an ancient feat of engineering that shaped their nation." Through these words, he muses on the visual beauty of the scenery at this ancient engineering spectacle, paying testimony to the cultural imagination in relation to the metaphor of national spirit.

Writing Poetics in the Mountains and Lakes: Hani Rice Terraces and Xiě Yì Aesthetic

China from Above I films the scene of Hani Rice Terraces in episode 1, *The Living Past*, capturing a farmer driving their buffalo on the terraces, mountains and waters lying on the countryside of Yunnan province. It presents the audience with the unique scenery of the local rural environment where the method of agricultural cultivation is carved out in the Hani Terraces pattern. The movement of the drone in filming Hani Terraces includes hovering, reversing, circling, panning and hyperlapse, which underscores the natural beauty of Hani Terraces, and suggests their value as historical evidence of a type of human settlement and relics of cultural tradition. With the use of drone videography, particularly through hovering and panning, *China from Above I* creates an artistic perception of Xanadu. Xanadu, 'Upper Capital', which was originally the name of the capital city of the Yuan Empire in ancient Chinese history, is an imaginary object in Western literature, related to the sense of a palatial place, but with a tragic destiny ending in destruction.[114] The earliest appearance of Xanadu in the Western world is Coleridge's description in his poem *Kubla Khan* in 1816. In *Citizen Kane* (Welles, US, 1941), Xanadu is the name of the eponymous character's splendid house where he lives a reclusive life. Since then, Xanadu has become a metaphor of splendour and a symbol of the romantic imagination about Eastern China in a Western context (Mihai Stroe, 2016). Here, in the sequence of Hani Terrace, the drone shooting builds what I am defining as a 'Xanadu Space' via the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic to display the natural beauty of traditional farming methods and life.

The '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic in Chinese painting emphasises the way of using the brush to place

[114] Xanadu is the term commonly used in the Western text. Its corresponding word in the Chinese language is Shangdu, literally meaning 'upper capital', referring to the capital city of the Yuan Dynasty in reality. However, Xanadu usually appears in the Western text as a conceptual idea in terms of literature and art.

the subjective consciousness and artistic imagination of the artist on paper. For example, Fan Kuan, a painter of the Song Dynasty, and Shi Tao, a painter of the Qing Dynasty, both draw the image of mountains on paper (Fig.18 and Fig.19) employing the painting technique of 'cun fa' to draw the lines of the mountains.[115] However, Fan Kuan focuses on the shape of a steep hillside with the brushstroke of axe-chisel strokes to draw twisted lines as the hard sides of the mountain (Fig.18), while Shi Tao 'writes ideas' of freedom with the cloud scroll stroke to draw a swirled mark as the tops of mountains, displacing his self-conceptualisation onto the natural world (Fig.19). Unlike painting on Xuan paper, the '*Xiě Yi*' aesthetic in *China from Above I* is implemented by the movements of drones hovering and panning, as I demonstrate below. Meanwhile, through the combination of hyperlapse shots, the drone camera captures the cloud and mist floating among the mountains, and the sunlight moving, obeying the rhythm of time, and showing the unique natural beauty of the landscape of Hani terraces.

[115] Cun fa, '皴法' in Chinese characters, refers to a technique in Chinese painting to present the texture of rock and mountains with the edge of the brush. The two pictures, Fig.18 and Fig.19, are referred from Briessen's book. See more here: Fritz van Briessen. (1962). The Way of the Brush: Painting Techniques of China and Japan. Rutland (Vt): Tuttle.

(Fig.18 Landscape by Fan Kuan, Sung[116])

(Fig.19 Landscape by Shih Tao, Ching[117])

In the sequence of Hani Terraces, *China from Above I* integrates the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic with the movement of a drone camera, creating an artistic perception of Xanadu in these scenes by means of the drone hovering and panning (Fig.20 – Fig.26).

(Fig.20 Drone flies across terraces. Advancing shot.)

As the narrator in *China from Above* says, "Thirteen hundred years ago, the local Hani people miraculously transformed the landscape to grow their crops. They hand carved rice paddies into the mountains to trap the water", the drone flies over, close to the terraces,

[116] The 'Sung' is Wade–Giles system and it refers to the 'Song' from Mandarin Chinese. Sung here refers to the Song Dynasty. It suggests the painter Fan Kuan was lived in the history period of Song Dynasty.
[117] The 'Ching' is the same as 'Sung' previously. The 'Ching' refers to the Qing Dynasty and suggests the painter Shih Tao, who lived in the Qing Dynasty.

immediately leading the audience into the story of the Hani people and their rice terraces. In the scene of viewing terraces from above, it successively employs high angle shots, shooting in different locations, to provide a beautiful picture of tier-upon-tier terraces (Fig.20). *China From Above I* conducts the drone to keep hovering in the air and complete the drone panning shots, presenting the natural scenery of the landscape of Hani Terraces. In these shots (Fig.21 and Fig.22 and Fig.23), water in the recessed section of hills looks like mirrors, whereas the layers of terraces form curved structures on the surface of the mountains. Light fog floating above the water in layers adds an ethereal effect.

(Fig.21 The drone hovers in the air capturing the layers of terraces. Panning shot)

(Fig.22 The drone hovers continually filming the terraces and mountains. Panning shot)

(Fig.23 The drone hovers capturing the terraces in the mist. Panning shot)

Then, *China from Above I* employs circling shots to capture the dynamic whereby local farmers cultivate on the layers of terraces (Fig.24-Fig.26). Two farmers are driving cattle to walk on the terraces. The drone camera shoots the two farmers from behind, gradually approaching them until it appears on their side. Thereby, a sense of 'participation' is created with the farmers, since the course of the aerial camera moving from far to near reduces the psychological distance between the viewer and the farmers (Figure.24). We see two farmers who are partly hidden and partly visible while walking in the fog and mountains. Comparing the three shots (Fig.24, 25, 26), with the gentle hovering of the drone in the air, the cloud and mist come and go in the frame. Additionally, the sunlight in the scene moves and changes. The movement of the drone in the air changes the degree of light entering the shots, which suggests the rhythm of time. The way in which the drone hovers in the sequence of Hani Terraces can be read as analogous to the use of brushstroke in Chinese painting, visualising the idea. *China from Above I* suggests that Hani Terraces and the pattern of early human civilization, as recognized by this site's designation as being of world natural heritage, is beautiful and poetic, unspoiled by modern technology and industrial pollution.

(Fig.24 The drone hovers and flies around the subjects. Circling shot.)

(Fig.25 The drone circles and passes by the characters. Circling shot.)

(Fig.26 The drone is reversing away from the characters capturing the bigger picture of terraces. Circle shot.)

The '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic here completes the deconstruction of the discourse around the farming pattern of Hani Terrace in the shots. It removes the anachronistic notions of low productivity and means of production against the social background of the early agricultural community. Conversely, it builds an artistic concept of Xanadu on an aesthetic perception, based on the quality of poetics and peace in country life. Ultimately, the Hani Terraces are presented as an object of aesthetic contemplation, rather than an ingenious solution to irrigating paddy fields.

Framing the Beauty of China in the Narrative Strand of Industrial Civilisation

In the narrative of industrial civilisation, *China from Above I* captures the landscape of skyscrapers in Shanghai to underscore the sense of beauty produced by modern architecture. Episode 2 titled *The Future is Now,* includes shots of the Hengdian Film Base to present a successful case of the industrialisation and specialisation of the Chinese film and TV industry. It also films scenes showing how China exploits new energy sources in Xinjiang and Tibet to raise social perceptions of the idea of eco-civilisation for the later narrative strand of post-industrial civilisation. In order to present a visual sense of the streamlined form of tall buildings and modernist design that involves sharp and clean lines, *China from Above I* utilises overhead shots to highlight the influence of modernism upon architecture in Shanghai. Meanwhile, music is added to reinforce emotion, and the vigorous use of melody suggests admiration of

contemporary society, which entails the success of technology and industrialisation.

From a sociological perspective, contemporary society usually connects with a series of concepts of modern state theory, in which the role of state power works to build national development, including social classes, economic activities and regional associations (Marinetto, 2007).[118] In the thematic strand of China in industrial civilisation, state power is concealed behind a depiction of the systematic industrialisation of Chinese society, namely a beautiful China produced by technical rationality. We can see this at work in *The Future is Now*, which uses different segments to demonstrate that the cinematic representation of beautiful China lies in its image of being a civilisation-state characterised by the ongoing process of industrialisation. In the scene where the old and modern buildings come into view, the drone flies overhead, capturing the landscape of China's busiest financial centre – Shanghai - recording how traditional rituals for worshipping ancestors have changed to a modern fashion, conducted in a cemetery, from an aerial view. In the two episodes of *China from Above I*, we also see images of various features signifying China's technological development, including high-speed railway transportation, a large man-made beach in an inland region, 'China-wood' in Hangzhou, a wind farm in Xinjiang, a solar power farm on a Tibetan plateau, a maritime fish farm in Hainan, and the large sky area multi-object fibre spectroscopic telescope (LAMOST) in Xinglong. These are presented as marvellous landscapes representing elements of industrialisation and technologisation, and appear one by one in drone shots. These drone shots display the success that China has made in its transition from an agricultural country to an industrial country, as well as the turn in society driven by industrialisation. Next, I will examine the sequence of the changing landscapes of Shanghai and the booming industry of China-Wood to examine how this has happened.

Framing Shanghai: The 'Paris of the East' in the Colonial Context vs. The Masterpiece in China's Economic Reform

Shanghai, a city that weighs heavily on the modern history of China and contemporary China[119], has been known as the 'Paris of the East', 'Queen of Eastern Settlements', 'New York of the Far East', 'Yellow Babylon of the Far East' , and remains the centre of urbanisation in socialist

[118] Michael Marinetto. (2007) *Social Theory, The State and Modern Society: The State in Contemporary Social Thought*. Maidenhead/New York: Open University Press.

[119] In accordance with the consensus of Chinese historiography, the modern history of China starts from the year of 1840, which was marked by the First Opium War (also known as The Anglo-Chinese War) to the year of 1949, which is signified by the founding of the People's Republic of China. The contemporary history of China refers to the time from national foundation day of PRC to the present.

China as well.[120] (Denison & Ren, 2006) Since the signing of the Treaty of Nanking between the Qing Dynasty of China and the UK in 1842, Shanghai has operated as one of the five trading ports for the UK (Keller, Li & Shiue, 2013) and become known to the Western world.[121] Correspondingly, in terms of colonial texts, Shanghai was depicted as an exotic symbol associated with adventure in the new land of the East, or romantic encounters in a Western context, for example, the colonial imagination focussed on Shanghai by the West could be found in films such *Shanghai Express* (Josef von Sternberg, US, 1938) and *The Lady From Shanghai* (Orson Welles, US, 1947). With the founding of People's Republic of China and the implementation of Chinese economic reform in Shanghai, both the city's landscape and the cinematic image of Shanghai have changed. A new type of cinematic depiction of Shanghai is being shaped, where the old orientation toward a Westerner's wonderland for adventure has been removed; instead, a new depiction of Shanghai becoming an icon of fashion and finance has been created in films such as *Tiny Times* (Jingming Guo, China, 2013) and *Her* (Spike Jonze, USA, 2013).[122] *The Future is Now* follows through new ideas of how to film Shanghai. Through the story of Xianzhang Zheng, a cityscape photographer in Shanghai, *The Future is Now* finds a way to present the modernity of architectural style in Shanghai.

Coupling drone videography with the type of non-diegetic film music, *The Future is Now* underscores the significance of Shanghai's postmodern role leading cities in China. First, the drone starts flying from behind the subject – the cityscape photographer Xianzhang Zheng (Fig.27), providing a scene where Zheng is walking on the top of one of the skyscrapers, as a metaphor of Shanghai rising in this overhead shot. Then, the drone flies around him (Fig.28) and completes a circling shot, hanging in the air on his left, showing the extremely sharp edge of the rooftop, immersing the audience with a sense of technology through modern architectural design. As the drone continues moving, a broader view emerges on screen, as a panoramic image of The Bund of Shanghai appears on screen (Fig.29) in the panning shot. The trajectory

[120] Edward Denison & Guang Yu Ren. (2006) *Building Shanghai: The Story of China's Gateway. Chichester, England/Hoboken*, New Jersey: Wiley-Academy.

[121] This was an unequal treaty due to the weakness of Daoguang Emperor and his Qing Dynasty and under the pressure of the military force of the UK, Qing Dynasty is compelled to agree to open five cities and towns, Canton (Guangdong), Amoy (Xiamen), Foochowfoo (Fu Zhou), Ningpo (Ningbo) and Shanghai, for British trade. See the original text here: https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/20276/page/3597/ Accessed on 28-03-2022. The Treaty of Nanking is extremely devastating in the sovereignty and economy of China.

[122] Tiny Times is a film series directed by Jingming Guo, composing four films, *Tiny Times 1* (2013), *Tiny Times 2* (2013), *Tiny Times 3* (2014), *Tiny Times 4* (2015). The four films set Shanghai as the background due to the fashion industry and the position of financial centre in China. See an interview to Jingming Guo about this film series on the website: http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2013/0702/c70731-22042988.html Accessed on 23-04-2022. *Her*, directed by Spike Jonze, sets the background of the film in LA, but in actual filmmaking 60% of the film is filmed in Shanghai because of the sense of futurism brought by this Chinese metropolis. See relevant information here: https://fourthreefilm.com/2014/05/china-hollywood-and-spike-jonzes-her/ Accessed on 23-04-2022. https://www.thelocationguide.com/2014/02/ng-film-filming-a-future-american-city-in-shanghai-for-quirky-romance-her/ Accessed on 23-04-2022.

of the aerial shooting movements highlights the post-modern style of skyscrapers in Shanghai, emphasising their irregular shapes, sharp corners, and the appearance of buildings that break traditional architectural square or rectangular form. From above, the drone shoots with a vertical angle of view looking down on the ground (Figure.30), challenging human perspective, which enhances the impression of artificial power and technological participation in the visual representation of Shanghai's landscape.

(Fig.27 The drone films a character walking on top of a skyscraper in Shanghai. Overhead shot.)

(Fig.28 The drone flies over the subject and the top of the skyscraper. Circling shot)

(Fig.29 The drone captures a panoramic picture of the Bund. Panning shot)

(Fig.30 A vertical view looking at buildings on the ground captured by the drone. Overhead shot)

Compared with conventional shooting by a camera on ground level, the aerial shots created by the drone advance a technological poetics, which allows for breaking the screen space produced by traditional means of shooting. It forms a new space that combines the first-person view and god's eye view, provided by the uniqueness of drone shooting. Peter Bergen argues that drones "alter the way we see and relate to others, the way we conceive space and time."[123] When the drone glides through the air, the camera covers the items on the ground in

[123] Peter L Bergen. & Daniel Rothenberg. (2015) *Drone Wars: Transforming Conflict, Law, and Policy*. Cambridge:

a smooth manner, which conveys a peaceful visual experience. For example, in *The Living Past*, the drone footage captures the terraces shimmering and disappearing amongst the mist and mountains, slowly moving the camera through the air, forming a sense of a peaceful pastoral style, which coincides with the construction of Xanadu as a space under the thematic strand of agricultural civilisation. On the other hand, when it comes to the cityscape, the drone performs vertical movements to present the difference of altitude amongst the forest of tall buildings. This has become a dominant method of filming cityscapes in aerial shooting. For instance, when recounting the story of photographer Xianzhang Zheng capturing Shanghai's skyline, the drone gradually moves from low altitude to high altitude, providing a spectacular view of skyscrapers and ground level buildings, which underlines the modernity and industrialisation of Shanghai.

Moreover, the employment of background music in the previous drone shots bridges the gap between the diegetic and extradiegetic elements, stimulating viewers' emotional connection to the city, as well as aiding the dissemination of ideas. For instance, as the narrator says, 'China, a five thousand – year – old civilisation, in a hurry, over the last three decades, it has modernised faster than any other country. At the heart of this transformation is one city, Shanghai. It's now China's most popular city; its financial hub and the world's busiest port,' we encounter two types of sound, narration and background music. The narrator suggests that the changing cityscape of Shanghai proves the success of China's urbanisation and industrialisation under economic reform. The background music is *Disintegrator* by David Tobin, Jeff Meegan and Mark Armstrong, its arrangement made up of strings and drums. From a development of weak to strong beats, accompanying powerful rock drums, the impassioned music arouses a sense of excitement when drone shots present the sharp edges and shiny glass facades of the modern buildings. Especially, when the drone ascends from ground level to a higher position, passing over a skyscraper from the ground, the sound of percussion follows the camera movements, which infuse vigour into the drone shots, tempering the potential tedium of repeated viewings of tall buildings standing in Shanghai. The involvement of music with powerful drums suggests that industrialisation brings new passion and dynamism to human life.

Chinawood: The Industrialisation of China's Filmmaking – Hengdian Film Base as a Case Study.

Cambridge University Press.

There is one section in *The Future is Now* which focuses on China's filmmaking site, Hengdian World Studio, and which includes footage of martial arts director Ying Wang, who is working with his team there, suggesting that filmmaking in China is operating in an industrialised mode. In this sequence, the documentary suggests that Hengdian World Studio is equal to Hollywood, and that Chinese martial arts films in Hengdian have a similar role to Western films in Hollywood. As there are numerous '-woods' in cinema, from Nollywood (Nigeria) to Bollywood (India), the name of Chinawood supplied by the narrator suggests that the cultural content produced in today's China has approached an international level, where it rivals the Hollywood production mode. The narrator states: "In Zhejiang Province, a massive complex has been built, China's answer to Hollywood, Chinawood. This 6400-acre outdoor film set is now the world's biggest. Chinese history is being retold for Chinese audiences, like the Hollywood studios in the 1940s and 50s … Hollywood has westerns, Chinawood has its own wild west, dynastic dramas and high-octane martial arts movies." Through the voice-over, the Western audience is given an indication of the scale of the Hengdian Film Base and its remarkable work in developing genre films.[124] To perceive Hengdian Film Base as a rival to Hollywood here seems high praise, due to Hollywood being generally considered as the symbol of a mature filmmaking industry, one that sets filmmaking standards.

To aid the representation of a beautiful China in the thematic strand of industrialised civilisation, *The Future is Now* includes scenes with martial arts director Ying Wang's filmmaking practice in order to display the influence of industrialisation on the field of filmmaking. Through the employment of both aerial cameras and normal camera shots on the ground, it demonstrates that taking the filmmaking industry as a representative case of cultural and creative arts production practices in China are forming a professional system imitating the Western manner. Materially, the combination of drone shots and normal shots creates a sense of being 'at presence', which relates to Chinese film studies. Angela Zito interprets being 'at presence' with 'shooting on location', which contains the acceptance of contingency in the situation of 'on site visuals'.[125] (Zito, 2015). Filmmaker Xiaoming Ai reckons that 'at presence'

[124] The genre films which operate the filmmaking in the Hengdian Film Base compose the dynastic drama films and martial arts films. The notable films in the former genre include *The Emperor and The Assassin* (Yimou Zhang, China, 1998), *Curse of the Golden Flower* (Yimou, China, 2006), *Red Cliff I* (John Woo Yu-Sen, China, 2008), *Red Cliff II* (John Woo Yu-Sen, China, 2009), *Detective Dee and the Mystery of the Phantom Flame* (Tsui Hark, Mainland China/Hong Kong, 2010) and in the latter genre are examples, *Hero* (Yimou Zhang, China, 2002), *The Forbidden Kingdom* (Rob Minkoff, US/China, 2008),*The Four I* (Gordan Chan/Janet Chun, Mainland China/Hong Kong, 2012), *The Four II* (Gordan Chan/Janet Chun, Mainland China/Hong Kong, 2013), *The Four III* (Gordan Chan/Janet Chun, Mainland China/Hong Kong, 2014), *Sword Master* (Derek Yee Tung Sing, Mainland China/Hong Kong, 2016), *Brotherhood of Blades* (Yang Lu, China, 2014), *Brotherhood of Blades II: The Infernal Battlefield* (Yang Lu, China, 2017) and so on.

[125] Zito, Angela. (2015) The Act of Remembering, the Xianchang of Recording: The Folk/Minjian Memory Project in China. *Film Quarterly*, 69 (1): 20-35.

means '*xian chang*', referring to the fact that the filmmakers are supposed to maintain being present with the camera in a comprehensive set of attitudes: political, cultural and aesthetic.[126] (Zhang & Ai, 2017). Here the consciousness of 'at presence' created in *The Future is Now* means that the film creates a feeling of engagement through the employment of ground shooting alongside a large number of drone shots. Consequently, the audience could feel that they are alongside the director, watching him working on his filmmaking in Hengdian Film Base. As a result, this presents a view of filmmaking in China operating within industrialised logicistics, and conveys the impression of authenticity and professionalism. Specifically, a cluster of aerial shots are first employed at the beginning of the Chinawood scenes. The drone quickly gets close to Hengdian World Studio and keeps rotating to give an overview by circling shots and overhead shots (Fig.31 and Fig.32), presenting the whole picture of the filmmaking base from above. Many buildings whose design style belongs to different periods appear in the scene, which helps establish the impression that Chinawood occupies a great deal of coverage, suggesting the professionalism of this Chinawood studio as a filmmaking base.

(Fig.31 The drone captures the pastiche of European architecture in Chinawood film base. Circling shot)

[126] Zhen Zhang & Xiaoming Ai. (2017) From Academia to Xianchang: Feminism, Documentary Aesthetics and Social Movement. *Studies in Documentary Film*, 11 (3): 248-261.

(Fig.32 The drone flies forward capturing the replicas of Chinese imperial architecture in the Chinawood film base. Overhead shot)

(Fig.33 The camera captures the scene of a drama being shot in the Chinawood film base.)

(Fig.34 The drone flies low to film the scene that Ying Wang is directing on the site.)

In addition, when recounting Ying Wang's shooting practice, the documentary employs ground shooting to give a sense of 'at presence' for viewers. In the scenes where Ying Wang is directing his new martial arts movie (Fig.33 and Fig.34), actors and film crew (including cinematographer, director and lighting engineer) appear in the same space; their devices, from different positions, are operating to capture the actors' performances. In the next ground shot of the sequence on Ying Wang, the director advises a stuntman how to jump for the next shot of their martial arts movie (Fig.34). All of these elements provide a vivid picture of how China is producing its own genre films, and the booming industrialisation of filmmaking in accordance with the international mode which has been exemplified by Hollywood. As was argued at the beginning of the section, in the thematic strand of industrial civilisation in terms of the representation of beautiful China, *China from Above I* films metropolitan landscapes to underscore the success brought by technological rationality. It includes the modernity of visual scenes, skyscrapers as an example, and the industrialisation of the content-production of an art form, a Chinawood film base as the industry case.

The Beautiful China Policy: Building the Beauty of Eco-Civilisation in the Text of New Energy Use

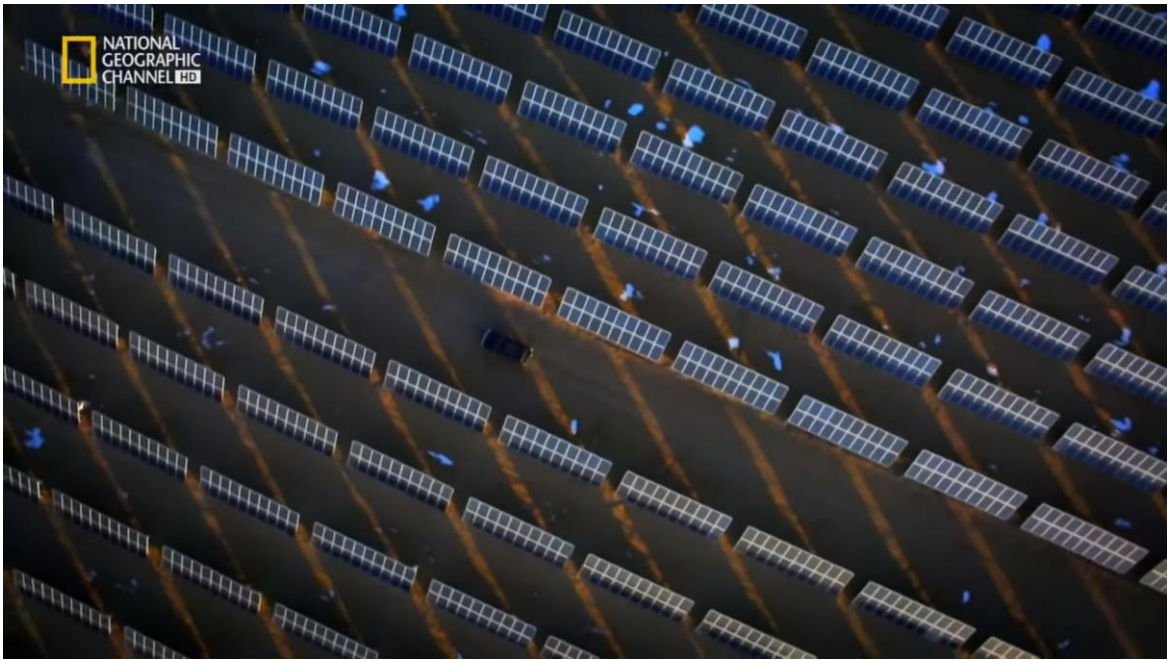
After framing the beauty of China as technological rationality in the film through shots which capture the city landscapes in Shanghai and Hangzhou, *China from Above I* raises another concept of eco-civilisation in the text of new energy use. *China from Above I* has absorbed the idea of the 'beautiful China' policy so that it comes to shape the ecological aspect of China as

one of the dimensions defining screen representation of the beauty of China, based on a green society. The film employs a combination of overhead shots and panning shots to capture scenes relating to new energy and their related technologies and equipment as used in China. For example, on the segment on China using wind power and running wind turbines, *China from Above I* employs drone panning shots to present a panoramic scene of the wind power station (Fig.35), then utilises overhead shots to juxtapose the size of the subjects and the mega devices (Fig.36).

(Fig.35 The drone films the turbines in Xinjiang. Panning shot)

(Fig.36 The drone captures two engineers working with the wings of turbine. Overhead shot)

In the film, the drone rotates across the wind turbine, continually framing the two engineers and their huge equipment in the centre of the scene. However, drone shots alone are insufficient to advance the ideological position, so they are complemented by the narrator who states: “To replace fossil fuels, Chinese engineers are in a race against time to build giant wind farms … in the far north-western province of Xinjiang, they’re employing a two thousand – year – old invention to harness the unusual climactic condition across these enormous planes, wind power.” The application of voice-over here is in conjunction with the construction of the representation of a beautiful China which integrates eco-concepts. Facing this reality, it suggests that in answering the call to environmental protection by the international community, China endeavours to implement a series of renewable energy projects in order to reduce the demands of a developing country for fossil fuel. Therefore, the depiction of wind farms and solar power stations in *China from Above I* is a precise narration of visualised politics, which suggests that although China is experiencing industrialisation and possible pollution, it is positively responding to environmental issues in the world.



