

PERFORMING THE CHINESE NATION

**The Politics of Identity in China Central
Television's Music-Entertainment
Programs**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

International Studies
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2011

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

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Acknowledgements

This study would not have come to fruition without my expert team of supervisors. Professor Louise Edwards with her infectious enthusiasm first got me on track to begin a PhD and saw it all the way to completion. Along the road, she provided valuable feedback on drafts and encouraged me to partake in a variety of activities that benefited not just the project but my understanding of broader issues surrounding it. When Louise moved to Hong Kong, I was exceptionally fortunate to have on board the equally expert and energetic professor, Wanning Sun, who had just arrived at UTS. Wanning's expertise in Chinese media and identity was vital in helping me form the theoretical and analytical framework that became the backbone of this work. Professor David Goodman also provided early supervisory support and took an interest in the work all the way. I'd also like to thank my supervisors for their generous support and encouragement to attend conferences and workshops both in Australia and overseas.

The following people – all fellow PhD students – deserve a huge thanks for their encouragement, proofreading and discussion of drafts: Jennifer Cheng, Wang Pan, Gao Yue, Maria Chisari, Mehal Krayem, Kelly Chan, Susan Bruck, and Suyin Hor. I am particularly indebted to Johanna Hood for her exceptionally detailed proofreading of the final draft. A special thanks also to UTS librarian Cai Wei for helping to access information and send articles while I was in China, and for allowing me to participate in her Chinese language and media class. Dr Katrina Schlunke's higher degree research sessions were extremely valuable, and Claire Moore, Ming Liang, Lei Gong, Lina Tan, Jingqing Yang, Chongyi Feng, Juleigh Slater, and Sandy Schuck all provided prompt and friendly administrative assistance along the way.

Also at UTS, I'd like to thank the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), Professor Theo van Leeuwen, as well as Dr Emilia Djonov, for the chance to help organize the Fifth International Conference on Multimodality (1-3 December, 2010) and in the process gain further

insights into the current state of international research on multimodality as well as obtain feedback on my work. I also received encouraging words and useful suggestions from participants after presentations I gave on aspects of this thesis at a number of other conferences, including the 'China's Appeal and its Discontents' symposium at Hong Kong Shue Yan University in 2011; the 'Auricle: Sound Cultures of the Future' conference at UTS in 2010; the 'Tenth International Conference on Cultural Diversity in Music Education' and the 'Preserving Tradition: Facing the Future in Asian Musical and Visual Cultures' Conference at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 2010; the 'Chinese Studies Association of Australia Conference' held at the Australian National University in 2011 and at the University of Sydney in 2009, and the 2009 and 2010 UTS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Research Student Conferences. I'd also like to thank Dr Haiqing Yu for the chance to present some of my PhD material to undergraduate students as a guest lecturer for her course on Chinese media at the University of New South Wales in 2011. Sections of this manuscript also benefited from feedback from Professor Keith Howard, editor of an article due to appear in a forthcoming volume, *Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage: Policy, Ideology, and Practice in the Preservation of East Asian Traditions* (Ashgate), and from two anonymous reviewers and editor Dr Shelley Brunt for an article submitted for the popular music journal *Perfect Beat*.

In terms of practical experience, I'd like to thank the staff at Radio Beijing Corporation who organized the inaugural *Global Chinese Storytelling Competition* and China Central Television (CCTV) for the opportunity to experience television production from the other side of the camera in 2009. I'd also like to thank the Beijing Olympic Games Organizing Committee (BOCOG) and Steve Dettre from Infostrada for the chance to work for the Olympic News Service in 2008 where I gained strong insights into the very different political agendas of the Western media and the Chinese organising committee from my base at the Main Press Centre.

The following people also offered advice and/or moral support at various stages of the PhD process: Wang Ning, Yu Gongjie, and Eve Leung enthusiastically gave their time to share personal insights into the music and television industries in mainland China and Hong Kong and helped me access materials; Dr Chantal Crozet provided valuable assistance in drawing up the project in its initial stages; and staff at Kunming University (formerly Kunming Teacher's College), where I taught from 2004-2009, gave substantial moral support.

Finally, a big thanks to mum and dad, as well as Dale, my grannies, uncles and aunties for their strong support; honorary family, including Katy Bruck, for daring to read sections of the thesis; and most exceptionally, my husband, Xuezhong (Steven), for his continuous encouragement to undertake and complete this research, his enthusiastic assistance in double checking some of my translations, and for the good times we've had practicing the songs we picked up from the TV.

This project was funded by the Australian Government through an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA).

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Abstract

This thesis analyses how the Chinese nation is being constructed in music-entertainment performances on China Central Television (CCTV). Taking the perspective that all entertainment has ideological implications, this study argues that programming on China's monopoly, national-level, party-state network offers a vital site for examining the politics of Chinese identity in contemporary times. It uses the music-entertainment genre to examine how ethnic and national boundaries are being drawn, and the cultural and political tensions that underlie contemporary conversations on 'who the Chinese are'.

Three main frames of Chinese nationalism are highlighted: a multi-ethnic Chinese frame consisting of 56 nationalities residing within China; a Greater Chinese frame that extends beyond the borders of mainland China to include Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and overseas Chinese; and a global Chinese frame constructed through emphasizing foreigners' attraction to China and assimilation of Chinese cultural practices. The study argues that the three privileged frames attempt to produce images of unity and harmony amongst all Chinese and support for China by Chinese living outside the mainland and by foreigners. Such notions of national harmony, unity and stability, delivered to the Chinese people via the party-state media, are used to achieve ongoing support for the Chinese Communist Party as it seeks to continue to lead the Chinese nation well into the future, both domestically and on a global level.

A fine-grained textual approach to analysis is used to examine how musical, visual and linguistic modes interact to create interpretable messages about Chinese national and cultural identity for both domestic and global CCTV audiences. The study argues that the different modes interact in ways that offer a spectrum of reading positions. At one end, visuals, language and music reinforce each other to form relatively 'hardened' reading positions,

where messages of a solid, unified, state-centred national identity are foregrounded. At the other end of the spectrum, the audio-visual modes ‘undermine’ each other to create ‘soft’ boundaries around the ‘Chinese’ nation, allowing the party-state to present itself as more cosmopolitan and outward-looking. The programs reveal a tension between the desire to construct China as strong and unified, with a solid, self-assured national identity, and as nation-state that is open to change as it engages with non-mainstream cultures domestically, and with other cultures around the world.

While the global debate over China’s rising status is often marked by fears of monolithic party-state control, this study argues for a more nuanced understanding of state nationalism whereby China’s own party-state propaganda machinery is projecting an image that is oscillating in its own imagination of who the Chinese are, and how China should position itself in a global context.

A Note on Style

Doing a study on the interactions of visuals, music and language on television, I was quite keen to bring to the reader some of the multimodal joy that I experienced as I watched the television programs. Initially, I was planning to cut snippets from DVDs of programs I recorded directly from Chinese television in China throughout 2008 and attach them to the thesis in DVD form. After struggling with the technology, I eventually realized that there were already many people who had already done the job of repackaging the television programs in a form that could be easily shared – through the Internet. I found a large number of the programs had been uploaded on the Internet presumably by fans on sites like *YouTube* and Chinese equivalents like *YouKu*. Many were programs in their entirety. While CCTV now streams most of its programs in real time, netizens and CCTV are actively maintaining a repository of CCTV programs online for viewing on demand. Where I have found the relevant programs online I have provided links to the websites in footnotes so that readers may examine the clips and make their own assessments on the programs and my commentary. These links, some better quality recordings than others, were current as of August 14, 2011. Throughout the main part of the text I have also incorporated key phrases from lyrics. Most of the songs discussed in this study can be freely downloaded from websites like Baidu.com.

All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. No two languages can be translated perfectly word for word, and I have had to make plenty of choices in the words I have used to translate from Chinese into English – as well as from visual and musical ‘languages’ into English. Such choices have a significant bearing on how my text in turn will be interpreted. One example worth noting was to use the word ‘motherland’ throughout as a translation for *zuguo*. As political scientist, Anne-Marie Brady (2002a:567; 2008: 188), notes, *zuguo* literally translates as ‘ancestral land’ and has been used by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) authorities to legitimize its rule

through equating feelings of patriotism and filiality to both the Chinese nation-family and the CCP as the vanguard of the Chinese nation-state. I use the less literal translation, ‘motherland’ in this study to reflect both a common translation and because in CCTV’s own programs the notion of *zuguo* is often gendered as feminine. For instance, in the program *Happy in China – National Day Celebration Special – Charming Macau* broadcast in October 2008 celebrating the 59th birthday of the PRC, female host Zhang Lei emphatically noted that it was a celebration for ‘*zuguo muqin*’, the ancestral country *mother*. Although a masculine sense of national identity is also present in some nationalistic songs, the female gendered construction of *zuguo* appears to be stronger in the music-entertainment realm, and can also be found in other domains such as children’s textbooks. Also, in this study I refer to the ruling Party, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and governing body of the state jointly as the ‘party-state’ (*dangguo*) or ‘government’.

In this study, I use the *pinyin* system of Romanization, while simplified Chinese characters for translations are included in the glossary. The *pinyin* system and simplified characters are both standards in the PRC, and mainland PRC television uses simplified characters. It thus makes sense to mirror their use in my text. The choice also reflects my own Chinese language training initially in Australia and then through self study while living in China for five years, as well as the growing reality of China’s ‘soft power’ which has made the mainland’s system of romanization more popular than that which is promoted by Taiwan. Furthermore, I began to study Chinese in 2003, in a context where the growing strength of the PRC made the mainland’s simplified characters more accessible than the traditional characters still used in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and which were previously the preferred object of study at universities outside of the PRC. The PRC’s official version of Chinese spoken language, *Putonghua* (to which the *pinyin* system corresponds), also became the more trendy option abroad compared to other ‘dialects’ and corresponding systems of Romanization. CCTV almost always uses Hong Kong and Taiwanese

singers' Mandarin (not English or Cantonese) names with simplified characters. Following CCTV's use, I use the pinyin version of their Mandarin names, with simplified characters in the glossary. I realise that I am making a political decision in choosing to maintain the Mandarin names (in Romanized *pinyin* form) of all performers as they appear on the CCTV screen and as announced by CCTV hosts. This applies for ethnic minority nationalities who may be known by non-Mandarin names in other contexts, Hong Kong stars whose names are pronounced and Romanized differently to Mandarin names and who often use English first names (e.g. I use Xie Tingfeng instead of Nicholas Tse), and foreigners whose non-Chinese names are likewise rarely, if ever, revealed on CCTV. As well as for maintaining consistency, I also retain the CCTV names to encourage readers to visualize how all performers are incorporated into an officially-sanctioned television context in mainland China. I also maintain the Chinese word order for names where the family name comes first. For instance, for Hong Kong singer Xie Tingfeng, Xie is his surname and Tingfeng is his given name. However, in referencing Chinese authors of scholarly texts published in English, I follow the English convention, placing the surname last.

While I would like to signal my unease with the use of certain terms like 'ethnicity', 'minority', 'mixed-race', 'Chinese', 'Australian', 'black', 'white', 'motherland' and 'nation', I have decided not to use quotation marks every time they appear for reasons of style. Without an internal editor, almost every word may have been wrapped in qualifying quotation marks and that, I believe, would have been quite distracting to the reader. Television program names and names of films are printed in italics while names of songs are marked by inverted commas.

Finally, I have used Harvard style referencing throughout this study following the lead of the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, which has been the source of a number of important works cited in this study. Since the journal began in 1998, the style of referencing has changed

slightly. I have decided to follow the format of a recent version (May 2011) – a special issue on transnational television – as it seems the most streamlined.¹

¹ See International Journal of Cultural Studies submission details, <http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal200946/manuscriptSubmission>. Refer to published articles for specific referencing formats.

“It was obviously not enough for me to have black eyes, black hair and yellow skin, I must say it, sing it, perform it. Chineseness, I began to understand, is not merely a biological category, but a social performance.”

Yiu-Fai CHOW (2009: 545)

Introduction

Performing ‘Chineseness’: My Experience and Thoughts on Identity

One afternoon in July 2009, I found myself dressed up, preparing to step into the lights on the famed China Central Television (CCTV) stage in Beijing. The studio space was abuzz with audience murmurs and clapping for the *‘My Chinese Life’ Global Chinese Storytelling Competition Awards Gala* (‘*Wo de Hanyu shenghuo*’ *quanqiu Hanyu gushi dasai jiexiao wanhui*). Cameras on long beams were manoeuvred to capture the stage and audience from different angles. A keyboardist nestled in a dark corner providing atmospheric musical accompaniment. After hours of hanging around, and days watching other people rehearse, someone finally called me and said I was up next. I ran around to the back of the stage, brushing past noted star Li Guyi who I had seen on CCTV many times before, and stayed in the shadows until CCTV host Zhao Baole announced the arrival of Gao Rui from Australia!

I walked onto the stage, smiled, and waved for my television debut. I was dressed in a bright red and yellow Yi nationality performance costume (the Yi are one of China’s officially recognised 55 ‘minority nationalities’). The costume came complete with a colourful headdress with extra wiring inside – presumably designed to stay on dancer’s heads, though it would barely stay on mine. As I stepped down towards host Zhao, he expressed an interest in my costume. ‘Look, Gao Rui is already wearing *our national* clothes!’ he exclaimed. ‘Can you tell me *whose nationality* these clothes are?’ I responded that they were the clothes of the Yi people, the nationality of my husband.

On reviewing the edited version, broadcast on October 29, 2009, I noticed that as Zhao started talking about the clothing, the camera panned from my

shoes up to my hat as if slowly absorbing the detail of the colour, design and, presumably, the curiosity, of an external ‘other’ (me, a foreigner) dressed up in the costume of an internal ‘other’ (the Yi, a ‘minority’ nationality). The question and answer session continued until my complex ethnic, national, and gendered identity had been fully detailed, and indeed applauded. Zhao concluded the introduction with a mock prize, exclaiming:

Ah! The China Wife (*Zhongguo xifu*) Award should be given to her! She married a young Yi nationality man! Please welcome her with a round of applause.

Piano music tinkled in the background, creating a sentimental mood. Then Zhao led me through intermittent prompts to tell and sing my story, which was about the power of popular Chinese music to unite me with Chinese culture, my husband, and China itself in its Olympic year, 2008.

This experience (further detailed in Chapter 6) helps to illustrate a number of questions I address in this study about the construction of national identity and how CCTV’s music-entertainment programs are being used as a platform to ‘perform’ preferred constructs of the Chinese self. Such questions include: In what ways are China’s minority nationalities conceived of as Chinese and how are they used to construct a unified picture of the Chinese nation-state? In what ways do foreigners ‘perform Chineseness’, and how do they help to construct the idea of the Chinese nation? Where do Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau and further abroad fit into the picture of the Chinese nation that is painted on CCTV’s music-entertainment shows?

For myself, my performance on the CCTV stage offered me an unusual opportunity to experiment with and experience the construction of my own identity in a Chinese television context. I personally view this experience as part of a broader set of ‘performances’ of my own identity in different contexts in both China and Australia. At times I have pushed a certain

understanding of my identity on others, and at other times had labels placed on me. During freer and more playful moments, I have found it amusing to witness the various reactions of Chinese strangers when, in response to the question ‘Where are you from?’ I explain to them in Chinese that ‘I am Chinese’, or ‘Uyghur’, or ‘Russian’. Some may read this act as being rather childish, but I take the notion of identity seriously. Seriously enough to rally against the idea that one’s identity is fixed, singular, and non-negotiable. At other times, when I am more limited in my response, such as on television, I am fully aware that people in positions of power, such as television hosts, are able to pin labels onto me, and that this can affect both how I am perceived by others and how I perceive myself.

My interest in identity comes from my personal experience in transgressing the borders of cultures and nations, including by living in China as a ‘foreigner’ for five years, a place I called ‘home’. Living in different cultures can offer insights into the heterogeneity of human life. However, the crossing of cultural boundaries can also allow one to experience rigid frameworks and firmly held views sometimes held by cultural ‘others’. For instance, in labelling myself, or being labelled as ‘Australian’, a ‘foreigner’ or a ‘wife’, certain feelings and assumptions are conjured up in both my own and other people’s minds about what kind of person I must be, some of them true and others far from what I would like to see in myself.

For this study, however, the focus is not solely on my own play with identity. Rather, it more broadly investigates how the Chinese media constructs and accommodates various articulations of national identity for its audiences. In contemporary times, some of the most influential constructs of national identity and ethnic stereotypes are produced through the media, and this study aims to identify such constructs, assumptions and framings of national identity as played out in mainstream party-state PRC television. It aims to understand how the identities of minority nationalities’ and the majority Han; of Chinese in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and overseas; and of foreigners are performed and framed in the media in

relation to one another. This investigates which frames are privileged and how their selection results in the denying of alternative ways of constructing a sense of belonging to the Chinese nation. Given that CCTV television content is strongly dictated by, or at least sanctioned by, central party-state propaganda units, this study offers a critical lens into how people with the power to produce and sanction cultural content in China's state media are imagining the Chinese people and China's place in the world.

This study extends on a body of work that is concerned with how Chineseness is actively constructed through everyday discourse by propagandists and media professionals working for the party-state and by 'ordinary' citizens in their day-to-day lives (e.g. Ang, 1998; Bai, 2007 and Chio, 2011; Fung, 2003; 2008b; Chow, 2007). The underlying paradigm of this cultural studies approach to identity is a fixation on the idea that one's identity is fluid and multiple. It contrasts assumptions about identity as discussed in many Western mass media reports on China, for instance, which tend to assume that ethnic identity is fixed. For instance, Tibetanness and Uyghurness are often starkly contrasted with Han Chineseness in reference to China's ethnic and political disputes. This is often done without due reference to the subtleties of identity construction in China, including the possibility that people may identify as both Han Chinese and Tibetan as a result of mixed parentage or feel both Chinese and Tibetan as a result of growing up in a place with diverse cultural influences. The Chinese party-state also prefers single ethnic labelling in its construction of identity rather than multiple or complex identities based on cross-cultural experiences or heritage. However, to a limited extent, it does allow citizens with mixed parental heritage to choose which 'one' they want to be. This study questions essentialist standpoints on identity and demonstrates how Chinese identity in particular is not an essential reality into which people are born, but an idea that becomes real through performance.

The aim is not to downplay the significance of associating with a single national or ethnic identity, which can indeed be important for individuals in

their day-to-day lives. Rather, this study aims to highlight the creativity of national and ethnic identity construction. That is, it celebrates the creativity of human beings to construct solidarities and conceptualize themselves as belonging to different kinds of collectives. At the same time, it shows how those in power are able to shape the construction of identities in ways that may reinforce or create dominant perceptions of a nation, culture or ethnic group. At the same time, I aim to illustrate that identity constructions are contested even in highly controlled party-state media where dominant forms persist.

As an overtly performative genre, music-entertainment television provides an ideal lens through which to test out how nationality is ‘performed’ in the media. With its strong connections to the party-state, the CCTV network offers the most obvious source through which to gain insights into how the music-entertainment genre is being used by the central administration to construct ² or sanction particular visions of the Chinese nation. Entertainment (*zongyi*) programming is also a particularly important genre for analysis given its popularity, being rated the third most popular genre of television programming in China in 2009 after television dramas and news and current affairs (Wang L., 2010:44).

By ‘music-entertainment’, I refer to a variety show genre that features performances of singing. It includes a kind of Chinese evening variety program (*wanhui*), which Keane *et al.* (2007:30-31) describe as an ‘indigenous’ form that features singers, dancers, and sometimes comedians, performing live and often lip-synching. The *wanhui*, as I see it, is ‘indigenous’ insofar as it draws on local and foreign influences in unique and less obvious ways compared to the more obvious ‘clones’ of successful foreign programs, which also have to adapt to local circumstances. The most influential *wanhui*, the annual *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* (*Chunjie lianhuan wanhui*, or *Chunwan* for short), broadcast on the eve of every

² I use the terms construction, performance, production, creation, and imagination interchangeably.

Chinese New Year since 1983, has been the subject of a number of studies (e.g. Zhao B., 1999). A few studies have examined other annual or one-off televised entertainment events, spectacles and ‘specials’ such as the annual military parades (Sun, 2007), and the dedicated fundraising events for victims of the Wenchuan earthquake and ‘snow-ice’ disasters (Sun, 2009). However, variety and music-entertainment programs have never been analysed in the context of a broader music-entertainment genre that includes multiple regular daily, weekly, annual, and special programs across the year. It is the broad spectrum of music-entertainment programming, with a particular focus on regular programs (introduced in Chapter 2), that is the focus of this study. This study is also unique in its specific focus on musical, artistic, and visual design in the context of television, and how these multiple modes of symbolism are used to perform the Chinese nation in a variety of ways.

Theories on the Performance of National Identity in the Media

For this study I draw on a number of analytical frameworks to analyse how Chineseness as a multi-ethnic, ethnic and cultural idea is constructed in relation to the PRC, the region and the world. Firstly, as discussed in detail in Chapter 3, I draw on theories of performativity whereby identities, whether they be gendered, sexual, national or ethnic, are understood as being created through everyday performance. Akin to the way I conceive of my own identity, this study, which focuses on the national and ethnic dimensions of identity rather than other dimensions such as gender, takes Chinese national and ethnic identity as a fluid, multiple, and contested concept that is created through cultural activity and performance. In this study of television, I argue that national and ethnic identity is created through performances of singing, through visual displays (including dress and set design) and through linguistic performances in the form of spoken discourse, sung lyrics, and on-screen text. The title of this study – ‘Performing the Nation’ – derives from the assumption that all identities,

including national identity, are performed or constructed through various forms of human expression.

This study also draws on postcolonial theory that promotes the idea that identities are constructed through fluid relationships between the constantly changing Self and Others. Of particular interest is Homi Bhabha's concept of national boundaries as '*in-between* spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated' and where 'the "other" is never outside or beyond us' (1990:4, original italics). Bhabha argues that national boundaries present a Janus-faced problem in that outside/inside distinctions can never be clarified entirely satisfactorily for those who wish to promote the idea of national unity. With this understanding, the point of a cultural investigation into national boundaries is to analyse what kind of cultural space the nation is, taking into account its 'transgressive boundaries' and its 'interruptive' interiority'. It also attempts to assess the kinds of "'containing" thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural translation' (Bhabha, 1990:5).

Also useful for this study is Duara's (1996:49) notion of hard and soft boundaries where 'every cultural practice is a potential boundary marking of a community'. Duara argues that before being marked, groups have multiple orientations and identifications. However, with a change in context, certain cultural practices such as language, religious practices, and common historical experiences, begin to function as 'markers'. These markers 'harden' perceptions of group boundaries defining who belongs and who does not, who is privileged and who is not, and heighten the 'self-consciousness of this community in relation to those around it'. This hardening leads to a 'closing off of a group whose self-consciousness is sharpened by the celebration of its distinctive culture'. Soft boundaries, on the other hand, are where practices of other groups are adopted, tolerated and shared, and not viewed as a threat. No matter how hard the boundaries are, national identities are always changing and there will always be differences, or a certain softness, within. Hardened forms of ideological

control include overtly restrictive methods such as the closing of doors to foreign imports. A softer approach would be less imposing forms of control, such as the CCP's support for domestic production in order to compete with a continuing influx of imports (Su in Hong, 1998:140). Duara argues that communities are not formed through the 'invention of tradition' or 'new cultural forms' but through 'transforming the *perception* of boundaries of the community' (Duara, 1996:49-51, my emphasis).

Cosmopolitanism is another concept I draw upon for understanding nationalist and patriotic impulses suggested within CCTV programming. Edwin Jurriëns and Jeroen de Kloet (2007:10) describe cosmopolitanism as a structure of feeling that grows out of nationalism, given that the global is located within the local. They take the idea a step further by coining a new term, 'cosmopatriotism', to describe a kind of belonging that is both 'placed and displaced, territorialized and deterritorialized, at the same time' (2007:12). The cosmopatriot, they argue, is a person who navigates between a sense of belonging to the state and to the world, and who thinks and feels within and beyond the nation. They argue that to feel equally at home in any location requires a certain critical and ironic stance towards their 'own' state and a degree of engagement with 'the Other' (2007:11-13). In the context of party-state television, however, I do not think the cosmopatriot frame on CCTV is implemented in a particularly critical or ironic way. Rather, I refer to the term to suggest that it reflects an unrelenting tension between the ongoing desires of the Chinese state to simultaneously stand out as strong, superior, and unique, and to present itself as an equal, open, and accepted part of the 'modernized' world.

This study also revolves around the idea that the media offers a particularly significant space for the creation and realisation of identities. As James Carey (2009:19) argues, communication is a 'symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed'. The 'media of communication' are therefore 'not merely instruments of will and purpose', simply used for imparting messages for the purposes of influence and

control, but are ‘definite forms of life; organisms...that reproduce in miniature the contradictions in our thought, action, and social relations’ (2009:7). Instead of viewing the Chinese media from a ‘transmission’ perspective, where its functions and effects are interrogated, I view it as a space where conversations about identity take place, focusing on how realities about Chineseness are produced.

Nations are not performed or constructed without contestation, however, and powerful individuals within the Party and media institutions certainly have a greater say than others on what can and cannot be performed, and what styles of cultural performance are deemed acceptable. For instance, when it comes to musical performance on television, party-state authorities tend to block out certain performances that are assumed to be imbued with political and moral messages of which they do not approve. For instance, unauthorized political comments on such ideas as a Free Tibet; sexual innuendo, such as through dirty lyrics and the wearing of revealing clothes; and the gathering of large, uncontrolled crowds (de Kloet, 2006) are certainly not features of CCTV’s music-entertainment programs. However, while a few topics and approaches may be obviously off-limits, there is still space for negotiation and contestation at a more mundane level concerning, for instance, what styles of musical performance should feature in programs (e.g. commercially-oriented popular music, folk music, patriotic songs). Furthermore, what is not allowed in one place may be allowed in another. For example, provincial television stations may offer productions of identity that differ from the national broadcaster, and different CCTV programs offer spaces for different expressions of identity. As de Kloet (2006) and Fung and Zhang (2011:272) remind us, it is also worth noting that the biggest censor is often not the ideological arm of the party-state but the media industry itself, which only produces material that they think will be commercially successful and that will not offend the conservative morals of mainstream Chinese consumers. While the performances of identity that feature on CCTV are clearly controlled by both party-state ideologies and the limitations of the media industry, in the period during which this study

was conducted (2008-2010), it is clear that room for expression on the topic of ‘who we are’ on CCTV extends to much more than a *singular* party-state voice.

Spectrum of Television Performance Styles: From Harder Orthodox to Softer Cosmopolitan

Building on the above theories, I posit that CCTV music-entertainment programs assist the current Chinese state in its constant bid to re-imagine and re-define the Chinese identity. At one extreme, they push out ‘hardened’ nationalistic, and ‘orthodox’ party-state ideological messages. Throughout this study, I use the term ‘orthodox’ in a non-religious sense to refer to standard CCTV music-entertainment performance styles used to produce party-state propaganda – performance styles that can relatively easily be recognized by viewers as being produced by CCTV, as reflecting party-state ideology, and which use language, visuals, and songs in ways that construct relatively easy to read party-state ideological messages.

At the other end of the spectrum, performance styles produce messages through experimentation with ‘softer’, popular, globally-inflected, or ‘cosmopolitan’ forms of entertainment, possibly with the aim of appearing less ideological, or to re-invent the CCTV brand for audiences who may no longer be attracted to programming that only offers programs with hardened, ideological, ‘orthodox’ formats.

There is no hard line between the ‘orthodox’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ styles, and all CCTV programs are being produced in reaction to other programs and the changing environment around it. However, I use the distinction to suggest that even within CCTV there are differences in approach, and that different approaches may reflect contradictory and complementary visions of China and the world by leaders within the party-state and its national television network. While the lines between hard/soft, nationalistic/cosmopolitan, orthodox/experimental are blurred, I argue that

the more ‘orthodox’ styles with more overt nationalistic messages reflect an inward-looking, defensive position for China, while experimentation with new styles reflect in varying degrees a ‘softer’, outward-looking, and global vision of the Chinese nation and state.

Research Questions, Timing, and Approach

Research Questions

In this study, I aim to provide an empirical assessment of how Chinese national identity is contested and projected within music-entertainment programming on CCTV through the posing of three main questions:

1. How is Chineseness framed in CCTV music-entertainment television?
2. What kind of cultural strategies are used by directors, performers, and editors in the production of music-entertainment television, and how may these reflect political, economic, and cultural considerations? Specifically, taking into account the audio-visual nature of television, what kind of linguistic, musical, and visual techniques and styles are being used to construct and frame Chineseness, and how do these modes interact to establish meaning?
3. What kinds of artistic and political tensions are evident within these frames, and what kinds of spaces are there for negotiation on, or ‘conversations’ about, Chinese national identity in the music-entertainment genre of the television network with the highest level of ideological control by the PRC party-state?

Timing – Celebrating the Olympics and Thirty Years of Reforms, Addressing Global Fears of a Rising China

The year 2008 was the starting point for this research and it proved to be a pivotal year in China's history. It was the year when China hosted the Olympic Games. These Games were not just 'Beijing's' Games, but a Games through which 'China' firmly asserted its place on the global stage. The Olympics were a major event during which the construction, promotion and performance of Chinese national identity for both domestic and global audiences gained fresh momentum. The year 2008 also marked the thirty year anniversary of China's opening up and reform policies initiated under Deng Xiaoping. The notion of year-by-year improvements over this period as a result of the successful reform policies was celebrated and heavily promoted in CCTV's music-entertainment programming, particularly in post-Olympic 2008. Special programs were dedicated to Deng, to the reforms, and even to CCTV itself, which was, in part, a product of these reforms. All of these moments, significant to both the state and nation were celebrated in music-entertainment programming on CCTV. Analysis of programs during this period is able to inform us of the kind of understandings party-state television wished audiences to acquire about their nation's recent political history. Programs in 2007 and 2009-2010 were also included to assess continuities and potential changes in identity construction pre- and post- the Beijing Olympics. However, patterns and variety of approaches of performing Chinese identity within this period, rather than specific changes over these years are the focus of this study.

This study is also significant in a context of growing global fears in the popular media and academia about China's rising status and growing assertiveness (e.g. Franklin, 2011). Concerns over China's rise, its human rights record, and military threat have been accompanied by efforts to 'contain' China. This is particularly the case in the influential discourse of the media and political leaders in the United States of America (USA), which in turn is propagated by other media agencies around the world (e.g.

see report on Sarah Palin in *Want China Times*, 2011; Cheng, 2011), not to mention other countries' own concerns about China's growing power (e.g. Johnston, 2011). By focusing on regular music-entertainment programs produced within the television network with the closest ties to the hegemonic Central Party leadership, this study attempts to break down the discourse on China as a single, monolithic entity as produced through the fears of the Western media. It encourages readers to see the multifaceted nature of Chinese political discourse, including its 'soft' and 'hard' sides.

As Zheng Yongnian (2010: 198) notes there have always been 'great dynamics' within and outside the Party. Even under the strong rule of Mao Zedong, struggles between different factions within the Party (*dangnei youpai*) existed. Since the end of the Deng-centred leadership factional politics has to a great degree been institutionalized, and many organization-based factions have been formed, including the Party, the National People's Congress, and the State Council. Other factional groups include the Shanghai Gang (built up by Jiang Zemin to bolster support from his networks after he was unexpected chosen as Deng's successor in 1989), the Qinghua Clique (those who graduated from Qinghua University), the *tuanpai* or Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL, which became Hu Jintao's power base)³, and the *taizidang* ('Princelings', or officials who are the offspring of veteran revolutionaries and who are in many ways loyal to the regime that their fathers established)⁴ (Zheng, 2010: 93-4, 194-5). Factions have also been built around different types of university education (e.g. engineering, finance, law); networks developed in college or vocational training (including training in the Party school, as civil servants and in the military staff college system); and generational cohorts (Li Cheng, 2001; also in Shangbaugh, 2008: 157). Members of each of these factions hold a range of liberal and conservative views with regards to the role of ideology and pragmatism and the role that China should play in an increasingly integrated international environment. At present, the factional ties are

³ The CCYL members include Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao, Wang Yang and Wang Zhaoguo.

⁴ Amongst the prominent princelings are Political Bureau members Xi Jinping, Wang Qishan, Liu Yandong, Yu Zhengsheng and Bo Xilai.

weakening and CCP leaders seem to be recognizing the need to ‘hang together’, which means that a more consensus-based and coalitional approach is required (Shambaugh, 2008: 157). While the programs discussed in this study can be clearly identified by seasoned viewers as entertainment produced under a consensual party-state system, it is nonetheless clear that accommodation of a range of political positions within the leadership can also be observed in the party-state’s cultural and entertainment programming.

As world leaders are simultaneously acknowledging the increasingly interdependent relationships between China and their own countries (e.g. Sainsbury, 2011), more nuanced insights into China’s socio-political landscape are vital. This study of the performance of identity on regular entertainment television programming aims to offer a view of China in which the party-state’s own propaganda machinery is projecting an image that is constantly oscillating in its own imagination of who the Chinese are, and where China should stand in the world.

Textual Approach

The questions outlined above point to the need for an approach that examines the production of discursive positions on national identity as produced through music-entertainment television texts, whereby ‘texts’ are defined as the television programs that are made up of interacting visual, musical, and linguistic ‘modes’. Described in detail in Chapter 3, I use a critical ‘multimodal’ discourse approach to analysis with the aim of understanding how language, music, and visuals are employed in the shows and how they interact to produce meanings about identity. In the growing field of ‘multimodal’ studies, few have examined texts in non-Western contexts, multimodality in the context of television (an exception is Chouliaraki, 2006), or, significantly, the role of music within multimodal texts (a rare exception is Goodwin, 1992 on music videos in the USA). Also, few multimodal studies have examined multimodality from within a social

constructivist or critical cultural studies lens as opposed to a systemic functional linguistic framework. This study focuses on examining the details of musical, linguistic, and visual strategies as used in the final edits of broadcasted material, and is most interested in assessing the results of collaboration and negotiation between producers, performers, propaganda officials, censors, sponsors and advertisers. This study takes a grounded analysis approach, first developed by Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser in 1967. The approach involves a close examination of the data (in this case, the television texts) and emphasizes the importance of writing notes based on observations. Theories emerge based on these observations and data is gathered until no new information on particular categories emerges (e.g. see Willis, 2010:423). CCTV's music-entertainment programs have changed over time, and this study is necessarily a snapshot of major observations during the period 2008-2010.

While I draw on informal discussions with people who have worked with or at CCTV, this study does not intend to deal with the intentions and motivations of producers, directors and performers. My decision not to include interviews with producers, performers and audiences as a major source of data is partly a matter of focus and a result of the constraints of time and access. It would have been difficult to gain access to a large number of informants at CCTV, not to mention the difficulty of sampling the millions of potential audiences of CCTV programming in China and around the world. My chosen focus, in any case, is on the textual output and on the details of how music, language and visuals are used for ideological effect. Nonetheless I have relied on scholarly works that draw on interviews with audiences and production staff to inform this work (see Chapter 3).

One of the major criticisms of CCTV by those who have conducted interviews with television viewers is that CCTV's programs are perceived as being unidirectional and overly propagandistic, and are deemed increasingly less relevant to audiences, particularly among the young and the middle-aged (Zhong, 2002). However, the party-state is spending

enormous amounts of money and resources on CCTV and on the music-entertainment genre in particular, and continues to *attempt* to reach out to large numbers of domestic and international audiences. For this reason alone, not to mention China's real growing strength on a global level, CCTV's music-entertainment programs must be seen as a vital avenue for gathering key insights into a range of both conservative and innovative party-state sanctioned positions on China's national identity and its place in the world.

While I have chosen to focus on one genre within a big, centralised media outlet (CCTV), I also acknowledge that China's media landscape is complex and multivalent. CCTV competes for audience attention with numerous provincial, local, cable and satellite television stations, as well as the Internet, radio and print media. There are also numerous smaller and more ephemeral forms and outlets of media produced for local or niche purposes and which remain 'relatively unrestrained by the state-run censorship apparatus' (Voci, 2010:xx).⁵ I have chosen to focus on China's most hegemonic party-state television network because it remains the most accessible media form for the greatest number of people across China and is the key mechanism for communicating party-state sanctioned ideas and perspectives on Chinese identity. Furthermore, the alternative and sometimes transgressive nature of other small, alternative media cannot be meaningfully appreciated and understood without taking into account the larger context of their connections with, and differences from, the 'main melodies' on CCTV. Analysis of programs on CCTV provides an important lens through which to understand how the parameters of political acceptability are defined and redefined.

⁵ For instance see Voci (2010) for an analysis of videos produced and shared on small screens through DV cameras, computer monitors, the Internet, and cell phones; Chio, 2009 on the production of village videos in rural Southwest China; and de Kloet, 2005, 2010 on rock music scenes since the mid-1990s in Beijing, which take on very different forms to that broadcast on mainstream media.