(Fig.37 The drone captures a car driving through the solar panels on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Circling shot)

(Fig.38 The drone films the solar panels on the ground. Panning shot)

As the drone flies over the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, the film music of *Disintegrator* rises in volume. The fast-paced non-diegetic sound influences the audience by producing impassioned emotion with stringed instruments. By the repetitive note in the same passage, the tremolo effect stands out and the frisson in listening achieved. This is the second time that this piece of music appears in episode 2, *The Future is Now*. The first appearance of the track was in the scene in which the drone flies over the skyscrapers of Shanghai. It establishes the setting in relation to emotional perceptions of modernity. The second time it appears in shots where the drone is circling and panning to film the rows of solar panels standing on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau (Fig.37 and Fig.38). This represents the theme of technical rationality, inspiring overwhelming emotion brought by the grand sight of the sea of photovoltaic panels.[127] This not only conveys enthusiasm in terms of technology, due to the industry of new energy involving technology, specialisation and investment, but also because it can be read as a metaphor for successful governance in the region of Tibet. Due to slow development in their early history and their difficult, isolated geographic circumstances, Tibet, which is located in northwest China, is not prosperous like Shanghai. However, the segment on solar power farms films the technology for new energy use and relevant equipment which have been installed in Tibet, indicating how China has deployed technological investment and experts to the area.

[127] The photovoltaic panel is a device which captures the sunlight and convert the solar radiation in the photoelectric or photochemical effect to produce electric energy.

Framing the Beauty of China in the Narrative Strand of Post-Industrialised Civilisation

China from Above II employs aerial cinematography to recount a series of ongoing stories which involve remarkable landscapes in mainland China, and Chinese people working in different fields. The documentary suggests how those Chinese people who live in inland towns and coastal cities, from north to south, and work in different professional fields, participate in the development of Chinese society under the social wave of more advanced stages of industrialism.

China from Above II films the coastlines of China, mountains and rivers as well as the neighbouring artificial objects in two episodes, *The Dynamic Coast* and *Land of Mountains and Rivers*. It employs an anti-institutional narrative strategy to organise the subjects and their stories, to convey that eco-industry builds Chinese society to become a new type of eco-society with humanistic values, scientific and technological dreams, and the coexistence of industry and environment. An anti-institutional narrative strategy opposes the old concept of institutional narrative which forms the textual compositions in terms of industrial stories or the themes in relation to policies adhering to authoritative guidelines. For example, the institutional narrative is evident in the TV documentary film *Great Three Gorges* (Yue Hua, China, 2009).[128] In its depiction of the engineering project of Three Gorges Dam, this film employs archive footage in which state leaders and government officials give instructions on hydroelectric project. As a scene of Chairman Mao Zedong among the crowd is seen in the archive footage, the voice-over states, 'As Chairman Mao's words: The floods impede us if we do not control the flooding', suggesting the legitimation of politics in building the project. Additionally, the film employs interviews with intellectuals to lend professional credibility. In one scene Houqun Chen, an academic at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, is explaining the working principles of Three Gorges Dam. In a succession of similar footage in *Great Three Gorges*, the head of the state, senior government officials, intellectuals with honourable status, all who are representatives of diverse dimensions in the structure of society are filmed at the centre of the narrative, although practically none of them have participated in the building of this engineering project. This is where the institutional narrative focuses more on the level of institutions and organisations, rather than the personal experience of someone on the site. However, in the anti-institutional narrative applied in *China from Above II*, the subjectivity of individual characters is the focus of the narrative. For example, *China from Above II* narrates

[128] Great Three Gorges/大三峡, is a 6 – episode documentary films, produced by and transmitted on the channel of CCTV in China. This film has a number of directors, Yue Hua, Hai Zhang, Shan Yan, Bing Han, Xiaohui Xu, Yanan Tong, Jiang Long, Qingmei Ma, Qi Gai.

the segment on Hong Kong – Zhuhai – Macao Bridge in episode I, *The Dynamic Coast,* based on the development of the story of Chinese engineers who tie their life with engineering dreams. In this way, *China from Above II* infuses technological rationality with humanistic values.

Anti-institutional narrative and Eco-Industry: Humanity, Engineering Dreams and Coexistence

Taking the examples of the segments on building Hong Kong – Zhuhai – Macao Bridge in *The Dynamic Coast,* and climbing Mount Qomolangma in *Land of Mountains and Rivers*, this section analyses how *China from Above II* uses drone videography and an anti-institutional narrative strategy to shape the cinematic representation of China as an eco-society balanced between technologism and environmentalism.[129] In the depiction of the engineering project of Hongkong – Zhuhai – Macao Bridge in *The Dynamic Coast*, the documentary employs diverse aerial shots (Fig.39-43) to present the shape and length of the super sea – crossing bridge and its marine location. It shows the difficulty of the building process and the outstanding progress of the ongoing construction. First, the film employs a circling shot (Fig.39 and Fig.40) to film the grand bridge standing in the sea. By the rotation of the drone from right to left, the scene of one section of the main body of the bridge is presented from different visual perspectives. Next, the drone flies downwards then moves upwards to complete the tilting up and tilting down shot, filming huge girders at low points and high points (Fig.41 and Fig.42). Then, the drone flies forward to capture the full length of the bridge (Fig.43) as it stretches to the horizon between sea and sky. In this way, this impressive engineering artefact is presented as a work in progress, and the aspect of technologism underscored from the visual perspective.

[129] Mount Qomolangma is also known as Mount Everest in the Western Context. The word 'Qomolangma' is from the Tibetan language, meaning 'Goddess, Mother of the World'. The name of 'Mount Qomolangma' was found to be published on a map in Paris by the geographer D'Anville in 1733.

(Fig.39 The drone circles to film the bridge. Circling shot)

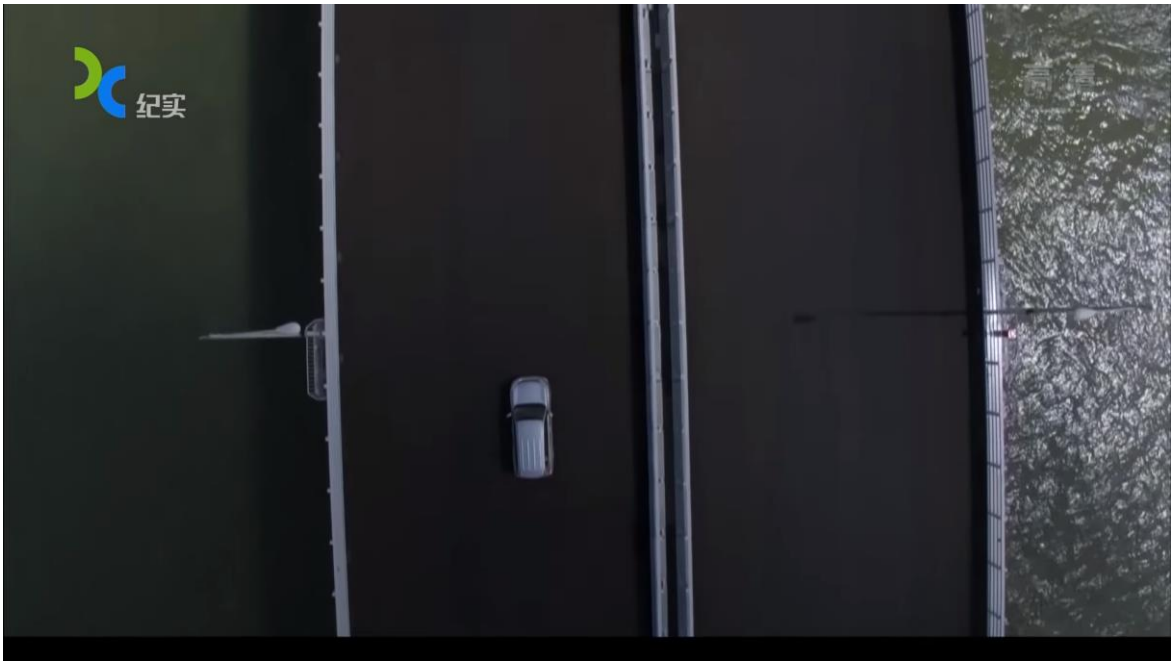
(Fig.40 The drone finishes the shot of circling the girder. Circling shot)

(Fig.41 The drone flies and tilts up to capture the girders and cables. Panning up shot)

(Fig.42 The drone flies and tilts down to film the surface of the bridge. Panning down shot)

(Fig.43 The drone flies forward to film the length of the bridge.)

With the revealing shot by the drone (Fig.44 and Fig.45), the film moves on to the story of the two engineers who participated in building the bridge, and suggests their engineering dreams integrate their lives with national construction projects. As mentioned above, the anti - institutional narrative works to alter the focus of technical rationality to the human element. The drone flies over the bridge filming the running car, the roadway on the bridge, and the sea level on both sides (Fig.44), which reveals the environment where a car runs over the bridge, providing a mobile visual effect when the drone is moving at the same pace as the car. Another frame in which the two subjects come into view (Fig.45) complete the shot, and brings attention to the narrative achieved by the talking head interview. This is the entry point to humanistic emotion.



(Figure.44 The drone films a running car on the bridge. Revealing shot.)

(Fig.45 The camera frames the two characters, Jinhai Xiong and Shuliang Li. Revealing shot)

(Fig.46 The camera films Jinhai Xiong giving a talking-head interview.)

(Fig.47 The camera films Shuliang Li being interviewed.)

Jinhai Xiong, the bridge measurement manager, and Shuliang Li, the bridge surveyor, are interviewed in the following scenes (Fig.46). Xiong says, “I left home shortly after getting married and worked in Canton. I can only see her (Jinhai Xiong’s daughter) once or twice a year when I get home. So, when it comes to this, I feel that I owe her a lot.” Li adds to this sense of tender emotions, when he states (Fig.47), “I have been here for four years. I worked here since 2011 and got married in 2015. My child was born in 2016. All my life events, basically, have happened here.” Their words suggest that this engineering project weighs a lot

on their lives. As the two characters talk about the relationship between their lives and the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, they are framed in the settings of artificial islands and the roadway of the bridge.[130] In this type of framing, the two characters and the man-made object are accommodated together in the talking head interviews, operating as a metaphor for the co-existence of the engineering dream and technologism.

In the section on Tibetan climbers and Mount Qomolangma in episode 2 *Land of Mountains and Rivers*, the film employs the same anti-institutional narrative strategy, but depicts the new value-orientation of an eco-society since a wave of industrialisation has moved into a late stage. That is, a turn from extreme industrialism and adventurism supported by technological confidence, to a trend of value towards balance, recycling, sustainability and coexistence. In this segment, human beings climb the mountains and cliffs, a theme which in the past was usually developed in terms of the conquest of nature, is conversely being established as a text of environmental protection.

(Fig.48 The drone captures the adventure of climbing on a mountain ridge. Circling shot)

The film first applies a successive circling shot (Fig.48) to present a scene in which humans are climbing Mount Everest. Taking the two climbers who are standing on the mountain range as the centre of the axis, a drone frames the subjects in the centre of the screen. Meanwhile, more information in the scene, for instance, the subjects' situation, surrounded by the forest of a mountain peak, is gradually revealed, which indicates a state of conflict between

[130] As a bridge-tunnel combined construction, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge consists main bridge, submarine tunnel and two artificial islands.

humanity and nature. Moreover, the fast-moving pace of the rotating drone shots connotes a sense of danger, which is usually the experience when humans challenge nature. Although it has employed circling shots to show the dangerous steepness of the ridge of Mount Qomolangma, the focus of the segment still lies on a cleaning action for ecological purposes.

(Fig.49 Pema Tinley and his members do the cleaning action. Follow shot)

The use of different types of shot brings diverse experiences to the audience, and influences their viewing of the characters and scenes in the shots.[131] (Katz 1991) In this case, to achieve different cinematographic effects, employing more than one type of camera movement in the same sequence is indispensable. Since the aerial rotating shot has been used previously for the presentation of human beings as conquerors of nature, on the contrary, for the construction of a protective role in the narrative of climbing for cleaning, following shots become the optimum choice to record the subjects in motion (Fig.49). Compared with previous aerial circling shots, which were categorised as objective shots requiring smooth motion by a drone mechanism, the follow shots here are conducted by conventional camera work as a subjective view when the audience watches the ongoing events.[132] (Ashtari et.al 2020) This attribution of follow shots can be of benefit to the building of a new value – orientation through the establishment of audience alignment, for example in the scene where these characters clean a path, removing non-degradable rubbish while climbing. These following shots effectively

[131] Steven D Katz. (1991) *Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen*. Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions in conjunction with Focal Press.
[132] Amirsaman Ashtari, et al. (2020) Capturing Subjective First-Person View Shots with Drones for Automated Cinematography. *ACM Transactions on Graphics*, 39 (5): 1-14.

represent the idea of the 'beautiful China' policy, an initiative that is shaping China towards an eco-society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter responds to the research questions raised in the opening paragraphs, suggesting that the representation of 'Beautiful China' on screen has been created and the utilisation of the particular '*Xiě Yì*' cinematic styles and drone technology enhances the expression of sound and pictures. As has been demonstrated in this chapter, *China from Above I* and *China from Above II* both employ the method of ethnographic filmmaking techniques to represent China. Taking advantage of drone videography, *China from Above* films provide scenes with a stunning visual sense when capturing natural landscapes and historical heritage relics, for example, capturing Shaolin Temple and the Leshan Giant Buddha statue. The impressive characteristics of cinematic techniques in filming natural scenery is based on the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic, a principle drawn from Chinese painting techniques. Driven by the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic, the film utilises drone hovering shots and circling shots to form an artistic perception and construct relevant ideas associated with religions, myths and sagas of ancient heroic figures in the shots. After reviewing the process of the *China from Above* films in establishing their representation of beautiful China, the chapter argues that from the three thematic strands, agricultural civilisation, industrial civilisation and post-industrial civilisation, an alternation of the textual structure has occurred, forming a definition of the beauty of China in a cinematic space in the building of visual spectacles, and of technological rationality in relation to the eco-society of China. However, to inspect the manner in which *China from Above* observes natural landscapes and city architecture, or especially certain cultural groups and their traditions, we could find that the method of ethnographic visualisation by the film is limited, because it is a particular way for a Westerner to find, explore and study the culture and people of the East. No matter how many relics, buildings, tribes and local activities have been recorded, China is always viewed as an object that needs to be seen and interpreted by the West in an ethnographic text. The integration of the ideas of 'Beautiful China', which benefit from the mode of Chinese – American co-production in filmmaking, composes the diverse strands of narration of the stories in the film. This twists the relation between the filmmaker and the subjects observed in the traditional manner of an ethnographic documentary, through the modified textual frames from a new perspective of aesthetic accountability. As the political idea of 'Beautiful China' and the initiative of shaping an eco-society in relation to the representation of China, a new discourse of accountability orients the type of frame in the ethnographic film from the external

sense-impression to inner reflection via subjectivity. As such, the cinematic representation of beautiful China - which is based on visual construction related to the beauty of natural scenery, attains the status of political discourse in terms of the beauty of the social form of an eco-society - is established.

Chapter 4

Constructing a Superpower: Framing Hegemonic China in the Expository Text, Archival Footage and Structural Editing

The chapter is developed around responding to the research questions that ask what representations of China are produced in the South Korean dominated transnational documentary films involving the depiction of China on screen and how these films construct such a cinematic image of China via particular film techniques as well as resonating with the political installation of the topics of China in a Korean society. In order to answer the two questions, this chapter aims to analyse the representation of China as a superpower in the Chinese - South Korean transnational documentary film *Super China* (슈퍼차이나) (Park Jin-bum, KBS/China, 2015).[133] The chapter examines the film's exploration of China related to hegemonic power via aspects of economic penetration, the arms race and military conflicts, as well as cross-cultural communication strategy. The films consist of 6 episodes, which each last 60 minutes.[134] Episode 1, *The Power of 1.3 Billion* (13 억의 힘), introduces the viewer to the manner in which China's large population forms a huge market which is competitively attractive to other countries, and how consequently the potential market in China influences countries across Asia, North America and South America to reallocate their domestic industrial resources. Episode 2, *The Power of Capital*(머니파워), explores how China makes a large number of investments overseas, playing the role of the world's largest holder of foreign currency reserves, and impacting economic structures in relevant countries where Chinese capital has reached. Episode 3, *China Rules the World: China's Era of Hegemonism* (팍스시니카, 중국 패권의 시대), describes

[133] Although *Super China* is transnational documentary, it is dominated by South Korea. As a result, *Super China* was first released by KBS 1 (Korean Broadcasting System) from 15-01-2015 to 25-01-2015 with voice – over and subtitles in Korean. It was later broadcast on CCTV 1 and 9 (China's Central Television documentary channel) with Chinese subtitles, and in TVB (Television Broadcasts Limited, Hong Kong) twice from 08-05-2016 and 19-06-2016 and 17-05-2017 to 25-05-2017.

[134] At its first release to the public, *Super China* was produced as a six-episode documentary series. Because of the fervent feedback from South Korean viewers and the increased level of discussion of China's national power in the public sphere, the filmmaking team of *Super China* edited episode 7 *The Chinese Road* (중국의 길) with concentrated content from the previous 6 episodes, and additionally made a special TV interview show in which several South Korean scholars, specialists as well as diplomats talked about *Super China*, which became episode 8 *Super China, Then Our Future?* (슈퍼차이나, 우리의 미래?) . However, only the original 6 episodes of *Super China* are examined in this chapter.

China's rapidly increasing military expenditure, focusing on military expansion in the South China Sea, suggesting the hegemony of China's development.[135] Episode 4, *The Power of Land* (대륙의 힘), demonstrates that the vast territory of China provides strong local support, due to the various kinds of resources on the land. Episode 5, *Soft Power* (소프트파워), demonstrates how China's cultural industry extends its influence on a worldwide scale. Episode 6, *The Leadership of China's Communist Party (CCP)* (공산당 리더십), analyses the success made by the Chinese government while also presenting evidence of corruption and the wealth gap, presenting viewers with the dilemmas faced by the ruling Chinese Communist Party. In the chapter, I will demonstrate how the cinematic representation of China as a superpower is constructed that throughout the 6 episodes.

In order to examine how *Super China* builds a representation of China in terms of a superpower, I employ Bill Nichols' theory regarding modes of representation in documentary filmmaking. In *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Nichols classifies the modes of representation into four types; expository, observational, interactive and reflective. Nichols argues that "the expository text addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that advance an argument about the historical world." (2017: 121) He suggests that in the expository mode of documentary, "Images serve as illustration or counterpoint. The rhetoric of the commentator's argument serves as the textual dominant, moving the text forward in service of its persuasive needs." (2017: 108) I will illustrate how *Super China* uses the expository mode, in that it raises the argument that China is a hegemony challenging the world order imposed by the US, and emphasises the influence of China and its ambitions, while suggesting the objectivity and reliability of its standpoint. It employs extensive archive footage and still photography to convey a sense of authenticity when it narrates events in which China is a participant. Additionally, *Super China* includes interviews, which encourage viewers to believe that the validity of China and the role it has played is being revealed, giving a concrete impression of China's role as a superpower. It employs the arrangement of image, sound and editing to complete the establishment of this screen image of China. Briefly, from the perspective of a South Korean

[135] 'Hegemonism' is a term originating from the adjective and noun 'hegemony', proposed in the thesis to describe the tendency of a nation to expand in diplomatic interaction, military development, and political decisions. The discussion of the representation of China's hegemonism in the writing is based on the construction by *Super China*.

documentary, *Super China* raises a core argument that China is a super power with influence beyond Asia. In order to illustrate how *Super China* develops its position, the chapter primarily focuses on two aspects of the film; the first explores the expository text of hegemony and China completed by the voice-over, archive footage and still photos, while the second analyses the structural organisation of the film in terms of shot editing.

Super China employs an ethnographic method to build the expository text, since stories narrated through an ethnographic discourse provide a veneer of authenticity. Meanwhile, in order to make the sensation of authenticity engaging between the filmmakers and the subjects observed, in other words to make the documentary persuasive, the film utilises voice-over commentary with a convincing tone and interviews with the subjects to construct stories of Chinese influence as a superpower through the ideological prism of South Korea. Apart from the ethnographic style in the cinematography, *Super China* employs a structural shot editing strategy to build an image of hegemonic China. I firstly argue that *Super China* uses a formula extracted from the ethnographic research method of anthropology to establish its ideological structure. In the formula, participatory observation, as a step of the ethnographic research method, functions as the means to provide credibility for this evidence, and arguments raised by the voice-over. Basically, "participatory observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture", as stated by K.M DeWalt and B.R DeWalt.[136] (2010: 12) The team in *Super China* visited many locales in different countries and regions so that they could explore the story of China's overwhelming influence with scenes and voices from the local area.[137] For instance, in the sequence on Chinese investment in Peru, *Super China* employs the Q&A formula to implement an ethnographic method of filming the scenery of Toromocho village, showing how the entry of Chinese capital has caused unemployment for the local villagers. With an ideological frame produced by these ethnographic manoeuvres, the film suggests that it occupies an objective position, and recognises a Chinese company as being damaging

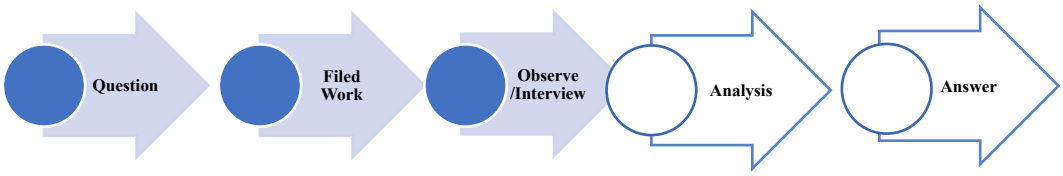
[136] Kathleen Musante DeWalt & Billie R DeWalt. (2011). *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Second ed. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.

[137] 'Providing a Different Perspective of China'—Interview with Park Jin-bum. http://world.people.com.cn/n/2015/0212/c157278-26555978.html Accessed on 23-04-2022.

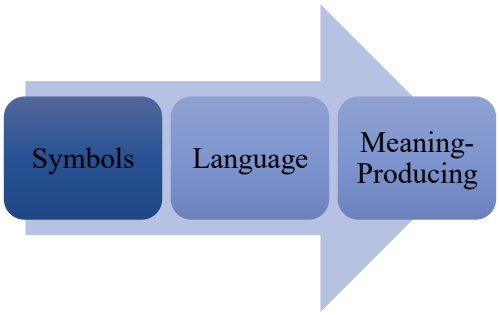
to the life of the Toromocho people. As Kirner and Mills argue that participatory observation is regarded as being 'writings about culture', the method of participatory observation has been considered as a means for accessing data, or a measure to uncover the 'truth'.[138] *Super China* employs the role of an observer who examines Chinese economic activities at a distance from China, when it states the international commercial investments of China in countries of Africa and Latin America are a new form of capital colonisation. The team of *Super China* arrives at these locales as a step in conducting fieldwork. As anthropologists might record the culture they are experiencing or observing, the team of *Super China* perform this activity with their camera. *Super China* films scenes of local people and their social environment to represent the 'reality' of these places. With the Q&A formula, *Super China* effectively demonstrates many concepts, hypotheses and judgements in relation to China. Essentially, in each sequence that explores different themes, *Super China* first raises a question or hypothesis. For example, in episode 3, titled *China Rules the World: China's Era of Hegemonism* (팍스시니카, 중국 패권의 시대), *Super China* proposes the heading of the sequence that narrates China's influence in Sri Lanka with the voiceover, 'Based on their economic and military strength, China expands its influence in the area of Indian Ocean.' It reminds the audience of the main idea of this sequence and suggests the content the audience will observe is China's activities in other regions. Next, *Super China* employs scenic shots in which the audience can see particular characteristics of the political environment or cityscapes of Colombo to assert the authenticity of the narrator. *Super China* also uses interviews with several residents to present the audience with the voices of local people, thereby authenticating the narrative. This creates a sense of being 'on the spot' or 'being there' where the audience can see symbolic items, for example, the national flags of China and Sri Lanka on the street, in the shot, and hear the voice-over and interview stating 'Sri Lanka and China currently are in a very close relationship'. These devices, taken together, operate to authenticate the arguments and judgements generated by the film. Sri Lanka, as well as towns and cities in over 20 countries, including Argentina, Peru, Greece, Kenya, Vietnam, America, Russia, Zambia, Italy, are visited to invite the audience to witness the changes under China's influence and learn the 'reality' presented through South Korean ideology. *Super China*

[138] Kimberly Kirner & Jan Mills. (2020) *Doing Ethnographic Research: Activities and Exercises*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

suggests that these changes have been forced by China's increasing economic power. Through scenic shots and interviews, *Super China* is able to organise these sequences and compose them with structural editing. In this way, the themes of Chinese hegemony are gradually developed. The following flowcharts display how the Q&A formula operates in accordance with the ethnographic method, and how the ideological frame of Chinese hegemony from the perspective of South Korea is built through image and sound.



(Flowchart 1. Q&A Formula in Ethnographic Method)



(Flowchart 2. Ideological Frame in Ethnographic Steps)

For Flowchart 1, I have discussed the first three steps in previous paragraphs. The following two steps are slightly different here, as *Super China* is not really performing ethnographic work to record a form of culture, but only utilising the ethnographic method as a cinematic formula. Ultimately, *Super China* is an expository documentary aiming to present a representation of China in relation to hegemony, so that the film is actually engaging in another process, described in Flowchart 2. *Super China* attempts to produce meaning through the symbols and language which appear in the shots. For example, in episode 2 *The Power of Capital* (머니 파워), in the sequence on the Chinese company NFC Africa in Zambia, *Super China* also films the national flags of Zambia

and China to set the tone of commercial cooperation in the text of politics. Additionally, when the film frames the two subjects, the Chinese and Zambian staff who are working on the underground mine, *Super China* utilises the voice-over commentary to offer ideological interpretation on particular scenes. For example, this can be observed in the image of two men, one Chinese staff and one Zambian staff, who are both dressed in the same orange uniforms and safety helmets, standing nearby underground mining equipment, where the viewer has no source to know their difference in responsibility. However, the narrator immediately explains, 'The laborious duties are mainly taken by Zambian people, whereas the Chinese staff are only in charge of management affairs'. As such, *Super China* depicts China's commercial interaction as the exploitation of capital. Ultimately, with the Q&A formula and ideological frame in the ethnographic mode, *Super China* is able to provide viewers with ideological arguments, which aids the documentary to construct the 'reality' of Chinese influence as a hegemonic power. Across all the episodes, it illustrates how China's increasing economic power resembles an invisible hand forcing other countries' structure of industry. We see this as *Super China* visits different places – some of them well-known metropolises such as Milan (Italy), San Francisco (US), Athens (Greece), while the others are little-known small towns, such as Chambishi (Zambia), Toromocho (Peru), Ussuriysk (Russia). These cities and towns lie across the continents of Asia, South Africa, Central Africa, North America and Eastern Europe. As I develop further below, on their arrival at each new location, the voice - over offers a hypothesis of the economic actions of China in that country, then *Super China* films local scenery and provides interviews to verify the given hypothesis.

In the utilisation of structural shot editing, one distinctive characteristic of *Super China* is that it employs several hand-held shots with a shaky camera, in which characters and surroundings in the scenes are unstable, bringing a crude visual experience, but also proves a sense of authenticity relating to the presence of elements in the shots. For instance, in episode 2 *The Power of Capital*, the scene in which a female Chinese staff member, who wears a grey uniform with safety helmet equipped with a flashlight, introduces the progress of an ongoing mining project being filmed, because this shot moves at a groggy pace causing the effect of visual fatigue. We can see that the person is focused clearly, two or three seconds later, experiencing a reduction of physical distance between the filmmaker and the subject. However, *Super China* always employs different montage methods, for example, intellectual montage

and the juxtaposition of montage construction, to advance its ideological arguments', although many scenes have no dispositional meaning.[139] For example, in episode 1 *The Power of 1.3 Billion*, a shot of broad grassland in the Pampas of Argentina and another scene which shows innumerable soybeans pouring down are edited together. *Super China* links the two shots suggesting that economic demand from China results in the turn from animal husbandry to soybean farming in Argentina. A question, 'Why recently has the pastureland of the Pampas been closed?', is raised by the voiceover in advance, at the beginning of the Pampas sequence: the editing here is constructed to suggest causality between the Chinese economy and Argentine agriculture.

To summarise the argument which I will develop throughout the chapter, *Super China* depicts China as a superpower in terms of economics, military force, culture and politics, and I will focus on how this is achieved through two methods, that is, expository text and structural shot editing. To construct the 'reality' of Chinese hegemony based on these aspects, *Super China* presents three themes - economic penetration, military hegemony and ideological expansion - on screen to suggest the influence of China as a superpower. The film first shapes the representation of China being associated with the text of economic hegemony, in which the film narrates some international stories about Chinese market and capital. Then, *Super China* suggests the military strength of China by examining the regional conflicts between China and its neighbours, such as Japan and Vietnam, to present an ambitious country and its national defence power. It constructs the 'reality' of Chinese military power around the concept of military hegemony in Asia, with a South Korean commentary. Finally, in the text of soft power, *Super China* films scenes in which Chinese culture and art are popularly circulated in the international art community, and suggests the popularity of Chinese culture in the Western countries is a form of ideological expansion. My aim in this chapter is to develop the analysis from the above aspects, and to illustrate how each of these comes into being through the expository text and structural shot editing strategy.

Narrating Economic Penetration: Symbol, Language, Meaning-Producing

Super China creates an expository text with the utilisation of an ethnographic method to represent the Chinese economy shaping a form of economic penetration into overseas

[139] The intellectual montage is featured with its function of being a metaphor in the shot which combines the image with intellectual meaning. These montage methods examined here are based on Eisenstein's work. See more about the scholarship of montage here: Sergei Eisenstein. (1986). *The Film Sense*. London: Faber and Faber.

territories. The ethnographic method is processed by an ideological frame which involves signifiers, language and meaning-production. The signifiers that appear in these films include material signifiers and non-material signifiers. Concretely, *Super China* takes advantage of material signifiers to complete the production of meaning. These include excavators, broken down hovels, soil, mines, cattle running on the Pampas, soybean farmland, Chinese customers, etc. These signifiers are matched with their surrounding environment, which functions as a setting to create particular meaning in the shots. For example, in one scene in episode 2 *Super China* frames excavators driving in mines to suggest resource exploitation by a Chinese mining company in Toromocho. Additionally, *Super China* employs interviews to place local languages on screen, and also uses a Korean voice-over commentary to advance an ideological position which is critical of Chinese manufacturing companies. For instance, at the end of the sequence of Toromocho, the Korean voice-over directly states, 'The case of Toromocha is a reflection that Chinese resource companies care more about profit than the life of local residents.' I shall examine some sequences from *Super China* to illustrate further how the film achieves this.

Super China, in episode 1 *The Power of 1.3 Billion* (13 억의힘) and episode 2 *The Power of Capital* (머니파워), represents China's increasing economy from a global perspective, analysing the role of the Chinese economy in the turn from globalisation to post-globalisation. The concept of 'Globalisation' has already been debated extensively in the fields of economics, politics and international relations (Rossi 2020; Mark, Kalinovsky & Marung 2020), and there is a consensus on recognizing globalisation as a flowing form of interaction amongst countries. However, some countries, for instance, China and Brazil, are considered as winners, while other countries are not satisfied with their developing domestic levels brought by the economic state of globalisation, due to their achieving less benefits from the global economic market, highlighting the accelerated gap of rich and poverty worldwide (Roy-Mukherjee & Udeogu: 2021).

A viewpoint that China has taken away opportunities and economic benefits from Western countries by taking advantage of globalisation is usually discussed together with what has been termed the 'China threat' theory. The China threat theory is a discourse on the 'rise of China' and 'China threat' raised by the US during mid-late 1990s, which regarded China as the successor of communism from the Soviet Union,

tending to seek hegemony globally.[140] Nicola Nymalm argues that the 'China threat' theory is linked both to assumptions regarding the likelihood of conflict and to the centrality of economic growth in assessments of power.[141] She suggests that when China is assessed as a threatening country by some politicians, not only economic factors are taken into account, but also the nature of China's Communist Party and their political system. Nymalm points out this is actually derived from American political discourse, where Congress depicts the US as the victim of 'unfair' and 'illiberal' policies. From the perspective of the 'China threat', China is thought to have built a new form of power relations, in which Ralph Wrobel has also argued that once the US retreated from its controlling influence in Southeast Asia, China would establish a 'backyard' in that area, holding a hegemonic position.[142] Although, there is another viewpoint, that China and America are not acting out a win-lose game against the background of globalisation.[143] (Lee: 2008) However, China is still being interpreted as a communist power which weaponises globalisation, turning their global ties into political tools against US influence.[144] (Schrader: 2020). *Super China* advances a similar perspective, constructing a representation of China within the concept of hegemonism. This will be examined below in the examples of sequences from diverse episodes of this documentary. In this representation of China being a super power on screen, the Chinese economy not only forces the overturning of the economic structures of some countries, but also implements economic colonialism by a succession of overseas investments.

To illustrate this perspective, I analyse the sequence from episode 2 *The Power of Capital* (머니파워) in which a Chinese company encounters negative responses from the locals in Peru, analysing how the Q&A formula and ideological frame is carried out by the relevant ethnographic steps, and how the expository text is under construction. In flowchart 1, illustrating the Q&A formula, the concept of fieldwork is

[140] Renée Jeffery. (2009). Evaluating the 'China Threat': Power Transition Theory, the Successor-State Image and the Dangers of Historical Analogies. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 63 (2): 309-324.
[141] Nicola Nymalm. (2020) *From 'Japan Problem' to 'China Threat'? Rising Powers in US Economic Discourse*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp.28.
[142] Ralph Michael Wrobel. (2019) Chinese Geopolitics in Southeast Asia: A New Pattern of Economic Power within ASEAN? *Asiatische Studien*, 73 (1): 147-189.
[143] Kuan Yew Lee. (2008) China Must Convince the World Its Rise Is Peaceful. *New Perspective Quarterly*, 25 (2): 21-27.
[144] Matt Schrader. (2020) China Is Weaponizing Globalization, Foreign Policy. 05-06-2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/05/china-globalization-weaponizing-trade-communist-party/ Accessed on 25-03-2022.

borrowed from an ethnographic research method. Fieldwork, according to Robert Park, is about 'getting out there, wherever there is, and becoming part of what is going on and what you are researching', essentially, what Geertz (1988: 1) called 'being there'. Fieldwork in the discipline of sociology is usually considered as 'a way of doing research where the emphasis is placed on the collection of data at first hand by a researcher' (Pole & Hillyard, 2016: 3). In the scenes where Chinese enterprises exploit minerals in other countries, *Super China* employs scenic shots in the similar manner of doing fieldwork, bringing the audience the sense of 'being there' and the emotion of seeing something hidden. Specifically, as outlined in the introduction, *Super China* constructs the ideological representation of China in terms of hegemonic power through the process of narration that is conducted by the Q&A formula. The Q&A formula operates in five steps: 'Question', 'Fieldwork', 'Observation', 'Analysis' and 'Conclusion'.

(Fig.1 The roadway to Toromocho village. Long Shot.)

(Fig.2 Toromocho village lies surrounded by mines. Long shot)

(Fig.3 The residents of Toromocho look straight at the camera. Medium Shot)

Super China invites the audience to enter the story of Toromocho through a series of shots of the town. Utilising several long shots (Fig.1 and Fig.2), *Super China* captures scenes of the geographic environment of Toromocho. Some dilapidated brick houses are seen lying in the mines, signifying the underdeveloped appearance of the region. These long shots operate by taking the audience to Toromocho village, at least cinematically, creating a sense of 'being there' emotionally, in a dynamic relationship between the on-screen persons and the spectator. The audience is invited to feel an element of participatory observation when they watch the scene (Fig.1), a sense which is augmented by the use of a hand-held camera that records cars and trucks driving

forward. This suggests that the film crew is also slowly moving along this circled mountain path and entering the village. After the long shots, *Super China* employs medium shots (Fig.2) to capture scenes of the local residents who stand at the door and look straight at the camera. This fourth-wall breaking device disturbs the sense of observation in the previous long shots and an awareness of spectatorial intervention, which reminds them of the emotional window on Toromocho's people that will be opened to them.

After the previous long shots and medium shots which have taken the audience to the locale of Toromocho and created the sense of 'being there', reducing emotional distance, *Super China* employs close shots in talking head interviews with local residents. It seems to make further inroads to access the life of the Toromocho people and attempt to communicate the real local voice. In the close shots (Fig.4-6), *Super China* frames Toromocho residents on the screen without their names, but only their words, which have been translated into Korean. The interviewees express their fears over the changes brought by Chinese companies to the local community.

(Fig.4 A villager (a) talks about the coming of a Chinese company and unemployment.[145] Close shot)

[145] Because *Super China* did not provide the precise names of the three characters, and only mention them as '마을 주민' – 'villager' in English - on the relevant shots of their interviews, for the convenience of analysis, the writer use 'villager a', 'villager b' and 'villager c' to refer to the three people sequentially.

(Fig.5 Another villager (b) talks about the same topic of unemployment in Toromocho. Close shot)

(Fig.6 The villager (c) complains about Chinese company as disturbing Toromocho people. Close shot)

The first 'villager (a)' says, "Once a Chinese company purchases the Toromocho mines, they employ mine-workers externally rather than Toromocho residents."[146]

[146] The three villagers of Toromocho speak their local language and their words are translated into Korean on screen by the film production company KBS. Later, the video of *Super China* circulating in China had added Chinese subtitles by subtitle groups. Here the English words were translated by the writer from relevant Chinese subtitles. The Chinese subtitles of the words by 'villager a' are '中国企业收购了莫罗科查矿山，同时便开始从外面雇佣矿夫，可是却不雇佣莫罗科查居民'; that of 'villager b' is '中国企业只雇佣身体强健的人，甚至连有假牙的人也排除在外'; that of 'villager c' is '以前全都有活干，也可以供子女上学，每个人都可以得偿所愿。中国矿山企业中铝来了之后一切都消失了。中铝侵害了我们的生存权利。为什么这么说呢？他们从我们手里夺走了工作岗位'.

Then, 'villager (b) says, "The Chinese company only employs those people who have strong and healthy bodies, and they even exclude a person who wears dentures from employment." Villager (c) says, "We could make a living and afford children's school fees. Everybody could get what they wanted, but all that disappeared when the Aluminium Corporation of China (a Chinese mining enterprise) arrived. The Aluminium Corporation of China violates our way of life. Why do I say so? They take away our jobs from our hands." Throughout these talking head shots, then, the three villagers all complain about Chinese enterprises, with close shots employed to capture their facial expressions. In these shots, the three local residents are pushed close to the audience, so that their angry or helpless faces communicate, as much as their voices.

Meanwhile, *Super China* employs the signifiers of the ideological frame that I have discussed above to produce particular meaning in the shots (Fig.7 and Fig.8). For example, in the previous narration of the sequence on Toromocho, *Super China* includes scenes where excavators work day and night in the mines to suggest the exploitation of resources by Chinese companies in the area. The Korean voice-over states simultaneously, 'The major Chinese investment flows into copper and iron, the two minerals that are in great demand in industrial manufacturing. The state-owned company plays the role of excavating deeply in the mines.'[147] As the excavators are usually used in the situation of resource extraction, based on the foundational function of digging minerals, this equipment has become a symbol of industrial construction or exploitation of resources. Especially, when these excavators appear in the mines of Toromocho, and the Korean voiceover suggests that they are working to the demands of the development of Chinese industry, they are underscored as the martial symbol of Chinese capital. Namely, *Super China* in this way creates the impression that the nature of Chinese capital is the exploitation of resources.

[147] Translated by the writer from Chinese subtitles. The Chinese subtitle is '中国主要投资的矿物是在工业制造中需求量很大的铜和铁。国营企业的运行扮演着深入矿山内部的市场营销的角色'.

(Fig.7 The excavator is working in Toromocho mines)

(Fig.8 The excavator still works at night)

(Fig.9 A slice of peaceful life in Toromocho)

(Fig.10 The broken brick houses in Toromocho)

While the excavator is used in the particular circumstance of mining, *Super China* also represents other signifiers to suggest the damage brought by Chinese capital. As 'villager c' expresses his anxiety over Chinese companies entering the town, *Super China* presents scenic shots to match his words, in which the audience can see demolished brick houses (Fig.10). The scene of the shabby habitat of Toromocho's people is naturally connected with Chinese economic activities. Moreover, *Super China* edits in a previous shot where people are walking leisurely on a rural road (Fig.9), providing a picture of local villagers enjoying a peaceful life before the coming of Chinese capital. This editing comparison intensifies the psychological effect for the

audience perceiving the role of overseas Chinese economic interaction, and contributes to the argument of economic penetration raised from the ideology of the South Korean side. Additionally, the Korean narrator concludes the sequence with the statement, "The story of Toromocho is a case where Chinese enterprises make a priority of their interests rather than local people's life". Here, the asynchronous appearance of sound and picture in the shots forms the effect of a sound montage. The audience, on one hand, can see the poverty and ruins of the village which has accepted the entry of external capital; on the other hand, they can hear the Korean voice-over stating that a Chinese company is gaining benefits from this place. Consequently, the ideological meaning that the local economic situation of Toromocho is being exploited by Chinese capital is produced.

Until this point, *Super China* responds to the question raised at the beginning of this segment; that is, how do Chinese investments conflict with local communities when they expand their economic influence in other countries? Through the Q&A formula (Flowchart 1) and ideological frame (Flowchart 2), *Super China* completes the depiction of China's powerful economic spread in remote small towns on other continents. Simultaneously, through the combined use of signifiers and sound montage in relevant shots, *Super China* produces a political metaphor that China's economic actions, such as Chinese capital as foreign investment in a local economy, are a type of colonialism, accomplished without violence and bloodshed. As with the case of Toromocho mine, between China and Peru, *Super China* ideologically cinematises the economic interaction of Chinese companies as a new form of economic colonialism. It helps to build the reality of global economic relationships. More precisely, it intersects with the perspective that considers foreign direct investment (FDI) from China entering developing countries as economic colonialism. There is significant debate over China's economic action in African countries, and controversy over whether this is neo-liberalism or south-south cooperation.[148] Critics (Bosshard 2008; Brautigam 2009; Gadzala 2010) regard the pattern of investments centring on natural resources including oil as an exact reflection of the colonial pattern of investments in developing countries in the past. "It was natural resources, including coffee, tea and spices that motivated historical colonial investments and the political and economic exploitation of developing countries in Asia and Africa. Now it is oil, coal, iron and copper that the

[148] Abutu Lawrence Okolo & Joseph O Akwu. (2016) China's Foreign Direct Investment in Africa's Land: Hallmarks of Neo-Colonialism or South-South Cooperation? *Africa Review (New Delhi)*, 8 (1): 44-59.

Chinese economy is in dire need of to fuel its fast-growing manufacturing sector. The second prong of the opposition to OFDI (Outward Foreign Direct Investment) from China is that Chinese firms employ labour from China rather than local labour, to the detriment of the growth of employment and human skills in African countries."[149] Moreover, Lamido Sanusi points out that China comes to Africa - like the US, Russia, Britain, Brazil and the rest – for its own interests, rather than Nigeria's; therefore, any romantic view of China should be removed.[150] *Super China* makes use of such interpretations of China's international affairs, suggesting that China's investments in Peru are driven by the politics and economics of post-colonisation.

Another example of this process emerges in the sequence on the Pampas grassland of Argentina, where *Super China* deploys montage to advance a political position. For instance, in episode 1, titled *The Power of 1.3 Billion*, which explores the economic effects of China in Argentina, the eating habits of the Chinese people are connected to running cattle in the Pampas through montage, suggesting that China as an economic superpower has enforced a change in the agricultural structure in Argentina from animal husbandry to soybean cultivation

(Fig.11 The large green Pampas grassland)

[149] V. N Balasubramanyam. (2015) China and India's Economic Relations with African Countries - Neo-Colonialism Eastern Style? *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies*, 13 (1): 17-31.
[150] Sanusi, Lamido. (2013) Africa Must Get Real About Chinese Ties. Financial Times. 11-03-2013. https://www.ft.com/content/562692b0-898c-11e2-ad3f-00144feabdc0 Accessed on 23-03-2022. Lamido Sanusi is the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria since 2009-2014.

(Fig.12 An Argentine man rides a horse)

(Fig.13 The cattle on the Pampas grassland)

With the use of signifiers to create meaning, *Super China* firstly completes the psychological setting of Argentina as a country which prides itself on animal husbandry. It shoots several scenic shots about the grassland, Argentinians, horses, cattle, etc., to establish the visual perception of the audience in relation to the characteristics of Argentine agriculture as being livestock farming (Fig.11-13). However, it later edits another group of shots in which the signifiers of soybeans, harvesters and purchasers to imply the transition from an agricultural structure of ranching to grain trading (Fig.14 and 15). The latter is intensively associated with the demands of the buyer, which means that this form of agriculture is unstable, and the benefits of exports will fluctuate with

the international market. Particularly, the Korean voice-over states that 'It is China who makes this happen, because China is the largest purchaser of soybean in the international market. Recently Argentina has only had to rely on the technological help of the US in soybean farming, and the interaction of imports & exports with the US to reduce the pressure of huge demand for soybean from the Chinese market.'[151] As the comments on the voice-over indicate, *Super China* enters the step of producing ideological meaning by inserting this visual construction into the discursive structure of China-Australia-US relations. Through the power of the camera, the filmmaker captures the indigenous scenery of grass, animals and people on the Pampas, and blends them into the commentary via a stentorian voice. As Nichols argues, the method of using the voice in direct address provides the spectator with a ready-made point of view, suggesting the spectator to 'see it in this way'.[152] (2017: 54) The film here induces the spectator to think - as evoked by the montage sequence of image and sound - about the disadvantageous changes brought by China towards the local people of Argentina, in contrast to their technological support by the US.

(Fig.14 Soybean cultivation takes the traditional place of cattle husbandry.)

[151] Translated by the writer from Chinese to English. The Chinese subtitle is "带来变化的主人公就是中国。中国是世界第一位的黄豆进口国。最近阿根廷是依靠美国的大豆种植技术和食物进出口才得以生存。原因是因为中国对黄豆的大量需求".

[152] Bill Nichols. (2017) *Introduction to Documentary*. Third ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

(Fig.15 Asian people are watching soybean growing)

(Fig.16 A customer is eating pork steak in a fine-dining restaurant in Shanghai)

Super China juxtaposes images of Argentine people stop raising livestock and with images of soybean cultivation in their pastures to suggests that the Argentine people have lost their pride in cattle breeding which, as a unique agricultural pattern in the Pampas, earned them a worldwide reputation. However, their efforts with the soybean crop are devoted to pigs, after the soybean is imported to China. In the ideological expository description, grass, cattle, soybean, and pork steaks eaten with chopsticks are formed into a causal link (Fig.16). The Kuleshov effect works here. The Kuleshov effect, as a classic montage theory in regard to Soviet silent cinema, was created in Lev Kuleshov (1899-1970)'s film experiments. (Andrew: 1976; Cook: 1996;

Ellis: 1995; Giannetti & Eyman: 1996; Mast: 1985) In that famous experiment, Kuleshov took unedited footage of the completely expressionless face of the actor Ivan Mozhukhin, intercutting it with shots of three highly emotive objects: a bowl of hot soup, a dead woman lying in a coffin, and a little girl playing with a teddy bear. For the audience to watch the four shots, a different order of shots appeared on screen to produce various meanings, with the audience responses indicating that a particular cinematic meaning emerges from the ordering of the shots (Prince & Hensley; 1992). *Super China* employs several shots (Fig.14, 15 and 16) to form the Kuleshov effect, while the shots (Fig.14 and Fig.15) indicate that soybean on the expansive soils of Argentina is grown for the Chinese market. The last shot (Fig.16) further suggests that the degeneration of the Pampas grassland and the damage to local cattle farming is destined to suit the Chinese table. As a result, this instance of intellectual montage points to a view of China as an economic superpower, one which influences domestic agriculture in Argentina, albeit from a negative side.

Portraying the Military Hegemony of China in Archive Footage

Episode 3, *China Rules the World: China's Era of Hegemonism* (팍스시니카, 중국 패권의 시대), and episode 4, *The Power of Land, Super China* (대륙의 힘) constructs a representation of China based on military hegemony. Since what Jihoon Kim has described as the 'archive turn'[153] in recent South Korean documentaries, South Korean documentaries have increasingly used archive footage to expand the space of exposition, as is evident in films such as *Kim-gun* (Sang-woo Kang, South Korea, 2019) and *An Escalator in World Order* (Miguk'ŭi baramgwa bul, Kim Kyung-man, South Korean, 2011). With the employment of a number of historical documents, and use of a narrative strategy based on those employed in Soviet montage theories, especially Vsevolod Pudovkin's method of montage as accumulation rather than Sergei Eisenstein's use of montage as conflict, *Super China* completes the narrative of China's military power, which functions as a second dimension of the visualisation of China on screen.[154] When archive footage is utilised in *Super China*, it is accompanied by a Korean voice-over

[153] Jihoon Kim. (2020) The Uses of Found Footage and the 'Archival Turn' of Recent Korean Documentary, *Third Text*, 34(2), 231-254.

[154] For more on Soviet montage, see Ian Christie and Richard Taylor. (1994). *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*. London and New York: Routledge. Sergei Eisenstein. (1986). *The Film Sense*. London: Faber and Faber. Ian Christie and Richard Taylor. (1993). *Eisenstein Rediscovered*. London and New York: Routledge.

commentary. The footage not only works for viewers to acquire content, such as sound and image in the shots, but rather they create 'narrative continuity' on the turn of past and present, serving prior to the cinematic representation of China as the military power beyond Asia. Utilising textual analysis of the film, in this section I demonstrate how *Super China* constructs the representation in terms of Chinese diplomacy and military affairs, and with the utilisation of archive footage how it represents the possible power transition of US-China in the Asian – Pacific region in screen.

Creating the Narrative Continuity in Archival Resources

As primary sources for researchers, archival documents - including old newspapers, articles, collections, pictures as well as videos - are employed in documentary filmmaking to provide historical knowledge and evidence recording actual events and moments in history. This process is evident in *China Rules the World: China's Era of Hegemonism*, which in one sequence of Chinese military capacity utilises archive footage of China's National Day Parade (Fig.17), shot by China's central television (CCTV) channel 1. In this scene, which I analyse in detail below, we see the formidable military presence on screen contributing to the establishment of China as a threatening power for other countries. After presenting China's rising power in arms (Fig.18), *Super China* details acts of aggression between China and other Asian countries, through footage of territorial disputes between China, Vietnam and Japan. This emerges through use of archive footage of Chinese ships and fishing boats ramming Vietnamese boats and Japanese coast guard patrol boats (Fig.19 and Fig.22). This reinforces the continuity of the military narrative around China's ambitions of expansion in *Super China*, shifting the construction of the hegemonic representation of China on screen to a deeper level. China is presented as firstly developing their military capability, and secondly, proceeding with their goal of military expansion, which is precisely described as behaviours conducted by hegemonism or defined as being a 'super power'. In addition to the use of archive footage, throughout this episode there are frequent scenic shots of the friction between China and Japan on the sea. For example, *Super China* captures a scene in which warships are circling on the sea, so that the shots are filled with a sense of confrontation, conveying a sense of continuity. In this way, *Super China* suggests that as a rising military superpower, China is ambitious in expanding its influence, and is a competitive force among Asian countries.

(Fig.17 Chinese Army marching forward in the National Day Parade. From archive footage)

(Fig.18 DF – 21 Missiles on carrier loaders are shown in a military parade. From Archive Footage)

On how China operates as a super military force, *Super China* directly selects archive footage of China's National Day Parade (Fig.17 and Fig.18). This 3-minute-long clip is taken from footage of the Chinese army procession in the ceremony to celebrate China's National Day in 2009. The video records the moment when Chinese sea-air-land soldiers were moving through the central street in Tian'an- men Square, which is the symbol of China's domestic political power. Following the array of soldiers, we see new types of weapons of mass destruction, including the latest intercontinental missiles, exhibited on the carrier loaders passing through Chang'an Avenue in front of the camera. As the vehicles pass through the square, the narrator states in a somewhat

muffled voice, "the troops of military honour guards are walking forwards in a goose-step … the management of our multi-types of soldiers gets optimised … receiving a review before the president and our nationals.'[155] This direct address by the host of China's Central Television is employed as one of the background sounds, while *Super China* provides a new dominant voice of a narrator from a South Korean host, discussing China's military strength: "Now that China, which has already become a rich country, continually increases its budget in military development in these years, building a military powerhouse beyond Asia, challenging the seat of world supremacy."[156] For the purpose of the ideological education of Chinese people, making it clear to them that China has made a great achievement in defence capability for its citizens, arousing the patriotic emotion of Chinese people who are watching at the site of the national parade or viewing the ceremony online, China's central television channel has made a video demonstrating Chinese soldiers' well-trained discipline, as well as weapons made with advanced technology. However, from the perspective of the 'China threat' theory, *Super China* employs this video clip with a different voice-over, which creates a new meaning in regard to the presentation of the Chinese army in terms of hegemonism; namely, as the major step China has taken in developing military strength, Beijing initially attempts to call up patriotic emotion in people with the construction of a strong national image through the presentation of the army in the archive footage. In contrast, *Super China* utilises the fragments of archive footage to illustrate that China has become a threatening power, bullying other countries with their soldiers and impressive weapons. This is the first layer in *Super China* for building the narrative of a military hegemony of China.