Constructing Chineseness: Investigating Institutionalized Frames of Identity

This study is about the negotiation and construction of ‘Chineseness’ as it is played out on CCTV’s music-entertainment programming. By negotiation and contestation, I refer to the discussions that must have taken place behind the scenes that have led to the final selection of broadcast televised content, taking into account different political, commercial and artistic pressures and convictions among CCTV producers, directors, performers and editors. The discussions I refer to specifically concern the politics of identity and how ‘the Chinese nation’ should be performed for domestic and international television audiences. While for the most part I have not been privy to internal discussions (although I refer a heated televised meeting between producers and directors of the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games in Chapter 6), I mainly judge the fact that negotiation has taken place by the variety of output broadcast on CCTV. At the same time, I also argue that all performances on CCTV fit with broader acceptable, consensual, state-sanctioned constructions of Chinese identity. CCTV thus offers a window into how the party-state would like its population to think about Chineseness as well as China and its place in the world. But it is not only ‘one’ way. As Gregory Lee (2003:vii) advises, ‘while there have been dominant ways of representing China’, there is ‘no single way of imagining China’, and performances of China’s and Chinese identity even on party-state television have come in multiple forms. Frames of Chineseness that are constructed in texts are not ‘empty or arbitrary’ (Chow R., 1998:24), but rather, are closely linked to political, social and economic forces. The important question to ask is ‘Which of the many Chineseness-es is privileged and institutionalized?’ (Chu, 2008:200) – and which are privileged in different broadcast contexts.

In this study, I suggest that three main frames of China and Chineseness are privileged in CCTV music-entertainment programming: a multi-ethnic

frame (Chapter 4), a single ethnic Chinese, ‘Greater China’ frame (Chapter 5), and a frame based around the notion of a Chinese civilization that attempts to attract and absorb foreigners (Chapter 6). As far as I am aware this is the first time that the three frames have been discussed systematically in one study and in relation to a specific television genre in PRC China. These frames closely relate to the three main tasks of the party-state in the post-1978 era, as outlined by Yingjie Guo (2004:43, 141). Firstly, an all-encompassing multi-ethnic frame based on the equal citizenship of the 56 different state-endorsed nationalities belonging to one single overarching ‘Chinese nation’ has been stressed in an attempt to avoid the kind of disintegration seen in the Soviet Union, and to quell separatism in Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and elsewhere. Secondly, a genealogically-based, greater/cultural China frame has been employed to stress reunification between the mainland PRC and Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and the entire Chinese diaspora. Cultural and ethnic nationalism, in which cultural ties and myths of common descent are featured, has been promoted in a post-socialist era where class struggle is no longer the major goal. Thirdly, the party-state has employed cultural nationalism to counter the influence of the West, particularly in the wake of the Tiananmen incident in 1989. The party-state blamed cultural nihilism and lack of a patriotic spirit for political dissent as a result of the over-worshipping of ‘Western’ ideas in the 1980s, and such attitudes were thought to threaten both the Party’s rule and stability of the state. Chinese culture is presented as superior and its promotion and preservation as necessary for the survival of the Chinese nation. The idea of ‘the Middle Kingdom’ (the literal translation of *Zhongguo*, the Chinese term for China) and of Chinese culture as having an essential power to attract and absorb foreigners (known as ‘barbarians’ in earlier times) has been revitalized as China seeks to re-establish itself as a significant player on the world’s stage.

The three frames can be understood as concentric rings representing visions for the Chinese nation. The inner ring, represents the geographic core of the PRC, dominated by an official manifestation of the culture of the majority

ethnic Han, but which is rhetorically inclusive of the cultures of the 55 officially recognized minority nationalities as well. The Greater China ring expands this core to include the geographic areas of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, as well as the scattered ethnic Chinese communities around the world. However, unlike the inner circle frame, it suggests that all Chinese outside of the mainland are born of a single ethnic Chinese (implied Han) identity. For instance, ‘overseas Chinese’ constructed in the programs are rarely, if ever, presented as Uyghur-Chinese or Tibetan-Chinese. A third ring theoretically includes all people around the world, but specifically ‘foreigners’ who are attracted to China and who are shown to at least try to adapt to the dominant and official brand of Chinese culture and civilization.

The three frames that are privileged in the music-entertainment program closely relate to the party-state’s need to maintain stability internally. They also relate to the desire to gain the support of overseas Chinese and non-Chinese foreigners for its legitimacy, which is largely premised on its ability to maintain stability and social harmony within China. Whilst focusing on each frame in separate chapters, I also analyze tensions within these frames and how these frames overlap. In the next part of this introduction, I introduce my understanding of the concept and importance of national identity in contemporary China, and the significant role that the media and television in particular play in establishing a sense of Chinese national identity.

From Class Identity to National Identity

Class identities were the most significant markers of identity in China when it was under the rule of Chairman Mao Zedong (1949-1976). As Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (1999) explains, at the time, all other identity markers, including national identity were subordinated to class to allow for focus on the revolutionary goal of creating a socialist utopia. All groups were all expected to tow the Party-line and their most significant identities were

based on the class to which they assigned (proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie, or the un- or counter-revolutionary classes). Class identity was particularly emphasized during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) when ethnic differences within China lost virtually all significance, and gender differences were also reduced to a single masculine state identity. However, in the reform era (1978-present), as Yang explains, differences in gender and ethnicity, as well as other identity positions, have re-emerged and begun to be asserted much more strongly, while in official representations, identities based on differences in class have faded. Even though the legitimacy of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) still partially relies on class consciousness, national identity has become the most significant state-promoted identity position in contemporary China. Yingjie Guo (2004) argues that with socialism discredited and downplayed, the promotion of nationalism has become an even more important basis for the CCP's legitimization. Now what the Party seeks is not a form of internal division and agitation (the basis for class consciousness), but a glue that unites large swathes of people together into the same (Chinese) frame – people both under its rule and beyond.

The Communist Party's shift away from socialism and towards nationalism has resulted from a number of key events that have shaken China and its ruling Party. Firstly, after the death of Chairman Mao in 1976, the closed and radical revolutionary approaches of the Cultural Revolution came to be seen as a mistake and officially labelled as 'ten years of chaos' (Rofel, 1995:304). A new path to reform was established under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. As China opened-up and began to engage with the outside world, Chinese people were able to see that socialism hadn't made them any better off than the West as had been claimed, and the gap in economic development between China and the West was perceived by some as humiliating (Song X., 2003:81-2). The state-controlled socialist system was gradually debunked in favour of a market-economy 'with socialist characteristics' (a term often used to explain contradictions between ideology and reality).

In a context where China sought to position itself as an important economic player in a global context, and with a diminishing focus on class, a new search for a national identity began. In the 1980s, a cultural debate arose around whether to focus on learning from the West, or on developing a ‘national essence’ based on Chinese culture and traditions. One group of intellectuals posed that only wholesale Westernization could save China from its ‘backward traditional culture’ and ‘ugly national character’ that had been holding it back economically. Another group promoted the rediscovery of a national culture through the study, preservation, and rediscovery of China’s traditions, including Confucianism, which had until then been considered under Communist rule as the reason for much of China’s stagnation (see Chapter 1). Following the Tiananmen debacle of 1989, the cultural nationalists seemed to gain significant influence on party-state thought. Westernization and lack of patriotism were blamed by the Party as the causes for the internal chaos. Forced to come up with an alternative to socialism in order to supplement and cement its legitimacy, the Party began to reposition itself as a ‘national’ party, and began to reinforce the need for the Chinese people to rediscover their own ‘national spirit’ and ‘national culture’ (Guo Y., 2004:x-xi, 2; Song X., 2003:81-99). The notion of a single, unified Chinese nation had to be invented, created, imagined, and made ‘real’ – that is real in the sense that it is made ‘meaningful and motivating to people’ (cp Brown, 2004:2).

The idea of a ‘nation’ is an extremely fluid concept and it is virtually impossible to pin down without recognizing contradictions and contestations. It has been defined in numerous ways in reference to various criteria. For instance, the very naming of a nation or labelling of certain people as belonging to the same group may define a nation. The sharing of a common historic territory, the circulation and belief in common myths and historical memories, connection through a mass public culture and a common economy, and the adherence to the same legal rights and duties are other ways of defining a nation (see discussion in Guo Y., 2004:10). In this

study, I focus on the idea of nation as a discursive device, or ‘system of cultural representation’ that is used to represent unity or identity (Schwarz in Hall, 1992:292). I do not take the nation as an essential entity, but as a shared construct that is continually being articulated and revised through symbols and themes (Brook, 2003:5-6; Guo Y., 2004:10). These discursive actions narrate and create the very ‘idea of origins, continuity and tradition’ that are necessary for the nation to be perceived as real (Barker, 1999:65).

‘National identity’ technically refers to a ‘collective expression of an individual sense of belonging to...a national community’ and ‘nationalism’ implies loyalty to the ‘nation’ as a cultural idea (Guo Y., 2004:10). However, national identity is often employed to refer to ‘a form of imaginative identification’ with a ‘nation-state’ (Barker, 1999:64). A ‘state’ is a set of political institutions, and in the case of the ‘nation-state’ it is assumed that the territorial-political unity of the state coincides roughly with the territorial distribution of the national group it purports to represent (Guo Y., 2004:10 drawing on Anthony Smith). In such cases, there may be significant overlap between nationalism as an ideology focused on creating a ‘nation’, and nationalism focused on the ‘state’ projecting itself as the embodiment of the nation.

Timothy Brook (2003) describes national identity as a ‘foundational idea’ closely aligned with modernist, teleological visions of progress taken up by post-colonial nations in the hope of joining the top ranking world civilizations. In the post-colonial context, nations have consistently aimed to fashion themselves in relation to other nations by marking their own uniqueness. However, where post-colonial nation-states have been unable to achieve the levels of modernization and progress promised to its peoples, Brook notes that some researchers have turned to focus on national identities as ideological constructs created in specific historical times. Symbols and narratives – the ‘material’ of the nation – have become the very subjects of critique.

In relation to China, the concepts of ‘nation’, ‘national identity’ and ‘nationalism’ are complex to say the least. There is no single, definable way of describing any of these notions, and there is significant contestation surrounding what they should mean (Guo Y., 2004:133; Rofel, 1995:303-315). The kinds of discourse on the nation that have dominated public debates have shifted dramatically over the decades ever since the idea of the Chinese nation became salient in the late nineteenth century, and particularly potent after the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911.

In one of the few studies to focus on expressions of Chinese nationalism outside of the late Qing dynasty and Republican-era China, Yingjie Guo (2004:xiii) identifies several main types of ‘official’ articulations of the Chinese nation currently circulating in contemporary China. Firstly, a cultural and genealogical ‘pan-Chinese nation’ (*Zhonghua minzu*) includes all mainland Chinese as well as the people of Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and overseas Chinese. It includes the 55 non-Han ethnic minorities (hereafter, minority nationalities) but is based on Han cultural symbolism such as the Yellow Emperor and the Dragon.⁶ Secondly, a class-based definition of the nation persists in CCP ideology based on ‘the people’, or people of China (*Zhongguo renmin*), and includes the proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie, but excludes the un- or counter-revolutionary classes. The four classes of ‘people’ are marked on the Chinese flag as yellow stars, which reflects a racial and genealogical dimension within CCP ideology. And thirdly, ‘Chinese citizens’ (*gongmin/guomin*) is designation that includes all people living within the

⁶ The Yellow Emperor (*Huang Di*) is a legendary Chinese cultural hero in Chinese mythology who is said to be the ancestor of all Chinese (*Huaxia*). Also see section on colour symbolism (Chapter 3) and the song ‘Yellow People’ (Chapter 5). The dragon is a legendary creature in Chinese mythology, and a symbol of power, strength and good luck. The term ‘Descendants of the Dragon’ (*Long de chuanren*) became popular as an ancestral symbol in the 1970s (previously the dragon was considered a progenitor of ancient rulers and common people were forbidden to associate with it). Hou Dejian’s song ‘Descendants of the Dragon’ no doubt played a major role in popularizing the term (see Chapters 1 and 5). Even though different ethnic groups in China associate themselves with different animal symbols (e.g. the wolf for the Mongols, and the monkey for Tibetans), the Chinese government has represented the Chinese nation as ‘descendants of the dragons’. For instance, as Barry Sautman (1997: 76-8) notes, as part of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations in 1995, the Chinese government produced a tripod decorated with 56 dragons representing each of the officially-recognised ethnic groups.

PRC borders and who hold citizenship to the PRC state. These citizens, who are internally differentiated as either 'majority' or 'minority' on ethnic terms, become united through opposition to an external 'Other' – generally 'the West' (Guo Y., 2004:28-9, 38-9). However, Chineseness is also defined in relation to other Asian neighbours as Brook (2003:1-9) points out.

As Guo (2004) explains, each of these conflicting ideas about the nation are articulated by the state simultaneously and at different moments for various instrumental reasons, and state constructions of nationalism are constantly reacting to and accommodating pressures from cultural nationalists who have been pursuing an agenda to 'nationalize' the party-state that they see as no longer authentically representing the people of the times. The multiple forms of national identity simultaneously circulating in official discourse seem contradictory. The CCP's official ideology and *raison d'être* still relies on a Marxist-Maoist, class-based narrative of Chinese history, which is a narrative predicated on revolution and a break with the past. However, the cultural nationalist history is based on a sense of continuity and evolution. Guo notes that some of the major questions of concern for the party-state at present relate to its legitimacy based on this changing narrative for existence. What if the Party no longer recognizes the proletariats/workers/farmers as the most progressive forces of history and instead attempts to erase class lines by welcoming entrepreneurs (i.e. capitalists) into its membership? What is to be made of the Party that says it represents workers and farmers but that has simultaneously dismantled state ownership, which has resulted in the exploitation of workers and farmers, the polarization of rich and poor, uneven regional development, and ethnic tensions? (Guo Y., 2004:2, 40-1, 136) Such tensions and contradictions between the party-state as a champion for workers and farmers and as a champion for a single great Chinese national culture that streamlines class identity have not been resolved, but remain embedded in many of the debates and performances of identity and Party legitimacy in contemporary Chinese society.

By downplaying inequalities and differences in class, gender, or race, attempts are made to conceive of nations as having a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’, as Benedict Anderson explains in his well-known work *Imagined Communities* (2006:7). However, all nations have to deal with tensions and contradictions within. It is only through various forms of cultural power that the nation can be understood as unified (Hall, 1992:296-7). As political scientist Anne-Marie Brady (2008:200, 202) argues, despite contradictions and numerous crises and challenges since 1989, the symbols used and stories told to emphasize national unity and social cohesion have on the whole successfully enabled the CCP to renew its widespread legitimacy and grip on power. As cultural analysts, we need to interrogate the cultural practices that are chosen (or not chosen) for the purposes of nation-building, and an understanding of exactly who speaks for the nation, which groups are able to take charge of the national stage, and what kinds of spaces there are for rival interpretations, discourses and symbols (Brook, 2003:3, 6).

In this study of nationalism on party-state controlled television, the primary voice speaking for the nation is clearly that of the party-state, given that CCTV is the central Party-mouthpiece. However, the party-state itself is not without internal contradiction, and, as noted above, it currently draws considerably on the voices of cultural nationalists, New Confucianists (see Chapter 1), and others, to construct and perform the Chinese nation. Furthermore, the media itself is made up of professionals who have increasing influence on what goes to air and who may push the boundaries of party-state policies (see Zhang X., 2011b). What is needed is more empirical examination of the kinds of ‘representational strategies’ used, and ‘narratives’ told, to reinforce the existence and nature of the Chinese nation, and the party-state’s attempts to ‘stitch up’ internal differences into a single identity (Hall, 1992:295).

But paradoxically, as this study shows, national construction is not simply about eliminating internal difference. Given that the Chinese state is

currently concerned with an image of openness, certain differences *within* the nation are part and parcel of the promotion of the uniqueness of contemporary Chinese culture. Since the 1978 reforms, the ‘colourful’ 55 minority nationalities as well as the reclamation of the Han identity, for instance, have become essential components of a great and singular Chinese entity. Also, discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 4, the processes of constructing minority groups as well as the Han majority are ongoing. Expressions of Chinese national identity by nature are full of paradoxes and contradictions.

Guo (2004:xiii) argues that many Western academic studies on Chinese nationalism have related the idea of nationalism to forms of aggression, arrogance, assertiveness, chauvinism, and xenophobia of both the ‘state’ and popular nationalist movements. However, like Guo (2004:xiv, 1), who takes a cultural studies and discursive approach to nationalism, I am more interested in examining nationalism as ‘a way of talking, thinking, and seeing the world’, and as something that is constantly created and recreated through the communication of symbols whose meanings are constantly contested. Nationalism in itself is neither good nor bad, but it can be used in both ‘defensible and abominable’ ways (Guo Y., 2004:xiv). I also view nationalism as an expression built through complex interweaving of local-global experiences. For instance, as Nyíri *et al.* (2010) note in relation to the patriotic outbursts among overseas Chinese youth during the international leg of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games torch relay, students’ expressions of nationalism could be seen as a manifestation of their experience of a state-led patriotic education in China; a strong sense of cosmopolitanism as a result of having economic capital and international experiences in global cities and the desire to assert their individuality; as well as their sense of struggle and inferiority as new migrants in a new country and the need to vent frustrations.

National Identity and Television

The mass media in China, as elsewhere, offer particularly important spaces for the expression of various forms of national identity. This is because national identity is grounded in cultural formations and artefacts (Anderson, 2006:4) and requires various types of human expressions, including words, pictures, and sounds (the basis of all mass media), to make it real. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (2006:36-8) famously outlines the importance of print-capitalism and the fixing of national languages in forming the very basis of a national consciousness. By reading the same print materials in the same 'national' language on a regular basis, a large number of people who would never meet in person, and who may have spoken mutually unintelligible dialects, could feel as if they belonged to the same cultural community (Anderson, 2006:6, 26, 44; Barker, 1999:65). Print technology and capital thus provided readers with sense of 'synchronicity' in inhabiting the same space and time, and engendered a sense of shared identity based on being part of the 'same' reading community (Chua, 2006:80).

Similar interpretations of the importance of the media in cementing a collective national consciousness have been applied to both the radio and television. Television produces meanings about the nation with which audiences can identify, contained in stories about the nation, and memories that connect the present to the past (Hall, 1992:293). As Lopez (1995:262-3; also see Barber, 1999:67) notes of Latin-American telenovelas, the programs offer audiences ongoing opportunities to recognize themselves as part of the nation through the everyday experience of relating to characters with typically national features, based in locations that are emblematic of the nation, and through stories woven with national stereotypes. As people across the nation routinely share the experience of watching the same programs with others across the nation, they may begin to feel as if they share common values and are united as a 'family'. Those at the periphery become linked to those at the centre (Morley, 2004:312). Television

continues to fix and spread vernacular languages and formulates the boundaries of the modern nation-state (Silverstone, 2007:19). It also offers the opportunity to unite via the familiar sounds of particular spoken languages as well as through familiar moving images, music and ambient sounds.

While television was introduced to China during the early years of Communist rule in 1958, very few people had access to it until after the economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping (Huang and Yu, 1997:572). The new market reform policies led to significant increases in living standards, including increased prosperity in the countryside. In a system that allowed people to generate their own incomes, it was not long before farmers as well as better-off urbanites could also afford to buy their own television sets and eventually some of the advertised products (Zhu and Berry, 2008:3; Lull, 1991). Also important was the change in the workday system from six to five days in May 1995, implemented due to high levels of unemployment as well as to stimulate consumption and the service industry, particularly tourism (Ma E., 2000b:27; Hou, 2009), and that resulted in a doubling of leisure time after which television viewing became an increasingly popular activity (Hong, 1998:139; Rofel, 1995:314). The speed of television development in the post-Mao era was phenomenal. While in 1978, there were only about three million television sets across the entire nation with a population of 800 million, by 2000, 92% of the population, or 1.19 billion people, including people in some of the most remote parts of the country, had access to television (Brady, 2006:64; Huang and Yu, 1997:572; Zhu and Berry, 2008:1-3). Since the 1980s, television has become the main source of news, entertainment, and national communication for most people in the PRC (Huang and Yu, 1997:572; Zhu and Berry, 2008:1-3).

Through its layering of visual, audio, and on-screen textual messages, and relatively cheap access, television remains the most effective way of reaching the widest spectrum of audiences including the illiterate and semi-literate. As it still operates as a mouthpiece for the Party, television is the

medium with the best potential for promoting CCP policies and for creating and solidifying a sense of unified identity within the PRC. While television in private homes has offered a retreat from the state, it has also become an important way for the state to reach into private homes with its approved programming (Rofel, 1995:314). CCTV is particularly well poised to meet this objective as the dominant and only television ‘network’ specifically mandated to provide programming for the entire nation-state.

Across the world, television is not only activated in the service of nation-building on a domestic-scale. It is also used to ‘sell’ the nation and a specific image of the nation to others through the export of programming. The use of television to fulfil both national and international goals leads to a contradictory pull between the construction of national, regional, and global identifications (Lopez, 1995:265). Researchers like Martín-Barbero (1995:283), writing in the context of Latin American television, argue that to appeal to a broader spectrum of transnational audiences, national characteristics are often watered down through tapping into modern experiences that are thought to be shared. PRC television stations are also increasingly producing programs for transnational markets. As a result of satellite, falling trade barriers, and the Internet, there has also been an increase in the circulation of television materials among Chinese speaking territories and among Chinese around the world (Zhu and Berry, 2008:1).

CCTV is also leading an outward push of Chinese media products towards non-Chinese speaking global audiences. While financial objectives must play some role in the push, this cross-linguistic, cross-cultural international push is largely part of a political attempt to improve China’s global image, part of its efforts to exert its ‘soft power’ (discussed further in Chapter 2). As part of its latest five-year plan, the government is being called on to ‘promote vigorous development and prosperity of socialist culture and the soft power of national culture,’ to improve ‘external propaganda work and culture exchange, to innovate the “Going Out” (*Zou chuqu*) strategy (also referred to as ‘Go Global’) for the cultural industry and to enhance the

international competitiveness and influence of Chinese culture' (Chao, 2011a). In this context, where television is also being overtly used as an instrument of foreign policy, the performance of national identity takes on a new dimension. CCTV is now trying to compete with other nationally-identified networks like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and American-owned CNN for audience share around the world. Like other 'developing' or 'third world' countries (e.g. see Mankekar, 1979:13, 17), what is at stake is the not just the solidification of a national unity, but also the ability to present the nation and the state in a favourable light to the world.

At least since November 2003, when President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao have led China, cultural products have been promoted as the main source of attraction to foreigners in the party-state's attempt to build a desirable image of China in a global context. The offering of a distinct culture through satellite television, live cultural performances, and the promotion of Chinese language studies, is being used to convince both domestic populations and the world of the party-state's peaceful intentions. This strategy is being supported through slogans. Domestically, the notion of building a 'harmonious society' (*hexie shehui*) has become part of the established political jargon since 2004, with the aim of developing a society with democracy, rule of law, fairness and justice, integrity and fraternity, vitality, stability and order, and harmony between man and nature.⁷ CCTV's music-entertainment programs have been used as a prime avenue to spread the message of a stable and harmonious China under the leadership of the CCP.

⁷ The concept of the harmonious society was introduced during the Fourth Plenum of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the CCP in September 2004, but reached full maturity after Hu's speech at the Sixth Plenum in 2006. See the report of the Sixth Plenum of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the CCP [中国共产党第十六届中央委员会第六次全体会议通过], Resolutions of the CPC Central Committee on Major Issues Regarding the Building of a Socialist Harmonious Society [中共中央关于构建社会主义和谐社会若干重大问题的决定], 11 October 2006. Available at: <http://www.hnmeida.com.cn/glcs/ydzb/xctz/xctz-zywj-zdjd02.mht>.

The global equivalent to a ‘harmonious society’, a ‘harmonious world’ (*hexie shijie*), was popularized in the lead up to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. The focus on culture and ‘peaceful development’ (*hexie fazhan*), and the re-imagination of Confucian notions of social harmony are a direct response to a persisting global image of China as an aggressive rising power. Significantly, while China may not want to give the impression of being ‘aggressive’, its communications tactics at least have clearly shifted from a ‘defensive’ to an ‘offensive’ approach, whereby media content including CCTV programs are being actively pushed into global spaces via satellite television and the Internet to spread key ideological messages of stability, harmony and legitimacy (Zhang X., 2009:103-4, 113-4).

The global outreach also represents a desire to present China on equal terms in an international market where economic and cultural trade between competing states remains unbalanced. Modern technology and speed of communications has made it impossible for the Chinese state to control every cultural product that enters China, so it is now pushing to balance out or reverse the flow of cultural products. After thirty years of strict control on imported culture during the Mao years, in the late 1970s, China began to formally open up to let ‘foreign’ cultural products in, including TV series’, popular music, and films from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Global media companies more recently entered the mainland Chinese market through joint ventures and the selling of templates of foreign television formats ranging from the *Idol* format, to *Survivor*, to melodramas such as *Ugly Betty* (Fung, 2009; Fung and Zhang, 2011). While having mixed success thus far, China is attempting to turn the tide on the imbalance of cultural trade and make a more even playing field in pushing its cultural productions, including television programming, abroad (Zhang X., 2009). The Chinese party-state is clearly using cultural production, including television production, as part of its attempt to push out its visions of the Chinese nation and of global Chinese nationalism.

Over the last few years, television itself has changed in form through technological developments that have resulted in significant convergences between media platforms. China's state-owned media, including CCTV, have followed global technological trends and invested heavily in satellite transmissions and new online platforms in order to spread its programming and preferred messages beyond state boundaries. Since the end of 2009, CCTV has been actively promoting its content globally online through live-streaming and downloadable vodcasts on a platform called China Network Television (CNTV), and has been aggressively competing with private Internet companies for market share (Chao, 2011b; Chao, 2011c).⁸ Through these multiple platforms, PRC television programming is being made available to Chinese netizens, Chinese people outside of China, and increasingly to non-Chinese audiences around the world through broadcasts in a range of international languages included English, French, and Spanish. Often the same programs, with some adjustments, are being produced to promote the attractions of China and Chinese contemporary culture for these different audiences. The desire to address multiple audiences simultaneously presents a challenge for producers who are trying to create programs that unify and interpellate⁹ different local and global groups.

While television programs may hope to create various forms of national and transnational identities, or a sense of global solidarity and support, we cannot assume without empirical work or evidence that audiences in fact *do* develop a sense of belonging (or a positive impression of a nation), as Couldry (2004:124) warns. In the East Asian context, where popular culture is constantly circulating, Beng-Huat Chua (2008:86-87), for instance has argued that Chinese and East Asian audiences across the region might be thought of as a 'community of consumers' who may not be aware of, nor have any desire to be part of, any imaginable community, although the act of consuming media may dispose them some kind of unified identity. This

⁸ According to research firm Analysys International, by March 2011, CNTV ranked fifth in online video advertising revenue with about 7% of market share.

⁹ I use the term interpellate to describe the process of producing identity through ideology, in this case Chinese Communist Party ideology that forms the basis of party-state television.

sense of community is far from stable and may follow the rise and fall of particular artistes and programs. Chua argues that in comparison to Internet users for instance, television audiences are particularly passive. Yet, that does not stop those in control of television content from *attempting* to influence, define and interpellate a united domestic or global Chinese family or a pro-China global family made up of Chinese and non-Chinese nationals through television and other media, whether for commercial or political reasons.

The Politics of Entertainment

In media studies, a distinction is often made between factual, serious, or ‘hard’ television formats, such as the news and current affairs, and ‘soft’ entertainment forms focused on such artistic forms as music, dance, and drama. These distinctions are part of a range of popular dichotomies that attempt to separate fact from fiction, important information from frivolous storytelling, and the political from the apolitical. Yet, these are arbitrary distinctions created through social and cultural convention. Both news and entertainment formats carry stories and dramas of human life, educate people on what is right and wrong, draw boundaries of belonging, and reinforce cultural identity. While the different formats clearly use different designs, and offer different stories, with different sets of symbols and metaphors, both entertainment and news formats are highly political as they attempt to tell us about our society, politics, and culture, and often in ways that serve the interests of those who maintain power of production (Sun, 1995a:93-7; Carey 2009:23; Bird and Dardenne 1988; also see Herman and Chomsky, 1988 for a similar argument on propaganda and the media in the USA).

For the purposes of this study, politics and ideology are seen as closely related and interweaving concepts. Drawing on Donald and Hall (1986), what is defined as ‘political’ is ideologically and culturally constructed and

it is through the analysis of discourse (linguistic, visual, musical) that we can learn about the kinds of politics, or contestations of power, that are operating at particular moments in time. Ideologies are defined as ‘the frameworks of thought which are used in society to explain, figure out, make sense of or give meaning to the social and political world’ (Donald and Hall, 1986: x). They are necessary for making sense of the world, and at the same time impose certain ‘ways of looking’ at events and relationships, while other perspectives are excluded (Donald and Hall, 1986: x). Defined by Louis Althusser as ‘systems of representation’, ideologies also identify and set boundaries. They recruit ‘subjects’ through ‘interpellation’, which Althusser defines as the function of naming and positioning people as subjects so that they instantly recognize that it is they who are being addressed (Donald and Hall, 1986:xvii-xviii), as, for example, implied in the category of ‘the Chinese people’. As this study shows, ideologies are not fixed but ‘constantly evolving’ and modified to meet the needs of changing historical conditions (Donald and Hall, 1986: xi).

The CCP has always recognized the importance of both entertainment and news formats as part of a gamut of communication tools for reaching out to audiences for the purposes of political education (Brady, 2008:201). From the early days of political agitation, Chairman Mao and others sought to appeal to specific target groups by drawing on and adapting political propaganda (agitprop) genres from the USSR as well as local Chinese cultural forms, including dance, song, drama, comics, cartoons, and pictorial magazines that were already part of people’s everyday lives (Holm, 1991:18-24). When television entered the scene in the 1950s, both news and entertainment programming were put to political use. On the cusp of the opening up and reform period in the late 1970s, Godwin C. Chu’s (1978) edited volume on popular media in China sought to ‘illuminate ideas and values’ that the CCP leaders in Peking wished to communicate and the ‘imaginative ways’ in which they were going about the task of ‘creating a new culture’ (Barnett in Chu, 1978:viii). The notion of popular culture as apolitical is an illusion, and this is no more so in the context of China where

all television, radio, and print media are still controlled, whether in direct or indirect ways, by the party-state.

As television became one of the most popular cultural activities in China from the 1980s onwards, its large number of entertainment programs have become the focus of analysis. Yet, in many studies, popular entertainment continues to be theorized as a kind of apolitical programming. According to Zhao (1999:294) after the highly restricted decade of the Cultural Revolution, people built up a thirst for popular entertainment. Media outlets sensed audiences desire to seek escape (from politics) through entertaining programs that are close to their lives (Leung, 2008:67). Yet, as Gray (2008:57, 59) points out, while entertainment programming is often seen as ‘escapist’, examining what people are escaping *to* can provide good insights into what people are escaping *from*. Entertainment programs are inherently political and ideological in the sense that they are actively involved in producing representations of reality and allow us to experiment with ways of thinking about the world in which we live. In terms of the politics of national identity, the kinds of images and sentiments that are being performed in entertainment programming reflect both party-state and public debates on what the nation could or should be like (also see Silverstone, 1999:148).

A related distinction has also been made between Chinese television stations (or programs) that are more politically-orientated (i.e. the centrally-controlled CCTV) and those that are more commercially-orientated (particularly provincial-level stations like Hunan Television). Zhao (1999:292), for instance, argues that with the increase in popular entertainment programming resulting from pressures for commercial success, the party-state has allowed ever-increasing amounts of popular entertainment (including international formats) to air on television because it does not necessarily ‘disturb’ the social and political stability of the nation, on which its current legitimacy is based. At the same time, she argues that television’s political role as the Party’s mouthpiece is increasingly being

‘eroded’. Yet, given that the party-state is both producing and sanctioning various forms of popular entertainment, that all television stations in China come under the auspices of the party-state and are essentially part of the same (though complex) ‘system’, and that it is part of state policy to promote economic marketization and internationalization (Leung, 2008:57), this argument is too simplistic.

Within entertainment programming, a distinction between ‘core’ entertainment programs and popular entertainment has been emphasized by a number of Chinese media scholars (e.g. Fung, 2009:181-183; Ma E., 2000b:29; Zhao B., 1999:292). ‘Harmless popular entertainment’ or ‘globally tinted entertainment programs’ are sometimes contrasted with ‘core’ programming over which the Party maintains a ‘tight grip’. The core programs include the news and journalism formats, but also CCTV’s in-house entertainment productions, and are said to use ‘orthodox’ production techniques, are aired during prime time, and have a ‘managed effect’ (Fung, 2009:183). Some of the objectives of core programming are to mobilize nationalist sentiments through speeches and to represent glorious military victories and heroic acts. Globally tinted entertainment programs, on the other hand, which include television dramas, reality shows, quiz shows, and variety shows, are noted as being aired outside of prime time and as being free to amuse audiences with the razzamatazz of showbiz (Fung, 2009:181-183; Ma E., 2000b:29; Zhao B., 1999:292). However, the line between ‘core’ programs and popular entertainment are increasingly blurred in the case of CCTV’s entertainment programming.

Entertainment programs have increasingly been constructed (or selected) with the expressed intention of mixing pleasurable infotainment with ideologically ‘correct’ didactic teaching (Sun, 2002:190). Sun (2009:64) refers to the ‘skillful marriage of political indoctrination and palatable entertainment’ as ‘indocritainment’, a format that aims to serve the ‘twin masters’ of the state and the market. party-state media officials have promoted the ‘unconscious’ education of the people through entertainment

as one of the main aims of broadcasting in contemporary China (Lu, 1995:4). Ying Zhu (2008) has carefully documented how prime time television dramas merge popular entertainment with party-state politics and ideology. For instance, dynasty dramas have been skilfully used to justify Confucian leadership in order to neutralize public hostility towards the regime even amid worsening social conditions of social inequality, political corruption, local maladministration (Zhu, 2008; Fung, 2009:187). Fung (2009:186) has also described how the 'Survivor' format has been used as a basis for reliving the Long March, during which twenty challengers walked the same 6000km path taken by Red Army of CCP in exile. The program served to promote loyalty to the Party and patriotism through a popular entertainment form. As described above, all programming involves negotiation between innovative and more orthodox objectives to meet state and market requirements.

As I will further elaborate on in Chapter 2, more entertainment does not necessarily imply an erosion of the political role of television in China. Rather, it points to the fact that the party-state is engaging in a different kind, or rather multiple kinds, of politics, which may link to the ideologies of different factions within the Party. One kind of politics at play can suggest a more 'subtle', less 'crude', and more entertaining approach to indoctrination than was more common in the past (Zhao Y., 1998:10). It is part of the state's policy to 'de-emphasize ideology', in order to make it possible for a variety of 'less ideologically loaded' cultural genres and entertainment forms to flourish (Chin-Chuan Lee in Zhao Y., 1998:5). This shift in approach to content, style, and politics has lead to the tactic of creatively packaging political lessons (Fung, 2009:187), or 'masking' the politics in ways that makes it more effective (Sun, 2002:190). As Eric Kit-Wai Ma (in Fung, 2009:181) argues, 'Under the veil of entertainment....audiences are oblivious to their own indoctrination'. On the one hand, as Fung (2009:181) argues, entertainment programming is able to project a kind of 'soft nationalism' whereby 'the state utilizes global [and localized] forms of entertainment to reinforce the efficacy of its governance'. On the other hand,

entertainment programming reveals tensions between the modernizing, outward-looking, internationalizing, ideologically relaxed attitudes of the party-state and its more closed, controlling, conservative, ‘hardened’ side (Leung, 2008:58).

Gaps in the Study of Televised Music

This study has specifically chosen to focus on ‘music’ entertainment television for a number of reasons. While previous studies have focused more on formal global influence on China’s entertainment programs such as through the purchase of ‘blueprints’ of global formats like *Idol* or productions in tandem with a global partner like CCTV and Channel V’s joint music awards evening, the formats that are the basis of this study are produced ‘in-house’ by CCTV. CCTV’s ‘in-house’, or ‘core’ music-entertainment programs seem to have been sidelined as an object of study in themselves by Chinese media scholars seemingly because of their political nature, perhaps with the assumption that if political persuasion and indoctrination are part of the purposes of production, then they cannot be classed as ‘real’ entertainment. Yong Zhong (2001:173), for instance, emphasizes that big-budget programs are made to pay tribute to the party-state and that private companies continue to make these programs as ‘political investments’ even though most make a loss due to low audience ratings and economic returns.

While these findings are important, a few points need to be made. Firstly, it is the ideological nature of one of China’s most significant propaganda tools that is of most interest in this study. I am concerned precisely with how the Chinese party-state uses television to produce its own visions of the Chinese nation. At the same time, and especially in a highly globalized world where there is an easy and rapid flow of information and communication across cultural boundaries, no culture is an island, and we are not simply talking about an enclosed propaganda system. Certainly, in the opening up and

reform era, CCTV's in-house programs (and party-state propaganda) have not been immune to external influences. CCTV's music-entertainment programs have clearly been impacted on through cross-cultural fertilization via similar programming in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan,¹⁰ and elsewhere. CCTV's own formats continue to adapt and integrate certain elements from other cultures (e.g. 'foreign' styles of singing and clothing, competitions, SMS voting, etc.). However, the precise blending of 'local' and 'foreign' elements enables CCTV to develop its own unique brand and design. It is also clear that the programs have been influenced by behind-the-scenes negotiations between producers and marketers who wish to promote their stars from the mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and beyond, as well as through artists, intellectuals and others who wish to feature 'their' kind of music, dance, and other cultural forms for a variety of economic, cultural, and political reasons.