[155] This was the original soundtrack for the archive footage which was picked from the video on the 2009 military parade for China's National Day and employed in *China Rules the World: China's Era of Hegemonism* (episode 3 of *Super China*) for the hegemonic depiction on China's military power. These words from the OST are translated by the writer from Chinese to English. The original words are as following: "迎面走来的是三军仪仗队…队伍结构不断优化…接受祖国和人民的检阅。"

[156] *Super China*, which is being examined in this chapter, is the version released towards the Chinese market and screened with Chinese subtitles and Korean voice-over. Here are the words by the off-screen Korean host 김영철 translated by the writer from subtitles in Chinese into English.

(Fig.19 Vietnamese boats and Chinese ships clashed in this video clip released by Vietnam)

(Fig.20 A Chinese maritime police vessel on the sea)

(Fig.21 The destroyed Vietnamese boat captured by the shaky camera)

(Fig.22 A Japanese navy officer shouting at Chinese boats on the sea area of Diaoyu Island)

Following the sequences discussed above, *Super China* turns to focus on territorial disputes between China and its neighbouring countries to establish the second layer of its representation of a hegemonistic China on screen, by employing the visual representation of several cases of conflict in the region of the South China Sea between China, Vietnam and Japan, respectively. In the narrative regarding the Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Japanese disputes, China's declaration of sovereignty in the South China Sea,

in accordance with Chinese law, has provoked conflict.[157] In archive footage (Fig.19) from the Vietnamese media appearing in *Super China*, we see two vessels at sea, shot with a constantly-moving camera, which creates the visual sensation of a sea battle. The video clip consists of three parts: firstly, a naval vessel without an obvious logo is sailing near to a Vietnamese fishing boat (Fig.19); next, a ship bearing the logo of the Chinese Coast Guard is shown moving across the sea (Fig.20); finally, after a violent swing, the picture on the screen is stabilised to be followed with a zoom in, the camera giving a close-up shot of the destroyed seaboard of the fishing boat (Fig.21). This is quickly followed by more archive footage (Fig.22) regarding Sino-Japanese maritime conflict with video footage of a Sino-Vietnamese ship crashing, intensifying the impression that China with its increasing military strength is playing an aggressive role in Asian countries. This is reinforced in the scene in which a Japanese naval officer is addressing a Chinese fishing boat. As we watch this footage, the Korean narrator states that the conflict "almost leads the diplomatic relationship between China and Japan around the edge of the flames of war. This is China's strong declaration to a territory which has been occupied by Japan since the Sino-Japanese War (1894 - 1895) between China (Qing Dynasty) and Japan (Empire of Japan)." [158] By the employment of these videos of inter-Asian conflict, *Super China* depicts China as an aggressive superpower in military affairs for the international community. It suggests that the rapid development of China's national defence power supports China's ambition to expand towards the external world, which eventually causes military conflict with surrounding countries. As most news, whether in the form of newspaper articles, radio or television broadcasts are considered, at least in part, reliable, because of the function of daily news recording the events, characters, stories happening at that historical moment, this gives archive footage a quality of truth when viewers encounter such kinds of information. As a consequence, a cause-effect relation is produced through the above series of news

[157] China-Vietnam's conflict in the South China Sea (2014). In May of 2014, Chinese commercial vessels were attacked by Vietnamese ships in the area of Xisha Islands/Paracel Islands. The key point in the collision incident was a dispute of sovereignty in the South China Sea and exploitation rights. As a sequel to the incident, Vietnam rapidly initiated violent protests (Biểu tình phản đối Trung Quốc tại Việt Nam năm 2014) setting fire to local companies run by the Chinese and Japanese. China-Japan's maritime conflict in 2010 originates from the territorial dispute over Diaoyu Island. Chinese fishing boats and Japanese patrol boats had a collision when the latter intercepted the former. The incident happened near Diaoyu Island.

[158] Voice-over originally in Korean with corresponding subtitles in Chinese. The words here are translated by the writer from Chinese to English. The original text of the above Chinese subtitles in *Super China* is "海上冲突引发的中日矛盾，几乎把两国推向了战争边缘。这是日清战争之后，日本占据的土地，中国也毫不妥协地声明主权。"

videos in which, the first level of correlation is that because China strives to develop its military force, it naturally generates the capability and intention to have an extended requirement of domination. Then, the second step is territorial disputes with other countries, as their ambition is driven by actual force. The cases onscreen of the China-Vietnam ship-crash and China – Japan maritime conflict on Diaoyu island are two examples which are extracted from reality. As the cause – effect relation works, it provides sequences depicting China's military in a narrative related to China's aggressive behaviours supported by military strength, which from the level of visualisation reinforces the output of ideological viewpoints formed by *Super China* on China's military hegemony.

(Fig.23 A soldier who stands at one of China's stations in Hugh Reef is monitoring the sea surface)

(Fig.24 Warships are moving on the sea)

In addition to the frequent use of archive news footage, *Super China* utilises numerous stills with an interchangeable use of rostrum shots to produce 'narrative continuity' in particular segments. For instance, in order to present the dangerous atmosphere in the Chinese – Japanese interaction, with regard to these countries' military confrontation in the East China Sea, *Super China* employs images (Fig.23) with military iconography such as soldiers, weapons and installations for military use to imply China's emerging military hegemony. On the other hand, the stills (Fig.24) invite viewers to visually sense the tension of military confrontations between China and different countries. Due to the construction regarding China's military force on screen, which has been completed using historical video documents, *Super China* applies several sets of images which enhances the argument that China possesses strong military power and is threatening other countries' territorial interests.

Resources as Weapons: A Discursive Narrative Built in Still Pictures

In the segments depicting China's geological and climatic resources, *Super China* utilises montage and an offscreen voice to produce a new explanation for the images through the compositional arrangement of stills and sound on screen. Writing on the construction of reality in *First Principles of Documentary*, John Grierson comments, "You photograph the natural life, but you also, by your juxtaposition of detail, create an interpretation of it". (1979: 23) For Grierson, those original elements, including actors, gestures, movements and situations are raw materials which work to prove the

attribute of the practice of documenting. In addition, a creative intention would be established in the form of composition. *Super China* builds a narrative structure with the presence of relevant stills on screen and suggests to viewers that it is revealing the strategy taken by China to weaponise resources. In this intentional structure, various resources in China, the forest, climate, water, soil, mines, etc., are described as a kind of weapon for China's diplomatic triumphs, rather than being normal substances for human consumption during the development of society in accordance with people's common understanding of resources. We can observe this process at work in episode 4 of *Super China*, titled *China: The Power of Land*, in a composition of still photographs of former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, who is greeting visitors, and China and Japan's collision, accompanied by a narrator's voice who states

the generations of Chinese leaders showed concerns about rare-earth minerals, realising this is China's best resource. Actually, rare-earth minerals once worked as China's powerful weapon. In the incident of the China-Japan sea conflict in 2010, China banned the export of rare-earth minerals to Japan. Later, it only took 100 days for Japan to make a decision to release the Chinese captain who had been arrested earlier in the conflict.

The suggestion, then, is that China used rare-earth minerals as a secret weapon when in conflict with Japan in a political confrontation resulting from the China – Japan maritime dispute over Diaoyu island in 2010.

(Fig.25 Still Picture. The former Chinese President Deng Xiaoping shaking hands with people)

(Fig.26 Still Picture. A confrontation between China and Japan's ships)

(Fig.27 Still Picture. The Chinese captain who was released from Japan returns to China)

According to the mode of Griersonian documentary filmmaking practices, the creative arrangement of motion pictures is a form of art which not only provides the surface of events but also produces new meaning. With different versions of the narrator's voice added on screen, a new interpretation is presented. For building the narrative regarding China's resources as a weapon, *Super China* selects stills as raw materials, documents for evidence. In the case of the Chinese captain, *Super China* sketches a diplomatic incident between China and Japan, in which a Chinese captain of

a fishing boat was captured by Japanese naval staff after a collision incident in the East China Sea, where China compelled Japan to release the arrested captain through the means of banning exports of rare – earth minerals from China to Japan.[159] The latter figures as an indispensable material in Japan's high – tech industry. The composition contains three still images; (Fig.9) former Chinese President Deng Xiaoping shaking hands with visitors. (Fig.10), the collision between a Chinese fishing boat and Japanese maritime surveillance ship, and (Fig.11) a man walking downstairs from the flight. As we regard these stills, the narrator states, "(China's) Presidents of different ages expressed concerns about the use of raw – earth minerals. China stopped the export of raw – earth minerals to Japan. It only took 100 days for Japan to make the decision to release the captain who had been arrested by Tokyo in China – Japan's maritime conflict." This simple composition of sound and picture presents a story briefly but very effectively. In this story, an argument created by the creative use of editing and narration is one where China influenced Japan's diplomatic decision by its strategy of resources as non – military weapons; in light of their demand for rare earth minerals, Japan made a concession in the interaction with China. A new 'constructed reality' inside the cinematic space has been established in the composition of pictures, in which *Super China* offers viewers a screen image of China as a hegemonic power expanding the development of military force, forcing different countries to bow to its superpower status. This suggests that China is a super power challenging the dominant global position which had been occupied by the United States, and that, at least in this geo-political sphere, it is China which is now running with the baton.

The Recomposed Timeline and Space in the Accumulation of Montage for Building a Rising Military Superpower

In the segments presenting China's naval power on screen, *Super China* makes a comparison of new and old supremacy with the employment of a series of shots, reshaping the timeline and creating a cinematic space. In order that the representation

[159] On the '2010 Diaoyu Island Boat Collision Incident', more statements or narration from the three sides of China, Japan and English News Media see: The Press Conference of the Foreign Ministry of China on the Japan's Claim for Compensation from the Chinese Captain of 'Collision Incident' (In Chinese). http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2011-02/12/content_1802144.htm Accessed 28-03-2022. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson of China holds the regular press conference for answering the questions on Diaoyu Islands Collision and other issues (In Chinese). http://www.gov.cn/xwfb/2010-09/09/content_1699374.htm Accessed on 28-03-2022. Chinese Captain Sent for Inspection on the Patrol Vessel Collision, Suspected of Obstructing Official Duties (In Japanese). http://www.asahi.com/special/senkaku/SEB201009090008.html Accessed on 28-03-2022. Japan-China row escalates over fishing boat collision. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/09/japan-china-fishing-boat-collision Accessed on 28-03-2022.

of China in relation to a hegemonic narrative can be built more strongly, *Super China* mobilises an alternate use of current and historical examples. For example, in episode 3 *China Rules the World: China's Era of Hegemonism*, the narrative shifts quickly from one location to another, from one historical moment to another, which invites viewers to feel the change at the centre of hegemonic power. This visually suggests the diminishing power of Washington in Asian affairs, in contrast to Beijing, which has increased their capability to dominate the situation in Asia. In terms of the changing locations, from Subic Bay in the Philippines to Hainan Navy Base in China, the main characters have changed from American President Barack Obama to Chinese President Xi Jinping, the image content changing from the America aircraft carrier docking in Subic Bay to a Chinese carrier on the coast of the South China Sea. These changes of space and location can be mapped against the transition of power in the Asian – Pacific region.

(Fig.28 American President Barack Obama visits the Philippines, 2014)

(Fig.29 Chinese President Xi Jinping inspects the South China Sea Fleet, 2013)

In the segment in which the centre of power shifts from the US to China, the first change of time and space is connected to Barack Obama visiting the Philippines and Xi Jinping inspecting China's PLA South Sea Fleet. In a group of shots (Fig.28) in this sequence, we see Barack Obama undertaking a state visit to the Philippines in 2014, which implies that a possible political or military cooperation happened between the two countries. This is followed by a series of shots (Fig.29) from 2013, in which Xi Jinping is using a periscope to inspect the navy army arranged for the South China Sea area. The two groups of shots have similarities in that they both connote a sense of national leadership, but as re-composed motion pictures with broken timelines where record particular events in a certain point of time, which induces the spectator to think about the balancing of power between US and China in the Asia-Pacific region. This produces an allegory in relation to the shift of power from the US to China in screen, suggesting the successor of China being a superpower.

(Fig.30 American troops in Subic Bay, Philippines, 1990)

(Fig.31 The US returns to Asia to dock their aircraft carrier in Subic Bay again, 2000)

(Fig.32 China's South China Sea Fleet docks in the area of the South China Sea)

The second turn of time – space is expressed in the narration of Chinese/American military deployment in the South China Sea. *Super China,* in episode 3 *China Rules the World: China's Era of Hegemonism,* employs two segments (Fig.30 and Fig.31) of archive footage showing the US navy power located in Subic Bay in 1990, and the troops' withdrawal in 1992, as well as their return driven by the Pivot to Asia policy in 2002. The third segment (Fig.32) provides images of China's South China Sea Fleet garrisoning in Guangdong Province, facing the gate of the Pacific Ocean. Unlike the first turn of time – space analysed above, these three sequences are arranged chronologically to convey the idea that American control of the Asian – Pacific Region diminished over time. The changes of space, time and location in these shots suggest a political metaphor of the Chinese – American battle for control of the Asian Pacific Area, with China increasingly in the ascendency.

In this section of the film, the archive footage works to build the narrative of China's hegemony power, which enhances continuity and intentionality in the conjunction of sound and image, finally producing new meaning. Moreover, the accumulation of parallel shots causes a unique effect in line with the building blocks theory of montage outlined above. Through these multiple changes in regard to the elements of time, space, location, content and the subjects, the re-composed shots shape a special time – space on screen. Ultimately, when *Super China* presents the shift of power between China and the US, it intensifies the concept that China has gained hegemonic power from the US, and emphasises a new Chinese hegemonism in *Super*

China's narrative strategy.

Constructing China's Soft Power on Screen: The Expansion of Chinese Ideology and Constructed Reality

This section analyses how *Super China* constructs China's soft power through the comprehensive use of montage shots to shape a pattern of the expansion of Chinese ideology. In the course of splicing archive footage, newly-shot footage and talking head interviews, it is creating the reality on screen which I call it the 'reality of the second dimension'[160]; by suggesting that an expansion of China's ideology is becoming the reality of the third dimension (real world). *Super China,* in episode 5 *Soft Power* (소프트파워), and episode 6 *The leadership of CCP* (China Communist Party) (공산당 리더십), hypothesises that facing the international audience, China has conducted a process of self – orientalisation when presenting its history, culture and art, which exactly coincides with Western aesthetics in representing the East. In this manner, Chinese culture becomes popular to Westerners. Episode 5 *Soft Power* (소프트파워) takes examples from Confucius Institutes in Western universities and Central China's TV departments in Africa and the Americas to demonstrate that Beijing is expanding Chinese ideology through the activities of cross - cultural communication in Confucius Institutes, and newly-founded media platforms in other continents. *Super China* suggests that aside from those perennially fascinating aspects of Chinese history and culture (for instance, Kung Fu, Tai-Chi exercise and calligraphy), the Chinese Communist Party works as an engine of the nation. In episode 6, *The Leadership of the CCP* (공산당 리더십), *Super China* builds the notion of China as a Party-state country where the values of communism cover the people of various social levels. In the section which follows, I demonstrate how these points are developed in the film.

Super China constructs a mix of Chinese cultural products, which is composed of both classic Chinese culture and the culture of communism, in the discourse of the "China Threat" theory in episode 5, *Soft Power,* and episode 6 *The Leadership of the CCP*. By the utilisation of a montage of attractions to construct China and its screen image of Orientalism, *Super China* connotes that via the popularity of Chinese culture

[160] The second dimension derives from the term 'two-dimension' (2D) in ACGN (Animation, Comic, Game and Light Novel) and is a concept from Japanese Anime Culture. Here, '2D' means a virtual space which particularly defers from the real world where we live. In the 2D world, stories and events from the real world are seized upon to re-write, exaggerate and modify to make new versions of stories with special themes.

in Western society, China – a communist country - transmits an attractive image through the strategy of Self-Orientalism. Sergei Eisenstein argued that theatre should consist of a montage of attractions showing the units of impression of theatrical art, by which it contributes to create a relation to the spectator different from their absorption in depictions.[161] Driven by Eisenstein's term 'attractions', Tom Gunning writes that the 'cinema of attractions' directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle as a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest in itself (Tom Gunning: 1922). Building on the insights from both Eisenstein and Gunning, in the following paragraphs, I will examine the constructed reality of the cultural expansion of Chinese ideology in *Super China* as an example of constructing China in the 2D world. The 2D world derives from the term 'two-dimensions' (2D) in ACGN (Animation, Comic, Game and Light Novel) studies. As a concept from Japanese anime culture, it refers to anime characters in their virtual creation, and around these anime characters, the written narratives, stories and affectional interactions from fans of Anime.[162] These anime characters, as the symbolic centre of the 2D world of Japanese anime culture, are created in the form of hand-made drawings and computer-generated images.[163] Consequently, the line drawings operate as a medium communicating both virtuality and reality, as it constructs the virtual corporeality of anime characters.[164] Here, '2D' means a virtual space, which particularly differs from the real world (3D) where we live. In the 2D world, stories and events from the real world are seized upon to re-write, exaggerate and modify, in order to make new versions of stories with special themes. *Super China* forms a reflection of the Chinese cultural landscape in the situation of an international occasion to become the virtual corporeality of an expanding Chinese ideology, one in which the frame in film is the medium, similar to the line drawings in the 2D world of anime. This trans-dimensional construction from 3D (the real world) to 2D (the virtual world) makes it possible for *Super China* to represent this kind of cinematic reality of Chinese ideology in the status of international expansion. Next, I will demonstrate how *Super China* relies

[161] Sergei Eisenstein. (1974). Montage of Attractions: For "Enough Stupidity in Every Wiseman". Trans. Daniel Gerould, *The Drama Review*, 18 (1), 77-85.

[162] Akiko Sugawa-Shimada. (2015) Rekijo, Pilgrimage and 'Pop-Spiritualism': Pop-Culture-Induced Heritage Tourism of/for Young Women. *Japan Forum (Oxford, England)*, 27 (1): 37-58.

[163] Marco Pellitteri & Heung Wah Wong. (2022) *Japanese Animation in Asia: Transnational Industry, Audiences, and Success*. New York: Routledge.

[164] Akiko Sugawa-Shimada. (2020) Emerging '2.5-Dimensional' Culture: Character-Oriented Cultural Practices and 'Community of Preferences' as a New Fandom in Japan and Beyond. *Mechademia*, 12 (2): 124-139.

on the editing style of Orientalist aesthetics to portray a simplified version of the Chinese cultural image on screen, and how it employs the digital simulation of the rostrum camera effect to connote the self-orientalisation of China to the West.

Screening Chinese Culture: Portray China in the Principle of Orientalism

In episode 5 *Soft Power*, *Super China* presents a positive image of the Chinese people's national enthusiasm for playing host to a worldwide audience through archive footage of the opening ceremony for the 2008 Beijing Olympics directed by Zhang Yimou.[165] The opening shots of *Soft Power* are scenes of the performance in the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. The archive footage of the full ceremony contains many sessions of different performances, solo dancing, group dancing, singing, Beijing Opera, calligraphy, martial arts, acrobatics, the athletes' entries etc. However, *Super China* specifically chooses scenes that display stereotypical and recognisable signifiers of Chinese identity to present on screen. For example, unique ancient Chinese instruments (Fig.33) and actors dressing in Hanfu (Fig.33-36), or dancers performing Chinese classical dance (Fig.35) are presented on screen in a rich visual feast of Chinese culture.[166] Following these symbols of Chinese culture, *Super China* adds the voice – over in Korean, "Still remember the scene? It is the opening ceremony for the Beijing Olympics in 2008, which indeed astonished the world. China exhibited its history, culture and tradition without hesitation in the most resplendent ceremony in the history of the Olympics. That is China's soft power.[167]" In this sequence where *Super China* employs the montage of attractions, editing archive shots in the performances during the occasion of the Beijing Olympics, it utilises the original soundtrack of the Beijing Olympics so that the spectator can hear the Chinese music, the sound of performers drumming (Fig.33), and the voices of Confucius's students (played by actors) reciting (Fig.34). Integrating the soundtrack and Korean commentary in the scene, from different shots in which those actors dressed in traditional costumes are performing,

[165] Zhang Yimou, Chinese director who has developed a prestigious brand internationally in directing Chinese language fiction films. He has plenty of representative award – winning works, including *Red Sorghum* (Golden Bear), *The Story of Qiu Ju* (Golden Lion), *Not One Less* (Golden Lion), *Hero* (Academic Awards nominated), *House of Flying Daggers* (BAFTA Award/Golden Globe Award nominated) etc.

[166] Hanfu is considered as a general name, usually referring to traditional Chinese costumes. In fact, China got through 18 dynasties before the extinction of the Empire system d, as a result, ancient Chinese clothing has some differences of style in every different dynasty, but generally, in modern times, the term Hanfu became broadly accepted in reference to traditional Chinese clothes.

[167] Voice-over is narrated and subtitled in Korean in the originally released Korean version of *Super China*. The writer of the thesis watched a Chinese version of *Super China*, which has a voice over in Korean but subtitles in the Chinese language; therefore, the English voice over is translated by the writer from Chinese subtitles.

this film attracts the spectator with its depiction of classic Chinese culture through the formula of representation in the style of Chinoiserie.

(Fig.33 The performers are playing Fou[168])

(Fig.34 Tens of thousands of actors recite poems from The Analects of Confucius: "It is such a delight to have friends coming from afar.")

[168] Fou (缶 in Chinese character), a traditional music instrument which appeared in the age of Qin dynasty (B.C. 221 – B.C. 207). In the ancient Chinese dictionary 'Shuowen Jiezi (discussing writing and explaining characters)', Fou is explained as a percussion instrument which originated from drinking vessels, and the Qin people sang with the beat of the Fou." *Super China* shows the scene of the Fou to evoke viewers' imaginations on ancient Chinese culture.

(Fig.35 The dancer performs the image of a goddess drawn from mural paintings in the Mogao Caves)

(Fig.36 The performers are dressed in Tang Dynasty costumes)

As illustrated above, on one hand, *Super China*, situated at the aesthetic position of Orientalism, constructs China's cultural representation in the order of Western definitions. For example, its extensive exhibition of Chinese traditional clothing, makeup, instruments and education, through the editing, forms the accumulation of visual effects. As such, it is evident that - as the Korean commentary connotes - amongst the diverse cultures in the world, Chinese culture is strong enough to strike people born in other cultural backgrounds. As such, *Super China* sets a precondition for the concerns of expansion of Chinese culture beyond China. On the other hand, *Super China* suggests

a tendency for self-orientalisation, through still photography in shots in the narration of stories on contemporary Chinese culture. This is illustrated below.

Echo of Orientalism: Strategic Self-Representation Based on Self-Orientalism

After the archive footage of the Beijing Olympics, *Super China* explores Chinese artists' influence in contemporary art, with a focus on the painter Xiaogang Zhang. In the segment of Zhang's story, *Super China* applies the digital effect of the rostrum camera to organise viewers in the screen space which was associated with Communism, Mao's era, which functions in collective memory as a socialist China in the Western imagination. This is evident in the scenes showing oil paintings by Zhang. Utilising digital technology to replicate the effect of the rostrum camera, *Super China* films a series of paintings moving one by one on the screen, facilitating the spectator to access the figures and objects in the image, which features the Maoist style. Taking two shots as examples, we can see fig.37, one of the series named 'Big Family' by the artist Zhang, appearing on screen with a zoom in shot, while fig.38, another painting of the same series is being displayed moving downwards, creating the visual effect of a tilt-up.

(Fig.37 Chinese artist Xiaogang Zhang's work 'Bloodline: Big Family Series' No.3 bid successfully for 13 billion South Korean Won[169])

[169] 13 billion South Korean Won, which is appeared on screen, is equal to 8.3 million pounds in accordance with the foreign exchange rate at 1575.35 KRW/1.00 GBP on 09-05-2022.

(Fig.38 Another painting of Xiaogang Zhang in the series of 'Bloodline: Big Family')

This digital simulated still photography in film re-produces the relation between painter, filmmaker and spectator. The content and theme, as well as the artistic techniques of the painter himself, contains a metaphor in relation to a certain aspect of contemporary art in China which is appreciated by the West as the manifestation of ideological aesthetics on the Western reading of China.[170] Simply, the West imagines the image of China as a 'communistic country' as defined in their minds and exactly resonating from the paintings of Zhang. On the other hand, through the situation of Zhang's acclaimed work in the Western world of art collection, *Super China* suggests that China is finding a way to make Chinese influence in relation to its culture, arts and ideology focused in the West. Namely, their self-Orientalism for self-display is an echo of Orientalism from the West.

In the literature review, I outlined how Edward Said has described how the West learns about the East and its histories in *Orientalism*. He suggests that the West conducts their experience toward the culture, history and customs of the East through the term of 'orientalism', through which Westerners define the culture of the East, but also enhance their own recognition of themselves (the West) against the East (Said: 1978, 3-7). In another word, the Orient is orientalised by the West. What Westerners tend to imagine about these Eastern countries is precisely influenced by this process of 'Orientalisation'. To some degree, since 'the East' has become synonymous with the viewpoint of the

[170] Tian Luo. (2014) Zhang Xiaogang: I wanted to be Kafka, but was treated as Warhol. https://cn.nytimes.com/interactive/20140716/tc16zhangxiaogang/ Accessed on 25-04-2022.

Western imagination, some particular elements that are distinct from Western society are used for anchoring the East. Concretely, in the context of China, they are objects, traditions, historical stories, behaviours and philosophy which are rarely seen in Western cultural texts, and they are orientalised as substances with Chinese characteristics. For instance, *Super China* includes images of the Hanfu, the Fou, which as stated above are both representative items associated with traditional Chinese culture and customs, as well as the ancient poem from a book regarding Confucius.[171] From a Western perspective, the orientalisation of China defines a welcome part of Chinese culture on the international stage; however, through the inclusion of stereotypical signifiers of China, *Super China* connotes that China performs a process of self-orientalisation to reach the internationalism of Chinese influence in ideology. Overall, these examples highlight that *Super China* selects relevant archive footage to indicate China's strategy for cultural expansion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter answers the research questions that have been previously proposed concerning what screen representation of China has been constructed in this Korean dominated transnational documentary filmmaking which attempts to portray a panoramic picture of China from the eyes of South Korea and how this is achieved. As has been demonstrated above, *Super China* re-creates the reality of China in a cinematic space from the perspective of the 'China Threat' theory, shaping a representation of China in relation to hegemonic power. With the employment of expository text and structural shot editing, *Super China* leans on its particular ideological position to observe China and depict the country's influence on aspects of the economy, military, culture and art. Utilising methods from ethnography, *Super China* includes many sequences of location shooting, following the Q&A formula. In this manner, the film uses many cinematic resources which combine to create the illusion of the reality of life. For example, *Super China* visits Peru and Argentina to film scenes of local people and communities, which provides the audience with a sense of 'being there', sharing a similarity with the approach of fieldwork. Therefore, *Super China* is able to construct a sense of the 'reality' of China through cinematic techniques to suggest uncovering

[171] As stated previously, Hanfu and Fou are both representative items associated with traditional Chinese culture and customs.