This study also aims to bridge a gap in the analysis of televised music more broadly. There has been limited academic focus on musical performances on television in China or elsewhere. One of the main reasons for this is that music has long been conceptualized in Western musicology as separate from other forms of human communication and separate from politics and ideology (Cook, 1998; Radano and Bohlman, 2000). As Nicholas Cook notes, people have been analysing songs, operas, ballets, music videos, television commercials, films etc. in isolation from one another with little cross-fertilization. But music, like all other discourse, is never 'alone' and is always 'multimedia in nature'. Meanings emerge from interactions with words, images, and the specific socio-political contexts and associated memories in which it is constructed and received (Cook, 1998:v, 23). In other words, music has no intrinsic 'meaning' apart from the other visual and linguistic discourses that surround it and that are associated with it. It draws on historic associations and connotations that audiences bring to what

¹⁰ E.g. The *Kohaku utagassen* (Red and White song contest). First broadcast in 1951 as a radio show, the *Kohaku utagassen*, is an extremely high rating, extravagant popular music television concert held every New Year's Eve at NHK Hall in Tokyo. The show lasts more than 4 hours, and is transmitted to 80 countries and regions by radio, cable and satellite (Brunt, 2003:5).

they hear, and uses these in new contexts. Even though television has become a major space for the performance of music in contemporary times, there are a paucity of scholarly works that delve into the mechanics of television production and that interrogate *interactions* between music/sound effects, visuals, and language in the production of social and political meaning.

While not focused on televised music, in recent years a number of cultural theorists have begun to examine the socio-politically rich contours of Chinese popular music culture. Of note are Andrew Jones' (2001) and Andrew David Field's (2010) studies of pre-Communist jazz ('yellow music') and cabaret scenes, and Jones' (1992), Nimrod Baranovitch's (2003), and Jeroen de Kloet's (2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2010) work on the ideology and genre of Chinese rock music in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Anthony Fung has been active in analysing the dynamic relationship between the Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and mainland popular music culture, including how stars outside of the mainland negotiate political boundaries in their attempts to enter the mainland market (e.g. 2003; 2008b; also see Fung and Curtin, 2002). Marc Moskowitz (2009, 2010) has more specifically detailed Taiwan's Mandarin-language pop music, or Mandopop, scene and broader influence. These studies have drawn on and paralleled a number of works on the politics of popular music in other global contexts (e.g. McClary and Walser, 1990; Mitchell 2009; Pennycook and Mitchell, 2009).

While such scholars have examined the interactions between commercially viable popular music and the state, and the ways that newer forms of 'underground' music play with state sanctions (e.g. de Kloet, 2010), there remains a lack of focus on the various types of music that are state-sanctioned and promoted through Chinese party-state television, particularly through CCTV, which has a massive reach across the PRC. Notable exceptions are Nimrod Baranovitch's works on state-subsidised singers Mongolian-Chinese Teng Ge'er (2009a) and Tibetan-Chinese Han Hong (2009b). Furthermore, most studies on music in China have tended to focus

on a single genre of music or ‘scene’ that is made up of singers or bands with similar styles of music. CCTV’s music-entertainment programs, however, are made up of a hodgepodge of mixed musical styles, presenting an interesting challenge for analysis. In his analysis of a CCTV partnership with ‘global’ entertainment giant Channel V for a music awards ceremony, Fung (2008a:100) suggested that a preference for a mixture of styles on CCTV programming, rather than a concentration on ‘commercially-viable’ styles, points to political and ideological intentions:

Folk songs glorifying the culture, ethnicity, and nationhood – which are completely missing from the commercial business – could be regarded as a very strong signal that the commercial program has acceded to some demand or other. While commercial stations may regard it as a great departure from mainstream tastes, Channel V dared to integrate the political and the popular – though the jury is still falling out on agreeing whether the amalgamation has been successful or not. While Americans may think watching folk songs about nationalism on music television is strange, the integration seems quite proper in the current Chinese context.

The separate classification of music entertainment into ‘political’ and ‘popular’ styles, whereby the ‘popular’ is a matter of commercial success, is, however, a problematic distinction to make when it comes to contemporary party-state television, which aims for both financial success and a broad audience base. Fung (2003; 2008b) himself has written extensively on how nationalist (political) sentiments are evoked in popular music for both political and commercial goals. But beyond this, CCTV has a mandate of

reaching out to the broad masses and not just the interests of urban, cosmopolitan, youth with disposable incomes. What is ‘popular’ for urban youth may not be preferred by older groups or other Chinese citizens. Furthermore, several different forms of ‘folk music’ appear on party-state television these days, reflecting a variety of political and cultural stances, and folk music *can* be a matter of economic concern such as when it is used to promote of tourism in local areas. This study aims to further delve into the socio-political significance of the different styles of musical performances offered on CCTV, as well as interplays between them.

Given the complexity of China’s contemporary television system and the local-global interactions taking place in the production of entertainment programs, I begin the analysis with an understanding that CCTV is a part of and interacting within this web of interactions. CCTV remains a significant part of the Chinese television landscape. Even if CCTV continues to be perceived as more ‘managed’ (Fung, 2009:181, 183) in its provision of more ‘core’ programming, it is continuously drawing on innovations and experimenting with ‘new’ styles at prime time in order to stay competitive. While CCTV may remain the most overtly political network in terms of its connections with the central party-state apparatus, which is reflected in its program design, it is also important not to ignore variation within CCTV itself. Whether enjoyed or detested, celebrated or written off as Communist Party propaganda, CCTV music-entertainment programming provides a vital lens through which to understand what the party-state is projecting (and allowing to be projected) about the Chinese state and Chinese national identity.

Chapter Overview

The study consists of six chapters: the first three chapters provide an overview of the contextual, theoretical, and methodological framework of the study in relation to the Chinese nation, television, and performance of

identity. Chapters 4-6 provide in-depth analysis of salient CCTV music-entertainment moments in the performance of Chinese identity, highlighting three major ways in which Chineseness and China is framed through music, language, and visuals on television. These frames are the multi-ethnic state, greater China, and China-loving foreigners.

In this introduction, I have provided a comprehensive historical overview of the construction of the ‘Chinese’ nation and national identity, highlighting the important role of politics and the media in making this identity a reality. I also introduced the importance of music and entertainment programming in political education as well as my theoretical framework on national identity as being constantly created and having shifting, contested, and fluid boundaries.

The next chapter, Chapter 1, contextualizes the three frames of Chineseness that are central to understanding national identity construction in CCTV’s music-entertainment programs —outlined earlier. In the first frame, China is understood as a multi-ethnic state, and a single Chineseness is construed as being made up of 56 internally differentiated nationalities. In a second frame, Chineseness is an ethnic construct that traverses political boundaries and includes Taiwanese, people from Hong Kong and Macau, and Chinese living around the world. In the third frame, Chineseness is constructed as unique in relation to (and in some ways inclusive of) foreign nationals of non-Chinese ethnicity. I focus on significant party-state policies, limitations on, and interpretations of Chinese identity from a historical context, as well as contemporary flows across cultural and political borders that affect how Chineseness is constructed and performed.

Chapter 2 reviews the context and history of the media in China, with a focus on CCTV and the politics and economics of entertainment programming since 1979. It also establishes a theoretical framework for analysing entertainment television in China based on the idea of entertainment as a ‘soft’ form of propaganda and the connections between

entertainment and politics. In addition, I introduce the programs analysed in this study, and make a case for why this genre warrants serious scholarly attention.

Chapter 3 details my theoretical and methodological approach to multimodality and the performance of identity in the context of music-entertainment television in China. I also outline my conceptualization of audiences from within the framework of performativity and identity.

In Chapter 4 I engage in detailed analysis of television texts, focusing on performances of multi-ethnic PRC state identity. I identify three important frames through which the politics of China's internal nationalities/ethnicities are performed. A first performance style, which I call 'orthodox', is based on ideas of *transforming*, developing and modernizing folk song performances in ways that mirror the discourse of state development and modernization. A second style fuses elements of popular music with Chinese minority and Han majority nationality folk music, and reflects an officially sanctioned appeal to youth and urban markets. Finally, the *yuanshengtai* ('original ecology') style reflects more recent social and state concerns about environmental preservation and the protection of 'intangible cultural heritage', and stresses the need to *preserve* the folk musics of minority nationalities. I argue that each of these ways works within the Chinese party-state ideology of the 'unitary multi-ethnic state', yet at the same time reflect changing directions of, and multiple influences on, contemporary party-state policies.

Chapter 5 focuses on the Greater China frame and explains how Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwanese, and overseas Chinese are incorporated into a PRC-mainland centred Chinese identity. I argue that CCTV music-entertainment programming is not only making stringent efforts to re-construct for domestic and global audiences a sense of Greater China as a reality, but is also clearly attempting to re-centre mainland PRC within the Greater China sphere. I highlight the way that CCTV uses popular culture to create a sense

of unity between the different Chinese groups. I argue that the greater China frame is presented in a spectrum of orthodox and cosmopolitan ways. Building on the definition of orthodox as performance styles that are easily read as party-state ideological messages, and which carry the stamp of a ‘CCTV’ production, I argue that the main, and most easily read ‘orthodox’ message of CCTV’s music-entertainment programs in relation to the Greater China frame is one of ‘sameness’ and ‘unification’ on PRC terms. That is, Chinese people in the mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese are shown to be members of ‘the same’ ethnic group and who are all natives of mainland China. Chinese across the world are observed singing the same songs, speaking the same language, celebrating the same festivals, and attracted to the motherland. The more cosmopolitan performances of global Chineseness stress areas of difference to varying degrees in ways that may be more attractive to urban, youth audiences. Pop stars from Taiwan and Hong Kong may sing in English or Cantonese, wear trendy and unusual clothing, sing in more newly ‘imported’ R&B and rap styles, and reveal a mixed ‘Chinese-foreign’ identity. However, even Chinese pop stars from outside the ‘mainland’ tend to play important roles in promoting a sense of mainland-centred greater Chinese nationalism in their CCTV performances.

Chapter 6 focuses on the performances of foreign identities on CCTV music-entertainment programs. In particular, the performances of foreigners’ *interest in China* serves to highlight how special the Chinese nation is, and helps to position the significance of ‘the Chinese civilization’ in a global context. Again, I highlight a spectrum of performances ranging from the more orthodox moments where, in this case, the modes work together to present overt messages of foreigners’ attraction to China and (mainstream) Chinese culture, to those with a more global outlook with moments that feature individual foreign stars from Liberia, Russia, Korea, and Japan and their unique styles. I argue that both orthodox and cosmopolitan extremes attempt to promote the allure of China and the idea that it has ‘soft power’ in the modern era. They both present China as a

revitalized ‘Middle Kingdom’ (*Zhongguo*, China), the centre of a dynamic and superior civilization, and a place that is attractive to foreigners from around the world.

Finally, in the conclusion, I review the main findings on the framing of Chineseness, strategies of production, and spaces for the negotiation of Chinese national identity on CCTV’s music-entertainment programs. I then elaborate on the emerging theme of a China-centred world, and implications for local-national-global interactions.

Chapter 1. Frames of Chineseness

This chapter contextualizes the three main frames of Chineseness identified as being central to the construction of national identity in CCTV's music-entertainment programs: a multi-ethnic sense of Chineseness made up of 56 different ethnic/national groups; a genealogical/racial sense of Chineseness that is made up of people without and outside of the PRC borders, including Taiwanese, people from Hong Kong and Macau, and Chinese living around the world; and the inclusion of China/Chinese-loving foreigners in a China-centred world. This review aims to provide an insight into some of the salient ways in which party-state ideology, as well as cultural flows across political borders resulting from a regional and global market economy, may impact on the constructions of performances of Chinese identity in contemporary PRC television.

1.1 Multi-Ethnic Chineseness

State Unity and the Construction of Majority and Minority

Nationalities in China

With the intervention of the Western foreign powers in China in the mid-nineteenth century, the downfall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, years of warlordism, and the Japanese invasion from 1937-1945, many Chinese people suffered greatly. Like its rival Nationalist Party (the *Guomingdang*), the CCP was determined to establish a strong China to avoid future chaos. Forming a solid national identity, or *minzu*, was considered a vital part of the solution. Both parties pushed the concept of a unified China cemented through the construction of a majority 'Han nationality' (*Hanzu*) alongside a few assisting 'minority nationalities' (*shaoshu minzu*) who did not identify as Han and whose support was necessary for the state-building project.

There was a period in the early 1930s when Mao Zedong went so far as to offer the various ‘barbarian’ groups the possibility of self-determination and even the right to form independent states completely separated from China if the CCP won national power (Gladney, 2000).¹¹ However, after the Communist Party emerged victorious and established the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, promises of self-determination were rejected. Instead of offering national autonomy to these groups, the Party offered them some concessions and privileges, including the establishment of ‘autonomous’ areas. However, these autonomous areas have all been firmly integrated within the context of a ‘unitary multi-ethnic state’ (*tongyi de duo minzu guojia*) (Leibold, 2010:24; also translated as ‘multi-national’ state e.g. Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 1982/2004; Mackerras 2004b:303). The notion of self-determination came to apply to China as a whole in relation to its suffering at the hands of foreign imperialists, but not to the groups who became internal minorities.

Naming the Minorities

In order to give some rights and privileges to the minority groups, the PRC government had to identify who they actually were. For most of China’s history until the early 1950s, various constellations of the national make-up were imagined, but no state had intervened or had been concerned to clarify the exact number and nature of the groups (Mullaney, 2004a:198). This ambiguity and fluidity in internal ethnic identity began to come to an end when a new Election Law in early 1953 required that one representative seat at the National People’s Congress (NPC) was to be given to each minority nationality regardless of the size of their population. When a census was taken between July 1953 and May 1954, in Yunnan province alone around 260 distinct ethnic names were found. This number was deemed politically untenable and on 15 May 1954 Beijing established the Yunnan Ethnic Classification Research Team with around fifty researchers, cadres, and

¹¹ According to the 1931 CCP Constitution.

students to determine ‘once and for all’ the number of ethnic groups in the area who would be officially recognized (Mullaney, 2004a:198).

The classification of China’s internal ethnic groups purportedly followed Joseph Stalin’s definition of ethno-national identity, which rested on the sharing of a common language, territory, mode of economic production, and psychology/culture. However, few groups in China met all these criteria, and the categorization system was actually more closely based on linguistic criteria where language families were equated with ethnic group identity. The hasty nature of the investigations were driven by political pressures, unfamiliar and unstable local conditions, and included local Han Chinese interpretations of other ethnic groups (Mullaney 2004b:217, 226; Cooke, 2008:42). At a national level, eventually out of the more than four hundred groups that applied to the new Communist government supervised ethnic identification program, a manageable number of forty-one nationality groups became officially recognized, reaching a final total of 56 by 1982.¹² Thus, the 55 minority nationality categories were created and endorsed from a wide range of cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences (Mullaney, 2004b:207, 224-226; Tapp, 2008:468; also see Mackerras 2004b:303-305).

By the 1960s, the people of the PRC came to include the 56 officially recognized, state-constructed nationalities in the PRC (Wu D., 1991:166). In what Mullaney (2004a:197) calls ‘the strange calculus of Chinese nationhood’, the formula of PRC membership became ‘55 + 1 = 1’, referring to 55 minority nationalities and Han nationality as equalling a single ‘Chinese’ (state) nationality. In the state imaginary, the Han majority represents about 92% of the population (about 1.3 billion people) and the 55 minority nationalities together make up the rest (about 106 million people) (Hoddie and Lou, 2009:51; Mackerras 2004a:147). With this formula, not only are all people in the PRC classified as Han or one of the minority nationalities, but they are also positively identified as part of a unified PRC

¹² Members of unrecognized groups were either identified as Han or ‘lumped together with other minorities with whom they shared some features for generally political reasons’ (Gladney, 2000).

and given the all encompassing collective label of ‘Chinese nationality’ (*Zhonghua minzu*). All PRC citizens thus have a dual ethnic/national identity.

Even if individuals and collectives within the state do not think of themselves as Chinese, and Chinese is nothing but an imposed ascription, so far as party-state is concerned, everyone living within the borders of the PRC – including all Tibetans, Mongolians, Koreans, Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Russians – are considered ‘Chinese’ and part of the Chinese nation (Guo Y., 2004:14). For some groups there has been no discontinuity between their self-conceptualizations and the nationality conferred on them by the state, while for others naming has led to a disjuncture between how they called themselves and how the state labelled them (Cooke, 2008:35). Some groups, such as the Bai, had until 1958 considered themselves ethnic Chinese and indistinguishable from the Han until a new label led to a change in perception of their culture (Wu D., 1991:170-171). In such cases, official policies meant that acculturated Chinese could now be labelled as non-Chinese (Wu D., 1991:177). In some cases there is a mismatch between what a group calls themselves and what the state calls them, resulting in a sense of ambivalence about their state-assigned identities (Mackerras, 2004a:150). For instance, one group calls themselves ‘Monguors’, but the state classifies them as ‘Tu’, a less dignifying label used in dominant Chinese discourse, and which literally means ‘people of the earth’ (as opposed to people with culture as represented by the dominant Han) (Cooke, 2008:36, 47). Some communities classified as minorities, such as the Naxi, have enthusiastically adopted their minority status (Rees, 2000:18). Some Uyghurs in Xinjiang and Tibetans in Tibet have actively resisted CCP and Han-dominated rule, and therefore reject the idea of being ‘minorities’ in a Han-Chinese nation. On the whole, Mackerras (2004a:149) argues, ‘minorities appear generally content to obey Beijing, and their loyalties, expectations and political activities are directed towards the Chinese nation-state just as much, if not more than, those of the dominant Han people.’ However, while many minorities (and Han) may be happy enough with the

status quo, this does not mean that there are no challenges to how the nation is defined.

The state's right to define the nation is a matter of ongoing concern. Confusingly, the Chinese term *minzu* refers to both 'nation/national/nationality' and as 'ethnic/ethnicity'. In an attempt to clarify matters, Peking University professor Ma Rong (2007:201) called for 'nation' to be used for English translations in reference to the 'Chinese nation' (*Zhonghua minzu*) and 'ethnic groups' or 'ethnic minorities' to be used when referring to the 55 internal sub-groups (*shaoshu minzu*), instead of 'minority nationalities'. It is clearly a political choice, aimed at presenting a contained image of the ethnic groups, not as groups with a right to self-determination as is implied by the English term 'nation', but as members of a larger multi-ethnic Chinese state. To maintain a sense of the politics of this issue, and to reflect common translations, I continue to use 'minority nationality' when translating *shaoshu minzu*, but 'multi-ethnic' for the translation of *duo minzu*, which describes the make-up of the Chinese state in party-state discourse, although clearly the terms are blurred.

Performing Minority Nationality

In the Mao Era

When the CCP came to power, minority nationality folk artists were organized into professional, full-time troupes. The Central Nationalities Song and Dance Troupe (*Zhongyang minzu gewu tuan*) was established on September 1, 1952, and folk artists were recruited from remote areas around the country. By enthusiastically sponsoring minority nationality troupes, the CCP has been able to choose the artists and ensure the ideological suitability of performance content and style (Mackerras, 1984:213, 215). Minority and Han performers from various performing arts troupes, including the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Troupe as well as army, navy, and airforce

performing arts troupes, continue to play important roles on CCTV's music-entertainment programs.

However, performances of ethnic diversity have not always been readily permitted in PRC history. At times, difference has been equated with opposition, in effect rendering originally state-sponsored differences obsolete (Baranovitch, 2001:365). Anti-ethnic homogenizing policies dominated the Campaign Against Local Nationalism (1958-1960) during the Great Leap Forward; the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), during which some minorities, especially Tibetans and Uyghur Muslims with strong religious traditions were subjected to persecution (Baranovitch, 2001:365; Mackerras, 2004a); as well as the 'spiritual pollution' campaigns of the late 1980s (Gladney, 2000). During these periods of political unpredictability, many artists faced persecution (Yang H., 2006) and were uncertain as to how they could express individual and sub-national identities (Mackerras, 1984:215).

In the Opening Up and Reform Era

Since the social and economic reforms were implemented from the late 1970s, many changes have allowed for greater creative freedom regarding representation of various Chinese nationalities. New policies of ethnic pluralism, enshrined in the 1982 Constitution and the 1984 Law on Regional National Autonomy, have also encouraged a number of urban (and rural) minorities to take charge of their own cultural representations and assert their own identities more strongly (Harrell 2000:npn). While taking on state-defined categories, individuals have had 'the opportunity and freedom to express who they are and what they choose to represent' (Bai, 2007:254).

Tourism has also 'nurtured a sense of being ethnically distinctive' (ibid.). As Susette Cooke (2008:50-51) notes, compared to the first three decades of the PRC, in post-reform China there is much greater scope for experimenting with and affirming minority nationality identity. Many communities have been able to revise minority nationality histories, engage in studies of minority nationality languages, revive religious practices, and

create positive assessments of minority nationality culture, all of which have led to the development of a stronger sense of ethnic identity. With the reforms, the media, recording and tourism industries have grown significantly, allowing greater exposure to different ethnic cultures. The disposable incomes of Chinese urbanites have also grown allowing them to purchase recordings and travel to ‘exotic’ locations to see and hear ‘internal difference’ for themselves (Baranovitch 2009b:195). Those that are not able to travel can experience a cosmopolitan portrayal of China’s colourful diversity through television.

However, while China’s nationalities may distinguish themselves ethnically, their main duty is still to the party-state. They must continue to work within state constructed discursive parameters and participate in national development plans constructed in Beijing. The Party still authorizes revised histories, and insists on a policy of inclusiveness wherein marginal groups are seen as vital parts of the national whole, working together towards the goals of unity, stability, and economic development. While more minority nationalities are able to participate in projects surrounding their own identification and cultural issues, policy still fixes minority nationalities within a Han-centric narrative of national evolution, and thus reproduces dominant Chinese culturalist frames of identification. As cultural belonging is measured by levels of modernization, most minority nationalities continue to be seen as lagging behind the Han (Cooke, 2008:46-55).

Cashing in on Multi-Ethnic Colour

The emergence of ethnic inspirations in contemporary musical culture is intimately intertwined with the China’s opening up and market reform policies. In a highly commercialized North American context, Santa Ana (2008:458) notes a growing fascination with multiraciality, to the extent that ‘racial mixture’ has become ‘a hot commodity’. Since the 1980s, China has seen a similar trend towards cashing in on multi-ethnicity thanks to party-state endorsed market reforms. As I will show in Chapter 4, ‘ethno-pop’ in

particular clearly markets difference in a way that is palatable to consumers, and offers a trendy cosmopolitan feeling that is both ‘primitive’ and ‘contemporary’.

Much of the current promotion of minority nationality culture, including in television programming, is based on selling ‘colour’ to audiences. This colouring of minorities, based on their colourful clothing (rather than colour of skin) and differences in culture compared to official, mainstream Han culture, fits with both political and marketing agendas. As anthropologist Louisa Schein (2000:108) notes, when China was cut off from the West over much of the first thirty years of the PRC, mainstream Han culture turned to minorities to escape from a ‘stilted and suffocating Han urban culture’ (Schein, 2000:112). After opening to the world in the late 1970s after the Cultural Revolution, the ‘anxious appetite for minzu colour’ became an important point of contrast to popular culture in the West (Schein, 2000:114). ‘Colourful’ minority nationality performances and their exotic dancing, singing and instrumental styles, have clearly become selling points used to attract domestic and international tourists as well as mainstream Chinese television audiences. In many ways, this internal otherness provides proof of contemporary China’s revitalization and uniqueness as a nation.

Framing Minorities as Internal ‘Others’ and the ‘Real’ Chinese

The desire for ethnic colour has been matched with the framing of minority nationalities as mysterious, internal ‘Others’ who are still seen as primitive, backward and peripheral, a notion that anthropologist Louisa Schein (1997:70) refers to as ‘internal orientalism’. During the first three decades of Communist rule, even though Han ‘chauvanism’ was discredited, official rhetoric placed Han above ethnic minorities on a ‘teleological grid of historical progress’, underpinning assumptions of Han superiority (Harrell 2000:nnp). Since the 1980s, although the minorities and Han have been consistently noted as being ‘brothers and sisters’ and equals in the same ‘Chinese national’ family (Schein, 2000:114), the Han group clearly

remains exceptional as the majority group and emblematic of the Chinese mainstream.

The notion of minorities as being backward and primitive even continues in alternative, anti-centre and anti-Han movements, where minorities have come to define the very essence of the contemporary Chinese self. For instance, Leo Ou-fan Lee (1991:207-208) describes the root-seeking (*xungen*) movement that began in the 1980s where young urban Chinese artists began reflecting on the meaning and origins of their own culture. Fighting against the central, official, Beijing-based Communist culture in which they had grown up, and feeling they had been cut off from their cultural roots, such fiction writers as Gao Xingjian and Han Shaogong, and film-makers like Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, sought inspiration from a range of remote rural and minority cultures in order to gain insights into mainstream culture of contemporary times. They were eager to uncover ancient myths and rituals of a range of native cultures they imagined to be imbued with much more vitality than that offered by the Communist leadership.

The animosity towards official culture was extended to the hegemonic Han culture in general, which was seen as having been suffused with feudal Confucian as well as Communist ideology. The *xungen* writers, who have mainly been strangers to the ‘exotic peripheries’, have attempted to uncover the exotic, unfamiliar, internal ‘other’ as the primordial source of Chinese culture and civilization in relatively remote regions like Tibet and Heilongjiang, as well as ancient sites of the Han or Chu cultures (Lee L., 1991:211). The real purpose of the search appears to be not so much for lost cultures or agitating for minority nationality rights, but for a desire to “‘decentre” the oppressive political culture of the Party’ and to uncover and celebrate a kind of Chinese cultural pluralism and cosmopolitanism (Lee L., 1991:208, 224).

In this study, I argue that the vision of modern Chinese culture as being revitalized by so-called peripheral multi-ethnic groups has been incorporated into mainstream CCTV productions (though without an overt anti-Han, anti-Communist stance) alongside continuing orthodox representations, possibly as a way of drawing in cosmopolitans of a younger generation. CCTV music-entertainment programs incorporate urban Han centrality reflected in both ethnic and political (Beijing-centred) ways, as well as through reactive, alternative, cosmopolitan standpoints. Yet, regardless of outlook, the basic framework of multi-ethnic *unity* continues to be the dominant template for mainstream minority-Han nationality performances on music-entertainment television. Within this frame artists have managed to find ways of creatively reigning in a wide variety of styles that allows for the simultaneous expression of unique differences *and* of the unity of the ethnic groups.

Flexible Representation, Fixed Categories

While an increasing diversity and flexibility can be observed in the representation of specific nationalities, the categories of classified nationalities themselves are fixed and non-negotiable. The party-state has ruled that there are 56 nationalities, no more and no less. Despite allowing some level of choice for those of parents with different nationalities, citizens of China can only be identified as *one* of these nationalities, rather than being ‘mixed’ Yi and Han, or Miao and Uyghur. The kind of postmodern discussion on the fluidity and arbitrariness of national identity and questioning of the rationality of categorization most often raised in post-colonial studies in Western academia is hardly if ever raised on Chinese music-entertainment television. Dru Gladney (2000) has been one of the few authors to employ deconstruction as a way of unveiling the arbitrary methods of classification and categorization and the convenient sidelining of important cultural differences *within* classified minority nationalities and the Han majority. In official rhetoric across CCTV’s music-entertainment programs, the rhetorical message is that China has 56 nationalities who all

belong to a single state. Yet, despite the constrained nature of the verbal rhetoric of ethnic identity within China's mainland, across this study I show that 'mixed' identities in fact play important roles in CCTV music-entertainment productions, and are essential to the dynamics and vibrancy of many of the programs.

A final point to make on multi-ethnicity in China is that PRC classification was not based on any scientific analysis of 'existing' nationalities, but through an application process that was open to 'latent ethnic potential' for developing national identity. Following recognition, the state and people of China have been in a more or less continual process of 'realizing' the forecasted categories, of turning the descriptions of reality into actual reality (Mullaney, 2004b:228, 231). Since the beginning of China's opening up and reform, the salience of the state-defined multi-ethnic categories *and* the idea of singular 'Chinese' national identity have, in a significant way, been made real to audiences around China through television.¹³

1.2 Global Ethnic Chineseness: 'Cultural China' and 'Greater China'

While the *multi-ethnic* sense of Chineseness has been built by the state to construct a unified *mainland* PRC Chinese identity, the party-state has promoted different constructions of Chineseness to connect mainland Chinese to ethnic Chinese, referred to as *huaren* or *huaqiao*, who live outside of the mainland. In recent decades, the idea of a single ethno-cultural Chinese collective been emphasized by the party-state and cultural nationalists in China and abroad. This collective includes Chinese citizens of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan (areas to which the PRC lays claim), as

¹³ See Hartley (2004:16) for a similar argument in relation to the Australian national identity, and the important role of national and international media in the construction of 'multination' states.

well as ‘overseas Chinese’¹⁴ who may be citizens of other states. The naming and relative centre of this Chinese collective is being contested by Chinese who are citizens of the PRC and those who live outside of China, as is the very notion of an essential ethnic or cultural unity. In this section, I examine two main concepts used to construct of a sense of Chinese identity across political borders: ‘Cultural China’ and ‘Greater China’, paying particular attention to the role of the media and popular culture in the construction of a greater China identity. I make use of the concepts ‘Cultural China’ and ‘Greater China’ in this study, not to suggest that a homogenous unit of Chinese people actually exists, but because CCTV music-entertainment programming itself tries exceptionally hard to create such an image.

‘Cultural China’ and the Revival of Confucianism as a Symbol of Unity

‘True’ China Outside China – Tu Weiming

Popularized by USA-based Chinese scholar, Tu Wei-ming, the term ‘Cultural China’ was coined in the early 1970s and was mainly circulated in intellectual journals outside of mainland China (Tu, 1994:25-6).¹⁵ At a time when the CCP was still widely promoting class consciousness as pivot for social solidarity, the Cultural China debate outside of the PRC borders

¹⁴ Wang Gungwu, an expert on the Chinese diaspora, goes to great lengths to distinguish between ‘overseas Chinese’ (*huaqiao*) who are Chinese nationals living abroad, and the majority of ethnic Chinese living overseas who have adopted local nationalities and ‘acknowledge their Chinese origins or are so regarded by demographers’ (1995:275). Wang Gungwu uses the term ‘Chinese overseas’ inclusively of both Chinese nationals living abroad and those who have gained foreign citizenship but are still labeled (or label themselves) as Chinese. However, in this study, I use the reverse term ‘overseas Chinese’, which assumes a connection to China, in order to emphasize the fact that CCTV productions do not make a clear distinction between these two groups. CCTV continues to use the term *huaqiao* to imply a solidarity of *all* Chinese around the world, often alongside the term *huaren* (another ethnic term for ‘Chinese’) for emphasis.

¹⁵ Particularly influential was his 1991 special issue of *Daedalus: Annals of the American Academy of Arts and Science*, later published as an edited volume called *The Living Tree* (1994).

focused much more strongly on the ethnic identity of Chinese people who no longer resided in their ancestral land and included Chinese in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and the USA. Tu critiqued the idea that the 'true' Chinese culture could only be found in China and argued that the centre of Chineseness in fact no longer resided in China. He argued that the idea of China as the 'Middle Kingdom' was threatened as a result of the penetration of Western powers, ideas and systems in the nineteenth century. But more significantly, China's own rejection of traditional and Confucian culture under Communism led to further displacement of China from Chineseness to the extent that being a citizen in the PRC would not guarantee one's Chineseness (Tu, 1994:2-3, 25, 27, 34; also see Chua, 2001:114). Famous for his advocacy of New Confucianism, Tu used the term Cultural China to describe what he saw as the emergence of a 'common awareness' among a *transnational* Chinese intellectual community, which symbolized the material and spiritual 'accomplishments' of the Chinese people (Tu, 1994:1). In contrast, he implied that the CCP were not the leaders of a country that housed the 'true' Chinese culture.

Tu also argued that with the rise of the economies of Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore in the 1990s, these peripheral locations would 'come to set the economic and cultural agenda for the centre', and the PRC would be displaced as the centre or core of Chinese culture. Tu saw Chinese culture as disintegrating under the Communist regime, under which many traditions were destroyed, but argued that it would be revived and preserved from the 'periphery' in ways that would powerfully challenge the centre (Tu, 1994:12; Ma L., 2003:22). As a New Confucian scholar, he argued that Confucianism would become the force that would unite all Chinese around the world as well as people from other East Asian countries including Japan and South Korea with a Confucian heritage (Chua, 2001:114). Tu imagined that a mutual belief in Confucianism was what drove the new economies and the successes of pan-overseas Chinese business networks. After the Asian financial crisis hit in 1997, however, the

reality of a single, thriving culturally Chinese or East Asian solidarity based on Confucian belief became much less obvious (Chua, 2006:76, 78).

Re-Claiming Confucius

What is most interesting for this study is that as the building of national identity has become a key pursuit of the PRC government, the PRC party-state has been quick to appropriate Confucianism and the concept of Cultural China, and has attempted to re-centre mainland China within a global Cultural China frame. Since the 1980s mainland Chinese scholars and the media have been active participants alongside their overseas Chinese counterparts in discourse on Cultural China and on the significance of Confucian thought (Song, 2003:84-8). In the twenty-first century, PRC authorities have even more actively attempted to re-claim control over the uses of Confucius and Confucianism as national icons. The news media has actively reported on the importance of China's Confucian heritage, Confucius statues have been erected all over China and around the world (Zhu L., 2011; China Daily, 2011; Allen, 2010), and Confucius' image has been used to promote Chinese language and culture internationally, particularly with the global spread of party-state sponsored Confucius Institutes (*Kongzi xueyuan*).

As Song (2003:91, 97) notes, the state sanctioning of a revival in Confucianism is clearly part of a pragmatic attempt by the party-state to strengthen its legitimacy following the chaos of both Cultural Revolution and the ensuing disorder developing as a result of rapid economic and social change. Fundamental Confucian tenets of social harmony, respect for authorities, obedience to superiors, devotion to the state, and protection of the family have been taken on board by the party-state when there is a clear need to pacify the country, stabilize society, and regulate the people (Song X., 2003:91, 97; Chen R., 2011). Stressing notions of moral civilization and humanist values have also been valuable in a context of high levels of official corruption and the collapse of moral order following the Cultural

Revolution. Significantly, Confucian ideas have also operated as significant markers of a Chinese cultural tradition and have been used to build up a sense of national identity following the void left by turn away from socialism (Song X., 2003:94-99). However, while notions of social harmony, respect for authorities, and devotion to the state, and protection of the family, were clearly evident in music-entertainment programming across 2008, the direct mention of Confucian culture and heritage was rare in the shows. Drawing on Beng-Huat Chua (2001; 2006), discussed below, I argue that in the context of CCTV music-entertainment television the construction of a pan-Chinese nation was much more strongly built around the the use and circulation of popular music and contemporary culture than any sense of Confucian heritage.

A Loose Sense of Chinese – Based on the Circulation of Popular Culture

Given the very different socio-political histories of Chinese communities in Taiwan, Macau, Hong Kong, and overseas Chinese abroad, the idea that they all feel a shared culture sense of the past and culture is disputed by a number of scholars (e.g. Chua, 2006; Ang, 1998). However, Beng-Huat Chua (2001, 2006) does argue that a *loose* sense of Chineseness exists across borders. This sense of Chineseness exists not because of essential ethnic ties or Confucian beliefs, but is rather based on a common cultural *economy* through which popular culture is produced, circulated, and consumed. People across these regions are connected through shared tastes, ‘flows’, and consumption of ‘ethnic Chinese popular cultural productions, products, artistes and consumptions of contemporary cultural products (Chua, 2006:79; Cunningham and Sinclair, 2000:35-88; Zhu Y., 2008:19). The marketing of popular culture products like films, television series’, and popular music across the region has resulted in the most successful realization of a transnational Chinese community across borders, much more than any bonding through Confucian culture. Chua developed the term ‘Pop Culture China’ to specifically describe the ‘dense flow’ of ‘pop culture products’ and networks of ‘cultural-economic exchanges’ between

populations of Chinese in geographically dispersed locations (Chua, 2001:114; 2006:77, 80).

However flimsy the sense of unity may be, satellite television has played a vital role in creating a new basis for building a common sense of time and space (Zhu Y., 2008:19). Added to satellite television are websites like Baidu (a Chinese music sharing hub) and YouKu (a video sharing hub like YouTube) onto which netizens have uploaded many Chinese television programs, which can then be shared with Chinese speaking netizens globally. While the flow of cultural products such as television series, films, and music, is much greater from Taiwan and Hong Kong to mainland China than the other way round (Tay, 2009), CCTV in particular is trying to compete and reverse this trend. Regardless of its effect on populations outside or inside the mainland, it is clearly using selected popular culture from both the mainland and the ‘peripheral’ Chinese regions to attempt to create a sense of pan-Chineseness, as I explain in Chapter 5.

‘Greater China’ and the Re-Centring of the PRC

While the earlier theories on Cultural China developed by overseas Chinese scholars attempted to displace the PRC from the ‘centre’, other theories more specifically under the banner of ‘Greater China’ insist that the PRC mainland remains at the core of an essential Chinese entity. In such analyses, the PRC takes centre stage, while the other entities ‘orbit around the mother country like planets around a star’ (Taylor J., 2004:175). The idea of Greater China reaffirms the idea that all Chinese are believed to be bound to mainland China no matter what their circumstances. This outlook has been criticized for blurring significant social and political differences between different geographic contexts where ethnic Chinese live and often gives the impression that ‘all peoples of ethnic Chinese descent within a single, homogenous cultural bloc’ (Taylor J., 2004:175). Yet, it is important to recognize that the creation of such an image is an important tactic of the

Chinese state and its media in its attempt to promote national unity and the importance of the PRC on a global level.