'truth' in these international Chinese stories. *Super China* also uses various visual and sonic signifiers and metaphors to advance its specific ideological discourse. In addition, the film portrays the Chinese military as a powerful hegemonic force, by presenting examples of maritime friction between China-Vietnam and China-Japan to portray the hegemonic representation of China on screen, by means of archive footage and structural editing. Whilst *Super China* uses still photography and montage to achieve narrative continuity; through montage, *Super China* re-composes the timeline and space in scenes in the Asian-Pacific region, highlighting the changing military presence in the South China Sea and the situation of a trade-off between China and the US. This depiction helps verify the cinematic hegemony of China. Additionally, *Super China* also frames the circulation of Chinese culture in European countries as a type of Chinese ideological expansion. By means of a mix of montage shots involving archive footage, contemporary documentation and interviews, *Super China* constructs the imaginary reality of China. In the text on Chinese soft power, *Super China* takes the cases of the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the popularity of Chinese art collecting in Europe to demonstrate that the communication of Chinese culture in European countries is a result of the expansion of Chinese ideology towards the West. As such, what I have demonstrated here is the very specific cinematic methods and techniques employed by the filmmakers in *Super China* to construct an image of China as a global superpower.

Chapter 5

‘Amazing China’ or ‘Marginal China’? Screening China on the Railway

The chapter develops around the responding to the research questions that what is the representation of China in the state documentary films and that in those independent (transnational) documentary films which involve the international filmmaking resources? How do the different filmmaking techniques contribute to the different depictions of China in terms of the stories of China’s modernisation? This chapter will examine a series of documentary films which focus on China’s railways and transport infrastructure to examine two images of China: what I have termed ‘Amazing China’ and ‘Marginal China’. The chapter will demonstrate that in keeping with the nation’s dominant national discourse, politically and ideologically, in the first set of films China is depicted as a country which has achieved significant success in terms of developing modernised transport infrastructure. Through analysis of *China’s Mega Projects I* (Bing Li, China, 2012), *China’s Mega Projects II*, (Bing Li, China, 2016), *China’s Mega Projects* III (Bing Li, China, 2017), *China High-Speed Railway* (Degang Li & Ruimin Li, China, 2016) and *The Belt and Road* (Yawei Li, China, 2016), the chapter will explore how these concepts of manufacturing, infrastructure, railway technology and industrial innovation are inscribed into China’s railway stories, establishing the cinematic representation of ‘amazing China’, one which is in keeping with the dominant national discourse.

The representation of an ‘amazing China’ is built primarily on its fast-developing industrial technology. In the national discourse constructed in the documentary films examined here, in the tradition of the documentary style and theories of filmmaking from John Grierson and Joris Ivens, these state-produced films place an emphasis on educational purpose and social meaning rather than commercial interests or reputation. However, there is another version of the representation of China’s railway infrastructure, one which presents a marginal narrative. This group of films includes *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks/À l'ouest des rails* (Bing Wang, China, 2002), *Last Train Home* (Linxin Fan, China/Canada/UK, 2009), *The Iron Ministry* (J.P. Sniadecki, US/China, 2014), and *Along the Railway* (Haibin Du, China, 2001). The chapter examines how these films

complete the depiction of the stories related to China's railway from individuals living in the margins of China. The latter body of documentary films, are mainly independent Chinese documentaries, which present an alternative perspective to that presented in the first set of documentaries. As I will demonstrate below, the dominant national discourse is usually based on the public sphere, encouraging the increase of the representation of respectable, even glamorous aspects of society, which are often formally employed to construct the film text of national history, civilisation and diplomacy, etc. In contrast, images of 'marginal China', standing at the point of private space, presenting stories of 'little ones' who seem to be far away from 'the great', showing the poverty, failure, pain in their lives, and then suggests some of the social problems in China's modernisation process.[172] Overall, the chapter utilises textual analysis of the films' formal qualities and ideological content, to illustrate how these three elements, China, railway and modernisation, are visualised in these documentaries to depict alternative visions of the country.

China's National Discourse: Visualizing the Modernization of China in Industrialism and Technologism

The four documentary films, *China's Mega Projects I*, *China's Mega Projects II*, *China's Mega Projects III*, *China High-Speed Railway* and *The Belt and Road*, narrate stories in regard to China's efforts in developing standard railway and high-speed railway technologies. Relying on intensive use of effective compositions in shots, the link between China and industrial technology has been established in cinematic space. In each of the documentary films, the audience is invited to see how railway technology develops step by step and how the relevant industry is running in Chinese society. For instance, the opening of *China Mega Project I* outlines how the high-speed railway is constituted; consequently, railway tracks, high-speed trains, railway bridged, tunnel

[172] Accepting the historical influence of a classic narrative mode originating from Chinese literature and ancient culture, the screenwriter/story writer/playwright, especially those who are working on state-level platforms, tend to build their creative writing on the broad terrain of Chinese history, resulting in the formula of an epic style crossing ancient and modern, and political metaphors or ideological arguments which are naturally connected with grand concepts such as the interests/destiny/spirit of the nation. Derived from the inspiration of the type of narrative mode, the state-produced/participated documentary films focusing on national success which are examined in this chapter are described by the writer as telling stories of 'the great'. Otherwise, some independent documentaries develop the filmmaking not on the collective level, rather framing the ordinary individual's story, even if the camera captures collective life or related forms of working and community life, so that the point of focus is still individual experience, for example, the fate of the individual. The type of depiction is termed by the writer as a concern about 'the little ones'.

borers etc. are the objects appearing on screen. To some degree, in the depictions of the mechanical aspects of the railway, the presence of different machines on the working site are shaped as the more spectacular roles than the human characters who are only scattered in the scene. As a result, the main thrust of my analysis is to explore how these technical spectacles are presented on screen, and how the relationship between human and mechanical aspects of the film frame are formed and changed by the different ways of representing human and non-human characters.

As my analysis will show, in *China's Mega Projects*, segments of railway stories bind together China, through the development of underground railways and standard railways, as well as high-speed railways, in cinematic space through the use of compositions in shots. It suggests that a modernised China, from the perspective of public transportation, is built on a well-qualified railway system, behind which the belief in industrialism has taken a dominant position in Chinese society during the last few decades. This is in keeping with the mainstream, state-supported ideology of China, which suggests that developing industrial technology and remarkable engineering projects are signifiers of a modernisation process which is highly visible in the country.[173] For instance, from 2016 to 2020, the added value of the industrial sector experienced a rise from 24,540.6 to 31,307.1 billion Chinese yuan (CNY).[174] Internationally, the development of China's science and technology industry has been regarded as 'the innovation leader in a range of high-tech industries.'[175] The social wave of thought on the technological sublime has boosted relevant technological industries in reality, and is also reflected in the works of film and television.

I will analyse how the framing in shots works in the films from several aspects, including location, scenery, characters, lighting, and how these are accommodated in

[173] In 1995, in the duration of President Jiang Zemin, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued 'The Strategy of Revitalizing China through Science and Education', whose content is to "make science and education a priority for economic and social development with education as the basis, speed up the transforming of scientific and technological advances into practical productive forces, enhance the scientific and cultural quality of the whole nation, making economic construction rely on scientific and technological progress and enhance the quality of laborers, to quicken the pace of building China into a powerful and prosperous country". An official statement which has mentioned the above idea could be found on the website of China's embassy in Indonesia. http://id.china-embassy.org/eng/kjjl/t87394.htm Accessed on 10-03-2022.

[174] Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2020 National Economic and Social Development. National Bureau of Statistics of China. Issued date: 28/02/2021. http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202102/t20210228_1814177.html Accessed on 10-03-2022.

[175] Sylvia Schwaag Serger, Cong Cao, Caroline S. Wagner, Xabier Geonaga & Koen Jonkers. (2021) What do China's Scientific Ambitions Mean for Science—and the World? *Issues in Science and Technology*. https://issues.org/what-do-chinas-scientific-ambitions-mean-for-science-and-the-world/ Accessed on 10-03-2022.

the frame. I conduct my analysis via items in the scenes and camera movement, by which an idea of shaping China's railway stories through industrialism forcing forward the progress of a society is presented on screen. Moreover, a national discourse integrated with the spirit of industrialism emerges. In my analysis below, I demonstrate how the sequences of stories in relation to the construction of the rail system and the development of rail technology are narrated in the shots with features of the industrial style. The 'industrial documentary' is a term that emerged in the Chinese documentary filmmaking industry a decade ago, and later entered academic discussions in the studies of Chinese documentary.[176] It refers to those Chinese documentary films such as *China's Mega Projects* (Bing Li, China, 2012/2016/2017) and *Remarkable Construction* (Min Pan, China, 2021) which are themed around industrial stories, filming undergoing industrial programmes, engineering constructions and the artificial landscapes of industrial objects. This pattern of documentary filmmaking in China contributes to documentary aesthetics with the ideas of industrialism.[177]. Currently, the 'industrial documentary' is considered to have the characteristic of filming objects of machines and equipment as the main roles rather than human characters.[178] The narrative focus is on machinery, stressing the achievements made by humans through mechanisation and industrialisation. Thereby the 'industrial documentary' films evoke the popularity of industrial manufacturing, modernisation and technological innovation in Chinese society (Tongdao Zhang, 2018; Zhuquan Qi, 2018; Guangxia Niu, 2021). The emergence of the 'industrial documentary' in Chinese filmmaking is also regarded as being associated with social thought in relation to Chinese modernity, due to the literary and cinematic symbols in the grand narrative, and aesthetic construction of the

[176] The genre of Industrial documentary and its characteristics has analysed by Tongdao Zhang. See Zhang's paper here: Tongdao Zhang & Zhongbo Liu. (2018) 2017 Research Report on Chinese Documentary Works. *Contemporary TV*, (7): 4-6 张同道&刘忠波. (2018) 2017 年中国纪录片作品研究报告.*当代电视*, (07): 4-6. Scholars also have cases studies on the genre of industrial documentary and comparative studies with international films. See two examples here: Zixuan Zhang & Yumei Cao. (2015). Different Images of Modern China: A Comparative Study of Two Documentaries, Man Made Marvels (2008) and China's Mega Projects (2012). *China Television*, (2): 80-84. 张梓轩&曹玉梅. (2015). 现代化中国的不同形象呈现——纪录片《建筑奇观》《超级工程》比较研究.*中国电视*, (02): 80-84. Shupin Zhao, Hao Wu & Long Zeng. (2019). Analysis on the Cinematographic Style of *Big, Bigger, Biggest* (2008). *China Journalism and Communication Journal*, (04): 223-233. 赵淑萍,吴昊,曾龙. (2019). 论纪录片《超大建筑狂想曲》的创作风格.*中国新闻传播研究*, (04): 223-233.

[177] Tongdao Zhang & Zhongbo Liu. (2018) 2017 Research Report on Chinese Documentary Works. *Contemporary TV*, (7): 4-6 张同道&刘忠波. (2018) 2017 年中国纪录片作品研究报告.*当代电视*, (07): 4-6.

[178] Zhuquan Qi, Hongbing Chen, Yang Li, Jing Zhang & Liping Wang. (2018) Analysis on the Industrial Documentary: A Case Study of *The Pillars of a Great Power. Television Research*, (4): 22-24. 齐竹泉,陈红兵,李洋,张菁,王立平. (2018). 从《大国重器》看工业纪录片创作实践.*电视研究*, (4): 22-24.

subject of industry.[179] (Jian Zhen & Zihao Yuan, 2020) One representative 'industrial documentary' is *The Pillars of a Great Power* (2013), which was produced to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the announcement of the Decision on the Development of Major Technical Equipment. Over the three series of *China's Mega Projects*, the films narrate stories of Chinese railways and the people in the industry to present the challenges of developing Chinese railways and their technological achievements in a manner which conveys faith and patriotism to a nation. That is to say, *China's Mega Projects* - as a pattern of filmmaking involving engineering and industrialising - suggests that the development of China's railway and people who work on the rail and train business are witnessing the fruits of China's modernisation and economic reform. When the camera frames constructions of railways and train carriages in *China's Mega Projects I*, or high-speed railway technology, digital information sensing technology and artificial intelligence in *China's Mega Projects II*, China's modernisation processes are visually presented. Industrial technology, rail connections, Chinese engineers and workers, all these elements converge on the ideological terminal point, nationalism.[180] Domestically, the emotions of nationalism attend patriotic narratives on multi-platform media, stimulating enthusiasm for contributing to the prosperity of the country. Put simply, I suggest that these specific scenes from the 'industrial documentary' operate to eulogise the success of the industrialisation and modernisation of the country. In the sequences on China's railway stories, the shooting location is changed many times over various cities in China, from an underground railway design institute, to the aboveground railway construction site or the underground railway tunnel in *China's Mega Projects I*. The locations also include an HSR test centre and chip research zone in Beijing in the section on the innovation of China's railway system in *China's Mega Projects II*. Moreover, the filmmakers arrive

[179] Zheng, Jian & Zihao Yuan. (2020) The Construction, Rethinking and Compliment of China's Industrialization Process: A Study of Online Industrial Literature and Documentary in the decade of the New Century. *Research of Chinese Literature*. (03): 159-163+179. 郑坚&袁子豪.(2020) 中国工业化进程的构拟、复盘与赞歌——新世纪 10 年代网络工业文学与纪录片研究.*中国文学研究*, (03):159-163+179.

[180] The concept of 'nationalism' operates in the areas of engineering and industrialisation in Chinese society as an equivalent of patriotism, emphasising pride and glory in participating in the development of the economy and society in the country, and from an individual perspective, to make one's contribution to the progress of the development of one's nation is a great achievement in popular consensus. See below for articles from news media in which this social thought, that the success of technological engineering projects is associated with the national confidence and political system, can be found. Yuqi Huang & Chendi Bo. (2019) Why is China capable of building super projects? http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0926/c429373-31374886.html Accessed on 23-04-2022. Sisi Xiao. (2017) *China's Mega Projects* Shows China's Power to the World. https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnK5ybk Accessed on 25-04-2022. Jun Wang. (2017) The Technological Power of State-Enterprises behind Mega Engineering Projects in *Amazing China*: Chinese Technology Solves World-Level Problem. https://m.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1800741 Accessed on 26-04-2022.

to Turkey and Saudi Arabia to film the scenes of Istanbul (Ankara–Istanbul high-speed railway) and Mecca (Haramain high-speed railway) in the section that explores China's railway abroad in *China's High-Speed Railway*. The change of location extends the sphere of the narrative on China and its railway stories. The fundamental level of the discursive sphere is that China applies advanced equipment at that moment, such as a tunnel boring machine (TBM), to improve the capacity of infrastructural construction towards a qualified standard to be broadly accepted internationally. This is evident in the scene in *China's Mega Projects I* in which we can see how the technology of computer-animation is utilised in shots to inform the spectator of the mechanical principle of TBM. As the image showing that the computer-generated machine model of TBM is digging forward in the subterranean layer, the huge blades at the forehead of the TBM seen slicing the sediment rapidly. Meanwhile, a voice-over commentary states in the shots, 'an advanced machine which improves efficiency dozens of times more than manual work. That is TBM'. As the story of China's railway on screen continues, and the development of China's railway technology improves, the structure of the text on China's railway story and the imagination of modernisation through the technological symbol of the rail system becomes better shaped in *China's Mega Projects II* and *III*. The capability of creativity in this country, as a new cultural element, is written into the developed text of national discourse. Consequently, several elements, such as the sequences linking Danyang-Kunshan Grand (Railway) Bridge and big data mixed with the facial recognition system in Guangzhou-Guiyang High-speed Railway Station, celebrate cases where Chinese engineers have applied industrial theories and technology in a creative way, comprehensively, to solve a series of thorny problems in construction projects. They are presented on screen to emphasise the role of innovation in the industrial development of China, both in *China's Mega Projects II* and *China's Mega Projects III*. In another special documentary themed on China's railway moments, *China High-speed Railway,* a 'triptych structure'[181] is employed to tell the story of China's railway projects in the past decade, innovative concepts in railway development and a picture of city life led by faster railway transportation. The three parts of *China High-speed Railway* deliver different sides of China's high-speed railway story and, in particular episode 2, *Pulse of the Time* emphasises the relationship between the railway

[181] Thomas Waugh. (2009) The 400 Million (1938) and the Solidarity Film: 'Halfway between Hollywood and Newsreel'. *Studies in Documentary Film*, 3 (1): 7-17.

and modernisation in China.[182] I will support all of these assertions through the textual analysis below and I concentrate on this episode to examine how the location shifts from a high-speed railway work studio to the zone of research and testing, thereby conveying ideas about creative design and core technology upgrading in China's railway construction. The third level, which raises the position of the railway in China's industrialisation, is that railway technologies help open a door to a broader sphere for China's external cooperation with different countries, which assists in developing diplomatic relationships. Consequently, the discussion of the influence of railway technology takes a transition from the level of engineering in China to its role of international participation, in a wider sense. As such, several shooting locations are arranged abroad, for instance, in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Through the presentation of China's engineering participation abroad, we are invited to see the effective reach of railway technology of a Chinese standard. The appearance of the scenery of countries in the Middle East region in *China High-speed Railway* makes the story of China's railway an international text. Eventually, these segments related to the history and recent development of China's railway technology, which have been narrated by the documentary films of *China's Mega Projects I*, *China's Mega Projects II*, *China's Mega Projects III*, complete the work of combining industrialism and the modernisation of China in the cinematic zone with the effect of making an 'amazing China'.

In this section, I will examine the style of cinematography in the above documentaries by analysing the following cases to discuss how the narrative of China's railway stories and where modernisation has been contained is led by the spirit of industrialism, and been depicted on screen in the public interest. I will focus on what these contents are in the frames of the examined films, and how they are organised for the purpose of presenting an industrial style on screen.

The filming location established the tone for the following succession of shots. For example, in episode 3 of *China's Mega Project I*, titled *Underground Railway Lines in Beijing*, the first filming location is the work zone of railway designers and engineers, including a large office and seminar room (Fig.1); thereby, the audience is introduced to Beijing subway through engineering drawings. In the scene where the work studio

[182] All subtitles in *China's High-speed Railway* are presented on screen in Chinese. *Pulse of the Time* is translated by the writer from the original Chinese title '时代脉动', which makes a metaphor connecting high-speed railways to the pulse of the human body, suggesting the significant function of railway transportation in an age of modernisation.

of the Design Institute for line 6 of Beijing Subway is filmed, the individuals appearing include Peng He, whose role in the project is displayed as 'Deputy Head of Beijing Subway Projects from Beijing Urban Engineering Design & Research Institute', and his colleagues.[183] The camera focuses on him, as decision-maker in a professional team in the plot of team members working on the design drawings of underground railway line 6 in the old city centre of Beijing, as he discusses with colleagues how to avoid disruption to the Imperial City when designing a new line crossing through the centre of the area.[184] Facing the camera, he has another role, of being an interviewee who holds authority in railway construction, referring to the matter of protection of heritage versus urban construction in the process of China's modernisation. In the shots interviewing Peng He, the focus is not on the technology of railway construction but on the idea of maintaining a balance between developing China's railway system on its way to access the level of a modernised country and preserving historic relics. This suggests that from the early phase of China's promotion of urbanisation, the country has had comprehensive consideration in the relation of urban design and sustainable development when it develops its railway projects. This coincides with the principles applied in urban construction by European countries. For instance, in a Scottish railway project supported by Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme (EGIP), the first point to be concerned with was an assessment of the adverse effects brought by changes between old structures and newly external frames once the upgrading work begins.[185] Episode 3, *Underground Railway Lines in Beijing*, as a portion of *China's Mega Projects I*, starts filming the scene of the work studio of urban design and construction institute in reference to the depiction of China's railway stories. It sets the tone of scientific technology, a specialist and sustainable future for the stories of China's railways.

[183] The institute has developed to be Beijing Urban Construction and Design Group (01599.HK) in 2013.

[184] Imperial City is the core section of ancient Beijing, where there are buildings, blocks, gardens, and political areas of the emperors and their relatives. Now Imperial City is a zone circled out as a cultural heritage conservation area.

[185] Manuel Neves, Chris Holt, Robert McConnell & George Marjane. (2016) Geotechnical Design and Construction of Improvements to Existing Railway Lines. *Procedia Engineering*, 143: 1384-1391.

(Fig.1 Peng He and his team are working on the design of line 6 in the office of the institute.)

The next sequence in *China's Mega Projects I* takes place in one of the construction sites of underground railway line 6 in Beijing (Fig.2-4). Leaving the drawings and papers, the camera takes the audience to the reality of a worksite, where it depicts a strong spirit of industrialism in China's society that binds together the capacity for infrastructure construction and a level of modern civilisation. In the first decade of the 21th century, the need to 'be geared to international standards' is still the dominant social ideological trend in projects organised in various fields in Chinese society.[186] Furthermore, in the field of railway construction, China is at the stage of catching up on advanced technology, as well as mature management, when it compares the 'made in China' railway system with that of European-American countries. One of the necessities in China's economic reform and modernisation is to complete the process of matching international standards, principally in line with developed capitalist countries that have commanded sophisticated technologies and equipment, and have traditionally had superior economic strength.[187] As a result, the primitive manifestation of industrial spirit in China has led to a representation of cutting-edge tools and equipment on screen as exemplified when *China's Mega Project I* attempts to depict a fast-developing China in which the railway system is being upgraded. In a

[186] The original expression in formal official documents in Chinese is '与国际接轨'.

[187] Naiji Lv. (1997) A Debate on the Connotation and Relationship of 'Be Geared to International Standards' and 'Adhere to Chinese Characteristics' -from a Perspective of Science and Technology. *Philosophical Trends*, (10): 28-30. 吕乃基. (1997). 试论"与国际接轨"和"坚持中国特色"的含义及其关系——科学技术的视角.哲学动态, (10): 28-30.

segment which narrates the ongoing construction in episode 3, *Underground Railway Lines in Beijing*, a tunnel boring machine (TBM) appears in the scene, as a grand piece of equipment symbolising the advantage of technologism. Since the innovation of TBMs in 1954, they have been improved many times by James S. Robbins, to be used in complex geographical conditions and zones through changeable weather, while, with the complementary aid of big data and artificial intelligence, engineers can manage the progress of digging by TBM.[188] In this instance of TBM, *China's Mega Projects I* integrates archive footage and shots produced by computer-animation technology with location filming to suggest the leap in China's capacity of developing a railway system. As seen in the black-and-white images edited from the archive footage (Fig.2), several people are working on the builders' staging, and the structures are directly established on the surface of the ground, due to the limitations of technological conditions of that time. Then, in the shot (Fig.3), generated by computer animation, the mechanical model of TBM is displayed for the spectator to perceive how this advanced machinery will work to replace manpower. Therefore, this comparison in archive shots and computer-generated shots is used to signify that a thorough change has been made, from human power to mechanical power, when tracing China's railway history.

(Fig.2 Chinese workers participate in railway construction with manpower in 1960)

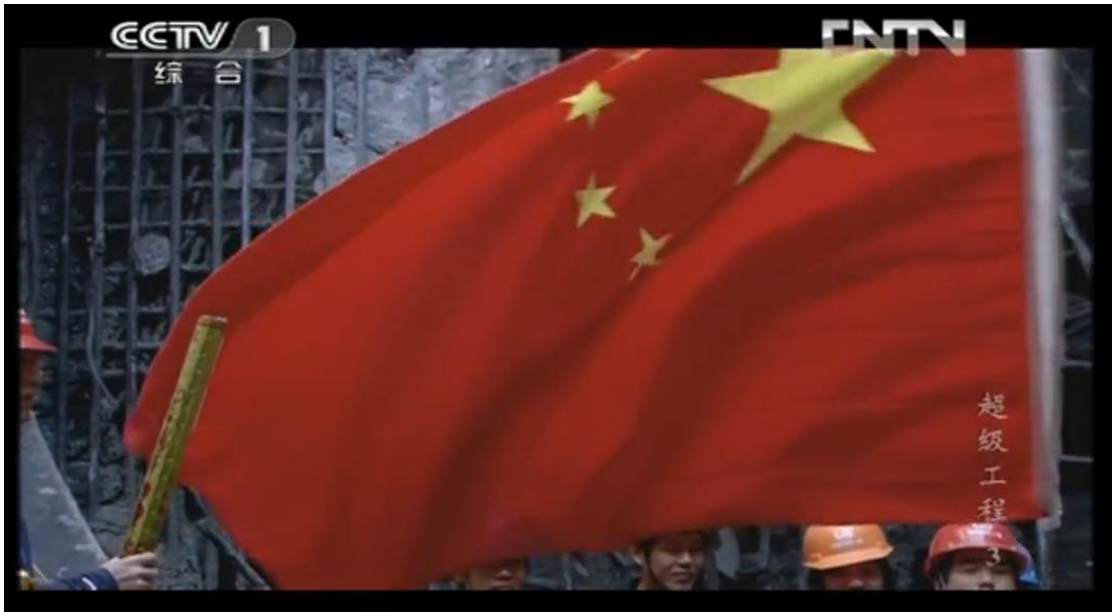
[188] Danial Jahed Armaghani & Aydin Azizi. (2021) *Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Tunnelling and Underground Space Technology*. Singapore: Springer.

(Fig.3 The representation of TBM tunnelling generated by computer animation)

(Fig.4 A TBM that has been used in the construction of line 6 in Beijing in 2011)

(Fig.5 Tube workers are transferring the sections of a huge TBM to the underground.)