With the growing strength of the PRC economy, the PRC is becoming an increasingly significant player in the transborder flow of Chinese popular culture. Tay (2009:106, 113107-8) argues that while China may not necessarily be 'leading the way in terms of content, style or influence', it is the most powerful and sizable participant. She argues that we need to acknowledge the 'complex role played by the PRC within this context' in that it provides the cultural, economic and political bedrock on which the market depends. China's force in the Chinese geolinguistic media industry may still be 'nascent' but it exerts influence and remains a long-term factor in consideration of strategies of national media markets. For instance, Hong Kong producers reconfigure their products for mainland PRC audiences in line with official state regulations in return for legalized access to southern China (Tay, 2009:107-8).

In this study, I argue that CCTV itself is heavily involved in ensuring that the PRC mainland is firmly constructed as the cultural core and central homeland for a global Chinese family. Making 'real' the concepts of 'Greater China' and 'Cultural China' with the PRC mainland at the centre is clearly part of its mission. Yet, like the idea of multi-ethnic state unity, there are moments of tension and ambiguity given that performers from the different regions outside and within the PRC, also attempt to push their own identity constructions within the limits set by the ideological, financial, and artistic constraints of party-state television.

Furthermore, it must be recognised that with a high level of cross-cultural interaction between Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, overseas Chinese, and the PRC mainland, the cultural uniqueness of each area is becoming increasingly blurred. With quotas placed on imported programs in mainland China, producers in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and elsewhere, are forming joint ventures and joint production units with mainland Chinese television stations and production houses to produce programs for consumption in all

three regions (Chan, 2008:26; Hong, 1996:98). The interactions of television cultures represent what Jonathan Friedman (in Chan, 2008:33) refers to as the consumption of palatable cultural difference, in which elements from all three places, including artists, producers, formats, and stories are integrated. The PRC is playing an important role in this process, although as this study shows, its state-owned television stations like CCTV continue to offer particular constructions of Chineseness as a result of such cross-border interactions. The following section briefly outlines a selection of important details on the politics of the histories, popular culture, the media, and identities of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan in relation to the PRC mainland as well as on the construction of overseas Chinese from a PRC perspective.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong (*Xianggang* in Mandarin Chinese, meaning ‘fragrant harbour’) borders on southeast China’s Guangdong province. It has become a powerful symbol of Chinese nationalism and identity, given its colonial history after being ceded to Britain in 1842 with the Treaty of Nanking following the First Opium War and ‘returned to the motherland’ in 1997. In the PRC party-state imagination the loss of the island to Britain marked the beginning of 150 years of humiliation as a result of Western and Japanese aggression and violence against China (Chow R., 1998:5). Ever since Hong Kong was returned to the motherland in 1997, becoming the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong SAR) of the PRC, it has undergone a process of ‘re-sinification’. The boundaries between Hong Kong and the mainland have become increasingly blurred as Hong Kong people have begun to understand their new place as part of China (Fung and Ma, 2002:78; Ma E., 2000a:177-178). The media in both Hong Kong and in the mainland play an important role in re-orienting citizens on both sides to what it means to be Chinese in the ‘one country, two systems’ arrangement.

As Eric Kit-Wai Ma (2000a:175, 177) explains, since the 1990s, Hong Kong people have been exposed to new national discourses, including media celebrations of the founding of the PRC. Many Hong Kong people, not used to being interpellated as part of any nation, and holding ideas of China as primitive and ruled with unpalatable propaganda techniques, at first disliked such national celebrations and symbolism espoused through such acts as raising national flags and singing national anthems. However, through multiple retellings of national stories, many Hong Kong people have started to become more sympathetic to official discourses and sensitive to over-simplifications and characterizations of the Chinese party-state and society.

One of the earliest performances of this new national identity for Hong Kong audiences was a 1993 charity show co-produced by CCTV and Hong Kong's TVB. Aimed at fighting poverty in rural China, it was staged at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing where large-scale political meetings usually take place, and featured a mixture of political and cultural icons (Ma E., 1999:55-6). Since 1994, entertainment programming celebrating the anniversaries of the establishment of the PRC has been relayed on all of Hong Kong's electronic media. The 1997 handover ceremony featured popular singers and television personalities singing the Chinese national anthem together and raising the national flag (Ma E., 1999:6).

Many Hong Kong entertainers have tried to downplay any direct 'political' identification with the communist government that is perceived as being relatively militaristic and xenophobic in contrast to a non-military and internationalized outlook, to which Hong Kong people have grown accustomed. They have instead chosen to focus on a 'cultural' identification with mainlanders. Tapping into a cultural resource of an essentialist, timeless Chinese heritage has allowed them to establish a sense of Hong Kong people and mainlanders as members of one big Chinese family. This cultural nationalism pleases mainland officials and is acceptable to many Hong Kong people (Ma 1999:56-7). At the same time, the Hong Kong

cultural industry is feeling pressure from the mainland. The Hong Kong film industry in particular now increasingly depends upon mainland investment and producers, resulting in Hong Kong actors and directors pandering to mainland commercial and political requirements.

For instance, Hong Kong action movie star, Jackie Chan (Chen Long), was extremely active in promoting the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, and performed during the opening and closing ceremonies (Associated Press, 2009a and 2009b). He was also one of the most visible Hong Kong stars on CCTV music-entertainment programming in the lead-up to the Olympics, and clearly helped to promote the messages of the party-state with his highly plugged pre-Olympic song 'We Are Ready'. The song's lyrics emphasized the bold and generous era in which the world's eyes would descend on 'us' (China). Actors like Jackie Chan, who have become hugely successful in the mainland, have also been criticized by audiences in Taiwan and Hong Kong for seeking power and money from mainland pursuits. At the annual Boao Forum in 2009, Chan was asked to comment on censorship and restrictions on filmmakers in China. He wondered aloud about whether Chinese people really needed democracy and suggested that too much freedom, such as in Hong Kong and Taiwan, leads to chaos and that 'we Chinese need to be controlled'. Chan was applauded by a predominantly Chinese audience of business leaders. However, his comments were sharply rebuked by Hong Kong and Taiwanese commentators. Another Hong Kong star, Chow Yunfat, was also criticized for his leading role in the 2010 film *Confucius (Kongzi)* for pandering to the kind of films the party-state wished to produce and promote. After pulling the hugely-popular *Avatar* from Chinese cinemas, *Confucius* was heavily promoted by the authorities, but did terribly at the box office. Apart from more general negative reviews of the 'painfully dreary' production style, the film was widely thought of as a 'not-so-subtle propaganda exercise' used to exploit the historic character for contemporary political purposes and to assert a unified Chinese national identity (e.g. Groves, 2011; Robey, 2010; Zhou R., 2010).

Mainland television in the form of CCTV-4 (CCTV's Mandarin language international channel) has been attempting to penetrate into Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as reach out to overseas Chinese since 1992 (Zhang X., 2011a:59). The number of Hong Kong viewers of CCTV-4 remains insignificant compared to the popularity of local Hong Kong programs and imported programs from Korea, Taiwan, Japan and elsewhere (Chan, 2008:20). However, the party-state is attempting to share its visions of China with both Hong Kong and mainland audiences in other ways. For instance, CCTV and Hong Kong's TVB (*Xianggang Wuxiantai*) have been working together to produce variety shows (such as the program celebrating the ten-year anniversary since the return of Hong Kong to China discussed in Chapter 5) as well as dramas and special reports, some of which have received very high ratings (Zhou Z., 2010). In 2007, CCTV Director, Zhao Huayong met with Hong Kong's Asia Television (ATV, *Xianggang Yashi*) to discuss cooperating in a wide range of areas including news exchange, feature films and television program content. Zhao expressed to ATV Chairman, Cha Maosheng, a desire for more Hong Kong viewers to be able to watch CCTV programs, while taking into account the needs of Hong Kong viewers. Hong Kong television was clearly being used as a platform through which to reach out to the world (*mianxiang shijie*, lit: face the world), particularly overseas Chinese. In the same year, CCTV Deputy Editor, Zhang Huashan, explained CCTV's long-term cooperation with RTHK (*Xianggang Diantai*), which operates more formally as the government's foreign propaganda window (*zhengfu duiwai xuanchuan de chuankou*) in Hong Kong. Zhang noted that both CCTV and RTHK stations are specifically charged with the task of guiding public opinion, and that Beijing and Hong Kong are working closely to develop a strong 'media brand' for China (*Zhongguo de chuanmei pinpai*) (Zhou Z., 2010). These efforts by CCTV, whether through direct CCTV-4 broadcasts or through airing CCTV content or joint productions on other stations, suggest that the party-state is keen to use the media to influence Hong Kong viewers and overseas Chinese audiences on how to think about the Chinese nation.

Scholars like Chan (2008:20) assert that only certain television programs from mainland China (e.g. television series based on classic novels) are popular in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and Hong Kong audiences find many mainland programs dull, ideological in tone, and overbearing. However, the new collaborations between CCTV and Hong Kong stations mean that it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate ‘mainland’ media from ‘Hong Kong’ or overseas Chinese media as far as content is concerned. If viewers are watching Hong Kong television, they may think that the programs are free from the propaganda of the mainland, but by subtly integrating CCTV programs (including joint productions) into Hong Kong television broadcasts the party-state may be more able to effectively reach a wider range of viewers. In examining musical performances and verbal discourse that feature Hong Kong or Hong Kong performers on CCTV, we are able to gain vital insights into the party-state’s attempts to interpellate Hong Kong and overseas Chinese audiences as well as how it frames Hong Kong in relation to the Chinese nation. In-depth examination of Hong Kong performers on CCTV may allow us to investigate how CCTV attempts to educate both mainland and ‘Greater China’ audiences on the significance and identity of Hong Kong for the greater Chinese nation.

Macau

Macau SAR, known as ‘Aomen’ in Mandarin and ‘Oumun’ in Cantonese (lit: ‘door to the bay’), is located next to China’s Guangdong province, and an hour’s ferry ride from Hong Kong. It is the smallest entity in ‘Greater China’ and the most understudied, resulting in a paucity of research on cultural production and national identity in relation to Macau (Shambaugh, 1995:6; Edmonds, 1995:226). My general feeling, drawing on CCTV’s music-entertainment programs is that Macau is heavily influenced by mainland Chinese culture. Unlike Hong Kong and Taiwan, Macau does not have a strong music-entertainment industry like Hong Kong, or any noteworthy pop stars attempting to make their own inroads into the PRC mainland television market. This feeling reflects Lo’s (2008:227)

observation that the ‘one country, two systems’ model is practiced less in Macau than in Hong Kong where policy, economy and society are all integrated into the PRC.

Macau offers the party-state a chance to celebrate its legitimacy by emphasising the successful return of this former Portuguese colony back to the Chinese motherland, a feat that was finalized on 20 December 1999. Yet significantly Macau’s unique ‘historical and cultural character’, which merges Portuguese and Chinese elements, has become a unique selling point for the Chinese tourism industry, mainly attracting tourists from around the Greater China region. Since 1982, historic buildings have been preserved with the specific concern of attracting tourists mainly visiting from East and Southeast Asia (Edmonds, 1995:232-4). I argue that while Macau itself is generally framed by CCTV as a successfully returned ‘child’, much like the returned ‘brother’ of Hong Kong, the emphasis of a mixed cultural/national heritage (although largely limited to exotic interest in buildings) does provide some contrast with the way that Hong Kong is constructed where a celebration of British heritage is all but absent.

Sheh and Law’s (2011) comparative study of official history museums in Hong Kong and Macau helps to shed further light on differences in the ways that Hong Kong and Macau are incorporated into the Greater China frame. Somewhat mirroring my findings (see Chapter 5), they argue that the different official constructions of nationalism in the Hong Kong and Macau history museums reflect two different faces of official PRC nationalism during the rise of China. Hong Kong’s museum of history represents the narrative of national humiliation as a result of British imperialism. It completely downplays the significance of its British colonial history and Western-Chinese cross-cultural relations, and instead emphasizes Chinese patriotism through placing emphasis on Chinese art, archeological discoveries, maps of China, and ancient Chinese inventions. (In CCTV’s music entertainment programs, however, it is mostly contemporary popular culture rather than historical artefacts that is being used to unify Hong Kong

people and those in the mainland.) The Museu de Macau, on the other hand, showcases Sino-Western cultural exchange and the blending of Eastern and Western culture, and is presented as a bridge between China and Europe. For instance, it includes a history of trade in Eastern and Western products, displays Western and Chinese architecture side by side, and places significant emphasis on the culture of Macanese with mixed Portuguese-Chinese heritage (e.g. Macanese cooking). Macanese culture is emphasized even though they represent only a small a minority of the current population of Macau, which is currently dominated by ethnic Chinese/Cantonese. Unlike Hong Kong, where British heritage is downplayed, Macau's Portuguese heritage and mixed Chinese-Western culture is celebrated.

Sheh and Law argue that by highlighting the peaceful co-existence between Chinese and Portuguese speaking peoples, Macau is being used as a cultural platform to strengthen China's strategic policy of forming new friends with developing countries in Latin and South America where Portuguese is spoken. This suggestion is backed-up by an article in which a CCTV deputy editor, Li Ting called for the strengthening of relations with Portuguese-speaking nations through cooperation with Portuguese-language sporting associations during a meeting with the Macau Portuguese-language Olympic Committee in July 2007 (Zhou Z., 2010). Sheh and Law argue that the two history museums are being used to rebuild the identity and culture of Hong Kong and Macau in different ways by asserting different kinds of nationalisms, both of which are part of the ruling political authority's strategy for maintaining power and legitimacy. I investigate this application of this argument in relation to the construction of Hong Kong and Macau in CCTV's music-entertainment programs in Chapter 5.

Taiwan

Political and Cultural Claims for Being the 'Real' China

Taiwan (which literally means 'station/ledge at the bay') sits opposite Fujian province in southern China across the Taiwan Straits. Although the PRC claims Taiwan as an inalienable part of its territory, the island has not become a special administrative region of the PRC like Hong Kong and Macau. Since 1949, it has maintained its own statehood under the name Republic of China (ROC). After the Qing defeat in the Sino-Japanese war and the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan who ruled the island for fifty years until 1945 (Hughes, 2000:64).¹⁶ After Japan's defeat in World War Two, the Allied forces committed to returning Taiwan to the ROC, which has controlled it since then. However, in the years following the expulsion of Japan, the civil war in China led to the Nationalist Party's own expulsion from the mainland after the Communist Party took control and declared the People's Republic of China in 1949 (Hughes, 2000:64). With American intervention, the ROC/Nationalist Party made the island of Taiwan their 'last battalion' (Kirby, 2005:110).

In the context of the civil war and Cold War, Taiwan became a national cause for both the Communist and Nationalist parties who both claimed to represent the true 'China' (Kirby, 2005:107). When class-based revolutionary ideology was at its peak in the PRC mainland, interest in Taiwan faded (Yahuda, 2000:30). While the mainland was embroiled in the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the Nationalist Party battled its own cultural war in Taiwan, arguing that it was saving the traditional Chinese culture that was being destroyed by the Communists on the mainland (Cohen M., 1991:131-132). Whilst previously 'anti-traditionalist' in outlook (like the

¹⁶ In earlier history, Taiwan was been ruled by various regimes including the Dutch (1624-1662) and the rebellious army of Cheng Cheng-kung (1662-1683). It formally came under the control of China's Manchu government/Qing dynasty (1683-1895) in 1684.

Communist Party), Cultural Renaissance Movements were launched by the Nationalist Party government to inculcate traditional Chinese culture and Confucian teachings in order to 'restore China' and thus present the ROC to the world as the 'real' China, the 'Free China', and the centre of Chinese culture (Lee and Huang, 2002:109; Cohen M., 1991:131-132; Chun in Huang S., 2010:17). Various forms of media in both the mainland PRC and Taiwan have operated as important spaces for the airing of political and cultural arguments on what the real China and real Chinese culture are.

Re-Asserting Unification and Maintaining Creative Ambiguity in the Reform Era

In the reform era, as the PRC's emphasis has turned away from class struggle and towards nationalism as the reason for the Communist Party's legitimacy, its stance regarding Taiwan has shifted from disinterest to active concern. In this context, the PRC has reasserted its commitment to preserving and developing traditional Chinese culture, so that the PRC mainland is re-centred as the home of Chinese culture and Taiwan is constructed as a peripheral, but essential part of the Chinese nation-state. In 1978, the new PRC constitution mentioned the 'liberation' of Taiwan, but a few years later in 1983 the updated (and most recent) constitution emphasized the 'unification' of Taiwan (Yahuda, 2000:30).¹⁷ The PRC's 'one China policy' has become the requisite understanding for any country wishing to develop diplomatic relations with China. Under the policy, Taiwan is to be considered a province of China; it is to be excluded from international organizations that require statehood for membership; and the PRC threatens the use of force to bring about unification if Taipei makes a formal declaration that Taiwan is not a part of China (Hughes, 2000:63). The CCP has reportedly offered Taiwan to join with the mainland in the 'one country, two systems' framework like Hong Kong and Macau, and has

¹⁷ Chiang Kai-Shek also did not claim Taiwan in earlier draft constitutions 1925, 1934, 1936 (Yahuda, 2000:30).

offered significant concessions to Taiwan, such as allowing it to keep its own government and armed forces (Hughes, 2000:79).

Some Taiwanese believe in unification but are waiting for a time when Beijing will allow greater freedom of speech, democracy and the rule of law. But many other people in Taiwan are waiting for the CCP to take their offers a step further and are agitating for a separate 'native' Taiwanese nation and identity. While most voters in Taiwan at present do not want to be politically united with the mainland, they have also been reluctant to take the risk of declaring formal independence (Hughes, 2000:71, 79). This era of political limbo has led to the emergence of a state of 'creative ambiguity', which is a strategy of developing an ambiguous stance on the issue of Taiwan's relationship to China so that both sides can benefit from developing indirect social and economic ties and the building of political confidence through informal talks. In this way, Taiwanese can build special cultural, kinship and economic ties with the Chinese mainland without implying that Taiwan is under the sovereignty of PRC (Hughes, 2000:77). This is significant in the context of CCTV's music-entertainment programs, which is used by some Taiwanese singers to access a vast mainland Chinese market (see Chapter 5).

From Smuggled Content to Strong Business Opportunities

Cultural and media exchanges between Taiwan and the mainland have been through a number of stages since China began allowing 'foreign' cultures to enter China in the late 1970s. The 1980s marked a period of strict authoritarian controls on both sides. The Taiwanese government, for instance, only allowed mainland culture and media to enter Taiwan in the late 1980s, when it began to relax its anti-communist stance. Restrictions lessened in the 1990s sparking the exchange of entertainment television programming, while from the late 1990s great attempts have been made to separate cultural content from political content, resulting in an exponential increase in media and cultural exchange, despite political setbacks (Hong,

1996:91-96). Since 1978, with the PRC state's gradual retreat from the social and economic life of its citizens, popular culture from Taiwan as well as Hong Kong have had a strong influence on the mainland, even though Taiwanese culture and media only *legally* entered China in the mid-1980s (well after culture from the USA) (Cohen M., 1991:130). For the thirty years prior to that there were virtually no media/cultural exchanges between the two sides and the Cold War mentality meant that people on both sides could be jailed for listening, watching, and reading 'smuggled in' material (Hong, 1996:91-96).

One of the most popular Taiwanese singers to be smuggled into China via tapes was Deng Lijun (Teresa Teng). Her sweet songs about love and romance captured the imagination of the Chinese people at a time when such material was still thought by the Communist Party to pervert the minds of the people and divert them from socialist ideology. Having the same family name as Deng Xiaoping, who led China in its economic reforms in the 1980s, a popular saying circulated: 'In the daytime Deng rules, and at night Teng rules, and both Dengs rule the whole of China' (Fung, 2007:428; Fung, 2008a:50). In another high profile case, Taiwanese singer Hou Dejian had to defect to the mainland in order to physically cross the political borders. As soon as he did so, in 1983, he became an instant celebrity and was supported by the authorities until 1989. His song 'Descendants of the Dragon' (*Long de chuanren*) (see Chapter 5) was aggressively promoted in the PRC to highlight the Taiwanese people's yearning for reunification and was a feature of the 1988 *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*.¹⁸ The song was popularized at a time when Deng Xiaoping believed that reunification would happen in his lifetime, but also at a time when there was also popular support in Hong Kong and Taiwan that all of China might be reunited for the first time in a hundred years (Jaivin, 2001:56; Gold, 1995:269-270).

¹⁸ See clip of Hou Dejian singing 'Descendants of the Dragon' during the 1988 *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* online at <http://www.yinyuetai.com/video/19714>.

After the Taiwanese government lifted restrictions on doing business with the mainland in 1987 (Cohen M., 1991:74; Lee and Huang, 2002:114), and with the rapid economic development in the mainland since the early 1990s, the purchasing power of mainland urbanites particularly in big coastal cities has grown exponentially, and the potential for ongoing growth is attractive to Taiwanese and other investors (Chan, 2008:17). In this context, Taiwanese companies and performers have sold music, movies and television programs, particularly dramas, and they have become extremely popular in the mainland (Chan, 2008:20). Like Hong Kong culture, mainland Chinese audiences have found Taiwanese culture to be fresh, exciting, and mysterious as it is both Western/foreign and 'Chinese'. Taiwanese media and popular music culture as broadcast on television in mainland China may have offered PRC citizens a chance to experience a difference sense of Chineseness to programs produced by party-state broadcasters, as the programs merge elements of a language they understand with different cultural production values.

As Hong (1996) notes, mainland television stations prefer to purchase Taiwanese programs because they are cheaper than elsewhere and do not require extra funds for subtitling or dubbing. Apart from the economic incentive of importing Taiwanese culture due to linguistic and cultural proximity, there is also a political motivation. From the PRC's point of view, many pop singers from Taiwan have been invited to give performances on CCTV in order to show to Taiwan and the world in an entertaining and friendly way that Taiwan is ultimately inseparable part of China. Propaganda is also a motive of the Taiwanese as it strives to impress Chinese audiences with Taiwan's affluence, high living standards, modern lifestyle, and liberal social environment. At times, the Communist government has expressed concerns about Taiwan's influence in China, deeming much of its culture 'unhealthy' and having too much sex and violence, but also because, in satisfying public desires for sophisticated content, it fears creating unreasonable expectations that are not in line with its political goals (Hong, 1996:96-103).

A limited number of period dramas made in the mainland have been popular with Taiwanese audiences (Chan, 2008:20), beginning in the 1980s with television series on classic novels (Hong, 1996:93). On the whole, however, as is the case with Hong Kong, the flow of exports has been unbalanced in favour of Taiwan with more flow of media from Taiwan to the mainland, although the gap has been closing (Chan, 2008:20; Hong, 1996:102). Taiwan only allowed direct broadcast of programs from mainland in late 1990s (Chan, 2008:20). According to a 1998 speech by CCTV's Vice-President Li Dan, CCTV-4 broadcasts in Taiwan via its agent TVBS (Li D., 1998:3). At the time it was relayed by 112 cable television companies covering 22 counties, and could be received in 2.74 million households, representing 67% of 4.1 million of Taiwan's cable households (Li D., 1998:3). In 1994, access to China's television programs (it is unclear in what form) represented a reach of just under 10% of Taiwan's total viewership (Hong, 1996:101). It is important to note that CCTV programming, along with programming from other stations in China, plays an important role in attempting to orient *both* domestic mainland audiences and Taiwanese audiences on how they should think about cross-strait relations and their identities as Chinese more generally.

Taiwanese Identity and Chineseness

Taiwanese identity construction is complex and multilayered. Within Taiwan there has been some hostility between the native 'Taiwanese' population (*benshengren*) who emigrated from the mainland to Taiwan in waves of emigration over the past four centuries (comprising *Hoklo* and *Hakka* people who largely migrated from southern Fujian and Guangdong provinces in China) and the 'mainlanders' (*waishengren*, lit: people of other provinces) who were bureaucrats, soldiers and followers of the Nationalist Party who migrated more recently in the 1940s and 1950s (Huang S., 2010:15). These elites from the mainland who were actually minorities in Taiwan came to dominate the centre of power in Taiwan (Lee in Huang S.,

2010:15). It was this group who imposed Chinese culture and Mandarin as an official national language on the native Taiwanese, for whom it was a foreign language (Hughes, 2000:67). Nonetheless, by 1985 with only 5.7% of the population of Taiwan having been born in mainland China, and as a result of a common Mandarin education system, and other cross-cultural interactions, distinctions between the two groups had greatly eroded, (Hughes, 2000:75). The distinction between the two groups, however, remains important in the context of CCTV programming that relies on memories of elderly ‘mainlander’ Taiwanese living on the mainland with connections to families still in their ‘hometowns’ to promote the need for family reunion, and therefore cross-straits unification (see Chapter 5). Also significant are the conflicting ways in which the two sides name Taiwan’s ‘aboriginal’ population. Whilst the Taiwanese government recognizes 14 tribes, these people are incorporated into the PRC family as one of its 55 minorities under a single collective title of *Gaoshan* (lit: high mountain) nationality.

Another impact on the Taiwanese identity has come from anti-Nationalist Party, Taiwanese activists who saw Taiwan as being different from China, and having a distinct Taiwanese culture centred around Minnan (Hokkien) language and culture. These activists, who were jailed under martial law provisions for decades, saw it as a completely different entity, independent of China. Culturally-speaking, Minnan language films were extremely popular from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s, particularly among the less-educated rural population who could not speak Mandarin. Others who were dissatisfied with the government’s ‘Speak Mandarin’ policy resolved to make ‘authentic’ Taiwanese movies. The Minnan language movies, however, started to die out with new generations who were raised speaking Mandarin (Cho, 2010).

Over the years, there has been a general political acceptance on the island towards an official recognition of ‘Taiwan’ as being unique and different to China, resulting in the emphasis of a distinct ‘Taiwanese’ rather than

‘Chinese’ language and culture (Shih, 2007:36, 187-9). In this context, Minnan culture has been actively promoted in Taiwan as a point of distinguishing the ‘Taiwanese’ from the ‘Chinese’. However, Minnan culture is increasingly being used by officials and academics on both sides of the straits China, with both Taiwan are both staking claims to the culture. Officials on both sides are using it to stress a flourishing and *shared* cross-straits culture (e.g. Yan, 2008). For instance, at a national forum on Minnan culture in 2007, State Councillor Chen Zhili referred to Minnan culture as ‘an indispensable part of the Chinese culture’ and located it within the discourse of China’s ‘intangible cultural heritage’. Minnan culture was framed as a link between the mainland Chinese and the ‘six million Chinese of southern Fujian origin (who) currently live in more than 90 countries and regions around the world’ (Beijing Review, 2007). On the other hand, at an International Academic Conference on Minnan Culture in Taiwan in 2009, the Mayor of Tainan City where the conference was held emphasized Tainan as an ancient and historic city full of Minnan culture and one through which the renaissance of a great ‘Taiwanese’ culture could emerge (Business Wire, 2009).¹⁹ There are also cross-straits joint television productions in Minnan language, referred to in mainland PRC media as ‘Southern Fujian dialect’ (Fujian being the mainland province close to Taiwan). One example is the *2010 Minnan (Southern Fujian Dialect) Spring Festival Eve TV Gala*, jointly hosted by the mainland’s Xiamen Satellite TV Station and the Taiwanese China Television Ltd (CTV) and held in Xiamen, the capital of Fujian province (English.news.cn, 2010).

Japanese Influence

In PRC history, Japanese colonialism is presented as an unforgettable period of national humiliation, and cultural exchanges between the PRC and Japan on television can continue to be tense (as I show in Chapter 6). However, Taiwanese memories of Japanese imperialism have been quite different. In

¹⁹ Tainan was the state capital at the time when Koxinga (Cheng Cheng-kung/Zheng Chengong) left Quemoy (Kinmen) on the mainland to Tainan to expel the Dutch East Asia Company in 1662.

the last decade of Japan's fifty-year rule over Taiwan, Japan attempted to cultivate imperial subjects and Taiwan was assimilated into Greater Japan. Japanese became the official language and many people adopted Japanese names (Lee and Huang, 2002:108; Hughes, 2000:65; Ching in Huang S., 2010:16-17). Significantly, the Chinese government practically recognized Taiwan as Japanese territory in the 1930s, operating a consulate there and referring to the people who lived on the island as Japanese citizens (Kirby, 2005:110). During the Second World War, many Taiwanese men fought for Japan against China, then the ROC run by the Nationalist Party who eventually came to occupy the island in 1945. For many older residents, the era of Japanese occupation is seen as a 'golden age', for it was a time when law and order was upheld, and when economic and social infrastructure as well as the seeds of a democracy movement were developed (Hughes, 2000:64-66).

Japanese influence on Taiwanese culture and identity (and subsequently on China's culture via Taiwanese influences) continues to this day through the global market economy, with Taiwan being one of the keenest consumers of Japanese cultural products. Japanese-Taiwanese cultural hybridization also has a strong influence on local Taiwanese cultural endeavours, including television productions, which have in turn become popular in the mainland (Chan, 2008:29, 31). The PRC's complex feelings about Japan, and its limited tolerance for the warm feelings Taiwan has for Japan was shown in the controversy raised over the hit Taiwanese film *Cape No.7* (*Haijiao Qihao*), described as being unrealistic due to the fact that a Chinese woman falls in love with a Japanese man. The film was banned in the mainland for some time before been given a screening permit in January 2009.²⁰ In his online blog, Taiwan specialist Mark Harrison notes that in November 2008, Chen Yunlin, a mainland Chinese visiting representative to Taiwan

²⁰ Cape No.7 Gets Green Light in Mainland China, 15 January 2009: <http://www.screendaily.com/sen-lun-yu/116.contributor>. Bloggers have suggested it was because the film allowed for the possibility of love between Taiwanese and Japanese, and that this may go against China's patriotic education campaigns. For example see <http://justrecently.wordpress.com/2008/12/07/taiwanese-movie-cape-no-7-colonial-brainwashing/>.

reportedly described the film as expressing the legacy of ‘colonial brainwashing’ of the Taiwanese by Japan, while Chinese bloggers ‘offered ferocious vitriol and condemnation of the film and of Taiwanese attitudes to Japan generally’.²¹ The media is an important place where the ‘Chinese identity’ can be negotiated against and alongside other national identities, and the very presence of Taiwanese culture on mainland Chinese television can give rise to questions of who belongs to the Chinese nation, given that Taiwanese culture is built on a historical experience of cross-cultural relations with Japan that differs to that of the mainland.

Overseas Chinese

While Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are all claimed by the PRC through the politics of geography and symbolism, overseas Chinese living in areas beyond the PRC’s direct control are often claimed symbolically to belong to a global Chinese collective. Overseas Chinese are far from a single monolithic group, having left China at different historical junctures, and having dispersed and integrated into different areas around the world with shifting and multiple cultures. Large numbers of Chinese settled in the Southeast Asian region in colonial times and remain in Southeast Asian. Many of these people re-migrated to Western countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia in the 1970s as a result of changing immigration policies in Western nations, more efficient transport, improved telecommunications technology, as well as anti-Chinese discrimination in the newly constructed post-colonial nations (e.g. Indonesia and Malaysia). The Southeast Asian diasporic Chinese were joined in Western nations by Chinese from Taiwan who feared the possibility of mainland military intervention, and later by (often more affluent) Hong Kong people in the late 1980s and early 1990s who perceived political uncertainties with the imminent return of Hong Kong to the PRC (Ma L., 2003:1-2).

²¹ M. Harrison ‘Cape No.7 and China-Taiwan Relations’, Australian Taiwan Studies Network (online blog), 17 December 2008. Available at: <http://mharrison.wordpress.com/2008/12/17/cape-no7-and-china-taiwan-relations/>

During the 1980s, as part of its open door policy, the PRC government began to send thousands of nationals overseas on scholarships to study mainly postgraduate degrees and large numbers of students stayed on. Following the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989, the USA, Canada, Australia and other countries offered asylum to students after a period of strategic lobbying by students who were at the centre of anti-CCP dissident politics (Gao J., 2009:131-2; Nyíri *et al.*, 2010:52). Continuing economic prosperity in China, as well as relative ease of exit from China and global business opportunities have opened the way for a wave of migration largely from China's coastal cities to Western countries, with migrants' often first gaining entry on student visas and staying on.²² Chinese students arriving in global cities in the post-Tiananmen era have come at younger ages to study at undergraduate and high school levels, and have the freedom and financial ability to support themselves to study abroad. Unlike the previous generation of students, many contemporary overseas Chinese students are willing to defend China, a country that (despite its problems) has provided them with a good early education and the chance to grow up in a relatively prosperous and increasingly pluralistic society thanks to government reforms (Nyíri *et al.*, 2010:51).

As China's international prestige has grown alongside its economic prosperity, large numbers of Chinese migrants have returned to mainland China to invest as well as visit their ancestral land. Vast amounts of Chinese overseas capital have flowed into China with a significant impact on the Chinese economy. Many overseas Chinese today are spatially mobile and travel frequently between China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, and their adopted countries. Many have developed cosmopolitan outlooks and multiple identities 'each with a mix of ethnic, cultural, economic and political attributes' to flexibly adapt to different contexts (Ma L., 2003:31-36).

²² According to research by the International Organization for Migration, only 30% of students from China studying in Europe ever return home (Omelaniuk, 2005:190,194).

Chinese-language media from the PRC and across the world, including local newspapers, satellite television, and the Internet, plays an important role in promoting the myth of an essential Chinese identity that crosses political, geographical, and generational boundaries. Changes occurring in the Chinese ‘homeland’ as well as in the countries where they chose to settle have reshaped overseas Chinese peoples’ sense of themselves, with many increasingly conscious of their Chinese identity (Ma L., 2003:36-7). Media reaching out to overseas Chinese is backed by organizations with competing interests. The CCP has been active in its attempts to promote its official state version of Chinese identity to overseas Chinese, and has been noted as having had a strong impact on many overseas Chinese people’s continuing sense of being Chinese as they live amongst non-Chinese (Wu D., 1991:160, 177). CCTV broadcasts through satellite television and the Internet have been a crucial part of the CCP’s overall strategy of drawing overseas Chinese into the PRC-sanctioned picture of global Chineseness (Sun, 2002; 2010b). PRC media, however, increasingly clashes with such competitors as Taiwan-oriented and Falun Gong-backed media, such as the New York-based New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDTV). On Sydney’s community television station TVS, for instance, viewers can watch ‘China Today’, a repackaged program focused on music-entertainment performances by Hunan TV with some English subtitles, and they can watch a Sydney-based NTDTV cultural program called ‘Hello Australia’ encouraging Chinese-speaking migrants to get ‘out and about in our beautiful city’ (TVS, 2010).

As I will show, by focusing on Chinese ‘students’ and ‘entrepreneurs’ living overseas there is often an unexpressed implication that any Chinese person depicted in the programs is a Chinese national who will maintain close links with the PRC state, and who will eventually return ‘home’ after gaining knowledge and experience overseas. Any mention of Chinese having foreign citizenship, or dual allegiances, is avoided in CCTV’s music-entertainment programs. The absence of rhetoric that serves to distinguish between Chinese and foreign nationals of Chinese ethnicity is politically telling. In CCTV productions, overseas Chinese are not expected to support

socialism but they are expected to support national reunification, be patriotic, and love the motherland (see Guo Y., 2004:44-5).

1.3 Chinese by Civilization and Attraction

Civilizing and Absorbing the Foreign ‘Other’

As China has grown more powerful and asserted itself on the international stage, the old notion of the Middle Kingdom appears to be returning to fashion. The ‘barbarians’ these days comprise of foreign others, particularly Westerners, who are increasingly attracted to China and its mesmerizing civilization. With China re-asserting itself as civilized centre of the world, it has become possible again for outside others to become civilized (i.e. Chinese) through acculturation into the Chinese ways (Sun, 1996:35). The return of this view has led a re-emergence of the projection of China and Chinese culture as a superior, but not entirely racially exclusive, civilization.

Chineseness through sinicization is somewhat achievable (Erwin, 1999:250), even though it may always be in the process of becoming. As China regains its confidence, this time in the global system of nations, the middle-kingdom outlook seems to be strengthening in China’s televisual portrayal of friendly foreigners. If foreigners (attempt to) perform as Chinese (i.e. in politically and culturally appropriate ways), they will be accepted onto the programs. Foreigners’ demonstration of their ‘love’ for China on television provides a chance for China to regain its pride as the Middle Kingdom capable of attracting foreigners from around the world to its soil.

In contemporary times, the term ‘foreigners’ (*waiguoren*), is most often used to refer to people from other countries who are not ethnically Chinese. In common usage, as Kathleen Erwin explains, the definition often narrows to refer specifically to people of European descent, who are assumed to

speak English, and to have ‘blue eyes, prominent noses, and blonde hair’ (1999:245). Such foreigners were often believed to be more ‘open’ (*kaifang*), romantic, sexually licentious, modern, and wealthy than Chinese (Erwin, 1999:245), but this attitude is rapidly changing, particularly for wealthy Chinese in cosmopolitan cities. In my analysis of foreigners on CCTV programs, I also include Russians, who are ambiguously placed between the Western-Chinese divide, Asians such as South Koreans and Japanese, and African performers. While they may be perceived somewhat differently, due to cultural and historical circumstances, I show that a picture of foreigners’ attraction to China applies to all groups. Furthermore, bonds between particularly South Korean and Japanese nationals are largely formed through contemporary popular culture.

Erwin (1999:244-7) also distinguishes between the ‘authentic’ foreigner who is unable to speak comprehensible Chinese, and the much less common *Zhongguo tong* – ‘China expert’/‘old China hand’ – a Sinicized foreigner who is admired for having mastered Chinese customs and language. She argues that the *Zhongguo tong* validates essential aspects of Chinese culture in connection to the West by indicating foreigners’ respect and appreciation for certain Chinese characteristics. They may never be perfect Chinese – that is, they may make cultural ‘mistakes’ in conduct or language – but they are likable, and, at least on CCTV, ideologically in line with the CCP. In this study, I argue that the ‘China expert’, or more broadly, foreigners who are shown to be immersing themselves in Chinese language and culture, has become a major trope for proving to audiences China’s success on a global scale. In recent years, along with China’s rising confidence, China’s media has also increasingly asserted its pride in the fact that foreigners are fluently speaking their Chinese language and learning Chinese arts. It is in China’s interest to highlight to the common viewer that the average foreigner, not just the odd ‘expert’, is engaged with and loves China.