(Fig.6 Tube workers are matching pieces of TBM)



(Fig,7 Workers are waving the national flag and cheering while the TBM successfully drills through two sections of the tunnels)

In the shots from *China's Mega Project I* which were filmed at the construction sites, the pictures convey a strong industrial style through visualisation by showing extensive details from real construction sites. The greater the presence of machines on screen (Fig.4), the greater the approval of mechanism and technologism which has been delivered. In the framing of these scenes, machines (equipment) usually occupy the centre of the frame as human characters take a minor position. For instance, since the influence of industrialist aesthetics on the completion of China's railway stories, *China's Mega Projects I* visually represents the authenticity of the worksite (Fig.5) by presenting images of uncovered cables, steel scaffolds, fragmented rocks and tube workers' dusty uniforms (Fig.6). Besides the direct appearance of objects related to construction, the form of the composition makes a different emotional appeal. Large machines, as the priority on screen, are framed in full shot, even with a fisheye lens, in order to present the whole body of the machine. Tube workers standing on the TBM, in contrast, appear to be insignificant. The contrast of huge machines and small workers makes for a breath-taking visual experience, one which contrasts the greatness of the large machine and the relative insignificance of the individual workers. These types of shot, with framing to present technological equipment as playing a vital role, emphasise the overwhelming power of industrialism, a cinematographic eulogy to the power of engineering and technology. In 1994, the concept of the 'technological sublime' was advanced by David Nye to examine the social construction of technology in America.

"The sublime underlies this enthusiasm for technology. One of the most powerful human emotions, when experienced by large groups, the sublime can weld society together.[189]" As Nye saw the connection between the crowd's sentiment and engineering projects, we can observe the value in relation to the appreciation of the man-made marvels revived in China. *China's Mega Project I* involves both technological progress and national pride in the narrative of 'industrial documentary'. In scene (Fig.7), which captures the moment of the TBM precisely digging through the two tunnels as calculated, the workers outside the cave wave a national flag with excitement and joy. It is evident that their enthusiasm towards technological development has not only helped construct the national discourse of a promising China on film, but also formed the base of social solidification.

In *China's Mega Project II*, on the basis of pursuing an international standard and advanced equipment, which is extracted from *China's Mega Projects I*, China's railway story is written with a new element, that is, the capacity of innovation. Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed an innovation-driven pattern in economic development strategy in two sessionsin 2013, and soon initiated the 'road of innovation' to boost reform and progress in Chinese society at various official occasions.[190] In particular, regarding innovative development of technology, the term 'innovation' has become a buzzword drawing the attention of the public. In *Summary of Xi Jinping's Discussion on Science and Technological Innovation*, Xi describes the important role of innovation in the future development of China:

> Innovation is the spirit of a nation which aims to step forward; the driving force that a country reaches prosperity and strength … Sci-Tech innovation is indispensable. As a developing country, China is endeavouring in economic reform, optimising their structure. For the completion of the 'Two Centenaries' goal, the innovation-driven strategy must be promoted well through the country.[191]

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[189] David E Nye. (1994) *American Technological Sublime*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

[190] Two sessions refer to the National People's Conference (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) sessions.

[191] Xi, Jinping. (2016). *Summary of Xi Jinping's Discussion on Science and Technological Innovation*. Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, pp. 3-5. The quotes from Xi Jinping's speech are delivered in Chinese. The original words in Chinese are "创新是一个民族进步的灵魂，是一个国家兴旺发达的不竭动力…我国是一个发展中大国，目前正在大力推进经济发展方式转变和经济结构调整，正在为实现'两个一百年'奋斗目标而努力，必须把创新驱动发展战略实施好". Translated by the writer.

As a consequence of political influence spreading in culture and creative arts, when China's railway stories are cinematised on screen, the element of innovation is also written into the narrative. For instance, in episode 3 of *China's Mega Projects II*, titled A *Vehicle Made by China*, the example of Danyang – Kunshan Railway is utilised to serve as a representation of innovative engineering on screen, with regard to Chinese engineers' creative methods in the building of a railway bridge.[192] These engineers have come up with a creative design plan which mixes railway construction and bridge building within the same project, thus solving the geographical barriers caused by the multiple types of geographical condition in the area where the railway track would have to pass through. As seen in the scene where we can see the giant bridge-building machine labelled 'China Railway 11th Bureau Group Corp' on the head, working on piers, and some Chinese workers standing around the machine (Fig.8), *China's Mega Projects II* here utilises the approach of time lapse filming to shoot basically the whole process of the bridge-building machine working in seconds, informing the spectator how the innovation of this combination of railway and bridge becomes realised. Naturally, the spectator gains a sense of how the idea of building the whole line of Danyang – Kunshan railway on the steel bridge will function.

(Fig.8 An example of Chinese engineers' creative design – a bridge as a road-base of a high-speed railway track.)

[192] The title 'A Vehicle Made by China' is translated by the writer. The original title of episode 3 is '中国车' in Chinese, which means the transportation tools made by China.

(Fig.9 One of the water zones that Danyang-Kunshan High-Speed Railway Track would pass through. Tilt-up Shot)

(Fig.10 The same water zone that Danyang-Kunshan High-Speed Railway Track would pass through. Overhead Shot.)

(Fig.11 One of the rivers that the Danyang-Kunshan High-Speed Railway Track would cross. Overhead Shot.)

(Fig.12 The surface over which stands the flyover Danyang-Kunshan High-Speed Railway Project would have to go through.)

Since the railway would not be directly built on the ground, the complex geology of the area, which is covered by a network of rivers, old residences along rivers, crossed driveways and small stone bridges across the water zones (Fig.9, Fig.10, Fig.11), is just leapt over by the engineering team. The steel bridge is designed to be used to only serve the high – speed railway, as the best plan that solves the geo-problem. Indeed, the technology of bridge building by Chinese engineers is close to the top tier, standing

with their peers in the UK, Germany, France, USA, Swiss, Japan and Denmark.[193] *China's Mega Projects I* here is able to present the engineering capacity of China's bridge-building in these shots. *China's Mega Projects I*, then, utilises aerial shots and voice-over commentary to construct its particular representation of Amazing China.

China's High-Speed Railway narrates Chinese stories in relation to the construction of a high-speed railway through three episodes, *The Pulse of Time*, *The Road of Innovation*, *The Road to Prosperity*.[194] *China's High-Speed Railway,* applying a 'triptych structure' - an idea for the organisation of film segments utilised by documentarians such as Joris Ivens - to develop China's railway story from its history through innovation to its future. Joris Ivens was a Dutch documentary filmmaker who gained significant success in documentary filmmaking, particularly when he travelled and filmed during his stay of over 10 years in China. What has been generally accepted about Joris Ivens in China is his left-wing politics, his friendship with Zhou Enlai[195] and his affection towards the Chinese people.[196] In researching Joris Ivens and his filmmaking practice, his political belief in pro-communist ideas and 'distinctive approach to reality' are unavoidable. His approach in documentary involved accessing real situations, including the location, and showing them on screen[197]; however, he does not reject re-enactment as a strategy. Meanwhile, he insists on the use of music in appropriate shots to highlight the themes of the documentary. Joris Ivens' work in the Central Newsreel and Documentary Studio in China, and his teaching of documentary filmmaking, have left a heritage of documentary filmmaking for Chinese filmmaking practitioners, from *400 Million* (Joris Ivens, Denmark/China, 1939), *Early Spring*[198] (Joris Ivens, Denmark/China, 1958), *The War of the 600 Million People* (Joris Ivens, Denmark/China, 1958), *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* (Joris Ivens, Denmark/China, 1976), *Les Ouigours* (Joris/Ivens, Denmark/China, 1977), *Les Kazaks* (Joris Ivens, Denmark/China, 1977), *The Drugstore* (Joris Ivens, Denmark/China, 1980) to *A Tale of the Wind* (Joris Ivens, Denmark/China, 1988). Nevertheless, Ivens' ideas of

[193] Xuhong Zhou & Xigang Zhang. (2019) Thoughts on the Development of Bridge Technology in China. *Engineering (Beijing, China)*, 5 (6): 1120-1130.
[194] The three titles are translated by the writer. They are originally in Chinese, the episode 1 titled "时代脉动", the episode 2 titled "创新之路", and the episode 3 titled "经世通途".
[195] Zhou Enlai (also known as Chou En-lai in Wade-Giles) was the first Premier of China and one of the top leaders of the early Chinese Communist Party.
[196] Tongdao Zhang. (2009) The Legend of a Filmmaker and a Country-Fifty Years of Ivens and China. *Studies in Documentary Film*, 3 (1): 35-44.
[197] Jean-Pierre Sergent. (2009) The Chinese Dream of Joris Ivens. *Studies in Documentary Film*, 3 (1): 61-68.
[198] The film also called *Letters from China*.

documentary filmmaking still influence Chinese directors, and his film techniques can be found in quite a number of state-funded Chinese documentaries. For example, the classical organisation of film content - the triptych structure - in *400 Million* is later applied in other Chinese documentaries, such as *China's High-Speed Railway*. As Ivens explained in relation to his own work

> First a broad general section to say that the Japanese did not begin today, that the war is part of a plan which has been in the shaping process for over thirty years - hundreds of years, if you like - and was specifically formulated in 1927 in the Tanaka Memorandum. This is our political and economic background of this historic period. The central panel of the triptych will be the war itself and the battle of Taierchwang and future battles. Out of that must come the third section, a personal story of a young Chinese defending his country.[199] (Ivens, 1969: 170)

This historic influence still expands in contemporary Chinese documentary films. For example, in *China's High-Speed Railway*, Episode 1 *The Pulse of Time* reviews the history of the development of railway construction in China, and approves the success of China's railway projects. Episode 2, *The Road of Innovation* focuses on how China has made innovations in upgrading their railway system, and established the Chinese standard of high-speed railway technology. Episode 3, *The Road to Prosperity,* claims that railway projects have led China on the path of promoting economic growth, and suggests a revival of the Chinese nation.

Primarily I will focus on the content of episode 2, *The Road of Innovation,* and examine how it utilises the story of the French engineer Christophe Maliczak[200] to display China's worldwide participation in the field of high-speed railways, and the Chinese standard of high-speed railway technology.[201] In the sequence involving Maliczak and China's railway, filming takes place inside a high-speed railway train near the cockpit. Maliczak and his Chinese colleague, Yang Gao, a specialist in acoustic vibrations of railway vehicles, are discussing and testing noise in the carriage. *The Road*

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[199] Joris Ivens. (1969) *The Camera and I*. New York: International Publishers.

[200] Christophe Maliczak has a Chinese name Ma Xiaoke ('马小克' in Chinese characters) and when he appears in the documentary, the name is shown with '马小克' in subtitle.

[201] As the theme of *China's High-Speed Railway* is related to the display of its latest achievements in the development of railway technology, it highlights the internationality of China's capacity of self-innovation in railway technology. The story of Christophe Maliczak, a French railway engineer, who is a representative of the group of international intellectuals, coming to China and joining the core national engineering project exemplifies the international recognition on Chinese railway technology. This is why the sequence of Christophe Maliczak is focused in this section.

of Innovation films them working on testing, and in interviews with Maliczak and Yang Gao, verifies the mature stage that China's railway technology has achieved.

As the voice-over states, "Since China's railway technology has developed to a higher level, it has attracted overseas professionals to join the team working in China's railway companies. Ma Xiaoke, who comes from France, works in the sound lab of CRRC Changchun Railway Vehicles". It then develops the story of Maliczak and Chinese railways. In this instance, the film employs the montage method of editing the scenes, in which subjects are behaving in different statuses of being on duty, suggesting to the spectator how this team, which includes both Chinese and international engineers, deals with the routine of research and development of high-speed railway technology.

(Fig.13 Yang Gao and Christophe Maliczak install the equipment for testing)

(Fig.14 Christophe Maliczak is interviewed to talk about his role in CRRC)

(Fig.15 Christophe Maliczak and Yang Gao discuss the data and graph)

(Fig.16 Yang Gao explains the technological principle of SBS system work)

As seen in the fig.13, three engineers, including Christophe Maliczak and Yang Gao who sit in the back row, are installing the holders for testing. The film here utilises a full shot, capturing the three people and objects in the space of a carriage of a high-speed train, by which the spectator can have a general view of the movement of these specialists and their working environment. When Maliczak is interviewed on screen, he is filmed standing in the centre of the carriage by the holders and a spherical device (fig.14). He states: "When I was working for a smaller French communication company, I was not able to get access to those core parts of railway technology when we cooperated with Bombardier, Alstom or Siemens. But now I work in CRRC, all sections are open to me. All aspects of railway technology here I can access and understand, so we have more solutions[202]", comments Maliczak.[203] The participation of Christophe Maliczak shows that China's high-speed railway technology has become very close to that in major countries, such as France, who are taking leading roles in high – speed railway technology.[204] The participation of international specialists like a French engineer such as Maliczak in China's railway projects is the evidence.

Following this, the film employs medium shots and close shots to capture the

[202] Translated by the writer. Christophe Maliczak speaks in Chinese to complete that interview in the documentary. His original words in Chinese are "以前我在法国工作的时候，我在一个比较小的资讯公司工作，所以我们跟庞巴迪、阿尔斯通，或者西门子工作的时候，我们不可以看所有的秘密。但是现在我在中国中车工作，所有的东西我都可以看，所有的东西我都可以理解，所以我们的办法是更广".

[203] Affiliated to CRRC Corporation Limited. CRRC Corporation Limited is a giant whose service covering all items of rolling rock and eclipses its competitors Alstom and Siemens.

[204] Top 10 fastest trains in the world. https://www.railway-technology.com/features/feature-top-ten-fastest-trains-in-the-world/ Accessed on 26-03-2022

scene where Maliczak and Yang Gao are in collaboration for a sound test inside a high-speed train. In the image shown, Maliczak and Yang Gao are staring at the screen of a laptop, discussing data and graphs of this experiment (Fig.15). The employment of a medium shot facilitates the capture of facial expressions of the people in the frame, which displays Maliczak and Gao's dedicated attitude to work on the railway system. Next, the film employs a close shot on Yang Gao, Maliczak's Chinese colleague, filming how he explains their work about the sound test (Fig.16). Gao says, "We are doing some frames for the next sound test. Looking at this spherical beamforming software, which is for sound recognition, helping to test the location of noise in the inner space of the train carriage. While we are unable to see or touch the sound, after testing and image-forming by this software, we could visually see the sound".[205] In the scene in which Gao is interviewed, he is filmed turning the spherical device over. This image provides a piece of information on how these people work with their professional equipment, so that the spectator who comes from outside the academic background of sound engineering can perceive the specialisation of high-speed railway technology. Yang Gao's interview eventually functions to emphasise the place of technologism and industrialism in China's railway construction. In his interview, Yang Gao utilises terms like 'spherical beamforming software', 'spherical array', and 'sound recognition' that sounds abstruse but not too academic. As such, *China's High-Speed Railway* integrates the shots from different footages, forming the montage effect, which then constructs a sense of the technologically-advanced nature of the railway infrastructure in China for the spectator, in keeping with the concept of 'Amazing China'.

The final film which contributes to constructing a cinematic image of 'Amazing China' is *One Belt and Road*, a documentary co-supported by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China and the Information Office of the State Council in the 'Document China' film project. It has 6 episodes, *Common Fate*, *Road of Connectivity*, *Energy Ties*, *Road to Prosperity*, *Finance and Connectivity*, *Building Dreams*, narrating a series of stories of China and countries along the path drawn by The Belt and Road Initiative on cultural exchange, commercial cooperation and economic development. Here I focus on episode 2, *Road of Connectivity,* because it best depicts how an

[205] Translated by the writer from Chinese to English. The original words of Yang Gao in the interview are "我们现在做的工作主要就是在声音前期做这个声学的一些支架，像这个就是球形阵列。这个是做声音识别的，测试整个客车里面噪声源的位置。声音我们是看不见摸不着的，经过它测量，可以把整个声音图像化。我们用眼睛就能看到声音".

international version of China's railway story is presented on screen. I interpret how the overseas story of China's railway construction builds the image of China's contribution and responsibility to the international community by an industrial documentary.

In the segments showing China helping to build Haramain high-speed railway in Saudi Arabia in episode 2, *Road of Connectivity*, the method of synchronous sound and asynchronous sound setting serve the theme well. We can see this when the film narrates the sequence of a Saudi man, Ahmed, being interviewed, as Haramain high-speed railway is under construction. In the scene showing Ahmed being interviewed, the original sound of the interview is applied to display the authenticity of China's role as a helpful collaborator in international railway infrastructure. In the scene where the spectator is shown the construction site and the machine marked with the logo of a Chinese company, the film employs voice-over commentary to inform the spectator that this railway built with Chinese participation is the first high-speed railway in Saudi Arabia. This is demonstrated with more details below. Before the shots of China's railway construction sites in Saudi Arabia, an interview with a UN official is presented to authorise the credibility of China's engineering work overseas, and offer an explanation as to why China's investments are welcomed. For instance, in the interview Adnan Amin states:

> "China has tremendous human resources. China has had a very fast learning curve in terms of new technologies. China has huge technological resources. China has investment in research, development and innovation, and I think that sharing that experience with its partners would be extremely helpful in developing the future. China has a lot of things, not only capital, but also human resources, technological ability, innovation."

This aspect might not be affiliated to dynamic film aesthetics, but is essential for a state-supported documentary project to be internationally accepted when driven by a national discourse based on China's interests. To this degree, before building the representation of China with regard to successful international participation in economy and cultural events, this expression of attitude in public is diplomatically safe.

The film also seeks to include local voices. For instance, a local resident Ahmed, seated in front of the camera, compares the past and present after the Chinese helped in the construction of Haramain high-speed railway. He says, "From Medina to Mecca, in

the past pilgrims rode donkeys, camels and horses and failed because of the marathon journey. Some of them died on the unfinished way, while the others who finished pilgrimage still fell down on the return road."[206] The settings in the scenes of the interview with Ahmed suggests the formal role of China in the Saudi Arabian railway project. In the scene in which Ahmed is interviewed, we see the Chinese flag and furniture in a Chinese style, as well as Ahmed's keffiyeh and thobe (Fig.17). This displays the fact that Chinese companies and engineers arrive in Jeddah to assist the Saudi state to construct their own high – speed railway project in an officially approved commercial interaction between the two countries. Meanwhile, the Chinese company employs local workers and contributes to the rate of employment.

(Fig.17 Ahmed is being interviewed in a chamber where the Chinese national flag is one of the decorations.)

[206] These are expressed by the interviewee Ahmed in Arabic, with live direct sound, but the subtitles are translated by post-production in Chinese. The English version here is translated by the writer from Chinese subtitles. The relevant original Chinese subtitles are "以前从麦地那到麦加的朝觐者，他们骑着驴、骆驼、马，从麦地那出发赶往麦加。由于路途遥远，道路艰辛，用时过长，往往有些朝觐者无法完成朝觐就倒在了路上。还有些人完成了朝觐却倒在了返回的路上".

(Fig.18 Ahmed is talking with colleagues by an office table on which there are mini-Chinese flags and Saudi flags)

(Fig.19 Ahmed and his colleagues in the office room)

Apart from decorations in the office space, the camera movement also conveys particular meanings. For instance, when the camera frames Ahmed, the composition also includes two small flags – a Chinese flag and a Saudi Arabian flag - slowly moving upwards until Ahmed comes into the frame (Fig.18 and Fig.19). Although Ahmed is in the scene, he is out of focus, playing a subordinate role to the flags in the shot. Accompanied by the voice-over, “At present Ahmed works at a Chinese company participating in the construction of Haramain high-speed railway”, the camera movements present the link between Chinese technology with local human resources

and infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, rather than only depicting the lives of individual company staff. In this way, Ahmed and his colleagues become folded into the overseas version of China's railway story.

(Fig.20 The construction site of Haramain high-speed railway in Medina.)

As outlined above, the sequence filmed in Saudi Arabia of China's railway story involving Saudis implies meaning and emotion, to a large extent, by the change of location and setting. This short segment was dealt with through both interior (Fig.17, Fig.18, Fig.19) and exterior shooting (Fig.20). The interiors are primarily used for normal interviews by a fixed camera for the purpose of narrating, conveying information literally and producing meaning, whereas exterior shots are more often taken at real working sites to validate the argument proposed by the narrator, or words spoken by the characters, so as to create impressive visual experiences of the technology and machinery. In one scene (Fig.20), we see a tower crane undergoing construction on a railroad track in Mecca City. The aerial shots by a drone flying up and forward draw viewers to observe the large quantity of engineering from aspects. The slogan on which is written '18th Bureau of China Railway Construction Group Corporation' as one of the settings suggests, once more, that the Chinese company is taking responsibility for helping to build a high-speed railway for the Saudi people.[207]

Through analysis of the films outlined above, I have illustrated how China's railway story has been upgraded for the times, from its formative years – pursuing high-

[207] China Railway Construction Group Corporation is a state-owned super-max central company stretching more than 20 sub-companies specialising in various sectors of railway construction.

end equipment, to the second phase – achieving innovation, and now the third part – a new pattern that participates in the world forum evolved by high-speed railway technological standards made by China - is ongoing.[208] In this aspect, technologism not only brings the success of modernisation to Chinese society, but also helps China develop relations in various ways to other countries.

As such, in the shots from state-supported documentaries, the great national narrative in the name of technologism is recalled on screen, forming the political discourse of 'Amazing China'. Consequently, this facilitates depiction of the history of railway development and generations of Chinese engineers and workers forming a modern story with professional technology, individual contributions to the nation, responsibility and glory to this day and age. This is a narrative similar to *America: The Story of US* (2010) - a documentary narrating the history of founding and development of America, but from the aspect of industrialism. In this sense, railway technology filmed in above documentary films is not only the technological capacity in terms of rolling stock, railway track or data collection and management, but also the manifestation of national spirit in the field of industrialisation and modernisation, combining together to construct a series of images of 'Amazing China'

Observing/Participating in Marginal Narrative: Railway and Trauma, Kinship, Aesthetic Observation, Social Spaces of Outsiders

While such a grand national discourse delivers successful stories of the country in the course of modernisation, there is still another tone that can be utilised to tell a different version of China's development of economy and society in relation to railway tracks. Usually appearing in independent documentaries, I have defined this as a 'marginal narrative'. In this section, I examine several Chinese independent documentary films and transnational documentary films which employ the methods of direct cinema,

[208] The Chinese standard of High-Speed Railway technology has been recognized in the report, China's High-Speed Rail Development, released by the World Bank in 2019. It can be found online: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/933411559841476316/pdf/Chinas-High-Speed-Rail-Development.pdf Accessed on 23-03-2022. The internationalisation of Chinese standards for high-speed rail technology is also concluded to be one of the achievements in technological innovation in an official report by the National Railway Administration of China in 2021. See it here: http://www.nra.gov.cn/jgzf/flfg/gfxwj/bm/kjyfz/202112/t20211227_194034.shtml Accessed on 23-03-2022. The Chinese standards for high-speed rail construction and the engineering cases of China at home and abroad have been theorised. The UIC (International Railway Union) invited China to participate in completion of The Design of High-Speed Railway Series Standards. See more here: Pengfei Zuo. (2021). Research on the Compilation of UIC "High-speed Railway Design" Series of International Standards. *Railway Standard Design*, 65 (4): 1-5+13.

cinéma verité, observational modes and participatory modes to make different interventions in filmmaking to represent these marginal narratives. These documentary films are all about China's railway system at different stages, showing the connection between the Chinese people and the nation's railway tracks through a focus on stories about work and duty, everyday transportation, and on people making a living, kinship, unemployment and failure. The four documentary films under scrutiny are *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks/À l'ouest des rails* (Bing Wang, China, 2002), *Last Train Home* (Linxin Fan, China/Canada/UK, 2009), *The Iron Ministry* (J.P. Sniadecki, US/China, 2014), and *Along the Railway* (Haibin Du, China, 2001). These films depict how Chinese workers are negatively impacted by top-down unemployment in state-owned enterprises, and also the hardships facing ordinary Chinese people who are forced to leave their homes and families to earn a living. These aspects of hardship, captured from people who are struggling in life, represent the shock of many millions of ordinary people brought by economic reforms and social changes that were happening in that moment in Chinese society. This chapter analyses *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* use of direct cinema, highlighting how it documents significant moments with repeated long-take shots that depict the implementation of reforming China's state-owned enterprises, and how railway staff were facing their companies failing in mergers and bankruptcy. At that moment, millions of workers were being put out of work and losing their goals in life, sinking into emotions of being lost.[209] *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* represents this type of trauma by industrial restructuring. *Last Train Home* employs the method of cinéma verité to record the story of Zhang Changhua and his wife Chen Suqin taking the train back and forth between their hometown Huilong Village and working place, the metropolis of Guangzhou, to make money and feed their children. *The Iron Ministry* is an experimental documentary directed by J.P. Sniadecki, with the approach of observational documentary, on the theme of China's railway and the passengers. All segments were filmed based on Sniadecki's personal experience during 2011-2013 in his different train trips in China. In *The Iron Ministry*, a kind of aesthetic observation is employed by Sniadecki to observe passengers on the running trains and events happening in the slim train carriages. *Along the Railway* is a participatory documentary

[209] On the history event of the wave of bankruptcy and unemployment in Tie Xi Qu (West of the Tracks), Shenyang, some articles are written to retrospect the moment, narrating stories of people living in Tie Xi Qu. See an example here: Tie Xi, Tie Xi! The Road to Reform and Revitalization of an Old Industrial Base. http://www.ce.cn/cysc/newmain/yc/jsxw/201802/12/t20180212_28159511.shtml Accessed on 05-05-2022.

directed by Haibin Du. Du becomes involved in the process of documenting and starts conversations with the main characters, who are followed and observed by his hand-held camera and this interference invites the audience to enter the space of social intercourse amongst the vagrants. Next, this chapter will analyse how these documentary films present the relationship between railways and people from different economic groups in China's society, utilising the nation's railway structure to present an image of 'Marginal China.'

"*We wanted to create a world but eventually it collapsed.*" (Bing Wang, Director of *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks*)

Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks documents the bankruptcy of an area of heavy industry in Shenyang, China, of disused factories where workers trapped in depression have no enthusiasm for their duties, only chatting with colleagues and counting their pensions until retiring. This is a historical fragment picked from the early stage of China's economic reforms, which reflects changes in the Chinese economy from the planned economy pattern to the market-oriented one. Containing three sections, *Rust*, *Remnants*, *Rails*, each of which separately has a different narrative focus, *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* lasts 9 hours in total. This chapter mainly examines the third section, *Rails*.[210] *Rails* focuses on Du, a single father, and his son Yang Du, who cling to the railway and factories for a living, in the west zone of the tracks. Du has been a scavenger along the railway lines who has resold coal remains and components of iron to nearby factories for more than 20 years, until it is announced that the factories are bankrupt and to be reconstructed. The film demonstrates how, since the collapse of heavy industry in the zone, whether metallurgy of copper-extraction, factories in the place are being shut down. Railway and affiliated state-owned factories and companies in the local city are also losing money. Du and his son, who once freely lodged at a small room of the railway station, are supposed to leave the property. After being released from prison, Du is driven out, and takes his son to move to a new home. The story ends at night with a train running in the dark, leaving behind the industrial district and ruined

[210] *Tie Xie Qu: West of the Tracks* composes three separate sections, *Rust*, *Remnants*, *Rails*. *Rust* focuses the scenes of disused factories and *Remnants* films those unemployed people affiliated to the bankrupt factories of 'West of the Tracks' industrial base. Only *Rails* films the railway and people relying on the railway, which suits best the theme of chapter 5.

buildings.