In order to maintain a sense of a unique Chinese culture in the face of globalization, Western popular culture continues to be restricted in China,

and has not been able to enter to the same extent as Taiwanese and Hong Kong culture. There are practical as well as political reasons behind this limitation of certain outside influences. As Hong (1996:98) notes, popular culture from Europe, the UK and the USA have been less welcome in China due to differences in language, taste, habits, and heritage, as well as more stringent political opposition through censorship. Elements of 'Westernness', however, have entered China *via* Hong Kong and Taiwan, and via cultural products from other East Asian nations, especially Japan and Korea, who have absorbed and adapted Western popular culture in their own ways (e.g. see Monty, 2010:127 on Japanese indigenization of Western pop music). Korean and Japanese cultural products, whilst still 'foreign', are also perceived to have greater 'cultural proximity' to Chinese culture than Western products (Iwabuchi in Chua, 2008:83).

However, despite restrictions, notions of modernity built on aspects of Western culture and lifestyle have been popular themes in Chinese media productions and have been used to promote a range of political, social, and economic motivations. For instance, Xiaomei Chen (2002:33-7) explains that intellectuals who made the 1988 television series 'River Elegy' (*He Shang*) glamorized Western society in a way that enabled a critique of the oppressive Chinese political regime, and that 'to a large extent the success of *He Shang* can be attributed to its fundamental challenge to the Chinese conventional value system and worldview in the People's Republic'. The fact that it was shown on television at all in a strictly censored system reflects a period of political instability in China and power struggle within the ranks of the top leadership, which culminated in the mass rallies and dispersion of protestors in Tiananmen Square the following year. CCTV directors and ministers in charge of broadcasting could have vetoed the series or suggested changes to the script, but they themselves 'may have had their accounts to settle with the ruling ideology' or 'may have that deliberately looked other way...because they wanted this counter-discourse to appear' (Chen, 2002:37-8).

Erwin, on the other hand, has strongly argued that television dramas in the 1990s, including the well-known ‘A Beijinger in New York’ (*Beijing ren zai niu yue*), have offered a different kind of nationalistic ideology by attempting to Sinicize the West and portray transnational Chinese male dominance through stories about foreign women being drawn to China following their strong and attractive Chinese male partners. In these programs, the Chinese partner somehow maintains his essential Chineseness despite having an American wife and overseas education, while the foreign wife is seen in the process of becoming Chinese. Even the foreign/American child is shown to become completely ‘Chinese’, in effect transforming the future of America into one that suits China’s aims (Erwin, 1999:238-253). What Erwin’s study suggests is that the threat of the loss of Chinese cultural identity through intercultural/international marriage is mitigated through television dramas produced by Han males by emphasizing that an essential Chineseness remains stoic and unchanged through a process of globalization, while weaker ethnicities, cultures, and genders are somehow absorbed by a powerful and superior male Han Chinese culture. Thus, the old cultural civilization notion is reinforced in that, while Chinese are never acculturated into other cultures, barbarians can become (or almost become) civilized/Chinese.

Friendship and Love for China

The discourse of ‘foreign friends’ (*waiguo pengyou*) has long been an integral part of the ideology of the CCP, and it offers another angle through which to view the politics of the construction of Chinese national identity. Brady (2002b:307-8, 317) defines ‘foreign friends’ as those ‘non-critical’ foreigners, with the ‘power and influence to assist China’, and who stand in opposition to those who openly criticize China. The term and the discourse of friendship are frequently used in CCTV and continue to play important roles in music-entertainment programming. Based on her research on internal foreign affairs’ documents related to procedures for ‘correctly’ dealing with foreigners, Brady (2000:944; 2002b:307) is highly critical of

the term ‘foreign friends’ on the basis that the discourse of friendliness is a deliberate strategy to control and manage foreigners’ presence and activities in China. Rather than representing genuine intimate personal relations, ‘foreign friends’ are part of the construction of a ‘strategic relationship’, aimed at ‘neutraliz[ing] opposition’ and ‘re-order[ing] reality’ (Brady, 2000:944; 2002b:307). China specialist Geremie Barmé (2008) has also noted that the word ‘friendship’ (*youyi*) has been ‘a cornerstone of China’s post-1949 diplomacy’ with Mao Zedong declaring: ‘The first and foremost question of the revolution is: who is our friend and who is our foe.’

On his first trip to China as Australian Prime Minister in April 2008, Kevin Rudd, who is unique among the Western leaders for speaking fluent Chinese, attempted to ‘rewrite the rules of engagement’ (Barmé, 2008) by drawing on the Chinese concept of a ‘true/critical friend’ (*zhengyou*) when he made a speech to an audience at China’s most prestigious tertiary institution, Peking University. After recognizing China’s sovereignty over Tibet, Rudd said it was ‘necessary to recognise there are significant human rights problem in Tibet’ and argued the need to ‘avoid violence and find a solution through dialogue’. He then said he would ‘have a straightforward discussion with China’s leaders on this’. Rudd ended the speech with the following points on friendship:

A strong relationship, and a true friendship, are built on the ability to engage in direct, frank and ongoing dialogue about our fundamental interests and future vision...A true friend is one who can be a ‘zhengyou’, that is a partner who sees beyond immediate benefit to the broader and firm basis for continuing, profound and sincere friendship. In other words, a true friendship which ‘offers unflinching advice and counsels restraint’ to engage in principled dialogue about matters of contention. It is the kind of friendship that I know is treasured in China’s political tradition. It is the kind of friendship that I also offer China today (Rudd, 2008).

Rudd gained significant praise from a number of academics for standing up to the Chinese leaders who have long used the concept of friendship for ‘little more than an effective tool for emotional blackmail and enforced complicity’ (Barmé, 2008). According to Barmé, the official newsagency Xinhua also reported that ‘eyes lit up’ in the audience at Peking University when Rudd used the expression of the *zhengyou*. However, most official Chinese media enthusiastically embraced Rudd’s offering of ‘true friendship’, while overlooking his criticism issues of human rights and the environment and human rights (Vestergaard, 2008). Rudd’s attempt to use the Chinese government’s own ideology against them was, however, not appreciated by the Chinese leadership. As Ching (2010) reports, a few days after his talk, President Hu met with Rudd and rejected the idea that human rights violations were occurring in Tibet, effectively shutting off the conversation on the issue. Nonetheless, Rudd has consistently reinforced the need ‘to be able to speak to the government of China, its media and its peoples in a frank manner’ (Callick, 2010).

While foreign politicians like Rudd may occasionally attempt to shift the discourse on friendship, CCTV’s music-entertainment programs, which is constructed as a friendly genre, allows basically no space for critical foreigners. The genre differs significantly from the news or hardline current affairs in which tit for tat arguments between foreign/Western and Chinese media are often seen (e.g. on issues of Tibetan independence, Internet censorship, and pollution during the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games). CCTV music-entertainment programs also offer very limited space, if any, for serious or entertaining irony or criticism of the ruling Party. In the music-entertainment genre, it is not just the naming of ‘foreign friends’ that affects the ‘reordering’ of ‘reality’ (Brady, 2000:944; 2002b:307). *No one* who appears on CCTV is outside of a complex force that is involved in a reordering of a reality in which the world presented is one of only ‘friends’ of the Chinese party-state.

The re-orderings of reality within the realm of contemporary television productions are, however, far from stable and uncontested. The term ‘foreign friends’ may be interpreted in both political and mundane ways. In highly charged political contexts the term continues to be a deliberate and potent choice of word. Yet in many everyday *mainstream* contexts the term ‘foreign friends’, in China English and its equivalent in Chinese (*waiguo pengyou*) has simply become a synonym for ‘foreigner’ in its benign form.²³ Deciding where CCTV music-entertainment programs stand on this continuum between everydayness and the highly political is extremely complex as CCTV itself now acts as both the mouthpiece of the party-state and as the mouthpiece of mainstream, commercial discourse.

Further, the politicized discourse of friendship is not only applied to foreigners. It is also used in reference to ‘Chinese’ people, including overseas Chinese (e.g. *huaren pengyoumen*),²⁴ local Chinese audiences in particular cities or towns in China where the roaming show is located (e.g. *Lishui pengyoumen* – Lishui friends), and more generally to refer to national ‘television audiences’ (*dianshiji qian de guangzhong pengyoumen*, lit: audience friends in front of television sets). All these types of ‘friends’ are certainly ‘political’ constructions, but noting the extension of the ‘friendship’ frame significantly alters the understanding of the term. The notion of ‘friends’ as an ideological, labelled identity, just as for other terms like ‘Chinese nationality’ and ‘minority nationalities’, is not fixed, but shifting and ambiguous. I do not deny the politics of language in the use of the word ‘friendship’, but I argue that the politics in the context of contemporary CCTV music-entertainment programming is much more

²³ I, like Brady, found myself interpreting the term ‘foreign friends’ in a negative ideological frame until I found my students at a university in southwest China used the term in what seemed to be in an entirely innocent way. When I tried to tell them how the term may be perceived by foreigners as not entirely genuine, they seemed confused. Isn’t ‘friendship’ a good word?

²⁴ For instance, when popular male mainland singer, Liu Huan walked on stage in Vancouver for *The Same Song* program, he was told by the host that all those cheering in the audience in front of him were his ‘friends’ (*pengyou*), and was asked by the host to give his new year wishes to ‘all the overseas Chinese friends’ (*suoyou de huaren pengyoumen*). Clip available at: <http://v.ku6.com/show/pbJ9wuYYEg9fylej.html> (uploaded on 24 July 2008).

complex than the singular pre-meditated party-state discourse implied in Brady's study.²⁵ It is significant, however, that foreigners are most often 'friends' whereas overseas Chinese (*huaren*) are more evoked through the metaphor of 'family' and 'friends'.

Perhaps most significant in terms of party-state influence, is the apparent shift in discourse from an emphasis on expressing not only 'friendship' towards or from foreigners, but also of foreigners' expression of 'love' for China. This shift, which I highlight in this study, may well reflect a change in attitude towards foreign relations of the current Hu-Wen administration who have assumed power since late 2003, and who have established governance on the basis of the rhetoric of a 'harmonious society'. At a global level, especially in the lead up to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, the domestic promotion of a 'harmonious society' has been matched with the rhetoric of a 'harmonious world' (Zhang X., 2010:50). In this frame, as I will argue, foreigners and Chinese are imagined as part of the same 'global village' (*diqu cun*), although this 'multi-country' village is largely located in mainland China, and most often in the political centre, Beijing.

Finally, the distinction between foreign propaganda and domestic propaganda, whilst still relevant, is becoming increasingly blurred with changing communication and information technology. With foreigners shown to be interested in Chinese culture and able to speak Chinese, and with domestic programs available around the world via satellite television and the Internet, it is no longer always possible to know whether programs are made with at least the perception that both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' could be watching. Both national, inward-looking imperatives and cosmopolitan, outward-looking considerations need to be considered when producing programs for television and online audiences who could be 'Chinese' or 'foreign', and in China or anywhere around the world.

²⁵ I acknowledge the different type of data that Brady was working with, which seems to have been of a more sensitive and restricted nature. It is also from an earlier period to that dealt with in this study.

I have separated this chapter into three main types of Chineseness: a multi-ethnic sense, a sense of Chineseness that integrates members of the same imagined ethnic group around the world, and a China-centred vision of the world in which foreigners are absorbed into the culture and civilization of the Middle Kingdom. The lines between these three frames, however, are not fixed, and there are many overlaps between them. For instance, China's minority nationalities are both part of China and excluded from a Han-centred Chinese ethnicity as an internal 'other'. In addition, Taiwanese and Hong Kong culture are imagined as both 'Chinese' (us) and as 'foreign' (other), such as in relation to import laws. Furthermore, many overseas Chinese may feel little affiliation to China and would have a different understanding of 'Chineseness'. Furthermore, while 'foreigners' (especially white Westerners) are usually perceived as significantly different (if not the opposite) to Chinese in the PRC popular imagination, there is also the sense that they could become Chinese (or almost become Chinese) through absorbing Chinese culture and through their attraction to China, through the renewed idea of China being at the centre of world civilization. In addition, mixed-race identities in the form of Chinese-Western or Han-minority challenge all of these frames. These frames are emphasized not so much to stress essential differences in identity, but rather to stress the major symbolic differences that are emphasized by the party-state through popular and entertainment media, and which are put to various social and political purposes. The different sets of collective imaginings are used to highlight various forms of domestic and global solidarity and support for the legitimacy of the party-state, as I show in Chapters 4-6. However, before detailing particular instances of how music-entertainment television is being put to ideological use, it is necessary to outline the ideological background of television itself and its general political uses in China's recent history – the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2. China Central Television and the Politics of Entertainment

In order to understand the performance of national identity on CCTV music-entertainment programs, it is important to provide some background to the socio-political context in which television operates in China. Political and commercial factors effectively work to set boundaries around the types of cultural expressions that appear and can dictate and limit the variety of ways in which the nation can be played out and made ‘real’. In this chapter, I provide a detailed history of CCTV, focusing on important political and economic changes to the operation of television in the reform era. I then set out a theoretical framework for analysing entertainment television in China based on the idea of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ forms of production and propaganda, further expanded on in Chapter 3. Finally, I introduce the specific music-entertainment genre and the programs analysed in this study.

2.1 The Party, the Market, and Television Entertainment

Television in China: From the Mao-Era to the Market-Era

Television was introduced to mainland China in May 1958. It arrived in the context of cross-straits rivalry between the CCP and the Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang*) who had fled to Taiwan in 1949 after the civil war. The CCP was determined to pre-empt Taiwan by setting up the first Chinese television station in Beijing. However, Beijing TV station, the forerunner to CCTV, only began experimental broadcasts on 1 May 1958, more than a year after Taiwan succeeded in airing programs with equipment from Radio Corporation of America (Huang and Yu, 1997:565). The station was placed within a tight system of state propaganda and regarded as the ‘throat and tongue’ (*hou she*) of the Party (Zhao B., 1999:292). At the time of its

inception Beijing Television only had fifty television sets, which were used by privileged government officials, and it only broadcast to the Beijing area twice a week for 2-3 hours. Shanghai Television station began broadcasting soon after on October 1, 1958 (Huang and Yu, 1997:566-567).

In these early days, the purpose of television was to produce Party-political propaganda, education, and cultural enrichment. It was put to work alongside a spectrum of other communications platforms in an effort to persuade audiences of the importance of building of a socialist modernity with workers and peasants at the vanguard of social change. As Huang and Yu (1997:566-572) explain, the CCP considered entertainment on television to be an important form of political indoctrination. When Shanghai Television began broadcasting, 72.5% of airtime was filled with cultural and entertainment programs. The CCP realized that television stations could not broadcast only blatant political propaganda all day long otherwise it would lose audiences. In 1960, Beijing Television criticized its own broadcasts for being ‘dull’, ‘monotonous’ and ‘insipid’, and recognized the need to ‘entertain’ and cater to popular taste. With the policy of self-reliance, there were limited imports, all of which were to serve the Party’s political and ideological needs of socialist revolution and construction. News programs were exchanged mostly with socialist countries in the former Soviet Union and its satellite countries. Some programs were purchased from the UK’s VISNEWS Ltd in 1963, but were re-edited to conform to China’s political and ideological needs (Huang and Yu, 1997:571; Hong, 1998:133).

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), with the national economy on the brink of collapse, television production almost came to a complete standstill (Chang, 1989:213; Huang and Yu, 1997:567). From December 1967-1972, Beijing Television was under direct military control. With the resumption of production in 1969, the content of news bulletins was largely limited to rolling captions of Chairman Mao’s thoughts along with the music, ‘The East is Red’, whose lyrics in turn praised Chairman Mao. Eight model operas advocated by Jiang Qing, Chairman Mao’s wife and that were

designed to propagate Mao's 'revolutionary line', were almost the only approved musical performances (Huang and Yu, 1997:568; Chang, 1989:213). Television was largely used for intra-party struggles and as a political and ideological weapon to fight imperialism, revisionism, and capitalism (Hong, 1998:133; Huang and Yu, 1997:568). Television imports were banned until the 1980s unless they could expose the 'sick social system' of the West (Hong, 1998:3).

From television's inception until the late 1970s, few people had access to television. The production of television sets was also very low, with less than one million sets produced during the period between 1958 and 1976. Those able to watch television mostly accessed it in public spaces like halls rather than in private homes (Zhu and Berry, 2008:3; Lull, 1991). There was limited funding and few programs were produced, and with the economic and political ups and downs, television received limited priority (Zhao B., 1999:292; Chang, 1989:213). With limited television production and reception, major political roles were played by other broadcast media, particularly radio and the public loudspeaker system. From 1950, authorities, factories, schools, army units and public organizations at all levels set up radio transmitting stations and wired public loudspeakers that aimed to spread the one voice of the Central Communist Party to every household in China in urban and rural areas through broadcasts to school playgrounds, factories, rice paddies, and villages. From 1949-1976, the content of broadcasts was heavily controlled by one man, Chairman Mao, and concentrated on the works of Marx, Lenin, and Mao; Party decisions and current policies; mass campaigns; and recasts of People's Daily editorials (Huang and Yu, 1997:563-5). Songs and other 'entertaining' forms of travelling song and dance troupes would most likely have also played across the loudspeaker system as a way of spreading ideological messages.

It was not until the market reforms of the early 1980s that television began to play much more than a negligible role in both the party-state propaganda system and in ordinary people's lives (Zhao B., 1999:292). In 1976, Mao

Zedong, the founder and chairman of the CCP died and in 1978 his rival and successor Deng Xiaoping led the Party and China into a new era away from militant socialism and towards economic reform (Hong, 1998:2-3). With the new policy of marketization, the national economy was transformed from a planned economy to a 'socialist market economy'. By relegating state control to commercial interests, enterprises including television stations were allowed to open up to market forces, profitability, and cost imperatives (e.g. see Tay, 2009:108; Curtin, 2010:118).

The Development of CCTV in a Competitive Media Environment

CCTV itself emerged in the market reform era. On May 1, 1978, the television system underwent major structural reform and Beijing Television changed its name to China Central Television. A new organization, called Beijing Television, was inaugurated to provide a purely local service in the Beijing area, while CCTV was responsible for providing a national and capital service. CCTV quickly gained prominence and influence as China's only nationwide television network (Chang, 1989:213). Coming under the direct administration of the Ministry of Radio and Television of China (*Guojia Guangdian Bu*), it became highly authoritative as a mouthpiece for the Communist Party and as a government-owned media corporation, often representing top Chinese leadership's views on key policy and ideological issues (Pugsley and Gao, 2007:452-3). However, CCTV has not been the only player in the rapidly developing television industry. In the decades since the reforms commenced, a large number of new television stations at provincial, city and local levels, as well as cable television, have been established. Most of the provincial stations and some city stations are now available to national audiences through satellite as well as the Internet, leading to greater choice for audiences and intense competition (Hong, 1998:139). CCTV, whilst now having to compete with provincial stations,

nonetheless remains the most prominent, influential and far reaching of all China's television broadcasters. Its authoritative status can be compared to the BBC in the UK, or the ABC in Australia.

Since 1983, the authorities have dramatically reduced or terminated subsidies, and have demanded that media institutions become financially self-reliant whilst still meeting their political obligations (Fung, 2009:179; Yu, 2001:197). By the end of 1998, most urban television stations relied exclusively on advertising and third party investment to fund operations (Zhu Y., 2008:10). While there are few published statistics about how much money stations receive from the government, Zhong (2001:168) estimated in the years prior to 2001 that CCTV spent around RMB 3 billion a year on operation costs, with no more than RMB 40 million coming from government funding. On the other hand, as CCTV paid over RMB 400 million in taxes and fees to the government, it appeared to be a lucrative money-maker for the government. In this commercialized media context, CCTV, like the provincial and local stations, has had to compete for and draw on advertising dollars and investment to meet its bottom line (Tay, 2009:109; Pugsley and Gao, 2007:455; Zhao Y., 1998; Zhao B., 1999:291; Wang J., 2008:286). On the other hand, as Zhong (2001:169, 176) discovered in the case of CCTV, commercialization can even enhance Party propaganda, though 'exploit[ing] businesses by squeezing maximum advertising revenue from them' in order to cover for non-lucrative propaganda programming.

Increased competition resulted in a push for more quality programming with diverse themes, styles, and formats (Hong, 1998:139; Chan, 2008:27; Keane, 2003:90; Keane, 2004:65; Fung, 2009:182,185). CCTV has expanded rapidly to accommodate niche markets through channel branding, and currently offers twenty-five channels focused on such areas as news, finance and economics, sport, movies, TV dramas, documentaries, music-entertainment, Peking opera, children's shows, the military, and agriculture. Among these, the entertainment channel (CCTV-3), a Chinese language

international channel (CCTV-4), and a specialized music channel (CCTV-15) are the key sources of data for this study. In addition, CCTV has expanded to offer foreign language, mobile phone, and online television channels.

In the early years of reform, as Hong (1998:136, 139-140) notes, low domestic production and a vast amount of airspace resulted in television stations turning to imports to fill airtime, and attract audiences and advertising dollars, with Western programming seen as being particularly superior in quality, while being competitive in terms of cost. However, since the 1990s, the focus on Western programming has started to change with new party-state policies aimed at encouraging the production of domestic programs to compete against foreign imports both in the domestic and international markets. Under such directives, it has become popular in recent years to adopt and if necessary modify global television formats such as the *Idol* format, quiz shows, reality TV, and game shows in ways that both 'suit Chinese tastes' (Keane, 2004:65) and 'meet state agendas' (Fung, 2009:185). At least domestically, local programming has become much more competitive than before, and since the 2000s, viewers' interest in imported programming has been fading (Hong, 1998:141). Like all channels in the competitive media market, CCTV also draws on global formats in the hope of satisfying audiences, and allowing it to maintain a monopoly and keep ahead in the ratings, at the same time as adhering to and promoting party-state ideologies.

Significantly, as interest in Western television programs dropped in favour of indigenized global formats, the 1990s also saw greater importation of TV dramas from around Asia, particularly from Japan and then Korea, as well as from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Korean dramas became particularly popular from the late 1990s and seemed to escape the heavy scrutiny

imposed on other foreign programs.²⁶ Their acceptability and success are possibly due to the relatively cheap price of these imports, as well as the family values they presented, their politically neutral favour, and cultural proximity, particularly where elements of Chineseness (e.g. Han characters, herbal medicine, acupuncture) in Korean culture were acknowledged (Leung, 2008:64-65).

The new party-state policies of modernization, decentralization, open-door internationalization, commercialization and marketization have meant that the ideologies of Marxism/Communism have faded and become less intrusive, and the totalizing effect of the state has been reduced (Hong, 1998:134, 136; Tay, 2009:108). Changes in the structure of the media have opened up space for greater creativity and experimentation, especially at the local and provincial level where stations have greater autonomy and are more detached from the central government (Ma E., 2000b:22, 26, 29). However, while offering increased space for expression compared to the past, all television in China continues to come under tight state control. The State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) comes under the CCP Central Propaganda Department, and television still operates as an organ of the state, tightly bound to politics and ideology. In principle, television is still involved in pursuing the propaganda policy of the day and attempts to mould audience's attitudes and beliefs in line with the Party's political and ideological guidelines. Television remains one of the most controlled forms in China, and CCTV as the only *national* level television network is especially closely censored and mandated to operate as a mouthpiece of the Party and weapon of the state (Fung, 2009:179; Hong, 1998:134, 138; Ma E., 2000b:22-3). The state can punish any rebellious media workers and media organizations by direct order, and remains in complete political control (Ma E., 2000b:27-8). In addition, as the entire nation (including the government and the media) is subjected to CCP leadership, there are no legal mechanisms to safeguard the press from

²⁶ Ironically, Chinese broadcasters have had to buy Korean dramas through Taiwan television companies because local stations are not allowed to approach foreign distributors directly (Leung, L., 2008:64).

official intervention (Yu, 2001:196). Thus, while the Party may have loosened its grip financially, and allows for more diverse and lively forms of programming compared to the past, it still closely supervises and retains monopoly power over television content (Tay, 2009:108; Curtin, 2010:118; Hong, 1998:134, 141; Yu, 2001:199).

The most substantial changes in China's television system have mainly been in relation to institutional structure and operation (Hong, 1998:137). Since the 2000s, the method of control has also shifted steadily from a rigid totalitarian mode of state control towards a state-media-market-society negotiation model. With this model, the Chinese party-state is still monopolizing the country's political power, but it is 'no longer simply a one-power game'. Rather, 'control' is often forced to find its way through negotiation, through responding to criticism, public reactions and pressure from society – domestic and international (Huang, 2007:405-6). New ideas, knowledge, and technologies are generated through interdependent relationships between central government committees and scholars, business professionals, and international scholar consultants rather than implemented in a top-down fashion (Keane, 2007:5-6). Xiaoling Zhang (2011b) has referred to this shift as a move away from a propaganda model to one of hegemony. In this hegemonic model, as both the state and media system adapt to new political, social and technological changes, the media are being used as a way to build consensus and persuade audiences of the party-state's ongoing legitimacy. The more empowered and autonomous the media are perceived to be from the party-state's political apparatus, the more convincing they will be in justifying the political legitimacy of the CCP and as a provider of messages of political ideology.

Another standard understanding of current practice is that commerce and politics are working together in a fairly cozy relationship to produce programs that will satisfy the censors, attract audiences, and maximize profits (e.g. Huang 2007:405; Tay, 2009:111; Zhao B., 1999:303; Zhao, Y., 1998:2; Zhong, 2001:168). Operating under Party and market logic (Sun,

2001a:40), a number of scholars have argued that contemporary Chinese television lives a 'double life' as a mouthpiece and a money-spinner as it seeks to maintain competitiveness in the media market by serving both the 'Party line' and the economic 'bottom line' (Zhao B., 1999:291; Pugsley and Gao, 2007:454-5). In order to secure both state and commercial support, all media now need to protect and promote the interests of sponsoring government units and large companies (Ma E., 2000b:27). The market economy as practiced in China within the one-party state system is seen as 'a comfortable and functioning relationship between monopoly politics and monopoly markets' (Brady, 2006:59). Lu Xinyu (2009:119) even goes so far as to say that 'state nationalism has to be supported by the market' and 'ideology's worth must be measured in cash'. Importantly, all popular media gain from 'convergence' with the Party line (Sun, 2001a:40) and 'monopoly on and pursuit of ideological discourses can be transformed directly into control of the market' (Lu, 2009:119). This includes the foreign media who, while unable to own Chinese media enterprises, are able to negotiate co-productions, investments, co-ownerships, and direct productions (Tay, 2009:109). Like domestic companies, Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Western and other transnational companies must also meet political obligations in order to create 'culturally appropriate' programming (Fung, 2008a:95). This notion of negotiation between political and commercial players, as well as intellectuals who include cultural nationalists (discussed in the introduction and Chapter 1), and not just a single party-state political monopoly, is vital background to this study on CCTV's music-entertainment programming where the results of such negotiations are evident.

Globalizing CCTV – A Hard Push for a 'Softer' National Image

Television also plays an important role in the party-state's attempt to reach out to overseas Chinese and non-Chinese global audiences. The party-state has embarked on a new direction in actively promoting a positive image of

itself to global audiences. The idea of ‘soft power’, coined by Joseph Nye²⁷ to describe the ability to attract and influence others through mobilizing cultural resources rather than through the use of military threats or economic coercion, has come into vogue within the Party. The Chinese party-state has adopted this term for its own purposes and ambitions to increase its cultural influence in both developed and developing countries (Chu, 2008:202-3; Sun 2010a:55). While international propaganda has long been part of the PRC’s overall propaganda system, with different approaches for internal and external audiences, the precise nature of the communication has changed considerably. Under Deng Xiaoping, the policy was to keep a low foreign profile, but since Hu Jintao’s ascendancy to power, China has become much more proactive.²⁸ The party-state has actively exploited innovations in information and communication technologies to reconstruct its national image and to improve the effectiveness of its propaganda both locally and overseas (Zhang X., 2010:43-44; Sun, 2010b:126). At the same time as promoting particular political and ideological views about China, it has attempted to boost its economic competitiveness on a global scale through transnational capital and foreign trade in cultural products such as film and satellite television packages (Chu, 2008:203; Sun, 2010b:129).

In order to make the image of China and its culture more attractive to both overseas Chinese and non-Chinese foreigners, it has engaged in such cultural exchange activities as staging large-scale and grassroots exhibitions and performances overseas; sponsoring overseas students to study in China, such as through the Confucius Institutes; financing Chinese language programs abroad; and sending doctors and teachers abroad (Zhang X., 2010:42; Chu, 2008:203; Sun, 2010b:128). The Chinese government has also made ambitious efforts to increase China’s ‘communication capacity’,

²⁷ Nye has described and popularized his idea of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ power at numerous public lectures and books, including *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), and a lecture at The Center for Public Leadership, Harvard University (Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-g_zIP0emE4&feature=related).

²⁸ Hu Jintao assumed presidency of the PRC in March 2003 and became Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the CCP in September 2004.

using the latest technology to quickly reach as many people as possible across the greatest distances (Sun, 2010a:57, 59). Its aim is to ‘air China’s views’ and show the world China’s ‘vitality and glamour’ in what is considered to be ‘China’s century’ (Zhang X., 2010:42; Chu, 2008:204).

China’s media activities are focused on promoting a softer, positive image of China largely in order to counter negative, hardened images of the ‘rogue, Communist regime’ often presented in the Western media (Sun, 2010a:58-9,68). Following the June 4 crackdown in 1989, China was criticized for its lack of human rights and democracy, and from the early 1990s, the Central Propaganda Office (also known as the Information Office of the State Council) started to actively promote a favourable image of China through overseas activities to counter this negative image. It continued to build its image in the 2000s to highlight its progressiveness, competency, and emergence as a great, but ‘soft’ and non-threatening, power. In 2002, the CCP Congress proposed the concept of ‘peaceful rise’, which has since fallen into disuse and has been replaced with ‘peaceful development’ (*hexie fazhan*), as part of its attempt to soften its global image as an aggressive rising power (Zhang X., 2010:44, 47; Shambaugh, 2010).

An enormous amount of money and effort have been pumped into China’s media industries to further this overseas agenda. CCTV, Xinhua News Agency, and the *People’s Daily* have received up to RMB 15 billion (US\$2.19 billion) respectively for ambitious schemes geared towards enhancing China’s international influence and image. China Radio International (CRI) has also seen a massive global expansion in recent years. The ‘Go Global’ project, which has been managed and planned by SARFT, has pushed out multi-language satellite channels and websites aimed at promoting China’s perspectives and voices. In 2004, the Great Wall TV Platform, which is centrally managed and coordinated by CCTV, was launched in North America with the aim of enlarging and enhancing China’s media penetration into the world media market. It now offers television packages that include CCTV and mostly mainland-based provincial satellite

channels for a direct-to-home satellite service in the USA, Europe, Canada, Asia, and Africa, and Latin America (Zhang X., 2010:42-50; Sun, 2010a:59-61; Sun, 2010b:127).

CCTV is charged with playing a leading role in attempting to present a positive image of China to the world. CCTV International, which includes its English channels and International Mandarin language channel, claims to cover 98% of the world's landmass and have over 45 million subscribers outside of China, although this figure may include a substantial number of people who subscribe to satellite and cable packages which happen to include CCTV rather than as result of an active choice to subscribe to CCTV. Originally, CCTV International targeted overseas Chinese, but in recent years has aimed to attract mainstream audiences in the USA and Europe as well (Zhang X., 2010:45). The International Mandarin-language channel (CCTV-4) began broadcasting for overseas Chinese in 1992 and currently has broadcasts specifically catering to the Asian, European, and American regions. A CCTV International 24 hour English channel was launched in 2000 and was separated into the English-language CCTV-News and CCTV9 Documentary (English channel) in 2011. In addition, a Spanish and French channel (CCTV E&F) was launched 2004 and started to run separately in 2008; CCTV Arabic and CCTV Russian were launched in 2009; and CCTV Portuguese is also being formed (Zhang X., 2010:45, 49). The aim is to broadcast a 'positive image' of China via as many international channels and in as many languages as possible, even if international viewers are questioning the credibility of the party-state-controlled news outlet (Twizell, 2011).

The state has also actively used the Internet, which inaugurated in China in 1994, to help spread party-state messages to both domestic and international audiences. By 1995, news media, publications, radio and television stations already started their own websites, and in 2001 government-controlled news websites were developed and launched. By 1997, sites were specifically created in various languages for overseas publicity in order to project

China's voice in mainstream Western society (Zhang X., 2010:44-5). China Network Television (CNTV), a national web-based broadcaster was launched on December 28, 2009 with the aim of becoming an 'authoritative' and 'world-class online TV broadcaster' (CNTV Profile, 2010). The comprehensive site boasts twenty-five CCTV channels,²⁹ as well as all provincial and many of the city channels. It includes channels in foreign and minority languages, as well as specially produced online channels produced through user feedback and netizen contributions. A range of formats are offered, including live video, video-on-demand, file upload, search and videocast services aiming to appeal broadly as a source of public information and entertainment. CNTV reproduces, reprocesses and fragments traditional TV programming resources, produces new programs specifically for the Internet, and claims to prioritize user feedback and incorporate netizens in the process of production (CNTV Profile, 2010). Similar to the Olympic slogan 'One World, One Dream', the English language slogan for CNTV.com/CCTV.com is 'One Click, One World' (*Shiting Zhongguo, Hudong shijie*, lit: Audiovisual China, Interactive World) (www.CNTV.cn) highlighting a desire to unify a global public through innovative media practices.

In stressing the interactive nature of its programming, CNTV is potentially able to make the television programs *seem* more democratic, in order to highlight the 'openness' of the party-state and its media. Producers seem to have realized that one of the biggest complaints from audiences about the media in China is that it gives audiences too few opportunities to air their own voices and opinions (including criticisms), making programming seem distant to their own daily realities. There is a general consensus that local broadcasters have done a better job of innovative and enlivening formats that are 'closer to the lives' of audiences, while central broadcasting stations have tended to remain more formal, serious, and elitist in tone (Yu, 2001:200, 204, 215). These latest attempts, which in 2011 included CCTV's

²⁹ See CCTV website <http://www.cntv.cn/index.shtml> (accessed 20 December 2011).

first *Internet Spring Festival Gala* (see Zhang N., 2011) appear to show CCTV's recognition of the need to address this issue.

In recent entertainment programming, for instance, the CCTV3 program called *I want to appear in the Spring Festival Gala* (*Wo yao shang Chun wan*) (2011, Episode 2, CNTV), featured the 'ordinary' performers competing for a place on the actual *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*. It was promoted to domestic, overseas Chinese, and non-Chinese audiences via Chinese and English language television broadcasts, online videos, and online articles. In one episode that was broadcast on television and was downloadable from the Internet, host Dong Qing made a point of emphasizing that it is not what the directors want but what 'you' want. She pointed to the studio audiences, but also implied the 'ordinary' audiences at home who could vote for their preferred performer by SMS. Despite attempting to engage audiences, those visible on-screen looked rather unmoved and their voices were not directly sought. On the other hand, the opinions of directors and CCTV professionals were sought for each act. The production design therefore highlighted an attempt to appear interactive without relinquishing any control over content. Zhong (1998:93-7) has also argued that studio/mock audiences, which are a new practice in the post-Mao era, are included to 'make television seem more relevant to the life of common people'. However, in actual productions, studio audiences are mostly sidelined with little camera exposure or opportunity to interact, and are presented as passive, voice-less decorations, who are 'spoken to' by all knowing hosts. This study offers similar conclusions, and argues that many CCTV programs are clearly *attempting* to use certain techniques to give the impression that they are actively involving audiences, a 'fact' that can be marketed to both domestic and international audiences, but there are continuing and obvious political limitations in program design and content selection.

While analysis of the multiplatform nature of contemporary propaganda is not specifically the focus of this study, it is important to understand that the

new media and broadcast television formats are working together to attempt to construct a national ‘co-presence’ (Turner in Turner and Tay, 2009:52) amongst various ‘classes’ of domestic and overseas Chinese, and in a way that also attempts to draw in non-Chinese foreigners to the coverage, despite limited (or at best ‘mixed’) success in actually doing so. As Zhang (2010:43-50) and Sun (2010a:57-69) explain, while China has been successful in establishing a vast global coverage of its media, it actually continues to have low penetration into overseas markets in what is a very crowded global sphere with competitors who include the BBC, CNN, Al-Jazeera, and France-24. In addition, CCTV suffers from a crisis of credibility. Under the constraints of the party-state, setting up channels may be easy, but it is much harder to achieve widespread appeal, particularly where Western audiences may have profoundly different cultural and political expectations. Both Sun and Zhang argue that with a lack of an oppositional style of politics, and emphasis on promoting positive news in line with views supported by China’s political leaders, it may be impossible for the Chinese media to present itself consistently as open, transparent and objective. Many overseas audiences would find it very difficult to accept the message of a harmonious world, for instance, when the media is still preaching respect for Chinese authorities. China’s international push may thus continue to be seen by global audiences as ‘coercive’ rather than ‘soft’.³⁰

Regardless of how successful these ambitious plans actually are, it is the kinds of national images that CCTV projects through its programming that is of prime interest to this study. My focus is on CCTV’s attempts to project images of China in both hard-line and softened ways to domestic, overseas Chinese, and foreign audiences in an era where much content is being developed with both domestic and global audiences in mind.

³⁰ According to a study by the Lowy Institute in Australia (Hanson, 2010), negative perceptions towards China are high. Large numbers of Australians polled in 2010 were concerned over China’s human rights and did not believe the Australian government was doing enough to pressure China (66%), believed China was aiming to dominate Asia (69%), and thought of China as a military threat (46%). On a global scale, drawing on international polling, David Shambaugh (2010) argues that there has been a decline in China’s global image since 2007.

CCTV and the Politics of Depoliticization

As noted in the introduction in relation to the use of ‘indoctrainment’ (Sun, 2009:64), the use of entertainment is partly a result of party-state television’s attempt to appear less ‘political’ in order to attract audiences and subtly infuse them with ‘correct’ thinking. This approach may be seen as part of a more widespread process of ‘depoliticization’, whereby the Party is re-constructing itself as a seemingly ‘ordinary’ part of day-to-day administration rather than as an avenue for overt agitation for social causes or for raising social consciousness. Wang Hui (2006:688) describes ‘depoliticization’ as a process whereby political parties, not just in China, but around the world, have lost their ‘revolutionary’ nature and are no longer being used to stimulate new ideas and social practices, but rather serve in ‘administrative’ or ‘statist’ roles. Increasingly, political parties are becoming ‘depoliticized bureaucratic machines’ and conventional forms of state power in the ‘contemporary nation-state system’, and the CCP-led state in China mirrors this global trend. The ‘tactics’ of ‘depoliticization’ (Lu, 2009), or rather the way in which the party-state presents itself through its media organs as more or less ‘political’ at different moments, is the prime interest of this study. It is also important to reiterate that the meaning of ‘political’ since the reform era has centred not on class agitation, but on building a sense of legitimacy for the party-state based on its successes – and the communication of its successes – in enabling economic prosperity for the entire population and in being able to build a sense of national cohesion and social stability (Woronov, 2007:652).

Lu (2009:118) makes a strong case for the way that such tactics of ‘depoliticization’ have been used by provincial satellite stations to attract overseas (and domestic) audiences, particularly through the example of Hunan Television. Hunan Television has an explicit policy of promoting ‘popular entertainment’ geared towards youth and consumerism,

modernization and trendiness through programs such as Korean dramas and singing competitions like *Super Girl* (*Chaoji nüsheng*). Its success has led to a widespread differentiation between ‘official’ television programs that are thought to be ‘numbing’, and entertainment on local programs that is thought to be more ‘stimulating’. The apparent ‘non-political’ ideology of local stations comes across as a challenge to ‘big brother’ CCTV. Provincial television stations are also going national and global via satellite, and are competing with CCTV for audience share (e.g. see Zhao Y., 2008: 148; Meng, 2009:266). Many commentators see some of the provincial stations as a direct threat to the official ‘national’ and ‘global’ network as they lure audiences away from CCTV by offering more choice (Leung, 2008:62-3; Ma E., 2000b:31). However, while these perceptions are important, it must first be understood that CCTV itself is a competitor in this provincial versus national station war, and it too is continually expanding its popular entertainment programs, attempting to promote itself as more modern, glamorous, professional, and with more character than other stations (Leung, 2008:54,68). Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that domestic competition itself is actually in line with state policy (Meng, 2009:262). One of the reasons competition is encouraged is because it promotes a ‘national culture’ that leads to audiences choosing ‘Chinese’ programs as opposed to ‘foreign’ ones (Lu, 2009:119, 123; Hong, 1998).

The depoliticized feel of programs has been a successful tactic for Hunan Television, which has built up its brand as the leading provider of entertainment programs on television in China (Meng, 2009:266). The strategy has involved experimentation with both imported programs such as Korean dramas (‘healthy’ enough to pass the censors) (Leung, 2008:61, 65) and indigenized global television formats like *Super Girl*, which adapted the *Idol* format (Fung, 2009:182). *Super Girl* seemed to be apolitical in that it focused not on the ‘hardened’ state ideologies that CCTV entertainment productions are more prone to overemphasizing, but on softer, more commercial and cosmopolitan ideologies – which are another side of party-state politics. The program promoted individualism and self-identity, and for

some people, it was imagined as a symbol of civil society and democracy, and filled a need for social ritual and ‘resistance’ (Lu, 2009:123). Through the media’s introduction of new ways of living and competing, such so-called apolitical music-entertainment programming may seem to cultivate desires for personal freedom and liberation that have the potential to carry with them a sense of scepticism for authority (Ma E., 2000b:31).

While the party-state presides over the entire television network, compared to tactics of production used on Hunan Satellite Television, CCTV’s entertainment programs such as the *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* are often perceived to be too politically and ideologically rigid (Lu, 2009:124). Stylistically, the Gala is critiqued for its ‘formal, well-rehearsed style’, while *Super Girl* comes across as ‘unscripted and spontaneous’. Even though Hunan Television is part of the same regulatory and censorship television system, CCTV is singled out for being a ‘quintessential example of [a] government “mouthpiece”’, for having an ideological and propaganda role, for adhering to guidelines issued by Department of Propaganda, and SARFT, and for being tightly controlled by state administration and propaganda officials (Meng, 2009:261-263). The most significant criticism, however, is not necessarily political or stylistic, but that of ‘commercial exploitation’ (Zhong, 2001:173) due to political status. Even though it has come under increasing pressure from conglomerates like Hunan Radio and Television Group (of which Hunan Television is the flagship), CCTV has been able to use its political prestige and favoured status by SARFT for commercial gains (CCTV 2003; He and Chen, 1998). Its close links to the Party Committee of SARFT has also given it an unfair advantage.³¹ As Zhong (2001:173) explains, while CCTV is ‘nominally a non-profit organisation representing the national government...it has used its official monopoly status to engage in a wide range of official-profiteering activities’. Based on a blogger’s entry, Meng (2009:262) argues that there has been long-existing ‘disgust and anger among the average Chinese

³¹ The general director of CCTV also sits in the Party Committee of SARFT as one of its core members (Meng, 2009:262).

audience toward the monopoly of CCTV' and the strong support for *Super Girl* was 'a symbol of popular revolt against the state broadcaster'. Zhong (2007:78) too criticizes CCTV for being 'a conspicuous bully'. Because of CCTV's dominance and because of measures taken by authorities to feed official ideologies through music-entertainment programming on CCTV, the three frames of Chinese identity that are emphasized in these programs are likely to be viewed more than any other potential framings of the Chinese nation, and are therefore dominant frames.

The implication is that, because of its central party-state connections, CCTV is not giving people what they want, while Hunan Television (which is connected to the provincial government) is able to cater to the taste of ordinary Chinese people. Again, while these perceptions are significant, the situation is more complex than a black and white battle between big, evil CCTV versus good, democratic, popular Hunan TV, as both Meng (2009:266) and Zhong (2007) admit. Firstly, the party-state governs the entire television network that includes both CCTV and Hunan TV and is itself encouraging competition. CCTV can no longer shut out rival programs as it had done in previous decades – even though it lobbied the government to do so following the success of *Super Girls* (Zhong, 2007:78). Rather, CCTV had to respond through program production and competition. Labelling *Super Girls* as an 'evil and popular program', CCTV produced a competing talent quest, *Dream China*, and promoted it as a 'healthy' rival. *Dream China* achieved nowhere near the success of *Super Girls*. It had ratings of about one percent, compared to a record-breaking 12 percent based on selected screenings for *Super Girls*, which achieved a massive 400 million viewers out of a total population for 1.3 billion for the finale (Zhong, 2007). However, its response to develop similar entertainment programming and to attempt to learn from Hunan TV (CCTV production staff members were even reported to have gone directly to Hunan Television to learn from them) is significant.³²

³² Personal correspondence with a former CCTV employee, 2011.

Further, it is likely that there are tensions within CCTV management about how programs should be designed, what programs should go to air, and who the central broadcaster should be targeting. While Hunan Television clearly attempts to target the urban youth market, CCTV still has a mandate to produce for *all* Chinese, and not just young, urban, cosmopolitan audiences. With cross-influence from other television stations, what is interesting are the ways in which CCTV, in various contexts, *attempts* to make the messages contained in its entertainment programming seem more or less obviously ‘political’, in terms of how much it stresses ideological Party messages, in different contexts.

Significantly, there is a gap in the literature regarding the question of the precise nature of the program design that makes different programs appear more or less politically ‘rigid’, although Zhong (2007:74, 79) has hinted at a few things that were ‘wrong’ with CCTV’s *Dream China*. Firstly, while both *Super Girls* and *Dream China* adapted a foreign, live, participatory, interactive talent quest format, *Super Girls* kept most of the original elements of the program intact, while the CCTV production suffered from ‘excessive surgery’. In *Super Girls*, entrants’ individuality and spontaneity were highlighted. They selected their own repertoire, dressed themselves, choreographed their own moves, and often sang impromptu. However, in the CCTV program, entrants’ personalities and abilities were sidelined in favour of time and focus on the CCTV host and ‘royal artists’. Stage moves were carefully choreographed, and there was little interactivity or spontaneity apart from ‘rigged ballots’, ‘fake singing, and ‘fake improvisations’ (Zhong, 2007:74, 79).

Chapters 3-6 further detail the production techniques of CCTV music-entertainment programming across a range of regular and special programs to highlight just why it might seem particularly political. But more importantly, I aim to assess whether there is any variation on such seeming rigidity within the network. Is it possible that some programs are much more easily read as party-state propaganda or ‘indoctrainment’ (Sun, 2009:64)

while others seem less so?

One reason CCTV may appear more politically rigid in terms of adhering to party-state ideology is that CCTV uses some of its previous techniques to promote new policies. For instance, music-entertainment television carries on party-state and commercial politics through the creation of celebrity 'models'. In the socialist/Mao era (1949-76) workers, peasants and soldiers were exemplary models for class struggle (Davies, 2010:193-216; Brady, 2002a:564), and the media 'studiously searched for workers and peasants who could function as role models of moral leadership and exemplary citizenry' (Sun, 2009:59). In the post-Mao, market-oriented reform era, revolutionary models have been replaced with models from the 'new classes'. Entrepreneurs, private business professionals, property owners and employers now perform capitalist-market success stories for the purpose of emulation (Davies, 2010: 193-216; Sun, 2009:59; Edwards and Jeffreys, 2010:1-20; Brady, 2002a:564). Significantly, as Fung (2009:187-8) was told by informants in the media industry, media professionals were 'not unequivocally told by authorities' to present people with collective qualities as heroes but felt they could tap into deep-seated heroic tradition in a way that was both commercially viable and tapped into party-state ideology.

Using soldiers, workers, and farmers as model citizens has not entirely disappeared from contemporary Chinese television, which perhaps adds to the ongoing political feel of the network. Soldiers in the form of professional military singers are a regular feature of CCTV music-entertainment programs, and workers and farmers appear as token representatives of their 'classes' in various guises as contestants and as identifiable members of on-screen audiences. Yet, at the same time, as part of CCTV's adjustment in a competitive, market-driven television industry, it is increasingly drawing upon apparently non-politically aligned, commercially successful pop singers and celebrities. Celebrities from the mainland as well as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and elsewhere endorse and spread party-state-sanctioned messages through their performances.

Even their mere appearances on the CCTV stage are enough to spread the message of China's attractiveness. It is important to pay attention to the continuing efforts of CCTV to construct mainland celebrities to promote key messages, to co-opt superstars from outside the mainland, and to adapt new techniques and program design in order to maintain competitiveness. Without constant adjustment and innovation in response to the changing market, CCTV would not be able to draw in viewers, push up ratings, and attract revenue through advertising dollars that are necessary for its ongoing operation.

Dynamics Within CCTV: A Theory of Hard and Soft Television

In this study, I focus on a spectrum of production styles, which I argue reflect tensions in visions for the Chinese nation as well as a degree of openness towards the plurality of expressions. At one end, the styles seem overtly political in terms of the relative ease in which party-state messages can be identified. At the other end, tactics are used that seem to soften the perceived political nature of the programs – or rather, that engage in a different kind of politics. Internal variations are a likely result of three main factors: internal tensions within the Party between hardliners within the television industry and those with more liberal views; tensions between those promoting 'hard' and 'soft' propaganda tactics; as well as a result of increased interaction and negotiation with other areas of society in what is surely China's most pluralistic and open period of television (Hong, 1998:142).

Chengju Huang (2007:404) believes that the Chinese media is too often judged from a political control perspective. He argues that programming is not necessarily pre-determined by ideological goals, but can sometimes simply be constructed for the purposes of enjoyment and entertainment. Given that all television in China still ultimately remains under the control of the party-state, which insists its primary aim is to mould people's

attitudes and beliefs (Hong, 1998:138), entertainment and party-state politics are always linked in some way. This is certainly the case with music-entertainment programming on CCTV. However, it is important to emphasize that television in China is certainly not pre-determined by a *single* political-ideological direction.

The multiple political and ideological directions of programming are a result of both internal tensions within the Party as well as negotiations with other social players. Disputes within the Party about reform goals and consequences have resulted in contradictory directions and a lack of consistent policies in media production. Since the 1980s, Party control over the media has fluctuated between relaxation and constraint in terms of the type and origin (domestic or foreign) of content. However, the overall general trend has been towards fewer restrictions and less intrusive forms of propaganda (Hong, 1998:136-7; Zhao Y., 1998:4). One important reason for this is that the current legitimacy of the party-state has been formed around its ability to raise living standards and to promote a consumer culture that fosters and satisfies social desire through its own opening up and reform policies (Hong, 1998:141; Ma E., 2000b:28). In this context, a relaxed stance is therefore just as political as a hardened one.

In addition, as political economist Zhao Yuezhi (1998:4) explains, we can no longer talk of ideology in China as an intentional imposition of a narrow set of totalizing doctrines of Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought. Rather, these days ideology may be understood as an active social practice, which is often unintentional, and operates on the level of everyday sense-making (also see Hartley, 1994:140-1). Zhao urges scholars to focus on how everyday symbolic forms are being used to try to serve ideological functions of sustaining Party domination even if they do not ‘explicitly promote political doctrines’ (Zhao Y., 1998:5). As Sun (1995b:195) similarly notes, rather than view propaganda as related to purposeful biases as distortions, it may be better to think of propaganda as the application of ‘narrative forms

and strategies' that have the *potential* to 'transform events into politically potent symbols'.

At least since the 1990s, the establishment of propagandistic messages in television has been part of a process of constant negotiation between various players, including state propaganda and policy-makers, television producers and directors, performers, advertisers, sponsors, intellectuals, and audiences (Zhang in Chu, 2008:184). Despite the fact that the CCP continues to closely monitor content, even official policies and regulations are constantly negotiated. As de Kloet argues of the music industry, censorship has become 'a contested domain' in which the boundaries are often murkily defined and inconsistently imposed. These boundaries are 'constantly being challenged and negotiated by musicians, producers, state-owned publishers, and audiences, as well as by the music industry' (de Kloet, 2003b:182).

Program producers, directors, editors, and performers develop a sense of what is acceptable in the contexts in which they work, for as one journalist has noted 'Why bother putting in stuff which would be edited out anyway?', not to mention the potential for being expelled, fired, or even jailed for broadcasting unacceptable material (quoted in Yu, 2001:211). Drawing on Miklós Haraszti's book, *The Velvet Prison: Artists Under State Socialism* (1988), Geremie Barmé (1999:5-6), argues that some artists and bureaucrats in China deliberately apply self-censorship not due to coercion but as an artistic technique. Such statements made are often developed with little interference from the state, and are deliberately self-contradictory and open to a multiplicity of interpretations. In a relatively open context, such messages become acceptable as long as they do not directly criticize the bureaucracy (Barmé, 1999:14-17). On the other hand, as Louise Edwards (2008:201-2) argues, all sorts of social criticism are now possible as long as the party-state is presented as the defender and solution to the problem. Isolated cases of social problems are used to confirm the status quo as well as the need for more law and order and a strong government.

Yet, while these techniques were also found within the CCTV programs discussed in this study, and there are ambiguous moments in which it is difficult to read a single political message, I will show that there are patterns and general trends that can be clearly observed and that reflect the outcomes of such negotiations. Thus, even if the Party were to have no direct hand in crafting messages for specific programs, the consistency of viewpoints emerging from productions indicates major threads of thinking within Chinese society that extend to the political sphere, and that are important to recognize and understand.

In this study, I argue that while CCTV continues to communicate propaganda in a ‘hardened’ form at times, it also has a ‘softer’ side that is often unacknowledged in existing scholarly literature. Also, as explained further in the next chapter, certain formats and styles of production can appear ‘harder’ or ‘softer’ through visual, linguistic, and musical modes that either seem to reinforce the same message, or offer diverging messages that are more open to multiple interpretations. ‘Softer’ television can sometimes be more pluralistic and can potentially attract audiences from a wider range of backgrounds, and therefore push up the ratings, which is necessary for generating advertising revenue.

It is important to recognize possible *attempts* in CCTV’s music-entertainment programming to present a softer, or more ‘loving’, side, including through the promotion of such ‘official’ themes as unity, peace and harmony. While certainly having political – and economic – implications, these messages need not necessarily be perceived only through the lens of a sinister attempt to dupe and coerce. It is possible that some political leaders and program designers may actually be trying to promote a more compassionate and harmonious society, even if the main aim behind this is to persuade audiences to continue to support the party-state (see Hartley, 1999:32; and Sun and Zhao, 2009 on the ‘loving’ side of Chinese television following the Wenchuan earthquake in May 2008).

In addition, given that television performances are connected to multiple social concerns and anxieties, including anxieties over identity, television can assist in attempting to collectively and publicly resolve such dilemmas. Through its construction of narratives, dialogues and performances, television, including CCTV, can assist in giving meaning and order to the chaotic world in which we live (Silverstone, 1988:24, 38, 42-3).

2.2 Overview of the Data: CCTV's Music Entertainment Programs

The music-entertainment programs examined in this study are drawn from three CCTV channels: CCTV-3, CCTV-4, and CCTV-15. These stations have been selected as they offer a wide range of music-entertainment programs and also offer different perspectives on identity construction due to their different orientations, although the boundaries are blurring with greater global accessibility. CCTV-3/Comprehensive Arts (*Zongyi*) is a popular arts and entertainment channel that began broadcasting in 1995 and is directed towards a mainland audience. However, it increasingly pulls in Hong Kong and Taiwanese performers who are popular on the mainland, giving many programs a more global feel. CCTV-4/International (*Guoji*) is a Chinese-language international channel that focuses on providing news and entertainment to overseas Chinese audiences and residents in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and introducing various aspects of China to the world. However, it is also available to domestic audiences. CCTV-4 began broadcasting in 1992. CCTV-15/Music (*Yinyue*) is a specialized music channel promoting Chinese traditional and Western-influenced classical music, and began in 2004. It is directed to a niche domestic audience with an interest in folk and classical music. All CCTV channels, however, are now accessible in mainland China and around the world via broadcast or satellite television, as well over the Internet via CCTV.com or CNTV.com through live streaming and downloadable videos.

In this study, I focus on Chinese-language music-entertainment programs and do not analyse programs specifically packaged for non-Chinese speaking audiences, such as those produced for the CCTV English, Spanish, French, and Arabic channels. However, some moments from music-entertainment programs broadcast on CCTV-3 and CCTV-4 are repackaged for programs like *Culture Express* on CCTV-9, and the *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* is now simultaneously broadcast on multiple CCTV stations and in multiple languages. Some programs on CCTV-4 may assume a small audience of a non-ethnically Chinese people who speak Chinese (e.g. for the program *Sinophiliac* described below), although actual numbers of foreign audiences are likely to be miniscule.

The music-entertainment genre can be divided into a number of different sub-genres highlighting distinct variety and experimentation of formats *within* CCTV. These include *studio shows* based in the CCTV studios in Beijing and *roaming shows* that move ‘the CCTV-stage’ from city to city and town to town across China. There are *competition* based programs as well as those that are ostensibly created to provide an entertaining ‘service’ (*fuwu*) for media consumers. There are also ‘regular’ programs that are usually aired at least once a week during a regular timeslot and are repeated once throughout the week, and ‘special programs’ (*tebie jiemu*) that celebrate national events on a one-off or once-a-year basis. In 2008, specials included the commemoration of Deng Xiaoping and thirty years of opening up and reform, relief events for the victims of the Sichuan earthquake, celebration of China’s first spacewalk, and even a celebration of thirty years of CCTV. I would also include among specials the more consistent yearly and periodical rituals such as the Spring Festival (see Zhao B., 1999; Lu, 2009), the Gregorian New Year (*Yuandan*), the Mid-Autumn Festival (*Zhongqiu jie*) and China’s national day/‘birthday’ (*Guoqing jie*) (in 2008 its sixtieth anniversary was marked by a special military parade, which is held every ten years) etc.

The specials can be classified as a kind of ‘media event’, which are theorized as ‘live’ (rather than studio-based), ‘spectacular’, ‘ritualistic’, ‘ceremonial’, and ‘manipulative’ events designed for very large audiences and that are aimed at showing national unity, strength and prosperity (Sun, 2001a:27, 35 drawing on Dayan and Katz 1994). Media events are national rituals and ceremonies that are pre-planned, but ‘interrupt’ routine programs. They command a ‘collective audience’, run on ‘official time’, and celebrate unity rather than conflict. Typical media events are the Olympic Games’ opening and closing ceremonies and military parades. In the case of CCTV music-entertainment television, regular weekly programs were occasionally interrupted by specials. However, the line between regular programs and specials is blurred. While the specials may replace regular music-entertainment programs, they often feature the same hosts, and performers etc. that would have performed in the regular programs. The specials may even be at the same time as a regular music-entertainment program, and may even be a special within a regular program, although the organization and design of the program and the label ‘special’ presents it as being a unique and more important. In addition, many of the nationally significant ‘events’ were thematically celebrated and commemorated in regular programs as well.

Furthermore, regular, weekly CCTV music-entertainment television programs are frequently live, ritualistic, ceremonial, and manipulative and aimed at showing national unity, strength and prosperity. They too frequently command a ‘collective audience’, run on ‘official time’, are set in non-studio settings, and celebrate unity while blurring differences. They may be just as spectacular as less frequent special events and sometimes feature massive on-screen, or live, audiences. Although they do not have the hype of an event like the Olympic Opening Ceremony, they *contribute to* the build-up of bigger events through on-going spectacular music-entertainment display. Furthermore, these programs are clearly designed to help ‘ordinary people’ (*laobaixing*) to relax and feel happy, and at the same time learn about Chinese unity. There is an absence of performances that

criticize the party-state, focus on any other negative aspects of society, or challenge audiences to question the way things are. Happiness and unity are clear goals.

The major difference between specials events and regular music-entertainment programs is that ‘regular’ programs do not ‘interrupt’ other programs and probably find it much harder to maintain very large audiences even though they try to speak to large audiences. However, as Hunan Television’s *Idol*-style program, *Super Girl*, highlighted, it is possible for everyday ‘mundane’ programming to maintain substantially large audiences on a regular basis. Yet, given that regular programs can be as spectacular as special media events, specials may have less appeal than they once might have, and the consistent drone of spectacular performances aiming to attract large national or global audiences may be a more significant background theorization for the study of this genre.

The list of eight regular music-entertainment programs analyzed in this study, which includes almost all of the music-entertainment programs shown on CCTV around 2008, are summarized in the table and further elaborated on below:

Channel	English Title (Direct Translation)	Chinese Title	Program Type
CCTV-3	Happy in China (lit: Happy China travel)	<i>Huanle Zhongguoxing</i>	Roaming
CCTV-3	The Same Song	<i>Tongyi shouge</i>	Roaming
CCTV-3	Star Avenue	<i>Xingguang dadao</i>	Studio Competition
CCTV-3	CCTV “Longliqi” Youth Singing Competition	<i>CCTV qingnian geshou dasai (qing ge sai)</i>	Studio Competition

CCTV-3 (moved to CCTV-15 in 2011)	China Music Television	<i>Zhongguo yinyue dianshi</i>	Music Video
CCTV-4	Sinophiliac (lit: Same Happy Five Continents)	<i>Tongle wuzhou</i>	Studio
CCTV-15	Folksongs China	<i>Minge Zhongguo</i>	Studio

Regular ‘roaming’ shows on CCTV-3 were *Happy in China* and *The Same Song*. *Happy in China*, which started broadcasting in 2004,³³ is a large-scale outdoor arts program that travels to different cities around China. The two-hour length program was broadcast in 2008 once a week at the 7.30pm prime-time slot on Friday evenings with a repeat on the weekend, but is now currently broadcast on CCTV-3 from 8-10pm every night, with repeats at 2-4am. CNTV claims it has been CCTV-3’s top rating program over many years.³⁴ I chose to include *Happy in China* for the important role it plays in linking different cities around China into a coherent whole and framing local cultures and customs as part of a greater national culture, and for its emphasis on the special role of music-entertainment in ‘bringing happiness’ to and a sense of unity among audiences (*Happy in China* website, 2011). *Happy in China* is hosted by one mainland host per episode, usually either Dong Qing or Zhang Lei. Both are Beijing-based females who speak with the trained certainty of the CCTV/party-state voice.

The Same Song was also a series of large-scale themed concerts, drawing strongly on popular music genres. I selected this program because it is the only regular CCTV music-entertainment production to be staged and filmed in both domestic *and international* locations (*The Same Song* website, 2011). *The Same Song* started broadcasting on 1 January 2000 during prime time

³³ See report at Tiexue.net: http://bbs.tiexue.net/post2_4218968_1.html (27 April 2010).

³⁴ See report on Happy in China (CNTV website, 10 June 2011) <http://ent.cntv.cn/20110610/100420.shtml>.

(7.30-9pm) on Friday nights and had extremely good ratings. However, it was suspended after October 2009 for reasons that are unclear, although clips are still available online. Given its high ratings, it is quite possible that internal political tensions within CCTV or within the Party led to the current suspension, rather than a lack of profitability (Personal interview, 2011).³⁵ The name of the program *The Same Song* derives from a song of the same name written in 1990 by Mao Amin that was always sung at the beginning and end of the program, usually by a group of children surrounding male singer Cai Guoqing, who graduated from the army acting school. During 2008, *The Same Song* had usually had two or sometimes four hosts: one male and one female from the mainland, and one male and one female from the place where the program was visiting – especially for programs staged in autonomous areas, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and in foreign countries.

Both *The Same Song* and *Happy in China* have a consistent design and carefully weave Party-political messages throughout, as demonstrated in Chapters 4-6. Such messages include the promotion and maintenance of a harmonious society, multi-ethnic unity, greater Chinese unity, nationalist pride and pride in hosting the Olympic Games, and self-sacrifice for one's family and nation. Both attempted to unite the ethnic groups within China, as well as link mainland Chinese with their Hong Kong and Taiwan compatriots and overseas Chinese.

The two singing competitions analysed were on CCTV-3 and were both based in studios in Beijing. *Star Avenue* began broadcasting in 2004 (Wu Q., 2007), and is a competition that ran throughout the whole year on a weekly basis, with contestants competing to become weekly, monthly, and yearly winners. I included this program because it is CCTV's only regular singing competition program, and one of CCTV's most popular programs. In January 2011, during the yearly finals, it was ranked the second most popular CCTV program after the news on the CNTV website

³⁵ Television ratings for specific CCTV shows are not easily accessible. This information was told to me to me by a CCTV employee.

(<http://www.cntv.cn/index.shtml>). It stars ordinary workers from around the nation, and has included people identifying as students, teachers, police, and farmers, allowing 'ordinary people' to entertain the nation (Star Avenue website, 2011). The focus is on sung performances covering a wide range of styles, but other kinds of performances such as dance and instrumental performance are included. A number of former yearly finalists have become well-known television stars in China as a result of this program. The host of the program, Bi Fujian, is one of most loved and humorous television celebrities in China and gives the program a relaxed feel. The program, which runs for about 1.5 hours, is broadcast on Saturday nights at 10.30pm and repeated Sunday lunchtimes from 12.35pm but is often broadcast on multiple afternoons during the final rounds. This program is no doubt CCTV's response to the *Idol* craze, but remains sufficiently different in form. For instance, even though there is stiff competition, contestants are required to verbally and visually show their modesty and friendliness towards other contestants, an adjustment that seems to have been made for Hunan TV's *Super Girls* as well.

The other competition show is the *CCTV Youth Singing Competition*, which began in 1984. In recent years it has been an annual event. Broadcast on consecutive nights for about three weeks every year, the stakes for this competition are high, with winners gaining fame and job opportunities through ongoing performances with the national broadcaster in numerous other music-entertainment programs. The competition is important as it is a kind of quasi-popular selection process for the new cohort of 'CCTV television singers' who play important political and economic roles in sharing messages that are 'correct' according to the political line of the CCP through their sung performances on specials and regular programs like *Happy in China*. Well-known CCTV artists like Peng Liyuan (the wife of Xi Jinping who is tipped to become Hu Jintao's successor), Song Zuying, and Tan Jing are amongst the former winners of this program (lizhimin210/Yahoo Arts, 2010). The competition has changed in form over the years, and currently offers separate competitions in the following four

categories of singing: ‘national’ (*minzu*), ‘operatic’ (*meisheng*, lit: ‘beautiful sound’, a literal translation of *bel canto*), ‘popular’ (*liuxing*) and ‘*yuanshengtai*’ (‘original’/folk music). There is also a people’s choice award for which finalists from all four styles compete. However, the most serious awards are decided by judges, seated in cascading rows in front of the contestants, and who are all well-known national-level singers and composers. As well as giving scores out of 100, they occasionally give comments and provide direct advice to contestants. The program offers named sponsoring rights, with *Longliqi*, a brand that makes household items like shampoo holding the naming and advertising rights for the program in 2008.

China Music Television (Zhongguo yinyue dianshi) was the only music video show on CCTV-3.³⁶ The program combined earlier programs ‘Music Television City’ (*Yinyue dianshi cheng*) and *China Music Television 60 Minutes (Zhongguo yinyue dianshi 60 fen)* (CNTV website) and at the time of data collection was broadcast every weekday morning at 9am and evening after 11pm. *China Music Television* (now with the acronym CMV) recently launched a new website, and is now shown on CCTV-Music (CCTV-15) at 6am Monday to Sunday, with repeats at 6.55pm (Monday to Saturday) and 9pm on Sunday. The change of time possibly reflects a desire to attract more youth audiences, who are likely to be studying or working at the old timeslot of 9am.³⁷ The program plays music videos of ‘national’, ‘popular’, and ‘operatic’ music styles, and its 2011 website also says it broadcasts classic music videos from abroad, which were not seen during regular viewing across 2008. The program overwhelmingly features music video clips of well-known CCTV stars who regularly perform on other ‘live’ CCTV programs, old music videos from the past, as well as excerpts from past ‘live’ CCTV productions. Unlike another television station, Charming Music (*Meili yinyue*), which features a large number of contemporary Taiwanese and Hong Kong pop singers, and the CCTV-Guide

³⁶ I am unable to find the exact starting date for this show, but it is likely to be in the early 2000s.

³⁷ See <http://cctv.cntv.cn/lm/zhongguoyinyuedianshi/>.

station, which sometimes features international music videos, CCTV's *China Music Television* features mainly mainland artists.

China Music Television was considered important because of the way it draws on a genre most commonly associated with commercial music and youth culture (at least in the West) as a tool for propaganda. Many of the music-videos are songs sung by singers in military uniform or by well-known state singers who sing songs with lyrics that connect with ideological positions of the party-state. An entire edition (8 July 2011), for instance, was filled with elaborate music videos celebrating China and the 90th anniversary of the CCP.³⁸ In 2008, an episode was dedicated to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The kinds of music videos broadcast during this episode promoted China, its traditional culture, and its happy society in the era of economic reform (e.g. Tan Li's 'China Happiness' *Zhongguo Xi*)³⁹ as well as ethnic harmony (e.g. Han Hong's music video of 'Sky Road' *Tian Lu*, see Chapter 4), respect for one's elders (e.g. Chen Hong's well-known song 'Often return home' *Chang hui jia kan kan*),⁴⁰ love for victims of the Wenchuan earthquake (e.g. Believe in Love, *Xiangxin ai*),⁴¹ and pride in hosting the Olympic Games (e.g. Beijing Welcomes You, *Beijing Huanyin Ni*).

The music-entertainment program analyzed on CCTV's Chinese-language International channel, CCTV-4, was *Sinophiliac* (*Happy Five Continents*). It began in the early 2000s⁴² and was recorded in a studio in Beijing usually, with two hosts – one Chinese and one foreign – generally with the same few regular 'foreign' performers, including some young 'Westernized' overseas Chinese, and a relatively small and passive studio-audience made up of

³⁸ China Music Video program celebrating ninety years of the CCP special, 8 July 2011: <http://ent.cntv.cn/enttv/zhongguoyinyuedianshi/classpage/video/20110708/100154.shtml>

³⁹ See clip of 'China Happiness' (*Zhongguo xi*) at http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTAzMDIwMjEy.html.

⁴⁰ See clip of 'Often Return Home' (Chang Hui Jia Kan Kan) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Wh0BIa0LIQ>.

⁴¹ See one of the many clips of 'Believe in Love' (*Xiangxin ai*) at <http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/j8BZyIYP6Rg/>.

⁴² I cannot locate the precise starting time for this show.

mostly Chinese and some ‘foreign friends’. The performers demonstrated their skills in popular and traditional Chinese culture, particularly cross-talk, Beijing opera and martial arts, inter-dispersed with performances by PRC Chinese performers, particularly children, senior citizens, and minority nationalities. *Sinophiliac* was marketed as being unique for its ‘unity of opposites’ (*duili tongyi*) as well as for putting ‘foreigners’ (*waiguoren*) and ‘Western culture’ (*xifang wenhua*) ‘into China’s folk culture’ (Sinophiliac website, 2010). It appears that the special program that I landed up performing on for the awards ceremony of the ‘*My Chinese Life*’ *Global Chinese Storytelling Competition* (outlined in the introduction) was made by the producers of *Sinophiliac*.⁴³ This experience gave me significant insights into the construction of such programs, particularly the sometimes-arbitrary nature of performance and the layers of politics from rehearsals to the final recording. I included *Sinophiliac* for analysis as it was the only music-entertainment program to feature foreigners, and therefore offered the potential for unique insights into how the party-state via CCTV prefers to draw (and blur) boundaries between what is Chinese and what is foreign. *Sinophiliac* appears to have been dropped from CCTV-4 as a result of restructuring and a revised focus on establishing CCTV-4 as a news and information channel.⁴⁴

CCTV-4 also offers another important music program called *Our Chinese Heart* (*Zhonghua qing*) broadcast on Saturday afternoons from 3pm with a repeat at 10pm the same night. It is usually a large-scale outdoor concert program, clearly aimed at uniting the mainland with Hong Kong and Taiwanese compatriots as well as overseas Chinese. Like *The Same Song*, previous *Our Chinese Heart* programs also roamed to international cities with large numbers of overseas Chinese such as San Francisco and Sydney. However, while I monitored the program throughout 2008, it was aired irregularly during the period, and was apparently largely made up of repeats and snippets from former programs rather than new material. For this reason,

⁴³ The ‘*My Chinese Life*’ *Global Chinese Storytelling Competition Awards Gala* is available online at: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjM1MjQyODk2.html

⁴⁴ The report was found at <http://www.wowa.cn/Article/80729.html>

no moments have been included in the study. However, the conclusions drawn, particularly regarding the way that a sense of 'Greater China' is constructed, benefit greatly from viewing and analyzing these programs.

The CCTV-Music channel offers a different feel to both CCTV-3 and CCTV-4. I included the program *Folksongs China* (*Mingde Zhongguo*) because it appeared to offer a somewhat different approach to minority nationality performance and identity construction compared to music-entertainment programming on the other channels. I thought the program, which began on March 29, 2004,⁴⁵ was critical to include as an example of the range and multiplicity of forces at play *within* China's only and most hegemonic network. *Folksongs China* is the only television program in China to focus entirely on China's *yuanshengtai* folksong arts (explained in Chapter 4). The *Folksongs China* website explains that the series aims to introduce China's nationalities (*minzu*) and their folksongs and to promote the 'development' (*fazhan*) of *yuanshengtai* folksongs in China. The program is broadcast from 9.10pm (Monday to Saturday), with repeats at 9.20am and 1.22pm.

In 2008, CCTV's Sports Channel (CCTV5) changed its name to the CCTV-Olympic Channel (using the Olympic five-ringed logo). In the last few minutes of a sports news program called 'Hello 2008' (*Nihao 2008*), music videos of new Olympic songs were aired. These were also monitored as part of my data as I thought it was interesting that even a sports channel adopted elements of the music-entertainment genre to build patriotic sentiment and national identity in the context of China hosting a major international media event (the Olympic Games). The specials analysed include a celebration of China's Sixtieth anniversary called *Love My China* (*Ai wo Zhongguo*), the celebration of thirty years of CCTV and China's opening up and reform, entitled 'Releasing Songs of 30 Years' (*Fang'ge 30 nian*), and the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. The episodes

⁴⁵ See Folksongs China website at <http://www.cctv.com/music/special/C12941/01/index.shtml>.

and moments within programs selected for in-depth analysis were chosen on the basis of being able to provide a range of insights into the construction and performance of ethnic and national identity. I have attempted to take into account moments that highlight how the various identities can be performed in a range of hardened, orthodox and more open, softer, cosmopolitan styles. The next chapter details my approach to analysis, which enables me to link the audio-visual performances on CCTV's regular and special, roaming, studio, and competition programs to a discussion on the politics of identity.