Bing Wang decided to make the film to present the heavy industrial zone in Shenyang, drawing down the curtain in accordance with the economic reform policy, responding to the requirements on adjusting national industrial structure.[211] As the method of direct cinema features the quality of leaving raw materials with the practice of strict non-interventionism, it is deployed by Bing Wang to achieve the purpose of 'direct capture of reality'.[212] Wang was also influenced by the 'New Documentary Movement' in China, which eventually pushed him to take a hand-held camera into the factories 'west of the tracks'.[213] Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the New Documentary Movement has grown in China's TV and film production sectors, opening a new perspective for documentary filmmaking in China compared with the previously dominant mode of state-produced cinema before 1990.[214] In the environment of the New Documentary Movement, the chosen subjects were neglected in China's mass media, and usually, the films lacked explicit ideological framing, purporting to spread the voice of 'common folk'. These independent documentary directors and their films attempted to recreate reality and tended to forge a unique public space of critique.[215] Examples include *Bumming in Beijing* (Wenguang Wu, China, 1990) and *No. 16, Barkhor South Street* (Jinchuan Duan, China, 1996). Bing Wang's *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* and Haibin Du's *Along the Railway* were filmed against this background. In *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks*, the film applies numerous long-take shots and, with the broad use of live sound-recording, creates a sense of the quality of realism from ordinary life. With different long-take shots, he has successfully expressed the trauma brought by industrial transformation and upgrading from 20 years ago.[216] The first series of long-take shots appear at the beginning of *West of the Tracks*, through the development and the ending, which maintain similar framing in the sequence of the train running in the night and passing through factories (Fig.21-26). In these shots, we

[211] Interview with Bing Wang: The Overall Sense of History and Destiny. https://www.chinaindiefilm.org/interview-with-wang-bing-the-sense-of-history-and-destiny-2002/ Accessed on 06-05-2022.

[212] Susan Hayward. (2018) *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. Fifth ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

[213] Xinyu Lü. (2004). Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks and The New Documentary Movement in China. *Book Town*, (4): 62-63+2. 吕新雨.(2004)《铁西区》与当代中国的新纪录运动.*书城*, (04): 62-63+2.

[214] Xinyu Lü. (2003). *Documenting China: New Documentary Movement in Cotemporary China*. Beijing: Joint Publishing. 吕新雨. (2003).*纪录中国:当代中国新纪录运动*.北京:三联书店.

[215] Chris Berry, Xinyu Lü & Lisa Rofel. (2010) *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

[216] Xinyu Lü. (2004). West of the Tracks: The History and Class Consciousness. *DUSHU*, (1): 3-16. 吕新雨. (2004)《铁西区》:历史与阶级意识.*读书*, (01): 3-15.

see snow and building blocks passing away from the sides of the railway during day and night. There is a long take lasting more than 90 seconds showing brick houses and walls fading away (Fig.21). This is at the beginning of *Rails*, where, in the stillness of the night, audiences are invited to enter the world of the collapsing 'west of the tracks' and the history of China in the 2000s. That was the early period of China's national economic reforms, when the State Department issued documents to promote a series of reforms on state-owned enterprises in order to adjust their economic structure and expedite the process of being a market economy.[217] Those redundant and indebted state-owned enterprises were forced into acquisition or liquidation. Against this economic wave, once seen as the triumphant symbol of China's heavy industrial development, the Shenyang zone 'west of the tracks' announced permanent closures of steel mills and non-ferrous metal smelters, with relevant railway companies and factories consecutively stopping working and production.

(Fig.21 *West of the Tracks-Rails* A train is running into the zone of factories which were covered by heavy snow. Long take)

[217] The Decision of the Central Committee of The Communist Party of China on Major Issues Concerning The Reform and Development of State-Owned Enterprises. Issue Date: 22/09/1999. Effective Date: 22/09/1999 (中共中央关于国有企业改革和发展若干重大问题的决定．发布日期：1999 年 9 月 22 日，生效日期：1999 年 9 月 22 日)

(Fig.22 *West of the Tracks-Rails* The train was driving through the zone which is about to shut down. Long take)

(Fig.23 *West of the Tracks-Rails* The train passing by a quiet factory. Long Take)

(Fig.24 *West of the Tracks-Rails* The train passing by residential properties for workers in state-owned factories. Long take)

(Fig.25 *West of the Tracks-Rails* One building of railway workers' residences. Long take)

(Fig.26 *West of the Tracks-Rails* The train was waiting for the signal by a traffic cop. Long take)

Those factories which were destined to fail are exposed on screen without any decoration, thoroughly presenting their run-down condition (Fig.22). In this long take shot, the train runs through the broken industrial area at night. The camera is on the train and moves forward following the train; thus, audiences get a sense of advancing, watching the dirty snow and mud stuck on the railway line, and disused iron parts and machines being left behind. The wind is rushing in the shots and the noise of the train going over the railway immerses the audience in the atmosphere of gloom and sadness. This type of long take is continually employed to show railroads and buildings (Fig.23, 24, 25, 26) in the industrial zone 'west of the tracks' (Fig.23, 24, 25). Being fixed on the same position of the train, the camera documents the scenes of the sides of the railway, but given the changes of time and location, different objects – factory No.42 and railway crew residency buildings - appear in the picture, still with the sound of wind playing in the railways and noises of the running train. The accumulation of long take shots suggest that it is not a case of single companies not running well and going bankrupt, but rather, it is the entire area of state-owned enterprises and factories that are being broken down, visually signifying the systematic collapse of state-owned enterprises at that historical moment. As such, the film indicates the reason for upgrading the industrial structure, the old economic modes being revised, and in the course of revision, not only the factories but also those people who cling to the system are being downsized. The long take shot from the above sequence conveys a metaphor representation of the decaying factories and workers' accommodation buildings; the

group of railway workers and people who were permanently unemployed in the economic reform on state-owned enterprises are left behind by the age.

Last Train Home follows Changhua Zhang narrating a migrant worker's story of returning home during the Spring Festival. It takes the train, travelling between Zhang's hometown, Huilong village, and his workplace, Guangzhou, as the narrative thread, and depicts pain and love in this peasant family. In the story of kinship, Changhua Zhang and his wife Suqin Chen, who are farmers from a village in an undeveloped economic area in China, earn a living by working in the production line at a factory in the metropolis, Guangzhou. The film depicts their experience of earning a low wage and supporting their children and grandmother in a rural Huilong village, and hope their children achieve success through higher education, never to repeat their hard life. However, due to the long-time separation between the parents and children, Zhang's daughter rebels, rejecting schooling, and finally takes the path of being a second-generation migrant worker. At the end of *Last Train Home*, the parents decide that the mother Suqin Chen should return to the village to look after her son, who is at junior high school. In the last shot, after China's spring festival, thousands of migrant workers are boarding the train, leaving for factories again, connoting a cyclical movement of people through this process. Through the story of a Chinese migrant worker and his experience of train trips, *Last Train Home* depicts the pain and poverty of the group of migrant workers in China. It explores the issue of migrant workers through the image of the train as their transportation between hometown and metropolis, so as to create a metaphor of the elements of lives of Chinese migrant workers, the railway, modernity, those whose lives are far from reaping the benefits of Amazing or Powerful China.

Next, I analyse how *Last Train Home* connects the grassroots of people in the Chinese economy and their family relations, kinship and fate with the modernity of the nation. To present the details of life of migrant workers in *Last Train Home*, the filmmaking team followed the Zhangs as they moved in factories, train carriages, brick houses in the countryside and workers' dormitories. The scenery and sound from these places, including the conversations of passengers, the sound of machines running in the factory, the noise of the trains, quarrels in the train station, and unexpected snow storms in 2008, shape the volatility of their lives and the possibility of encountering obstacles in everyday life. *Last Train Home* documents Zhang's family story on the train, with the filmmaking style of cinéma verité, to construct a sense of realism, and provide

evidence for their emotions, ideological voices and the social phenomena revealed by the camera. Cinéma verité, to some degree, is not completely removing slight intervention, comparing with direct cinema. As Jean Rouch, the filmmaker who applied the method of cinéma verité in *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961), insisted, "filmmakers must have a strong attitude towards the subjects, must plan what to draw from them[218]" (McLane, 2013: 330), not because the objects filmed in the shots tell the truth, but the manner in which we are guided to see and hear by the filmmaking shapes the appearance of truth. Considered by some filmmakers and critics to be an approach to bring hidden truth to the surface through artificial circumstances, cinéma verité was applied as the path to reach the social reality of China decades ago, for example, in *There's A Strong Wind In Beijing* (Anqi Ju, China, 2000) and *Railroad of Hope* (Ying Ning, China, 2002), and provoke the audience with thoughts on social issues.[219] This resonates with the directorial style of Lixin Fan in *Last Train Home*, which involves the image of migrant workers, who are neglected outside of the mainstream media. Additionally, when the topic is concerned with this group of people, other social problems related to migrant peasant workers, such as left-behind children in villages, and particularly the education of these children, and the dual economic structure of urban-rural areas, are exposed on the screen. Through the route drawn by Lixin Fan, the audience perceives Zhang's workplace, inhabited environment and other situations that Zhang, as one of the peasant workers, might experience and face. By means of the improvisation of unscripted events happening in front of the camera, and the interaction between filmmaker and objects, *Last Train Home* depicts the experience of those at the margins in a sympathetic manner. By filming the homecoming trips of Zhang and their lives in Huilong village and the factory of Guangzhou, Lixin Fan represents Zhang as representative of the group of migrant workers in China experiencing the restructuring pains of social transformation in urbanisation. In *Last Train Home*, Lixin Fan records the real reactions of characters when this rural family faces the dilemmas of family relationships, poverty, and education on the next generation.

Following the journeys of Changhua Zhang's family on the train, the audience can feel that Lixin Fan switched the camera among different places, including the

[218] Betsy A McLane. (2013) *A New History of Documentary Film*. Second ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc.

[219] Jonathan B.Vogels, David Maysles & Albert Maysles. (2005) *The Direct Cinema of David and Albert Maysles*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

factory floor, the shabby rooms and crude toilets for migrant workers in the factory, the crowded railway station of Guangzhou, the roughcast brick houses, farmland and the pigstys of Zhang's home in Huilong village, etc., which provide visible differences in space. The exhibition of the indoor settings and outdoor views from first-tier cities and impoverished rural towns in *Last Train Home* suggests that people living at different economic levels in China encounter disparities in careers, individual dignity and life goals.

(Fig.27 Sewing Production Line at Zhang's factory)

(Fig.28 Two babies are placed on the workbench near the sewing machine)

(Fig.29 Huilong Village, The daughter Qin Zhang is doing farm work)

(Fig.30 Huilong Village, The daughter Qin Zhang is doing farm work)

(Fig.31 Changhua Zhang persuades Qin Zhang to return to schooling)

In the first shots of *Last Train Home*, the audience are brought to the Pearl River Delta, a region full of labour-intensive industries and one of the major destinations of migrant workers all around China. An image of the group of migrant workers in the factories is shown. In the full shot, the wife Suqin Chen is squeezed amongst the sewing machines (Fig.27). Little babies placed on the worktable remain sleeping (Fig.28). Framing these objects in this way builds the relationship between humans and their environment. Rather than humans, the machines are highlighted, suggesting that in this space, workers in the factory are valueless. Next, the camera leaves the factory in Guangzhou, where Zhang and Chen sell their labour resources to arrive at Huilong village, a poor rural setting which is their hometown. We see that in front of Zhang and Chen's bare brick house, their daughter Qin Zhang, who looks very immature, is farming (Fig.29 and Fig.30). This segment introduces the country life of the group of migrant workers, taking Zhang's family as an example. Indeed, it is actually the second thread of narrative, because the film will soon present the daughter Qin Zhang leaving school and entering a factory in Guangzhou. *Last Train Home* films a sequence of the parents and their daughter meeting in a factory, where there is a gesture towards the climax of the conflict between the two generations. On one hand, the elder generation sells their labour and wears out their life in order to support the next generation to escape the group of migrant workers, through receiving education and entering a higher economic situation. On the other hand, the younger generation fails to read the love behind the silent sacrifice by their parents, pursuing the transitory freedoms which

escape the discipline of schooling and boring schoolwork. As a result, the daughter ends up part of a younger generation of migrant workers, and works in a factory again. The interaction across the generations is represented in the scene in which the father Changhua Zhang discreetly starts a chat with his daughter, by mentioning the mom dreamed of the daughter (Fig.31). The film then recounts the following conversation:

> Changhua Zhang: Mom dreamed that you told her your work is tiresome and you wanted her to take you home. So, she asked me to come and see you.
>
> Qin Zhang: How come? I'm not tired, just drowsy.
>
> Changhua Zhang: I always wanted to come and see you, but never had the time.
>
> Qin Zhang: I never thought I'd see you here. You always said you would never come and see me.
>
> Changhua Zhang: That's right. So, what's your plan now?
>
> Qin Zhang: I really don't know. I'll wait and see.
>
> Changhua Zhang: You are 17 going on 18, you still want to wait and see?
>
> Qin Zhang: That's right.
>
> Changhua Zhang: Think it over. What do you want to do? You shouldn't be like us.

(Fig.32 The father persuades his daughter to return to campus. Close shot)

(Fig.33 The daughter avoids eye contact with her father. Reaction shot)

(Fig.34 The father does not look at his daughter either. Close-up shot)

Last Train Home films the conversation between father and daughter through changes of cinematic shot scale. In the shots, although the two characters are talking to each other, they take pains to avoid gazing into each other's eyes. When they speak, both father and daughter look straight ahead. This suggests the alienation between the two generations, because of long-time separation.[220] The first close shot (Fig.32)

[220] One of the characteristics of the migrant worker problem in China is that since the parents usually earn a living in the cities, their children are left in rural hometowns and accompanied by their grandparents. In the aspect of family education, the parents who are migrant workers are generally absent, which results in emotional

invites the audience to observe the conversation at a closer psychological distance. The reaction shot of the daughter (Fig.33) and the close-up shot of the father (Fig.34) displays the awkward atmosphere, and the endeavours the father makes to bridge the affective gap with his daughter.

(Fig.35 Guangzhou Railway Station, The crowd are shoving)

(Fig.36 Guangzhou Railway Station, A passenger is climbing over the barrier)

detachment between the parents and children. See more scholarship on the issue of migrant worker and the left-behind children here: Guanglun Michael Mu & Yang Hu. (2016). *Living with Vulnerabilities and Opportunities in a Migration Context: Floating Children and Left-Behind Children in China*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. Yijun Wei & Zhijun Gao. (2014). An Investigation and Research on Mental Health and Family Education of Children of Migrant Workers. *Journal of the Chinese Society and Education*, (7): 19-23. 魏亦军,高智军. (2014). 农民工子女心理健康与家庭教育调查研究. *中国教育学刊*, (07): 19-23.

(Fig.37 Local police and force are arranged at the station to retain order)

(Fig.38 Local police force arranged at the station to maintain order)

(Fig.39 Zhang Qin finds a new job in a night pub in Guangzhou)

Just before the Chinese Spring Festival in 2008, many hundreds of migrant workers planned to board the train home; as we see in the film, Zhang and his wife also come to the railway station in Guangzhou. However, unexpected snow storms affected a large area of land in southern China, causing the cutting of transportation lines through several provinces, which made the film team and Zhang's family trapped in Guangzhou railway station (Fig.35). This accidental event provides the director with the possibility to more effectively present the workers' experiences, capturing their uncertainty in life. This allows the audience to see scenes which are unusual in the routine operation of a railway station where the crowd push and squeeze to reach the waiting hall, desiring to board a train and making the journey as scheduled, while the railway station staff endeavour to hold back the crowd, since they have received an urgent message that for the moment no train could operate as arranged in the operating timetable, because of the severe snow storms. In the film we see images of soldiers assembling, in the event of the crowd illegally storming the railway station, local police and army forces also being called to restore order (Fig.36, Fig.37, Fig.38). Zhang's family finally successfully boarded a supplementary train for affected passengers to return to their hometown and momentarily enjoy the New Year's vacation with relatives. However, their daughter Qin Zhang was still refusing to receive education, resulting in her becoming the next generation of migrant workers. (Fig.39). Through scenes captured in different locations, showing sewing machines, fabrics on the worktable, farming in the countryside, shabby houses in Huilong village, the crowded railway station and

conflict, these elements taken from the real lives of migrant workers help depict their experience struggling between the metropolis and countryside, due to the unequal development of urban-rural areas. Moreover, through the shots and style of cinéma-vérité, *Last Train Home* reveals the genuine, complex hardships of life of marginalised Chinese people, those left behind by China's economic miracle.

For J.P.Sniadecki's *The Iron Ministry*, before understanding his aesthetic of observation, his attitude of filmmaking is vitally important. As he states:

"*I am not intending to tell a story of an individual or do the research on some social problems, however, it is the filmmaking practice that leads the project, so the film is a diary and of anthropology and it is a film about China's railway as well as a film about the filmmaking itself.*"[221]

In the shots of *The Iron Ministry*, people on the train are observed talking about the life of Muslims who have settled down in China, and their mosques newly built by the local government. The discursive chat about religion involves minority policies in the country, while several passengers talk about railway construction in Tibet, due to the development of minerals in the region. Another conversation is held between two migrant workers on salaries. The camera continually moves, to capture a female butcher who is dealing with a piece of raw pork meat, and a crew which is peddling snacks and drinks. All these are framed by Sniadecki in an avant-grade cinematographic style; for instance, the objects are observed with the characteristics of disarrangement, and the sense of staring at the objects extends on-and-off screen. In this way, the aesthetic observation of *The Iron Ministry* breaks with the mundanity of quotidian life, and in the space of the train, temporarily deconstructs 'ongoing life' into scenes which aren't ideologically overdetermined.

Bill Nichols argues, 'observational mode of documentary has the special qualities that filmmakers observe what occurs in front of the camera and gives up full control of sound to record what is said and heard in a given situation, refraining from voice-over

[221] A statement from J.P. Sniadecki in the interview with The New York Times (Chinese Version). The news report was released online in Chinese. Here the words are translated by the writer from Chinese to English. The original text of these words are '我不是想讲述一个人的故事，或调查某些社会问题，我是让拍摄过程引导这个项目，所以影片是日记式的、民族志式的，这是一部有关中国铁路的电影，也是一部有关电影制作本身的电影'. See the article here: Anwei Huang. (2015) The Iron Ministry: The Time and Space of China on the Train. https://cn.nytimes.com/china/20150821/c21sino-trains/ Accessed on 07-05-2022

and keeps the time and space in continuous from shot to shot'.[222] (2017: 108) In Bill Nichols's conceptual frame of the modes of documentary, the observational mode has made developments since World War II in Canada and America, and is generally considered to be observation in documentary concerns with indirect intrusion in concrete practices. While the filmmaker as far as possible simply observes what is happening in front of the camera without overt intervention, the more the lived experience of actual people would be represented.[223] Moreover, as the problematic strength of observational documentary is when it deals with the relation between the filmmaker and the observed characters, there are concerns raised about the observation of acts based on the filmmaker's voyeuristic interests, which does happen. For critics, this is a matter of ethical principles, as the act of observation might be unpleasant for the person who is being viewed. Nevertheless, the observational mode in documentary brings personal aesthetic features from the filmmaker, providing fresh insights into real life. This is relevant to my analysis of *The Iron Ministry,* because J.P. Sniadecki provides his unique aesthetic observation in the shots. In the film, Sniadecki films people who act on the train with the subjective silence of the filmmaker himself, without off-screen voices or commentary from a narrator building on the narrative. Moreover, Sniadecki adds ideas from experimental anthropology in the practice of observation. As Arnd Schneider and Caterina Pasqualino argue, 'With sudden zooms, abrupt shifts in the image, unexpected cropping, flashes, or double exposures; while the film is being developed, they sometimes add images to the negative, intensify its colour, chemically alter it, smear it with ink, scratch it or scrape it', the essential aesthetic of experimental film is the emphasis on the 'form as content'.[224] For example, an unexpected cropping of the shots from two sequences filming different people on the train that is ready for departure. In the former scene, in which a misbehaving child of the passengers is frame, we can hear, 'The 3838-438 train from the United States to Afghanistan is about to depart…As a disposable train, this one has been operating safely for 30 years, if you discover your head over your feet, you've arrived at the last stop, Heaven.'[225] The film is cropped here to edit another shot in which a female passenger sleeps lying prone on

[222] Bill Nichols. (2017) *Introduction to Documentary*. Third ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

[223] Bill Nichols. (2017) *Introduction to Documentary*. Third ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

[224] Arnd Schneider & Caterina Pasqualino. (2014) *Experimental Film and Anthropology*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

[225] In slang expressions of Chinese, the combination of the numbers 3 and 8, such as 38 and 438, implies terms of abuse. The number 4 is usually not considered as a lucky number.

a table, while in the background we hear the sound of a respectable male voice from the train radio program, 'Our train runs all the way. Our service stays with you. Voice of Harmony Railway'.[226] The similar ideas of highlighting the form of filmmaking with experimental features or avant-garde style in *The Iron Ministry* are promoted with the use of camera movements, the style of framing, type of shots and even the priority of subjects to be observed in the duration of filmic experiments.

The Iron Ministry randomly captures the behaviours of unknown Chinese passengers and the situations where they are travelling on the trains. When the director takes a journey, he starts documenting on the train, and audiences can see passengers on the trains preparing raw pork meat, chatting, drinking, sleeping, joking, etc. This documentary does not actually tell a whole story, nor include a particular main character, nor a complete narrative upon a certain theme. It only shows how the director observes the running trains and random passengers on the trains. This chapter argues that in *The Iron Ministry*, J.P. Sniadecki's aesthetic observation and his utilisation of the idea of experimental anthropology on filmmaking contributes to the completion of the diary documentary as it constructs a very particular representation of 'Marginal China.'. This section selects segments from *The Iron Ministry* to analyse how this aesthetic observation is made, so the subjects, camera movement, the style of framing and direct sound from the background will be discussed.

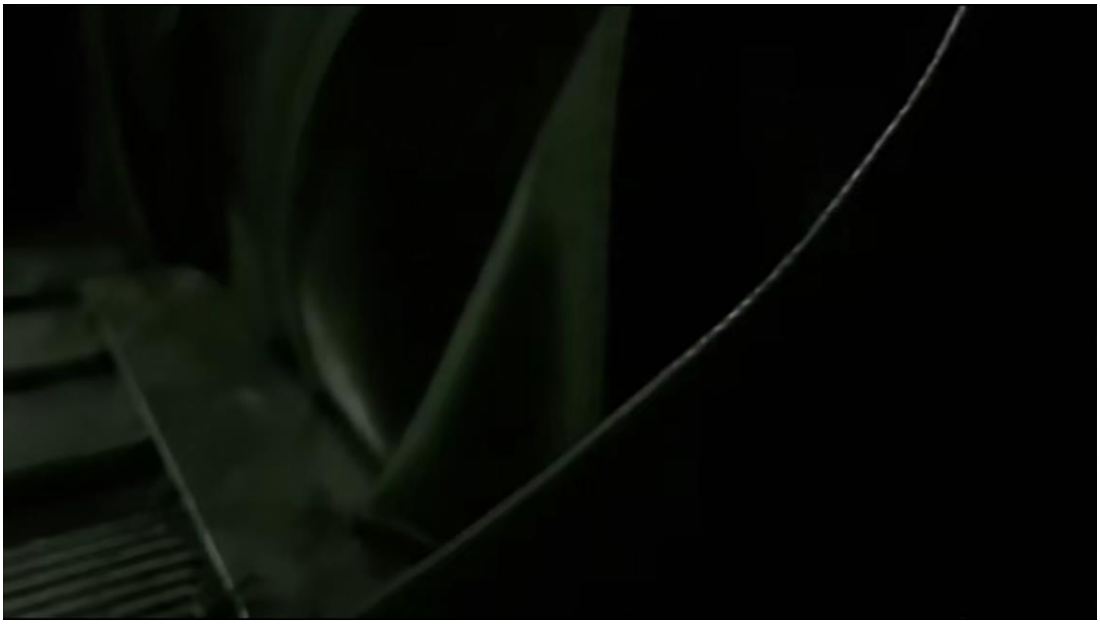
[226] The words from the train radio program are delivered in Chinese without subtitles on screen. Here, they are translated by the writer from Chinese Mandarin to English. The original words are '一路驰骋，伴你同行。和谐铁路之声'.

(Fig.40 A train is running in the dark, only the noise of trains can be heard. Long take)

(Fig.41 Waving the camera upwards observing the connection parts of two train carriages.)

The features of experimental film emerge in the first shot, a three minute long take. The screen is black and the audience can only hear the sound of a train rolling on the railway track, but have no awareness of what geographic terrain the railway is running through, and what is taking place in the train carriage (Fig.40). As the camera moves upwards, light comes into the shot, and the first segment comes into being, the connecting parts of two train carriages becoming visible (Fig.41). Through the use of close-ups and the movement of the camera swinging up, the spatial coordinates are uncertain, and totally different from conventional cinematography in that they do not secure the viewer's position but lead to a sense of dislocation.

Besides being unusual in the presentation of the components of train carriages (Fig.42), other subjects, such as raw pork meat (Fig.44), the internal organs of killed animals (Fig.43), human feet (Fig.45 and Fig.46), a city landscape in twisted drawings (Fig.47), a man shaving on the seat (Fig.48) and a large eye enveloping the frame (Fig.49) are re-created, and, from the perspective of a foreign guest, a form of deconstruction through a stylised impression of daily life is presented.