Chapter 3. Analysing TV Texts – Multimodality, Performativity, and Identity

Questions on who the Chinese are, and what China is, have been at the heart of intellectual and political debates in China at least since the end of the Qing dynasty (e.g. see Chun, 1996:136; Cohen, 1991:113-128; Duara, 1995:32, 76-7; Kirby, 2005:106-7; Lee and Huang, 2002:111; Wu, 1991:162-171; and Yahuda 2000:28-9). One of the key ways in which the notion of China is created for audiences in contemporary times is through television programming. This study is centred on understanding just how Chinese television attempts to construct the very notion of China as well as a sense of a collective Chinese identity for its audiences. In order to understand how television constructs ideas about China and national identity, I unpack the many layers or intertwining ‘modes’ of human communication that are used in making television (language, music, and visuals), and work out how they are put to the task of creating meaning as they interact. In this chapter, I discuss my theoretical and methodological approach to multimodality and the performance of identity in the context of music-entertainment television in China. I then detail how language, music, and visuals can interact in different ways, and the *potential* socio-political effects of their interactions. Finally, I theorize audiences from within a textual approach, noting the importance of CCTV’s attempts to draw in and interpellate television audiences in order to create a sense of a shared national identity. By linking the audio-visual substance of television texts to the notion of identity construction and ideology, this chapter lays the groundwork for the in-depth analyses of the three major frames of Chineseness that follow in Chapters 4-6.

3.1 Merging Multimodal Analysis with Theories of Performativity

A Multimodal Analysis

Critical multimodal discourse analysis, as defined in this study, is the analysis of how multiple modes of communication (in this case, language, visuals, and music) work together to create meaning, while paying particular attention to uncovering political and ideological implications of their interactions. Multimodal analysis, however, has only recently begun to emerge as an important method in the fields of media, popular culture, and critical discourse studies. The reason for growing interest in multimodality has come about largely as a result of rapid developments in technology that have lead to increasing media convergence and interconnected platforms for viewing videos and images, listening to audio, reading words, and interacting with texts. It is therefore necessary for media scholars to take on a multimodal dimension as texts are increasingly being designed with multiple interconnecting modes in mind. The continuing analysis of just language or visuals alone would severely limit our ability to take a critical stance towards such texts (Lemke, 2006:3). Television has always been multimodal in that it is constructed with layers of audio and visual texts, yet the interactions of its sounds and images has rarely been at the heart of academic television analyses. While most of the theorizing of multimodality has been done by scholars in Western countries like Australia, Europe, and North America, the theories can be applied to the study of Chinese television as well.

While new technology is clearly multimodal, in fact all communication is and has always been multimodal. We have never made meaning with just one semiotic modality alone. When we speak, we cannot help but also generate non-linguistic meaning through the timbre and tone of our voices as well as through our body language. When we write, our handwriting or

choice of font also adds meaning to what is communicated. Visuals provide the context for interpreting words, words enable us to hear music in different ways, and music integrates sequences of images influencing what we see (Lemke, 2006:5; Chion, 1990:xxvi). Furthermore, meanings emerge not only from the multiple interactions between words, pictures, and sounds, but also through the specific socio-political contexts and associated memories in which they are constructed and received (Cook, 1998:23; Hodge and Kress, 1998:vii). Whether in the context of live performance or the latest digital media platforms, modes ‘accumulate meanings’ in reference to one another in ‘regime(s) of representation’ across a variety of texts and media, a system of meaning making also referred to as ‘intertextuality’ (Hall, 1997:232).

A theory of multimodality implies that all interacting modes must be considered together and that it would be counter-productive to consider language, visuals, and music in isolation. For instance, it is not possible to entirely separate the meaning of the lyrics of a song from the tune that accompanies it, the visual performance of the performer, and the staged context in which it is performed. However, we still need to understand what each mode uniquely contributes to the ‘textual ensemble’ (Macken-Horarik, 2003a:14; also see Lemke, 2002:303). For this reason, it is still necessary to delineate some of the distinct features of language, visuals, and music. I outline some of the distinguishing features of the different ‘modes’ of television below.

It is tempting to think of certain modes as having the ability to trump or undermine other modes in the process of constraining the production of meaning. However, rather than think about one mode as necessarily overwhelming other modes, I prefer to think more generally of the modes as always working in connection with one another to create particular messages. Sometimes the modes work together in ways that create relatively clear messages while at other times their combinations may result in more ambiguous or varied readings. The way that audio and visual modes are

employed together (the production techniques) constrains or opens up the range of possible overall interpretations. The mode that is salient for one person may be less so for another and may change according to context. For instance, if other conversations are going on in the same room as the television, the visual images may be more salient. If a music-entertainment program is on as background noise whilst doing other tasks, the sounds and music may be more salient. Yet, regardless of which mode seems the most salient to individual audience members, as long as the sound and images are both switched 'on' (i.e. the sound is not on 'mute') and absorbed, *all modalities* in television are interacting and playing important roles in the meaning-making process. There is always a range of possible interpretations of the meanings of discourse in its multi-modal forms.

'Critical' Multimodal Research

This study also attempts to offer a 'critical' approach to multimodality. By 'critical', I mean it is not simply concerned with the internal dynamics of television's modes within the enclosed context of the specific program. Nor is it simply concerned with building a model that generalizes how modes work together. Rather, it is focused on coming to an understanding of how specific uses and patterns of multimodal interactions relate to broader social, political, and economic discourses. Multimodal texts have real social and political effects and are important sites for the production of national identity (e.g. Macken-Horarik, 2003b:283). A critical multimodal approach involves examining the kinds of multi-modal semiotic and narrative resources employed to represent events, people and ideas, and to assess the effects this construction has on legitimizing and evaluating moral and political agendas (drawing on Chouliaraki, 2006:262). I enter into the programs' internal dynamics as a basis for inquiring into the conditions of production and for asking questions on which institutions, sectors of society, and individuals, benefit politically and economically from the production, sale, circulation, and consumption of these texts (Lemke, 2006:12).

As Lemke (2006:8) explains, the aim of critical multimodal discourse analysis is to show the way images and texts, as well as music, sound effects, and spaces, etc. have been ‘selectively designed to reinforce one another’ as well as to show ‘their residual potential for undermining each other’. Multimodal techniques are often employed to combine modes ‘in ways that reinforce a single attitude’. The more modes there are interacting, the greater their potential to carry implicit ideological messages. However, Lemke also argues that ‘they can never really succeed’ because the more modes there are, the more potential there is ‘for alternative interpretations that are *not* consistent with those from other media’. The combination of ‘perverse or divergent readings opens up spaces of critique’, and audiences and analysts can use such spaces to become aware ‘of the extent to which the designed multimedia text is deliberately trying to foreclose these alternative readings and their potential ideological implications’ (2006:8). Through uncovering how the media is being used to the advantage of certain groups of people and institutions, and to the disadvantage of others, we may then be able to consider possibilities for alternative understandings and directions for possible change (Lemke, 2006:13).

Politics and power are crucial dimensions of ‘critical’ studies, but can be theorized in different ways. Many critical studies, particularly when referring to non-Western, Communist contexts tend to overstate a negative and monolithic role for the party-state and its ability to influence innocent citizens (Sun, 1995a:85). I would like to stress my understanding of political actors, performers, editors, and audiences, as neither entirely at the mercy of ‘power/discourse matrix[es]’, nor as completely ‘autonomous subject[s]’, but fluctuating somewhere in between these extremes. Identities are understood as being inflected through unconscious and conscious negotiation, acceptance, and struggle (Nelson, 1999:341, 349). This stance is particularly important for breaking down perceptions of a monolithic party-state system, such as that found in China, as well as for acknowledging its ongoing dominance. It allows for both a level of agency of individual performers as well as acknowledging constraints imposed on

individuals based on a wider set of socio-political discourses. As Yurchak (2006:9) notes in the context of post-socialist USSR/Russia, ‘we need a language that does not reduce the description of socialist reality to dichotomies of the official and the unofficial, the state and the people, and to moral judgements shaped from cold war ideologies.’ Breaking down simplistic dichotomies is also important for a more nuanced understanding of post-socialist China.

Critical multimodal discourse analysis itself cannot explain how individuals, whether audiences or producers, react to or interpret particular programs. It cannot clarify whether actions are conscious or pre-meditated or what performers or producer’s motivations are for certain choices in program design. Yet, close analysis of the television texts can provide important insights into the final edited ‘product’ – into what is selected for the screen and sound, and how messages are actually put together. Discourse analysis can help us shed light on each television program’s particular preferences for the ways in which sounds and visuals are arranged, ordered, and patterned. These patterns relate to and help to form broader socio-political discourses and are the starting point for many interpretations of Chinese identity. Detailed analyses of multimodal arrangement can allow us to uncover ‘similar representational practices and figures being repeated, with variations, from one text or site of representation to another’ (Hall, 1997:232). Significantly, as I show in the forthcoming chapters, these patterns of multimodal presentation are vital to the creation of such concepts as ‘nation’, ‘state’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘culture’, ‘Chinese identity’, and national ‘unity’.

Performativity – Constructing Identity through Performance

The idea that identity is constructed through performance is built on a number of theories of performativity. One of the earliest works to emphasize that identities are constructed through everyday performance was Erving Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1971). In this

book, Goffman explains how people perform as they go about their daily life, presenting themselves in different ways in different social contexts. If certain actions are played repeatedly on different occasions to the same audience, it becomes a 'part' or 'routine' role that in turn forms the basis of a social relationship. It is through these roles that we come to know each other and ourselves (Goffman, 1971:27-30).

Following on from Goffman, studies in performativity have branched out to examine how broad identity concepts, like gender, nationality, and race, are 'performed' through everyday acts such as speaking, dressing, and consuming the media. Judith Butler (1990) is well noted as pioneering the theory of performativity in the context of gender. In Chinese contexts, Louisa Schein (1999, 2000) has examined the performance of modernity and ethnicity through such events as ethnic tourism. Bai Zhihong (2007:245-8) likewise has analysed how local Bai nationality people in Yunnan province have not only actively appropriated their state-defined category, but reshaped and reinvented local ethnic identity and tradition for tourism and economic purposes such as through performance of a unique tea ceremony. Terry Woronov (2007:655) has examined how 'nationalism' is performed through children acting as young pioneers, such as by wearing red scarves, which originally represented the blood of the martyrs of the revolution, and performing in national ceremonies.

Drawing on these theories, I argue that it is through performance that both individuals and nations establish their identities in relation to others – or in the words of Spickard (2001:93) it is through performance that people (and nations) are able to 'try on' various identities and fashion a 'coherent ethnic narrative' for themselves. For instance, the speaking of Chinese, the wearing of red, and the singing of songs about China over time become widely understood as part and parcel of what it means to role-play the 'Chinese' self, while the speaking of French, the wearing of blue, or the singing of rolling hills to the music of a harpsichord are not.

As Elizabeth Cowie (1990:133) argues in a theoretical discussion on filmic representations of women, representations do not simply reflect already existing and fixed ideas outside of film. Rather the film itself works to ‘fix’ certain values related to the construction of their identity. Language – and other forms of expression, such as music/sound, stage design, television editing production techniques and dance – all assist in creating a particular views of ‘reality and of the Self’ (Richardson, 2000:925, 928). As Woronov argues, ‘performances of the nation are always necessary’ for nations to be ‘embodied,’ ‘lived and experienced as part of everyday life’ (Woronov, 2007:654,666). In this frame, national identity, like all other forms of identity, is something that people create by ‘doing’ rather than ‘acquiring’ (drawing on Nelson, 1999:341, who in turn draws on Austin’s 1975 theory of ‘speech acts’). Austin’s theory on speech acts posits that there are two main types of utterances which reveal the productive nature of language: ‘constative’ utterances state something, present facts, and describe reality (e.g. ‘it is cold’, ‘my name is Joe’); ‘performative utterances’ do something, for instance a judge calling the words ‘Guilty!’ transforms a person into a criminal, while ‘I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth’ at an official launch changes the social reality of the ship, rather than just describing it (see Yurchak, 2006:19). Constative utterances convey meaning and can be true or false, while performative utterances deliver force and cannot be true or false, but can be felicitous (suited to circumstances) or not (Yurchak 2006:19). Derrida and Bourdieu read Austin critically, and examine contexts and institutions as well as the semiotic power of discourse that produces new meanings and effects even with the same discourse in different contexts (Yurchak 2006:21).

Due to the constant ‘performance’ of human communication in all its forms, identities, including that of the ‘nation’ and ‘state’, are by nature ‘unfixed’ and always ‘in the process of being made’ (Bhabha, 1990:3). Analyzing precisely what people do and how they perform – how they speak, dress, the colours they use, their gestures, the music they create, i.e. the multiple modes of human performance – is therefore essential to understanding how

identities are constructed. CCTV music-entertainment television programs therefore provide significant spaces for understanding how the Chinese nation itself is played out and made 'real'.

With the view that identities are created through performance, it is important to reiterate that the Chinese nation being performed cannot be conceived of as a fixed, monolithic identity. Rather, since performances are constantly changing, so too is the identity of the nation. The nation is thus unstable, internally contradictory, and in constant flux (Chow R., 1998:24; Russell, 1999:275-9; Nelson, 1999:348; Hall in Lee and Huang, 2002:106). In Chapter 1, I outlined a number of constructions of Chineseness that are the basis for this study (the multi-ethnic state, greater China, and a Middle-Kingdom notion of China based on the attraction and assimilation of foreigners) and the important role the media plays in constructing multiple identities of the national and ethnic self. In this chapter, I assert the need for careful analysis of media texts in order to chart such 'myriad ascriptions of ethnicity, together with the cultural, political and disciplinary purposes to which such ascriptions have typically been put' (Chow R., 1998:24). The analysis intends to unpack and re-evaluate in the 'modes of its signification, the very forms of its historical construction' (Chow R., 1998:24). It aims to understand dominant discourses informing 'how individuals and collective subjects' in the specific context of CCTV music-entertainment television 'negotiate multiple and contradictory discourses' (Nelson, 1999:341).

Multimodality and Hard and Soft Constructions of Identity

In Chapter 1, I outlined my use of Duara's notion of 'hard' and 'soft' boundaries as an analytical framework and proposed that CCTV music-entertainment programs engage in constructions of Chineseness that straddle a continuum between presenting fairly 'hardened' versions of itself and fairly 'soft' and malleable constructions. Multimodally-speaking, a 'hardened' sense of unity occurs when all the modes – language, visuals, music – reinforce each other to create a more or less hegemonic message.

For instance, a woman dressed in red (the official Party/patriotic colour), singing in the official dialect, against the backdrop of a fluttering Red Flag, with lyrics directly asserting the happy unity of China's 56 ethnic/national groups, gives a clearly readable message of national unity. Even if one disagrees, the message is very clear. At the other end of the spectrum, the modes may seem to pull in different directions leading to messages that are more open to multiple interpretations. For instance, in one scene people may speak different languages, wear different kinds of clothes, and sing in diverse styles. In these instances, the Chinese collective hangs together in 'softer' ways, and in ways that may sometimes be less clear to the viewer/listener.

For the purposes of this research on the national broadcaster, where the party-state has significant control over content, it is important to emphasize that both the hard and soft extremes of production design reflect party-state political positions. Political contestation over meaning production can be read into attempts to construct mutually reinforcing multimodal expressions and more ambiguous multimodal constructions. Both sides of the spectrum may suggest equally authoritative, yet internally contested ideas, such as the need to present a less hardened and more cosmopolitan image in order to win the support of the viewing and listening public. Furthermore, as Duara points out, the boundaries are always fluid and malleable: soft boundaries harden, hard boundaries soften, and 'within a hard community there will always be soft boundaries which may potentially be transformed into hard boundaries' (Duara, 1996:50). I show that CCTV music-entertainment performances can work as powerful constructions of state unity, but at the same time reflect contested ways of representing the Chinese 'self'. Rather than represent a singular monolithic power, the program designs, compiled through different interactions between visual, musical and linguistic modes, work intertextually with a variety of Party, state, official and non-official texts that circulate at any point in time, and there are constant tensions in the way that 'China' and 'Chineseness' are performed as both internally diverse and unified. This theory of multimodality and national identity is used to

represent not a binary opposition of moments that are either closed or open to interpretation, but to reflect the extreme ends of a *spectrum* of production designs that facilitate open and closed readings to varying degrees. The following section details some of the distinct features of language, visuals, and music – the ‘modes’ of television – and the kinds of ideological messages they can carry individually, as well as how they may be used interactively to help construct a sense of Chinese national identity, whether in hard or soft ways.

3.2 The Politics of Performing Identity through Language, Music, and Visuals

Spoken Language - Putonghua

Language itself is a multimodal element that encompasses both sounds, as spoken language, and visuals, as written language (see Kress and van Leeuwen, 1990:2). While television ‘talk’ has rarely been the subject of analysis (exceptions outside of the China context include Tolson, 2001; and Bednarek, 2010 in the context of television drama), the type of language spoken by different people in different roles is critically important for considerations of underlying politics and ideology. Uses of ‘standard’ Mandarin, languages marked as dialects, minority nationality, or foreign languages, as well as ‘official’ styles of speaking and sub-cultural languages like hip hop highlight power struggles within the medium.⁴⁶

While a large number of dialects and types of languages coming under the banner of ‘Chinese’ are spoken in China, the mass media in the PRC has long played an important role in promoting one particular, ‘official’ form of spoken Chinese, which works as a unifying, lingua franca, aiming to draw together the entire nation. Literally translating as ‘common language’,

⁴⁶ See Thøgersen (2006) for an analysis comparing the language of officials (*ganbunese*) and ordinary people in China.

Putonghua was officially adopted by the PRC government as the spoken standard and language of power in October 1955.⁴⁷ As part of active nationwide promotional campaigns, the government made *Putonghua* the language of the mass media and the language of instruction in all schools across the country, and senior state leaders called for popular support and participation. Provincial leaders themselves had trouble communicating at a state level, and *Putonghua* therefore played a significant role in uniting people around the nation-state even at the highest levels of party-state politics. While the promotion of *Putonghua* was dampened in the 1960s and 1970s during the Cultural Revolution with political attention turned to other areas, the revised 1982 PRC constitution stated that *Putonghua* was to again be promoted around the country in schools, government, cinemas, theatres, radio and television. Since the 1980s, with rapid economic development, it has become easier for people in geographically remote areas to access electronic mass media, and this has rapidly increased rates of understanding of *Putonghua*, which continues to be the overwhelming language PRC's radio and television broadcasts. By 1999, about 90% of people in the PRC could understand *Putonghua*, and about 50% spoke it, and since then these rates have expanded significantly (Chen P., 1999:23-30).

With their special roles in modelling the national standard, hosts and professional performers appearing on PRC broadcast media go through strict training to ensure that their accents are standard.⁴⁸ According to a SARFT policy, the use of dialects and languages other than *Putonghua* are officially prohibited in television broadcasts (Guo, Z., 2009:2,9). However, different 'dialects' of Chinese, minority languages and foreign languages, particularly English, are in fact used from time to time. For instance,

⁴⁷ Also referred to as *Hanyu* (the language of the Han), or Modern Standard Mandarin, this variant was sanctioned under CCP rule after 1949. For more on the politics behind the promotion of *Putonghua* (and simplified characters) see DeFrancis (1984).

⁴⁸ SBS Global Village, 2 March 2010, had an episode on Chinese schools which featured a student being trained in 'correct' standard Mandarin. There are a wide variety of textbooks available for sale in China on 'broadcast language' for the training for all reporters and hosts, even specialized books for children hosts (*zhichiren*). School and university teachers as well as public servants are also expected to have near-perfect *Putonghua* and there are regular tests to prove competency in the standard dialect.

dialects are often used in ‘cross-talk’ skits for the purpose of comedy – the dialect being perceived as inherently comic in contrast to the ordinariness of the official language.

In the prelude to the Asian Games held in Guangzhou in 2010, Shenzhen local television also went to efforts to assure audiences that promoting Putonghua (*tuiguang Putonghua*) did not contradict efforts to ‘save’ the local ‘dialect’ Cantonese (*Guangdonghua*). In one report, ‘outside workers’ (*waidi mingong*) living in Guangdong and who could not understand Cantonese were interviewed alongside locals who could yet not speak Putonghua, and *both* languages were acknowledged as ‘important’. It also stressed that the National Ministry of Radio and Television (now SARFT) had specifically given permission for three ‘pure’ Cantonese language stations to operate locally since 1988. Nonetheless, the importance of *Putonghua*, was still emphasized. In what may seem like an appeal to respectful treatment of migrant workers in the harmonious society discourse, the report emphasized that the thirty million migrant workers in Guangdong had the right to watch and listen to media in a language with which they were familiar. It also stressed that many people visiting for the Asian Games would also not be able to understand Cantonese, which is why *Putonghua* had to be emphasized.⁴⁹ In January 2011, the English language *China Daily* reported an announcement by Huang Sheng, Vice-Governor of East China’s Shandong Province, that TV programs with local dialects would be gradually phased out during prime time in order to raise the levels of Putonghua, given the leading role of the media in promoting Putonghua. To give an impression of balance, and a context where alternative voices are increasingly heard, the article ended with the worries of some linguistic experts that some dialects would disappear and the need for a multi-lingual environment for a more harmonious society, but no blame was put on any

⁴⁹ Report on the use of Cantonese on television in Guangdong province, ‘There is no contradiction between promoting Putonghua and protecting Cantonese’ (*Tuiguangputonghua yu baocun yueyu bing bu maodun*). Shenzhen Television (2010). Available at: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTkxOTkxMjAw.html.

government policies (Song W., 2011). The predominant focus on *Putonghua* clearly reflects national-level politics and influences.

Correct Formulations

The CCP has consistently taken the issue of spoken and written language seriously, not only stressing the need to use a common standard dialect, but also the use of ‘correct formulations’ (i.e. particular phrases to be used in spoken and written language) in order to avoid ‘ideological confusion among the masses’ and to produce certain effects on feelings, thoughts and actions in order to maintain social control (Schoenhals, 1992:8-9, 22). The Party’s manipulation of language has led to the situation where some formulations cannot be employed while others must be, effectively limiting the scope and content of communication (Schoenhals, 1992:121, 109). Editors-in-chief from major official media organizations are still required to attend weekly meetings where the CCP’s Central Propaganda Minister issues guidelines on what can be reported and what should not be, what should be emphasized, and to what extent stories can be covered. Furthermore, propaganda units continue to provide the exact wording from time to time to ensure the creation of a unified voice (Yu, 2001:205). While formulations are usually discussed in relation to news reporting, I argue that certain kinds of formulations (e.g. ‘the Chinese people/*Zhonghua minzu*’, ‘56 nationalities’, ‘unity of the nationalities’, ‘harmonious society’ etc.) are clearly used and emphasized in CCTV music-entertainment television programs as well, particularly through on-screen text, lyrics of songs, and hosts’ discourse. While formulations are evident, this does not mean that language used in CCTV programming is *always* formulaic. Nor does it mean that language is not used creatively and in different ways even within a single program. These days both formulaic and non-formulaic language can be used to ‘political’ effect. For instance, trendy, youth language with Taiwanese-inflected accents may be used to attract a younger demographic who may simultaneously be exposed to the formulaic expressions in the language of hosts.

To extend the notion of ‘formulations’ multimodally, in the context of music-entertainment television we may think of visual and aural/musical ‘formulations’ as well. For instance, repeated images of the red flag fluttering and the use of a ‘national’ style of music (see Chapter 4) often accompany the linguistic formulations in attempts to reinforce an ideological message. There are also moments where the multimodal expressions are less formulaic, suggesting attempts to overcome restrictions in the use of language and other visual and musical modes of expression, perhaps in order to attract youth audiences. Formulaic language could potentially be combined with contradictory messages in the form of visuals or music.

Noting who speaks and who does not can also be particularly revealing of the power and politics at play. For instance, there are many performers, such as dancers and on-screen audiences, who never say a word. Hosts often have the power to put into verbal language an interpretation of what will be or has been performed. Certainly, it is possible that audiences ignore hosts’ explanations, yet, it is the host’s *attempt* to control the interpretation of performances, often in ways that stress party-state ideology, that is significant.

Written Language – Simplified Characters

On-screen text is another rich and under-emphasized avenue for analyzing the politics of language as visually presented on television. In PRC music-entertainment television, on-screen text includes karaoke-like subtitles with the lyrics of songs, running subtitles that ‘explain’ on-screen content, text that labels the names and places of origin of people, titles of programs, and large text imprinted over the top of images or evident in set designs. While different fonts may be used to express a more serious or relaxed tone, the use of simplified characters, which are used across all mainland PRC media and in all PRC schools, ensures an obvious ideological imprint is left on the

television screen. Like the official spoken form, these characters are part of an ongoing language policy that first began to be officially endorsed in the mainland in the 1950s aimed at increasing literacy among the masses (DeFrancis, 1984:260-1). Chinese viewers from Taiwan or Hong Kong, or elsewhere, who use traditional characters, are likely to be fully aware of the visual differences between the ‘Chinese’ characters visible on PRC mainland programming and in other areas. The uniqueness of the PRC’s spoken and written text in media contexts is particularly important to note in the context of programs that are actively attempting to interpellate a singular global Chinese audience.

The content of on-screen text, created by editors in post-production and for ‘live’ television, also often serves to ‘narrow’ the range of possible interpretations, create particular ideological pulls, and ‘domesticate’ the visuals (Chua, 2008:77). This follows the theory of cultural theorist Roland Barthes who, in the context of printed texts, argues that images like photographs need words (e.g. captions) to fix their meaning and tell us what the image means. The meaning of images as well as other semiotic codes with a visual impact like dress are seen to be dependent on language to constrain what would otherwise be too wide a range of possible interpretations (Barthes, 1977:39; also see Hall, 1997:228; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1990:3; van Leeuwen, 2008:137; Knox, 2009:177).⁵⁰ Running subtitles often frame song and dance performances in languages other than *Putonghua* (usually minority languages) through translations into simplified Chinese characters, and provide background information on instrumental pieces (usually ‘traditional’/minority pieces). On-screen titles also frame the content of programs by highlighting the ‘theme’ for the particular week. These themes are usually based on the locations for roaming shows (e.g. ‘Enter into Beijing’, ‘Enter into Lijiang’), introduce different areas of China as part of the whole nation, and feature political events that are celebrated as

⁵⁰ Barthes (1977:39) wrote that captions help readers to choose ‘the correct level of perception’ and allows them to focus their gaze and understanding. The linguistic message guides ‘interpretation, constituting a kind of vice which holds the connotated meanings from proliferating’, and limits the ‘projective power of the image’.

having national significance, such as Labour Day, National Day, which celebrates the founding of the PRC, and political consultative meetings.

Lyrics

Song lyrics are another significant linguistic feature on CCTV music-entertainment television programs. Lyrics can be highly formulaic, but popular music developed for other contexts can be reworked to fit program goals in both overtly and less obviously ideological ways. In the majority of songs on CCTV's music-entertainment programs, the lyrics are easily understandable and clearly articulated in *Putonghua*. Ease of comprehension of lyrics is reinforced through having written lyrics superimposed on the screen in written form as subtitles so that the auditory and visual languages reinforce each other. The visual and sung reinforcement of lyrics may be employed not just for added emphasis but also to draw in audiences who may be able to read Chinese but speak different dialects, and thus to interpellate as large an audience as possible. Further, the vast majority of songs on CCTV music-entertainment television have lyrics. The dominance of words over the instrumental music is emphasized by the fact that the singer is always visible on stage but other musicians, orchestras, or bands are rarely present on stage. Pre-recorded musical accompaniment is usually used instead. It thus seems clear that producers of the programs believe that lyrics (the words imbedded in music) require special attention. It is not surprising then to read many political slogans emanating from the lyrics across a range of genres, including popular music such as Han Hong's 'Sky Train' (discussed in Chapter 4).

Music, Memories, and Layers of Meaning

While the physical and emotive attractiveness of the beat rather than lyrics are often the focal point of sung music, this can be reversed, and the beat can become a medium for delivering the lyrics in a rhythmic way, sending the message deep into the minds of the listener (Lull, 1992:21). As artistic

works, lyrics are often particularly open to reinterpretation and can be easily ‘manipulated’ by hosts and television producers to fit in with particular program themes. When lyrics interact with spoken language and other visual imagery, they can acquire new connotations. For instance, in America, after the 9-11 attacks, songs like Billy Joel’s ‘New York State of Mind’ were inscribed with new meanings through juxtaposition with other media messages and visual symbolism in the context of a national television tribute for America’s rescue workers. Forman (2002:194-5) notes that:

The song might have once been interpreted as a melancholy, heartfelt homage to the city and its influence on the composer’s sensibilities, but after it has been performed by the artist with a simple prop – a fireman’s helmet – resting atop the piano (as it was on *America: A Tribute to Heroes* telethon), new connotative meanings are motivated.

Those from across the spectrum of politics understand that music’s power comes from its intertextual associations and multimodal connections and realise that songs can be used for a wide spectrum of political purposes to agitate, appease, and unify audiences. For the purposes of appeasement, American troops in Europe during World War Two were sent records of Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald, and were able to listen to rock, soul, rap, and country on Armed Forces Radio when fighting in Korea and Vietnam. Nazi Germany used music to help promote absolute political and social control (Lull, 1992:25). In the context of the ‘America: A Tribute to Heroes’ telethon, Jimi Hendrix’s performance of the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ may have suggested support for American unity and patriotism, but would have had suggested something very different in the context of the 1969 anti-establishment Woodstock festival (Forman, 2002:194-5). In China, the classic patriotic song ‘The Glory of Blood’ (*Xueran de fengcai*) was radicalized by demonstrators in the context of the 1989 Tiananmen rallies

(see documentary *The Gate of Heavenly Peace (Tiananmen)*, Long Bow, 1995).

Notably, whether diluted or enhanced with radical connotations, previously dominating meanings are not eradicated, but remain layered under the surface of new ones. Once the general meaning of the lyrics are known, even instrumental versions of the song can give rise to a range of reactions and emotions based on previous uses. While the lyrics are still open to a plurality of meanings, particular performance styles, in specific contexts, with links to political and cultural agendas, can serve to ‘reduce the interpretive frame’ (Forman, 2002:194-198).

Music as Unifying – Smoothing Rough Edges, Serving as Badges of Identity

Unlike other forms of expression, music is thought to play a special role in *unifying* (van Leeuwen, 1999:196-7) both modes and audiences. Music is able to tie words and pictures together into a convincing whole through the associations and values it brings to the event (Cook, 1998:22). It is thought to be able to ‘round out the sharp edges, smooth roughness, and mask contradictions and spatial or temporal discontinuity with its own sonic and harmonic continuity’ (Gorbman, 1987:59). This unifying capacity can give the impression of ‘unconsciously’ infusing audiences with emotional meanings, and moving feelings directly ‘from heart to heart’ (Cook, 1998:21; Lull, 1992:22; van Leeuwen 1999:196). By examining the use of sounds and music in television productions, we can begin to assess the ways that television texts may *attempt* to ‘envelop’, ‘unify’ and touch the hearts of audiences.

Furthermore, as Lewis (1992:135) explains, music can also be a powerful ‘badge of identity – a means of showing others (and ourselves) to what cultural group, or groups, we belong or aspire to belong’. Like language and visuals, music is another ‘framework of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values with which people define their worlds, express their feelings, and

make their judgments'. McClary and Walser (1990) also note how elements of pop music – melody, rhythm, beat, harmony, lyrics, and timbre – are 'embedded with a semiotics of meaning that can create a sense of community, crystallize imaginary identities, and create sentimental adventures for the audience'. Simon Frith (2000:317) also argues that 'shared myths and memories' are often 'articulated musically', and given 'instrumental, rhythmic and lyric form'. Furthermore, people can be physically 'mobilized by music' through concerts that bring crowds together and offer experiences of 'collective power'. As Frith notes, 'Under certain circumstances...music becomes a source of collective consciousness which promotes group cohesion and social activities that in turn have political consequences' (2000:317). Music inflects notions of us and otherness. Singing aloud and together can be a powerful way of expressing solidarity and pride. For instance, national anthems and certain instrumentation and melodies can instantly conjure up patriotic feelings. Particularly significant in the context of China where there are major and growing inequalities between rich and poor, music is thought to have the potential to bring people together from across different social classes (Lewis, 1992:135-145).

Singing is something 'anyone' can do, and if the lyrics are 'easy' and supported by thematic repetitions (or 'hooks') there is a greater chance of listeners catching on and singing along (Lull, 1992:4) – as advertisers are well aware. Finally, CCTV music-entertainment programs often like to give the impression of national 'unity' multimodally through the linguistic metaphor of *The Same Song* (the name of a flagship popular music-entertainment program and a common phrase used to designate unity even in non-musical contexts), as well as through the visual image and musical sound of 'everyone' singing *The Same Song* (see Chapter 5 for an example of how *The Same Song* is used to connect Chinese in the mainland and with their 'family' in Hong Kong). Other programs like *Music Tells You* (*Yinyue Gaosu Ni*), broadcast on CCTV-15 (observed in 2009), suggest that CCTV and party-state propagandists perceive music as having the capacity to play an important didactic role in the education of audiences.

Evoking Strong National Identities Through Lyrics and Instrumentation

In order to access the huge Chinese market and cross political borders, a pan-Chinese identity is often evoked through the music (Lee and Huang, 2002:115). This is can be done directly through the lyrics, as with Liu Dehua's (Andy Lau) hit 'Chinese People' (*Zhongguo ren*).⁵¹ The lyrics explicitly refer to the common 'suffering' of people with the 'same blood', who have 'no distinction between us', who desire to 'let the world know' about their strong and united identity as 'Chinese' as they 'march forward' into the future. Released in 1997, it was timed to coincide with Hong Kong's handover to Beijing. In appealing to the party-state sanctioned promotion of Greater Chinese nationalism, he reaped significant commercial rewards (Chow, 2007:99).

A pan-Chinese identity can also be achieved through adding quintessentially 'Chinese' instrumentation, such as the Chinese flute (*dizi*), shawm/trumpet (*suona*), Chinese drums, or the Chinese lute (*pipa*). Liu's 'Chinese People', for instance, features Chinese drums to establish a sense of a strong Chinese identity, alongside other more usual features of transnational contemporary pop music such as electric guitars. Instrumental music is also important because it is able to encode cultural symbols and 'images' (Goodwin, 1992). Music can suggest 'colour' (it can be 'dark' or 'bright' and uplifting), 'space' (open or enclosed), and 'place' (rolling hills, tranquil rivers, the vast sea). Its tempo and rhythms can suggest movements. Liu's 'Chinese People' makes use of a strong, steady beat suggestive of troops marching forward. These 'aural images' can then be verified through on-screen images, body language, gesture and dance (Goodwin, 1992). For instance, Liu's video clip features guards walking forward on the Great Wall, each

⁵¹ Music Video for Andy Lau's 'Chinese' is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8X_I8D2KLwg. See Fung (2003:264) and Chow (2007:95-99) for more on the politics of Liu's 'Chinese people' in the way it appeals to both a broad fan base and the authorities. Fung (2003:264) notes, for instance, that the CD design for this hit was in the shape of a map of China, thus highlighting China's national sovereignty, and that Liu was honoured as the 'Pearl of the Orient' for this song at a national televised awards evening.

holding red flags with the words ‘Chinese People’ painted on them. Liu is seen standing at a high position looking down on the wall, the men and the flags, who all seem to form part of a strong China. Strong, assertive rhythms, virile timbres and aggressive atmospheres may be connected with strong, masculine identities; and fanfare-like brass passages and male choirs chanting in unison march-like songs are musical clichés for national strength, war and the military, as is the case with ‘Chinese People’. Crescendos can be used to generate a sense of velocity, energy, and motion. Further, the structure of music itself (e.g. ABA, strophe-refrain, chorus-bridge), offers a mixture of ‘tension’ and ‘release’ and contributes to the telling of stories, such as the moral lesson of ‘pleasure after hard work’ (Martinelli, 2006:108-111). CCTV’s music-entertainment productions adopt many such musical symbols as part of its multimodal approach to telling stories about the nation and the state.

Visual Messages – Sets, Clothing, Cameras, Colour

Visuals in the context of music-entertainment television include clothing, set design, colour, movements of people, dance, body language, camera angles, and on-screen images created through post-production editing. Cameras create impressions as they swivel from side to side, tilt up and down, zoom in and out, and swoop around performers. Drawing on van Leeuwen (2008:138-147), the camera angle and distance can tell us a great deal about social relations, power and the representation of people. High angles can give the impression of ‘looking down’ on subjects, while low angles can stimulate audiences to ‘look up’ to people designated as authorities or role models. Close up shots at a level angle can depict people as friends and give a sense of closeness, while long shots can give an impression of distance, or a sense of being strangers. Hosts often look directly at the camera in interaction with audiences, while other performers who do not look back become a spectacle for our dispassionate, objective gaze.

Some people or types of people are regularly seen on the shows, while others are often or entirely excluded. For instance, while pop singers are embraced and indeed cultivated by the state (e.g. see Han Hong in Chapter 4), ‘rock’ musicians rarely appear on CCTV as the party-state has not embraced this particular art form. Poor farmers also rarely appear, and when they do they may appear as spectacles for middle class viewers (see Sun and Zhao, 2009) or to highlight the success of particular party-state policies such as those related to the ‘New Socialist Countryside’ (*Shehui zhuyi de xin nongcun*). By examining who is included and excluded visually, and who appears in the background and excluded from speaking, we can also gather important information about power and control. For instance, nameless minorities are often depicted wearing colourful costumes and dancing in the background, while a professional singer, who is identified by name, sings or host speaks *for them*. The individualized, close-ups of hosts and singers may highlight that they are to be held in higher esteem or paid more attention to than the collective, unnamed background dancers, who are categorized collectively by their similar costumes (see discussion of ‘Love My China’ and singer Song Zuying in Chapter 4).