(Fig.42 Observing the floor of the train carriage. Close-up Shot)

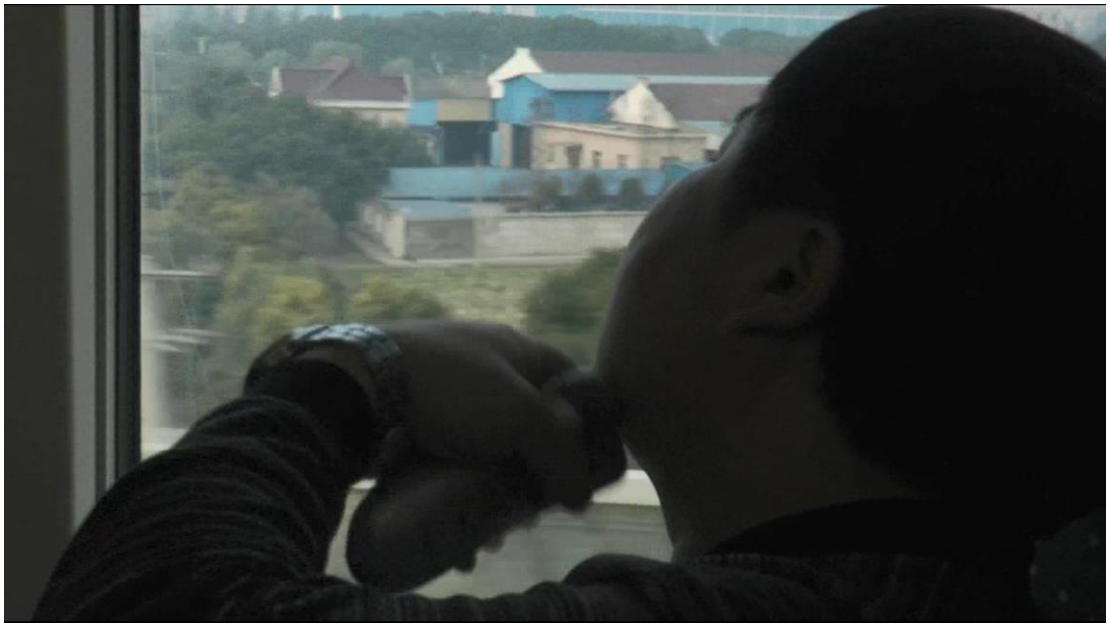
(Fig.43 Observing a pig's organs suspended on the inner wall of the train, trembling. Close-up Shot)

(Fig.44 Observing the female butcher dealing with raw pork meat. Low-angle Shot)

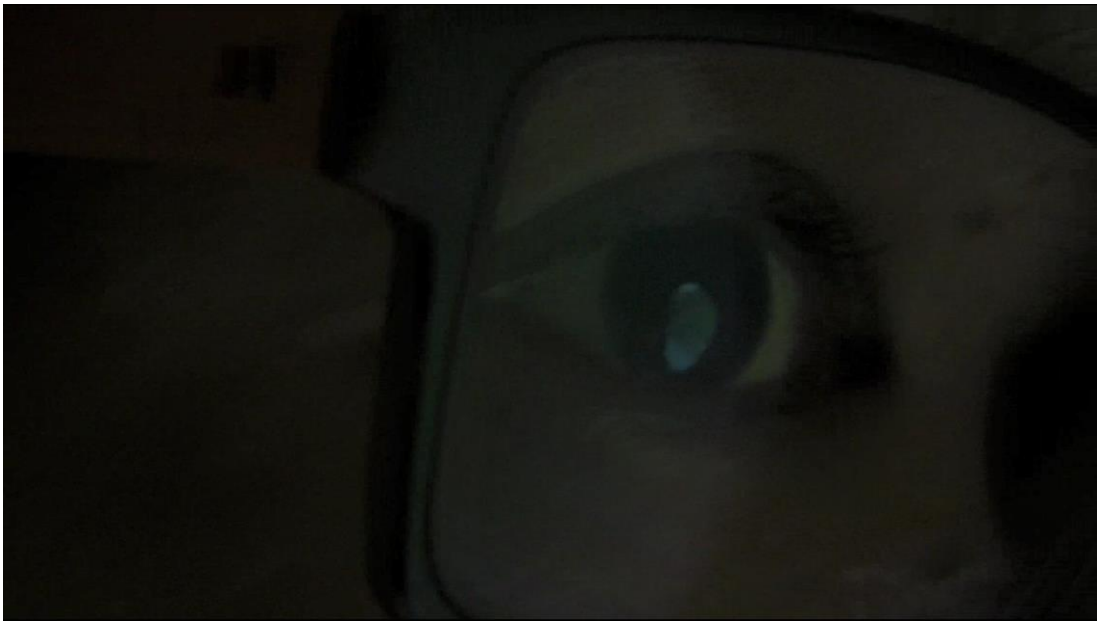
(Fig.45 Observing feet in various colours and designer shoes on the dirty ground. Tilt Shot)

(Fig.46 Observing feet in various colours and designer shoes on the dirty ground. Tilt shot)

(Fig.47 Observing buildings and walls which are blurred to abstraction. Long take)



(Fig.48 Man shaving on the train. Choker shot)



(Fig.49 The large eye wearing glasses is watching. Long-take)

The Iron Ministry documents the subjects caught by the camera, and is not aiming to build a narrative description of China, just presenting the practice of observing through filmmaking. The only dominant feature that the audience is able to seize through the scenes is decomposition as a way of understanding life. According to common sense, people perceive subjects in a spatial relationship with their environments, decorations, occasions, behaviours or abstract rituals. For example, the raw meat and butcher are objects that are supposed to be seen in the market or groceries or similar environments; but, *in The Iron Ministry*, a disjunction occurs when these two

subjects are observed in the train carriage. The psychological feelings aroused by raw meat, butchers and markets are disrupted, but the film does not construct a new meaning between the two subjects and the train, as the director has said it was a diary, and documentary about filmmaking itself.[227] As a result, the aesthetic observation employed in *The Iron Ministry* doesn't allow the audience to impose sense or meaning on the image, and can be read as an expression of the director's subjectivity. At last, we can see an eye with glasses being framed in a close-up shot (Fig.49). Behind the glasses, the eye keeps watching in the long-take shot, but nobody knows what and who is being watched. *The Iron Ministry*, then emphasises the practice of aesthetic observation in its representation of ordinary Chinese people on the standard-speed trains, participating in the construction of 'Marginal China' on screen. This cinematic expression of those at the margins of Chinese society from the perspective of filmmakers working at the aesthetic margins is positioned as far as possible from the mainstream aesthetics employed in dominant representations of China.

The final film that I will examine is *Along the Railway*, a documentary focusing on vagrants living near the railway line, which documents several homeless characters, Li Xiaolong, Zhou Fu, Xiao Xinjiang, Feng Xiang, Xiao Yunman, Huo Hongchang, Da Xinjiang, Cao Yongqiang and the King of Thief.[228] Haibin Du, the director, utilises the style of participatory documentary to present the life of the marginal group of homeless people wandering in the neighbourhood of the railroad, and in doing so, reveals the social space which the marginal population inhabit. By chance, audiences are able to see that even the homeless people who are wandering along the railroad all day have social ties and that in their group, there is destitution, pilfering, bullying, but also nostalgia and dreams about homecoming. As I outlined in chapter 2, Participatory documentary has the requirement of 'being there', giving the viewer 'a sense of what it is like for the filmmaker to be in a given situation and how the situation alters as a result'.[229] As an embodiment of the 'I speak with them for you' formulation stated by Bill Nichols, the filmmaker participates personally in the documenting, to make a path for the viewer to access a particular portion of the world, a process which we can

[227] Anwei Huang. (2015) The Iron Ministry: The Time and Space of China on the Train. https://cn.nytimes.com/china/20150821/c21sino-trains/ Accessed on 08-05-2022.

[228] The nickname of a member of the vagrants in *Along the Railway*. Nobody knows the real name of 'the King of Thieves' and he is referred to by this nickname throughout the film.

[229] Bill Nichols. (2017) *Introduction to Documentary*. Third ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

observe at work in *Along the Railway*. Through similar methods of framing, in which several homeless people are framed as the focus, being questioned in the same manner, Du interviews some of the vagrants and unfolds the diverse reasons why these characters have become homeless along the railway. This permits viewers to get closer to the space of those homeless people whom the director Haibin Du met, learning of their unhappy childhoods or unfortunate lives through their personal testimonies on screen.

In the interaction between filmmaker and subjects, this documentary presents two types of social spaces existing in reality: mainstream space and marginal space. *Along the Railway* stresses the latter in connection with marginal groups, yet, the former signifies a 'home' and social life that is difficult for the vagrant group to re-enter. For example, the marginal space is displayed in the complete capture of the slices of life of these homeless people, while the mainstream space only exists in the self-narration by these vagrants when interviewed by Du, memorising their previous days when they were not homeless.

(Fig.50 The King of Thieves is singing a song while a train is passing by.)

(Fig.51 Sitting around the fire, Li Xiaolong is singing.)

(Fig.52 Sun Suixiong is performing the third song.)

Along the Railway documents representatives of a type of marginal people, the vagrant, including their interactions and social space. The most comprehensive segment demonstrating their activities in socialising relates to their bonfire party on New Year's Eve. At the time of Chinese people welcoming the Millenium New Year of 2000, the camera leaves the prosperity of the metropolis and frames several vagrants settled in the wild land near the railway lines. The vagrants gather with smiling faces, warm themselves by the bonfire, and chat and sing (Fig.50, 51, 52). The participation of the director and camera in their space is peaceful, and the vagrants seem to make a party in

front of the camera very naturally. One of them, The King of Thieves, sings a song which speaks to the particularities of their position (Fig.50):

> We are a bunch of outcasts/wandering around all day long/In the day, I beg for food/at night I sleep in the train station/Good ladies and good gentlemen/you are all rich and wealthy/just give me some dimes/have some sympathy on those who begged for food/All you good people/You are people with sons and daughters/give me one of your daughters/have some sympathy on those who are still single.

As he sings, viewers are invited to feel the joy in the air as they hear of the group's aspirations of returning home, seeking money and female companionship imagined in the song. In the song, an ideal life is simplified as the combination of hometown, wealth and family relationships. In contrast, the trains and railway refer to the mainstream social space, a system that eliminates marginal aspects, such as the homeless persons who appear in the documentary.

Due to the participation of the director in the vagrants' days living on and around the railway, audiences can watch the trains passing by these characters, time and time again; however, none of the trains is for them, although almost each of them has expressed to camera that the thing they most want is to take a train home, if they could earn some money. The railway and passengers on the train passing by the homeless characters refer to another life and space, which is the opposite of marginal social space. The film invites the viewer to reflect on who are these passengers on the running trains, what are their jobs and how do they live their lives? The documentary leaves mainstream society in China unseen, whereas on screen it presents the life of the beggars as they dream of being at home but wander along the railway lines scavenging food from bins. Through Haibin Du's involvement in the vagrants' group when he films, *Along the Railway* invites the audience to enter the special public space of the marginalised group. With the repeated appearance of running trains on the railway while the vagrant characters are being interviewed, the finding of humanity in the vagrant group, including their desire to go back to mainstream society, and their reflections on the complex of real life are conveyed. As such, the film does not simply visualise marginal China, but offers the viewer to take a step into the world of its inhabitants.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter answers the research questions raised previously that ask what are the representations of China in the state documentary films and in those independent (transnational) documentary films? Among the two, how do the different filmmaking techniques contribute to the different depiction of China in terms of the stories of China's modernisation? As illustrated above, this chapter has examined representations of two types of China: Amazing China and Marginal China, and how these are constructed in a series of documentaries filmed in and around railways. In accordance with the content of these films, the dominant national discourse which is attached to 'Amazing China' is driven by railway stories connected with glory, success, advance, technologism, etc, the keynote lying in the construction of the success of China's high-speed railway technology, and its capacity in deciding technical standards together with their peer countries. People appearing in films utilising the national discourse usually engage with professions which achieve high reputations in society, such as specialists and engineers in rail-based technology, even if a few ordinary railway workers framed in the documentaries are shaped as part of a respectful group who sacrifice self-interest and contribute to the development of China's railway construction and new industrialisation because of their affection for their country and the encouragement of national spirit. Meanwhile, the films which construct a marginal China involve the presence of trauma, unemployment, poverty, and the everyday struggles of those at the margins of Chinese society. These films foreground those who are not glamorous, and capture their real life experiences confronting individual crises when facing industrial modernisation, economic reform and changing times. If a condensed form of the comparison has to be made here, in the first group of films the railway functions as a material symbol of how China has been a technological success, a politicised object indicating the technological achievements under the Chinese system. In the latter films, however, the railway takes the function of being a signifier for the abject, opening a window for the viewer to access the marginal group's world. As such these railways travel in two directions: an 'amazing China' which is connected to the official state narrative, and a marginal China which focuses on the lives of the dispossessed, calling into question the success of the former.

CONCLUSION

As is evident from the preceding chapters, this thesis takes a cross-disciplinary perspective, utilising textual analysis of film studies, but also absorbing knowledge from cultural studies and political studies. It answers the core research question – what representations of China have been produced through the diverse transnational documentary filmmaking between Chinese filmmakers and international filmmakers from external countries such as the UK, the US and South Korea. Drawing on Bill Nichols's film theory, especially on representation, and the ideas of Stuart Hall and Erving Goffman, the thesis examines Chinese-foreign co-produced documentary films during the past two decades (2000-2020). By the selection of specific case studies for analysis, the thesis identifies the modes of cinematising China as a subject, from the concept of literally being a geographic country to the diverse forms of representation with metaphorical discourses inside the cinematic space.

The thesis has sought to demonstrate how China is represented on screen in Chinese-foreign co-produced documentary films in a diverse number of ways. The crucial point is that 'China' has experienced the process of cinematising in documentary filmmaking, a transition from the textually conceptual at an aspect of geographical meaning to a cinematised object on screen. Although these films all choose the means of documentary filmmaking to accommodate images and sounds shaping the stories of ancient China or modern China, however, the audience views different types of representation in relation to a cinematic China. Consequently, how does this happen? Which ideological discourses are created by filmmaking techniques, and how? The thesis has attempted to answer these questions in the previous chapters.

Chapter 1, the introduction, includes the research context, literature review, as well as methodology. As the thesis is concerned with representation studies, located at the representation of China in cinematic space, the thesis limits the field of film analysis from the dimension of filmmaking, concentrating on films produced within the terms of transnational documentary. Initially it sets up the sphere of discussing transnational documentary cinema, re-locating the term in the arrangement of all elements of

filmmaking practices at the global level. The introduction raises a research structure which taxonomically contains the representations of China in five different areas: 'powerful China' (Chinese-British co-production), 'beautiful China' (Chinese-American co-production), 'superpower of China' (Chinese-Korean transnational production), 'amazing China' (Chinese state documentary) and 'marginal China' (Chinese independent transnational documentary). The core question of the research is examining the process of representation of China in the cinematography among the multi-side participation of transnational film producing, namely, to focus on the representations of China in diverse cinematic contexts. In the literature review, the thesis engaged with relevant scholarship related to Sino-foreign transnational documentary, Chinese independent documentary, independent Sino-foreign transnational documentary, representation studies and the studies of national image in both English language-oriented academia and Chinese language academia.

Chapter 2, titled "Revisiting Non-Fiction Narrative: A Powerful China in Confucianism, Socialist Norms, Folk Customs", examines *Confucius*, *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School*, *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth* in order to refine how the representation of a culturally 'powerful' China is built in Chinese-British transnational documentary films. The chapter demonstrates how these three recently co-produced Chinese-British documentary films narrate stories of China, based on ancient civilisation and modern culture, by the means of non-fiction. After examining the films, the chapter argues that *Confucius* essentially employs re-enactments of the life of Confucius, who existed from BC 551 to BC 479 in ancient China, on screen. It depicts the legacy of Confucius as the most celebrated ancient philosopher in China, and cinematises his critical philosophical theory which contributed to form the origins of Chinese and East Asian culture within communities, that is, *Li* theory and practices. Essentially, the chapter argues that *Confucius* provides an example of how to achieve the process of cinematising conceptual objects, because it demonstrates a case of cinematic adaptation from a body of knowledge to visual acceptance. For instance, *Confucius* employs a 'defamiliarisation' strategy and non-fiction stories to explore the theories of Confucianism and make them accessible. The

chapter then argues that *Chinese School* employs the performative mode of documentary to narrate the story of Chinese teachers teaching in a British school, filming scenes of the Chinese method of teaching, encounters with British students and the conflicts between the two. *Chinese School* accommodates these scenes within the dramatic structure to present 'collective consciousness' in Chinese education. However, in order to provide a dramatic viewing experience, the film uses a diverse range of montage shots to produce Hollywood-style storytelling, immersing the audience in this structure to create a suspenseful beginning to the story, increasing development, a dramatic climax, and eventually, a happy ending. This chapter argues that the coupling of a performative mode of documentary and dramatic structure in the narrative of *Chinese School* strongly suggests the directorial style of creative intention. The film reflects the director's understanding of Chinese socialistic norms and values, for example, discipline, conformity and collectivism, in the context of Chinese teaching in a British situation. The enthusiastic responses received from the audience in both the UK and China, whether agreeing or disagreeing, are exactly the authentic type of feedback invited by this performative style of documentary filmmaking, and the questioning used by the director with the film. *Chinese New Year* employs the method of participatory documentary to narrate festive stories of China during the Spring Festival. It uses five hosts to intervene in the process of filmmaking, playing the role of tour guide by inviting the audience to follow them experiencing exciting celebrations and events in towns and cities all around the country. Utilising a multi-line narrative strategy, *Chinese New Year* records the homecoming trips of different characters in order to achieve their family gatherings before New Year's Eve, and participation by the hosts in local festive celebrations. The chapter consequently argues that *Chinese New Year* creates a dialogue around Da Tuan Yuan, emphasising the values of family relationships and moral principles in the Chinese cultural community. Moreover, the chapter argues that although these Chinese-UK transnational documentary films make use of different cinematic techniques, they arrive at the same destination, in that they construct a non-fiction narrative of Chinese culture through their cinematography. In their construction, a representation of China is related to cultural recognition, which

involves Confucian ideas, socialistic norms and traditional folk customs. This cinematising of a culturally powerful China signifies that the Chinese cultural consensus functions as the soil for developing the family unit in Chinese society, and the ideological engine for boosting concepts of national identity.

Chapter 3, titled "Between Ethnographic Seeing and Aerial Videography: Framing China in the '*Xiě Yì*' Aesthetic and 'Beautiful China' Policy", examines *China from Above I* and *China from Above II*. It argues that the two films unite the methods of ethnographic film and aerial videography in order to film natural landscapes and historical relics on the land of China, shaping the representation of a beautiful China. The chapter demonstrates that the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic, which is extracted from the techniques of Chinese painting, has been blended into cinematic style to achieve the artistic effect in these shots. For instance, *China from Above* employs drone hovering shots and panning shots in the Hani Terraces sequence, creating the artistic perception of 'Xanadu', raising understanding of Hani Terraces from patterns of farming to artistic form. Meanwhile, regarding narrative structure, *China from Above* develops three thematic strands, agricultural civilisation, industrial civilisation and post-industrial civilisation. The alternation of narrative strands promotes a shift in the construction of meaning of the beauty of China on screen, ranging from beautiful spectacle in visual perception to admiration of technological rationality and value-orientation in building China as an eco-society. This chapter argues that the mode of Chinese-American co-produced documentary has gained a new perspective on the building of the representation of China on screen. Looking at the *China from Above* films, the single method of ethnographic film would not be able to introduce a new significance to cinematic representations of China, and conversely it might reinforce the prevalent Western aesthetic on the manner of reading China as the base of an imaginary East. In particular, the US team of National Geographic, who are famous for their cinematic experience of capturing scenic shots, pushes it ahead. However, due to the Chinese involvement, the CICC (China International Communication Centre) also having participated in the production, the political idea of 'Beautiful China' is written into the images of beautiful China in the *China from Above* films. The essence of the 'Beautiful

China' policy, which demands a social transition based on an eco-society, provides more possibility for the development of the multilayer structure of thematic narratives in *China from Above I* and *China from Above II*.

Chapter 4, titled "Constructing a Super Power: Framing A Hegemonic China in the Expository Text, Archival Footage and Structural Editing", examines *Super China*, a largely Korean-produced transnational documentary film. This chapter demonstrates that *Super China* employs the method of expository documentary to narrate stories based on diverse aspects of the Chinese economy, military capability, culture and art, constructing a cinematic representation of China in terms of hegemony. Drawing on the concept of the expository mode of documentary from Bill Nichols, coupled with the discourse analysis of Foucault and semiotics of Saussure, the chapter analyses the process of *Super China* building a screen representation of China within the structure of the 'China Threat Theory' discourse. The chapter argues that *Super China* firstly appropriates the ethnographic method cinematically, using the Q&A formula, to conduct a method of observing which holds a similarity to fieldwork. In this manner, *Super China* suggests an objectivity of standpoint as it constructs the expository text on screen. In fact, *Super China* utilises an ideological frame to achieve symbol and meaning-production, circulating the thoughts and attitudes of Korean ideology on the topic of China. One of the obvious examples is that when it explores Chinese international economic stories, *Super China* depicts regular Chinese overseas investment in Peru as a new form of capitalist colonisation via the employment of a Q&A formula and ideological frame. Hereby, *Super China* constructs international economic stories of China via the text of economic penetration. Exploring the Chinese military, *Super China* establishes the text of Chinese national defence capacity in terms of military hegemony cinematographically by means of using archive footage related to Chinese-Vietnamese and Chinese-Japanese maritime frictions. Furthermore, *Super China* constructs the reality of China through a mix of montage shots, combining archive footage, documentary footage and talking head interviews, to suggest that the popularity of Chinese culture and art in the West is a form of expansion of Chinese ideology. Eventually, such an expository text of hegemonic China based on the stories

of economy, military affairs and cultural communication is shaped in *Super China*. The central argument in this chapter is that *Super China* is considered to reconstruct the representation of China within the discursive structure of the 'China Threat' theory in cinematic space, and by the manner of establishing an expository text and structural shot editing, *Super China* conveys the 'constructed reality of China' under the influence of Korean ideology, from the screen to outside world. This chapter suggests that the filmmaking style of *Super China* reflects the manner of mainstream Korean society in reading China through the combined influence of the Asian political situation and Korean ideological policy of the time.

Chapter 5, titled "National Discourse and Marginal Narrative: Amazing China or Marginal China? Screening China on the Railway", conducts a comparative analysis between three types of documentary films, one in a Sino-foreign co-produced mode, a Chinese state mode and Chinese independent mode, to demonstrate the two forms – national discourse and marginal narrative – of developing Chinese stories on the railway. Drawing on the ideas of Joris Ivens on documentary filmmaking, the chapter examines the following state documentary films, *China's Mega Projects I*, C*hina's Mega Projects II*, and *China's Mega Projects III*, *China's High-Speed Railway* and *The Belt and Road*, to discuss how 'narrative discourse' is embodied in the filmmaking. The chapter argues that in the structure of national discourse, stories of China in relation to its railway system are built on an intellectual wave of industrialism, science and technology in Chinese society. The combination of Joris Ivens' cinematographic style and the passion of Chinese people for scientific upgrading and technological innovation produces a particular form of filmmaking in these state-dominated documentary films. The representation of 'amazing China' is such a product in these 'industrial documentary' films. The chapter continually applies the ideas of Bill Nichols on the mode of documentary, referring to the concepts of observational mode and participatory mode, to analyse the following Chinese transnational documentaries and Chinese independent documentary films, *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks/À l'ouest des rails*, *Last Train Home*, *The Iron Ministry*, and *Along the Railway*, with the integration of the idea of direct cinema from Albert Maysles, and the term cinéma verité from Jean Rouch. The chapter

argues that through the observation or participation of a 'marginal group', these films explore 'marginal narratives' in which the text is uncovered in a problematic relation to Chinese society. The central argument in the chapter is that the cinematic representation of 'amazing China' is based upon scientific and technological innovation due to social enthusiasm for these processes, whereas the representation of 'marginal China' is shaped in the construction of social issues including grassroots communities, migrant workers, left-behind children, the wealth gap, the urban-rural gap, etc.

In conclusion, after examining these Sino-foreign co-produced documentary films, including several Chinese state and independent documentary films, the thesis argues that the representation of China in cinematic space is flowing, changing and evolving in an ongoing state, which means that it is a kind of filmmaking practice intimately involved with changing Chinese society rather than a permanent film image, or a pure text or single formula. It could be a 'powerful China' in a culturally sociological text, a 'Beautiful China' featuring natural and artificial heritages in the framework of the 'Beautiful China' Policy discourse, a 'hegemonic China' in the Korean ideological text, an 'amazing China' marked by the innovations of science and technology in the Chinese genre of 'industrial documentary'. The thesis demonstrates the elasticity of China in recent years. That is, the concept can be stretched to accommodate multiple - even conflicting - perspectives, which are shaped by the socio-economic factors at play and the dominant aesthetic traditions in the countries involved in producing the films.

In the conclusion, the thesis has responded to the core research question upon the various kinds of cinematic representations of China in those different Chinese-foreign transnational cooperation of documentary filmmaking. Respectively each chapter answers the relevant subsequent research questions, analysing the construction of 'Powerful China', 'Beautiful China', 'Superpower of China', 'Amazing China' and 'Marginal China' by examining those selected film texts. These cinematic representations are also viewed via the related screens of television and streaming media. I summarise the thesis's central research findings and original contribution to knowledge is that it focuses on the diverse modes of representation of China in Sino-

foreign documentary films, as well as their cinematographic aesthetics and relevant political discourse. Placing the research of Sino-foreign transnational documentary filmmaking in a structure of the experience of international documentary filmmaking, the thesis argues how Western documentary theories have worked and evidenced fusion and localisation in the sphere of the Chinese documentary industry. The thesis discussed the new phenomenon of Sino-foreign transnational filmmaking, in examples such as the marriage of a classic mode of Western filmmaking and Chinese political discourse, like the coupling of ethnographic filmmaking and the 'Beautiful China' policy. The thesis also analyses the new characteristics of cinematographic aesthetics produced in Sino-foreign filmmaking, for example, the integration of drone videography and the '*Xiě Yì*' aesthetic from Chinese painting techniques. The thesis still adopts the idea of frame theory and the approach of formalist film theory for observing the latest development of Chinese-foreign transnational documentary. This considers a new turn in the Chinese documentary industry where a combination of contemporary Chinese discourses and Sino-foreign co-production modes may possibly provide more knowledge-production from the scale of industry to the circle of academia.

Furthermore, the thesis contributes to existing knowledge from three points. On the transnational production of film studies, the research here has provided not only the specific examination and analysis on the latest trending of Sino-foreign transnational documentary filmmaking but also it concludes the different successful modes of transnational cooperation that have been conducted in the market, suggesting the paradigm that can be referred to in the future transnational co-production between Chinese and international filmmakers. On the studies of representation of China, the thesis also provides new contribution that it suggests the concept of China can be repeatedly constructed with different approaches in the space of cinematography, which accordingly evolves the diversity of cinematic representations of China. The form of cinematic construction here involves the Western experience of filmmaking based on classic film theories, and the Chinese aesthetics and ideological discourse as well. It also has a strong concern with the changing social thoughts, political ideas and interactive international relations. The thesis sets the consideration of cinematic

construction within the politics, expanding the theoretical sphere of cinematic representation. Moreover, the thesis contributes to other disciplines, for example, modern Chinese studies. Considering that cinema, as one of the forms of arts in the procession in line with the other ones - Chinese calligraphy, Fine arts, Chinese history, Chinese literature and philosophy - constitutes the new pages of developing modern Chinese studies, the thesis provides an inspiration for updating the conceptual perception of scholars who specialise in Chinese studies upon the reading of China via a fresh perspective of filmmaking.

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