The way that images for television are captured through cameras, cut, edited, and re-connected for broadcast can also provide insights into how messages are ‘framed’ (e.g. see Macken-Horarik, 2003b:288 for framing in a print context). A visual focus on stars with spectacular dress, along with an audio focus on their voice that overpowers all other sounds, is a strategy determined to concentrate attention on the particular person (rather than some background image for instance), constructing the performer as someone to be held in esteem. On the other hand, a mass of faceless audiences waving glowsticks in the darkness can be suggestive of solidarity and unity.

Colour symbolism, particularly the use of red and yellow, is also significant in the context of CCTV performances of national and state identity. Like songs, colours may be imbued with a number of contradictory and

overlaying meanings as they are used to represent different things over time. The red of the Chinese national flag for instance used to stand for the revolutionary classes, but in the post-socialist era has become significant as a colour of a single united Chinese nation, and has taken on its traditional symbolic meaning of good luck. The yellow stars on the flag used to indicate a racial and genealogical dimension (perhaps linking to the yellow race popular in colonial Western rhetoric as well as the Yellow Emperor, the mythological ancestor of all Chinese), but this racial meaning is now downplayed in official linguistic discourse as the state tries to explain that they stand for all the nationalities (Guo Y., 2004:39). As singer, songwriter Hou Dejian explained in a democracy rally in Hong Kong in the late 1980s, not all Chinese have ‘black hair, black eyes, and yellow skin’. Although he had originally written this image into his song ‘Descendants of the Dragon’, now that he had been to China and knew the ‘true’ situation of ‘the Chinese’, he asked the audiences to change the words so that *all* Chinese people including the Uyghurs, for instance, could be included.⁵² Yellow is also increasingly associated with the nationalist symbolism drawn from the powerful gushing silted water of the Yellow River, as well as the named Yellow Mountain (one of the most famous mountains in China) that both appear in the lyrics of ‘Descendants of the Dragon’ and countless other songs.

Marking Place and Time through Visuals and Music

The stage is a key visual feature in CCTV music-entertainment television and to stand on ‘the CCTV stage’ (*Zhongyang dianshi tai de wutai*) is held up in the program design itself to be an honour and a privilege. This privilege is emphasized not only through being an elevated platform where most performances take place, but in the ways it is spoken about, the direction of lighting, and the apparent location from which most of the sounds are emitted (e.g. singing and talking) or directed towards (e.g.

⁵² See clip of Hou Dejian at a democracy rally in Hong Kong
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9rC2_ZYnP0.

cheering and clapping). The stage is also often home to a video screen that is captured on camera adding another layer of symbols and signs. Images projected on on-stage screens range from the Red Party Star and Tiananmen Square, to psychedelic computer generated visuals, to images of farmers at work. Lighting, like music, is also able to affect moods with its relative softness and brightness. Strobe lighting is sometimes utilized with dance music in an attempt perhaps to construct a sense of energy and pace with various socio-political implications.

At the same time as creating special stages for performance, television contexts are real performance/social places (studios, outdoor venues). It is through the broadcast of these *specific locations* that *national spaces* are constructed. For some programs, representatives from different places around China come to the 'centre' to perform on the CCTV stage, such as is the case with programs like *Sinophiliac*, the *CCTV Youth Singing Competition*, and *Folksongs China*, which are staged in CCTV studios that are located in China's capital city, Beijing (see Lu, 2009 for discussion on Beijing time/space). At the same time, various other programs like *The Same Song* and *Happy in China* travel around the country linking the nation's most well-known performers to local towns and cities. These town performances are produced for the entire nation to see and hear should they wish to switch on their televisions. In this way, the towns are therefore incorporated into a broader image of the national family. As Morley and Robins (1995:72-5) note, place is central to identity, and the media plays a particularly important role in transforming surfaces and frontiers, and defining spaces of nationality and identity.

The Beijing performances are usually in the CCTV studios, while the touring performances are usually outdoors, in local town and city squares, often strategically erected to the backdrop of newly built buildings or new civic buildings in the process of construction, or in global cities like New York, Vancouver and London where large numbers of Chinese people live. The television spaces of these programs are symbolic of key socio-political

concerns of the day – economic development, the Olympic Games and global Chinese solidarity etc. – and constantly link the developed and developing parts of China as well as Chinese around the world into a coherent network. Such spaces are essential to the storytelling that television engages in and constructs: the (political) centre bringing progress to the periphery, gaps being filled between developed and developing areas, the nation being strengthened, and progress being made towards an ever brighter future on a global scale. The gaps can also be read as a constant reminder of ongoing inequalities.

Place is also marked and constructed through music, and songs are able to evoke memories and feelings about the places they refer to or where one was when they heard the song (Lewis, 1992:135). As Bruce Chatwin notes, ‘Music...is a memory bank for finding one’s way in the world’, and a ‘musical phrase’ may act as a ‘map reference’ (Chatwin in Mitchell, 2009:i). CCTV music-entertainment programs use music along with lyrics, spoken language, and visuals to ‘produce place’, to evoke hometowns, and spaces of movement and migration. As Lipsitz (1994:4) explains, songs contain references that ‘tap memories and hopes about particular places’ amongst audiences, and ‘lyrics, musical forms, and specific styles of performance’ are used by musicians to ‘evoke attachment to or alienation from particular places’. While Lipsitz is mainly focused on the significance of place and alienation in the context of anti-establishment struggles for political recognition, hegemonic political groups are also part of this conversation as they attempt to express and maintain their legitimacy through the evocation of place, connection, and belonging through music. The actual sense of legitimacy, whether of hegemonic or oppositional forces, is closely connected to how audiences ‘imagine themselves in different imaginary geographies’ as a result of engagement with musical performances, as well as how much they connect with the performers’ articulation of their individual and collective identities (Cohen S., 1998:286-287).

In a similar way, music can also mark time. Old songs and songs depicting cultural ‘original’ others can evoke a sense of nostalgia for an innocent past, which some contemporary consumers may wish to purchase to enter a different, exotic world, away from their own modern, urban societies that may be seen as jaded and corrupt (Frith, 2000:313).

Power Over the Production of Meaning

Even though images, sounds and language are likely to be ‘read’ differently by different people in different contexts, it is only certain groups who have the power and capital to produce, accumulate, and consume messages, including in relation to the construction of Chineseness. Shu-mei Shih (2007:14-35) argues that the Sinophone identity – defined as a linguistically diverse group of Sinitic language speakers who live outside of China – risks being appropriated by the Chinese state. By centring China as place of origin for all Sinophones as their cultural motherland and source of value, the state is able to demonstrate its global influence and Sinophones may be interpellated in ways that may legitimize and maintain socio-political and Han-centric status quo. I agree. CCTV music-entertainment programs are clearly attempting to give an impression of a seamless global Chinese identity. The programs also attempt to give an impression that there is a unified group of Chinese audiences around the world who speak the same language (perhaps with slight variations), who like listening to the same music and watching the same entertainment television programs.

By carefully studying televised cultures, including the imbedded and interacting musical, visual and linguistic cultures, we can learn about their creators, how they have been influenced, and their attempts to influence audiences (Lewis, 1992:150). Drawing on Raymond Williams (1977), Lewis argues that particular musical cultures can operate in three main ways. They can support hegemonic culture; they can be alternative and coexist with power culture; and they can be oppositional (Lewis, 1992:145). In this study, the kinds of musical cultures that appear on CCTV are mainly

supportive of the hegemonic political forces, but also include the use of alternative forms that coexist with the power culture. For instance, CCTV and the Chinese party-state use both 'local' and imported popular music in ways that fulfil their own needs.

In the early 1990s, James Lull argued that the Chinese government embraced Western classical music as part of its 'spiritual modernization' (e.g. the 'national' style, described in Chapter 4), but strictly limited importation of youth-oriented popular music (Lull, 1992:17). More recently, scholars like Anthony Fung (2008a) are suggesting that popular commercial music is entering the market through negotiation with the party-state. While certain forms of youth-oriented music are restricted (e.g. rock music) in television productions, other imports like rhythm and blues (R&B) are used strategically in attempts to draw in an important youth market to CCTV programming for both commercial and political reasons. Indeed, as Lewis (1992:148) notes the kind of music that is 'approved' or 'unapproved' in China is always changing, and this follows shifts in ideology and power negotiations.

While for individual musicians and singers, their music may simply be understood as the result of accidental friendships, networks and relationships (Frith, 2000:319), in the context of party-state television, where demands from the state are evident, the uses of musical production need to be understood in relation to political, economic, and cultural contexts (Fung, 2008b:70). In the context of Chinese pop music, Fung (2008b:71) has argued that the key to commercial success in China is that music must first meet the Party's political agenda, and the state is able to regulate the type of music that gets performed through a system of rewards and sanctions. Any music that makes it to the CCTV stage and the television screen has filtered through a fine-tuned system of what is politically acceptable and what is not. This does not mean that audience preferences are not taken into account. Rather, there is a constant balance between providing content that satisfies the party-state and content that has the

potential to attract audiences. I now turn to examine the role of audiences in the meaning-making process and explain how I theorize audiences in this text-based study.

3.3 Conceptualizing Audiences in a Textual Analysis of Television

Audience Research – Television Audiences are Not Dupes

As noted in the introductory chapter, this study does not engage in audience reception studies. However, it does draw on secondary ethnographic audience research as an important backdrop to the overall television context. Firstly, it is important to point out that while the party-state hopes to indoctrinate audiences through info- or indoctrinainment, studies have shown that audiences are not passive dupes. Lull (1991), Sun (2009), and others have demonstrated that Chinese television audiences often read between the lines and challenge propositional and ideological knowledge, and the implication that audiences are easily ‘tricked’ by state propaganda is misleading (Sun and Zhao, 2009:98). Zhong (1998:100) also argues that Chinese television audiences are ‘dynamic, heterogeneous and conscious producers of a diverse range of meanings’. Furthermore, people in China often read, view, and listen to media in the knowledge that the media is a mouthpiece of the party-state and consume it precisely with the intention of finding out what the government wants them to know, see, and hear (Sun, 1995a:88). Lull (1991:170) goes even further to argue that television has ‘fuelled the imagination of the people in ways that far exceed what government planners had in mind when they first promoted the medium’s widespread adoption’ by introducing, reinforcing, and popularizing ideas and images (and, I would add, sounds/music) that have changed the way the Chinese public think.

Zhong (2002), on the other hand, argues that many Chinese audiences are simply abandoning Chinese television altogether, with many using the television monitor for alternative activities such as karaoke (where the songs chosen and control over the microphone are not decided by an authority), playing games, and watching DVDs of dramas and films from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the USA. He argues that many viewers, especially younger and middle-aged viewers, are rejecting official top-down distributed Chinese television channels, which position them as 'passive, homogenous and learning pupils', and have 'liberated themselves from the yoke of the seemingly powerful medium of official propaganda television' through the use of the television monitor for other purposes. It is really only the majority of the senior generation, who are less adaptive to change, who are taking a more regular interest in the offerings of broadcasts on CCTV and other party-state channels (Zhong, 2002:125-6, 141).

However, knowing that the television programs are propaganda does not automatically mean that people are against watching such programs. Clearly, state-controlled television still has the potential to emotionally affect audiences. As Sun (2009:55, 76) has shown with reference to CCTV relief events following the Sichuan earthquake, audiences can be moved to tears through 'innovative poetics' involved in television construction. Audiences of Chinese television, who have attended PRC schools and grown up with the PRC mass media, will be familiar with much of the discourse on television, and may at times be happy to submit to dominant messages of the program.⁵³ In the early days of television, some state institutions even helped workers to purchase televisions so they could watch particular programs at home instead of coming in for meetings. Yet, by replacing regular political meetings with televisions in informal private settings, workers were actually given a position where they could make choices in

⁵³ See Liu, 2008 for a related discussion on officially legitimized textbooks for Chinese children. Some audiences may assume the knowledge on CCTV to be more authoritative and superior to other stations (modified from Wallace, 1992:60 who talks about writers).

what they watched and given much more freedom in how they responded to programs (Lull, 1991).⁵⁴

Audience reception studies are able to highlight the role of television viewing in every day lives. Fung and Ma (2002:72, 77), for instance, conducted an ethnographic study of audiences in Guangzhou and their consumption of television dramas from Hong Kong. They found that many viewers from higher socio-economic backgrounds actively engage with the programs by trying out the different consumer products such as clothing ‘advertised’ in the programs in order to perform a more modern identity. Some even modified their habitat and lifestyle to the extent that they migrated to countries with a high intensity of modernity in order to fulfil expectations of modern living. Such programming and associated activities fit within the context of a country and region going through rapid economic change, and highlight audience desires to engage with external cultures and a market economy. Their interpretations and actions resulting from watching certain programs (in this case, imported programs) may or may not be in line with political expectations of the economic reforms. Whilst I have not seen any in-depth analysis of audience studies on CCTV’s music-entertainment programs, it seems quite obvious that CCTV programs *aim* to guide viewers in more controlled ways towards preferred ideological interpretations compared to imported programs.

Trend Towards Audience Participation

It is also important to note television stations’ attempts to utilize innovative ways to enable off-screen audiences to interact more actively in the production of actual programs, thus blurring the boundary between implied audiences who may be physically far away and on-screen performers. Popular techniques for encouraging participation include the invitation of

⁵⁴ This differs to other contexts like classrooms and political meetings at workplaces that serve to impose certain ‘correct readings’ (Wallace, 1992:60). Wallace gives the example of school children who are being assessed on ‘correct’ understandings of texts as explained by teachers. They may not be in positions to assert themselves against power of text in the context of the classroom. But if they were in their own homes they may be more critical.

audiences to send letters or SMS responses. These may be read out by hosts during programs or counted as part of voting for favorite acts. Such forms of participation can also be used to help generate income (e.g. directly through SMS charges) and may make television attractive to particular audience 'markets'.

While these are usually harmless forms of participation from people scattered around the country (or world), unseen off-screen audiences can occasionally be seen as 'threats' to the authoritative status quo. An oft-cited example is when Chinese audiences were able to choose their idols for the first time during the *Super Girl* contest on Hunan Satellite Television in 2005. In what some saw as a 'rehearsal' for democracy (Van Zoonen in Fung, 2009:184), a 400-million strong audience selected the winner through instant text-messages. The champion was Li Yuchun (Chris Li), who appealed to many audiences with her androgynous looks and a voice that could not easily be recognized as either male or female. It appears that Li was not the ideal choice for the cultural and political gatekeepers, and soon after this *Super Girl* sensation, new SARFT regulations came into action in 2006 aimed at avoiding 'vulgar or gross styles' and safeguarding the morals of younger generation (Fung, 2009:184-5).

Yet, the actual approach of using technology like text messaging to promote audience interaction continues, including on CCTV where an SMS voting system was adopted during the 2008 'People's Choice Award' for the prestigious *CCTV Youth Singing Competition*. Audiences could also participate in the program by sending in SMS messages and letters, and some of these were read aloud by the hosts. Even if it is done in a controlled way, and even if the interactions are 'fake' (Zhong, 2007:79), the aim is to both enable income to flow, and to at least give the *impression* of a more interactive, open and 'democratic' television (and political) system.

Various Readings, but Interpretation Still Depends on the Text

Whether or not they are directly interrogated about their viewing and listening habits and personal responses, or observed ethnographically, audiences are critical to an understanding of television's operations and design. However, while interpretations ultimately depend on audiences' personal reactions, the construction of meaning, including the meaning of identity, is developed through interactions with the television's multimodal texts. In other words, while there is never only one possible meaning for any particular discursive text, television producers and directors may try to fix and privilege certain meanings over others through the multimodal ways in which television texts are constructed. Strategies of audio and visual production are employed to create preferred starting points for audience interpretation. Through the creative use and design of audio-visual and linguistic modes by on-stage performers, as well as behind-the-scenes directors, set-designers and post-production editors, television texts establish various *discursive positions* with which audiences can identify (or from which they dissociate). It is these texts – the final products – that are the focus of this study.

All television output, including broadcast talk, music, body movements, clothing, and other signs and symbols, is 'knowingly, wittingly *public*'. That is, they are designed to be overheard and seen by audiences who are situated elsewhere (Scannell, 1991:1, 11, original emphasis). The idea of 'implied' or 'intended' audiences can be used to refer to subjects and identities that are formed through the various techniques and strategies of television performance. They are the identities that television producers and performers 'imagine' the un-seen and un-heard off-screen audiences to be. Multimodal signs and discourses work to create and mould particular kinds of implied audience identities or audience 'markets'. For instance, sexy cutting edge fashion-designs combined with trendy Taiwanese songs, may imply an attempt to draw in younger audiences, while older classics and more conservative style of dress, more traditional styles of music, and a

conventional sense of modesty may be an attempt to appeal to older audiences. The incorporation of images of 'live' audiences at the scene of the performance may also be used to represent or imply the kinds of audiences whom the directors expect will be watching and listening. Furthermore, hosts may directly address off-screen audiences, and use collective pronouns like 'us' and 'we' to attempt to construct viewers as part of a united group, such as 'the Chinese nation'.

Ideology and Commerce: Appealing to All Chinese and Specifically to Urban Consumers

CCTV's implied audiences are paradoxically both inclusive and exclusive. On the one hand, CCTV is supposed to 'fulfill the Party's propaganda orders and it has a socialist obligation to appeal to a broad audience of different social constituents' (Zhao, Y., 2008:159). It attempts to interpellate *all* Chinese audiences in the promotion of propaganda messages of the state. Yet, at the same time, given that CCTV operates on income generated from advertising and sponsorship, audiences are also constructed as 'neoliberal subjects' (Sun and Zhao, 2009:98) who consume market products and advertising messages. Advertisers focus activities not on the broad masses of non-urban, rural, older, less-educated, low-income, and possibly less critical majority, but on reaching out to more affluent, urban, coastal, youth 'markets'. From this perspective, the policies of marketization mean that television must take into greater account the tastes and pleasures of middle and upper class youth since they can afford to purchase products that the advertisers wish to sell. There is therefore a tension over who CCTV's main audiences are, with some scholars arguing that commercial channels and CCTV are shifting away from a focus on the traditional party-state base of the working class and farmers towards the middle class (Zhao, 2008:88; Lu, 2009:123, 117; Ma E., 2000b:27; Fung, 2009:179).

Sun and Zhao (2009:96-8) surmise that lower and rural classes may appear on television as spectacles for middle-class consumption, just as minority

nationality performances are said to appeal to a sense of exoticism for the majority Han audiences. As in the case of foreigners, visual, linguistic, and musical departure from the Chinese sense of self between minorities and farmers and the urban, Han audiences becomes a particular 'source of viewing pleasure' (Chua, 2008:74,78). Thus, while on the one hand, CCTV's mandate is to embrace the entire Chinese population, urban and rural, rich and poor, Han and minority nationalities, it must at the same time specifically appeal to a younger, more affluent, urban, Han audience in order to secure ongoing revenue. This creates many tensions in its programming, and in the performance of the Chinese national identity.

I am not so convinced that CCTV is fully focused on the urban, affluent, middle-class as some music-entertainment programs, like *Passionate Square* (*Jiqing Guangchang*) (not directly addressed in this study given my focus on ethnicity rather than class), do go to some effort to include farmers, 'poor' minorities, and people in small towns. More significantly, CCTV's programs are frequently criticized by the more affluent Internet-savvy urban populations (e.g. see Zhong, 2008:71).

Whether or not specifically catering to middle-class urban audiences, there is little doubt that CCTV is at least being run by people with middle-class urban sensibilities (Sun, 2001b:35). From informal conversations with a few students studying communications in prestigious universities in Beijing's, despite reservations about its strong ideological control, CCTV remains a highly sought after employer, and jobs with the broadcaster remain highly competitive. Applicants with connections and relevant degrees have a better chance to employment. Once securing a prestigious job at the national broadcaster, staff have little choice but to follow the 'rules' of their employer (see Zhong, 2008). One such rule appears to be the need to blur the ever sharpening increases in inequality between rich and poor that have occurred over the reform period (Zhao B., 1999:302), and by presenting all Chinese, no matter how rich or poor, and no matter whether they are urban professionals, migrant workers, or farmers, as part of the same happy

family. One way of taking the attention off class differences is to concentrate instead on ethnic differences, and it is the construction of the multi-ethnic Chinese family that is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Performing the Multi-Ethnic Family

In this chapter, I examine the construction of a unitary multi-ethnic PRC state family through detailed analysis of song and dance performances on CCTV. Through a grounded analysis, I have identified three significant ways in which the politics of China's internal ethnicities are performed. Recognition of each of these ways is important because they each seem to highlight multiple influences on how the notion of China as a multi-ethnic state should be constructed or understood. At the same time, each of these ways works to uphold the overarching Chinese party-state ideology of the 'unitary multi-ethnic state'. The first performance style identified is what I term a multi-ethnic 'orthodox' performance style – a style commonly seen on CCTV. In this case, the easy-to-read, hardened message is the 'fact' that firstly China is made up of 56 nationalities, and secondly that the 55 minorities and the Han majority are united and live happily together. Furthermore, the orthodox style is based on ideas of transforming, developing and modernizing folk song performances in ways that mirror the discourse of 'state development' (*guojia fazhan*) and 'modernization' (*xiandaihua*). Through reinforcing musical styles, visuals and language, this performance style most overtly asserts a collective identity, whereby all Chinese, no matter what 'ethnicity' (*minzu*), are seen to be striving together towards the future, under the leadership of the CCP.

A second style fuses elements of popular music with Chinese minority and Han majority nationality folk music, and reflects an officially sanctioned appeal to youth and urban markets by blending contemporary music with state-sanctioned themes celebrating China's multi-ethnic harmony. Finally, the *yuanshengtai* ('original ecology') style reflects social and state concerns about environmental preservation and the protection of 'intangible cultural heritage', and stresses the need to *preserve* the folk musics of minority nationalities as well as their unique languages, musical instruments, clothing and performance styles. The 'colourful' and 'exotic' folk traditions, once

derided for being un-modern and ‘primitive’ (Jones, 2001:103), are now re-imagined as essential to saving the essence of Chinese culture and identity as a whole in the face of globalization and rapid domestic development.

In all of these styles, minority nationalities on CCTV are most often marked by their unique colourful costumes. Although some minorities may be perceived to look ‘racially’ different, having darker skin, greener eyes etc., on Chinese television a minority ‘ethnic’ performer is most obviously marked by the their dress rather than the colour of their skin. In the television programs, most would be indistinguishable from those performing as Han if it were not for their different clothing. The idea of being a minority nationality is often linked with notions of primitiveness and a special connection to nature. Yet, as Hoddie and Lou (2009:51,66) note, whereas early PRC characterizations of primitiveness were presented as ‘detrimental to political and economic development of the state’, in contemporary times primitiveness has often been used to emphasize the ‘virtues associated with minority lives’, and minorities are praised for their rich and ‘colourful’ cultures, and for ‘providing valuable links to China’s past’. This is particularly the case with the *yuanshengtai* style as we will see later in this chapter. Ways of performing a multi-ethnic China are constantly changing, and this chapter provides a snapshot of three of the most common ways in the period from 2008-2010.

In this chapter I also suggest that the style of performance presented on CCTV’s music-entertainment programs at different moments is often affected by the perceived political importance of the event. Orthodox styles are the basis for special television events of importance for the party-state because they are more likely to create clear and unambiguous messages of multi-ethnic and nation-state unity through tightly concentrated messages; messages created through mutually reinforcing visual, linguistic and musical cues. During ‘politically’ less risky moments, programs may experiment to a greater degree with alternative and more ambiguous ways of negotiating the local and the national, reconciling individual artistic expression and

collective identity, and of unifying ethnic differences with the projection of a singular Chinese nation-state. There are many slippages between these styles, and most programs involve a variety of styles, sometimes even in a single performance the style will shift from one to another. These slippages highlight constant tensions between the desire to promote ‘harder’, nationalistic and ‘softer’, cosmopolitan sides of the party-state. Before delving into the three main identified styles of performing a multi-ethnic China, I have a few points to make on the politics of authenticity in relation to the performance of identity through song and dance on Chinese television.

4.1 The Politics of Authenticity

Performers who appear on CCTV’s music-entertainment programs often perform as one or more of the 56 nationalities and/or as a generic (unmarked) ‘Chinese’. Whether or not performers are really from the particular ethnic group they seem to be representing is hardly ever contested on television. However, it has been taken up as an important issue by the foreign media. In a post-Opening Ceremony press conference at which I was present,⁵⁵ Wang Wei, Vice-President of the Beijing Olympic Games Organizing Committee, noted to members of the foreign press that it was quite normal in China for people to dress up and perform as different Chinese nationalities for the purposes of performing multi-ethnic unity for a media spectacle.

The foreign non-mainland Chinese media, in contrast, have been much more fixated on China’s essentialized identities and the notion of authenticity, and have consistently referred to these performances as constructed aberrations on the part of the party-state. For instance, they made it a primary issue when children ‘wearing a costume representing one of China’s ethnic minorities’ during the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympic

⁵⁵ I took on a short term contract during my research period to work as a reporter for the Olympic News Service during the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games and was assigned to report on press conferences at the Main Press Centre. Run by the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Organising Committee, the service provided a news wire service for international journalists during the period of the Games (Aug 8-24, 2008).

Games were revealed to be ‘actually... members of the Han majority’ (Chao and Leow, 2008:13). The performance of minorities by ‘Han’ children was seen in the same negative vein as a cover-up of other hidden truths that ‘marred’ the ceremony. For instance, negative coverage revealed that a young child (Lin Miaoke) lip-synched because the ‘actual’ singer (Yang Peiyi⁵⁶) was deemed by the authorities as less attractive, and the fireworks displays were revealed to be pre-recorded and digitally enhanced prior to the telecast and not therefore the real thing (Chao and Leow, 2008:13; also see VOA News, 2008).⁵⁷ To many journalists writing for the foreign media, the fact that these scenes were constructed by authorities reflected the idea that some performances of identity are more ‘real’ or authentic than others, rather than the idea that all identities are articulated through performance and that all television is subject to editing and special effects for the purposes of visual spectacle.

Western media criticisms of the Opening Ceremony at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games appeared to be judged from an ideological perspective similar to that explained by Auslander (2008:73-4, 97-8, 103) in the context of televised musical performances in the USA. He argues that for the target (youth) audiences the practice of lip-synching and music videos are rarely a matter of concern, and are rather seen as symptoms of changes in the culture and production of music, including experimentations with new technologies. It is mainly older commentators who judge the performances from an ideology of authenticity and who have ‘accused’ singers like Milli Vanilli, Madonna, Michael Jackson, and Paula Abdul for lip-synching. In the case of the Opening Ceremony in Beijing, this ideology of authenticity was connected to single-tracked assumptions about the CCP/party-state’s assumed engagement in trickery, without acknowledging that such ‘trickery’

⁵⁶ A post-Olympics video of Yang Peiyi singing ‘Ode to the Motherland’ is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9ZNoPUJCu4>

⁵⁷ See clip ‘Olympic Opening Partially Faked’ with negative coverage of these ‘trick’ performances by New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDTV), which is run by Falun Gong supporters out of New York City. The clip ends with a qualifying quote from Chinese dissident Ai Weiwei, the architect of the Bird’s Nest Stadium, a centerpiece of the Beijing Games, saying that the ceremony ‘deceived and humiliated six hundred spectators’: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXxcqYwy-1s>.

is part and parcel of the popular music-entertainment television globally, whereby the visual and sound elements need not have any relation to one another (see Auslander, 2008:100). The constructed nature of the performance, for many Western media observers, was made to fit into an anti-Chinese party-state frame in which the monolithic, ethnocentric Han party-state is consistently criticized for their lack of human rights when it comes to policies on minority nationalities, especially Tibetans. Yet, as Bai (2007:254) explains, even in local Chinese tourism contexts, minorities themselves do not necessarily present/perform their 'own' ethnicity. 'Other' ethnicities are often performed for reasons such as perceived economic gain, such as the case she gave of a Bai nationality woman who ran a Tibet-themed café in Dali. Local workers at some hotels (who are presumably of different ethnicities) also dress in Bai costume to draw in tourists. However, the phenomena of local minorities actively drawing on other minority cultures for their own economic benefit is admittedly a different situation to Han performers playing minorities on state television for overtly ideological purposes.

For the purposes of party-state-endorsed television, which is specifically mandated to entertain and educate citizens on how to think in ideologically 'correct' ways about their national identity, the so-called 'real' identity of performers, at least in the orthodox style performances, is indeed often irrelevant. What is important is that ethnic minorities within China's borders are shown to be essential components of the Chinese nation. Yet, the performance of ethnicity on CCTV is not entirely fixed. As I show below, both Han and minority nationality performers cross the boundaries of stereotypes. Han performers may act as minorities (e.g. Zhu Zheqin), while minorities may perform in elite Han-like roles (e.g. Song Zuying, Han Hong). These blurred boundaries should be recognized as part of China's 'multifaceted and interwoven ethnic, political, and social composition' (Dayton, 2006). Thus, while the officially named 56 categories themselves are rigid, when it comes to issues of authenticity in performance and representation, the approach of the Chinese media can be much more

postmodern than the Western media. Or, to put it another way, the Chinese media chooses to be postmodern when it is politically useful.

4.2 Orthodox Performances of the Collective Multi-Ethnic Nation

The ‘Orthodox’ Style

I use the term ‘orthodox’ to refer to performance styles that clearly emphasizes, through all multimodal expressions, a ‘hardened’ party-state ideology of a happy and united multi-ethnic state entity. Visuals, lyrics, musical style, and the discourse of hosts all work together to stress this same message of unity. Whilst often seen on CCTV, such performances seem particularly mandatory during official national celebrations, events often directly and openly sponsored by the state propaganda department. Although ideological messages (e.g. of national or state unity, stability) are central to the performances, the performances may attempt to innovate and be more colourful and spectacular from year to year in an effort to attract and maintain audiences, advertising and sponsorship. Orthodox performances are not necessarily used throughout entire programs, but are often mixed in with different and more cosmopolitan styles in order to attract a wide range of audiences. There are also a number of variants in orthodox performances on CCTV, as I discuss below, following a brief overview of the history of performing multi-ethnicity in China.

Official Performances of Multi-ethnicity in Socialist China

From 1949 (and earlier) to the 1980s, the primary concern for official performances under Communist rule was to develop and modernize traditional minority nationality and Han styles to fit the new socialist cause

(Jones, 2001).⁵⁸ Some Party officials like Qu Qiubai, elected Minister of Education in the Soviet People's Government and Director of the Art Bureau within the ministry by the First National Congress of 1931,⁵⁹ advocated the technique of putting new lyrics to old folk-song melodies. He argued that by integrating new ideological ideas with selected styles and practices that already existed in society and to which people were accustomed, the ideas would be more easily popularized among workers, peasants and soldiers and thereby further revolutionary goals (Holm, 1991: 24). Others like Zhou Qiyong, a CCP critic known as Zhou Yang after 1935 and Qu's junior, however, were more hesitant than Qu on advocating the use of the old 'backward' forms. Old forms were regarded by educated people from the cities as being at most a temporary necessity. The main focus was to be on new international forms of mass agitation and propaganda art. The masses were to be given the right to enjoy – and raise their level of appreciation for – genuine, great art (Holm, 1991: 35). Soviet agitprop genres and the Western musical art forms were considered superior forms of music to Chinese traditional and folk music.

Both the Nationalist and Communist Parties inherited the cultural iconoclasm of the May Fourth New Culture movement, which regarded the whole of the Chinese cultural heritage as harmful, backward unwanted baggage that would have to be replaced with the new scientific culture of the West if the Chinese were to survive as a nation in the modern world (Holm, 1991:15). Both parties argued that the 'superstitious' culture of ordinary people needed to be abolished. However, Mao and his colleagues in the CCP argued that they could only abolish his backward culture gradually, with the popular approval and participation of the masses. Only if the approach was localized, would the new messages be relevant and

⁵⁸ Jones (2001) confirms how this style drew on an earlier tradition where music was used to improve the national essence in order to mobilize masses to fight against Japan. Nie Er, who composed what is now China's national anthem seems to have had significant influence on this form.

⁵⁹ Qu also created the official Chinese translation of *The Internationale*, which was earlier used as the anthem of the Communist Party of China. See <http://history.cultural-china.com/en/59H7594H12613.html>.

intelligible to the masses. Given the low level of education among the rural population, visual and aural media that did not require literacy were required. The use of old forms of art and music were therefore a significant part of a general strategy in CCP political work. At the same time, however, the Party also issued straight-forward commands for change towards a new revolutionary culture (Holm, 1991:16-21). The Yan'an period is recognized as a turning-point in the development of the CCP's program for the transformation of China. It was at this time when writers and artists first came into serious contact with 'common' people, and began using indigenous forms of art (Holm, 1991:15).

Since the 1980s, when class struggle was rejected, particularly after the devastating years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), rhetoric has shifted from class to Chinese nationalism as a revised platform from which the Communist Party is seeking to maintain its legitimacy (see Unger 1996:xi; Huang and Lee, 2003:55). Despite this change in cause, a fixation on the improvement and modernization of performance culture to fit national goals remains strong in CCTV music-entertainment productions.

Tensions between proponents of Western and Soviet forms and those promoting old indigenous/traditional styles continues to exist in the context of deciding what should constitute the (superior) modern, national style. The singing style that has been most widely promoted on CCTV and through China's conservatoriums as the 'national' style is the *minzu changfa* (literally, national singing style). It is widely presented as more 'scientific' (*kexue*) than other styles, and continues to be created through refining traditional folk songs (or new songs that sound like folksongs) by combining them with elements of Western operatic or choral vocalization and Western orchestral accompaniments (see Li X., 2004a:npn).⁶⁰ The

⁶⁰ In many cases folk songs have been altered significantly to fit the operatic style, or else are compositions that are designed to appear to be based on a folk song. They may simply take Chinese national themes, making it difficult to distinguish a 'national' style from the operatic style (*meisheng changfa*). Debates about the differences between these two styles abounded in the prestigious 'CCTV Youth Singing Competition' in March 2008,

language of spoken and sung discourse in this style is always in Mandarin/*Putonghua*, rather than any local dialect or minority language. Also, if lyrics are adapted from older songs that may have earlier expressed personal or local sentiments, in official performances lyrics are often composed anew to promote party-state ideological messages such as gratitude to the Party for ensuring national stability, development, happiness and peace. One example is ‘The Red Sun Shines on the Border Regions’ (*Hong taiyang zhao bianjiang*), which draws on ethnic Korean culture in Jilin province, northeast China, and contains the words ‘The CCP leads us towards victory, towards the future (*Gongchang dang lingdao women shengli xiang qian fang*)’ (discussed in Chapter 6).⁶¹ Another example is Song Zuying’s performance of ‘Song Flying out of Miao Mountain’ (*Miao ling fei ge*), which much more obviously combines Miao styles of singing with Western operatic techniques and is accompanied by a Western style orchestra.⁶² There are many ways in which Chinese folksongs are drawn on for inspiration but modified through musical elements perceived as more modern and sophisticated.

This hybrid style has proved extremely important in signifying a sense of a unified socio-political entity. While ‘national’ songs have originally been derived from a rich source of Han and minority nationality folk music, merging these with Western operatic elements allowed the old to be both ‘preserved’ and changed in a way that they became identified as the inherited property of *all* Chinese (Zou Wenqin, cited in Li X., 2004b:npn).⁶³ In other words, while ‘national’ songs might draw influence from *any* minority nationality, the resulting form represents all Chinese ethnicities.

where there were separate categories for the two styles. My distinction is based on the categories provided by the CCTV competition and in Chinese language literature.

⁶¹ Clip of ‘The Red Sun Shines on the Border Regions’ a Red Classics program or VCD is available at: <http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/1HAkit08PBo/>

⁶² Clip of Song Zuying’s 2007 performance of ‘Song Flying out of Miao Mountain’ on tour in the USA: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6h5R7XDZ3hk>

⁶³ According to Professor Zou Wenqin of the China Conservatory (*Zhongguo Yinyue Xueyuan*) in Beijing, there is a wide variety of vocal folk genres, which include *minge*, *shange*, *xiaodiao*; local opera, and *shuochang*, a form of entertainment involving singing and comic dialogue (as discussed in Li X., 2004a).

While each minority nationality contributes to the ongoing task of maintaining the rich diversity of Chinese music (Li X., 2004b:npn), the ‘national’ style of singing, accompanied by other components such as dance, costume, and language (all of which have undergone similar changes), continues to be upheld as the epitome of Chinese advancement and modernity in many CCTV entertainment programs and is often used to open and close productions.

Central Red, Colourful Peripheries

The most obvious form of an orthodox style performance is the spectacle of 56 dancers wearing 56 different colourful costumes dancing together happily around a singer who, if female, is usually dressed in red. (Males will often wear black Western-style suits with red ties, or red handkerchiefs in the pockets). Red is not only a traditional symbol of good luck in China, but also the symbolic colour of the Communist Party. Under communist rule, red has symbolized the ‘revolution’ and ‘revolutionary classes’ (Guo and He, 2000:37) (e.g. the ‘Red Guards’). It has also been constructed as the revered colour in music and film through songs/films like ‘The East is Red’ (*Dongfang hong*), the de facto national anthem during the Cultural Revolution (e.g. see Lee G., 1995:95).⁶⁴ Further, the major colour of both the CCP and PRC flag are both red, allowing for conflation between the Communist Party and Chinese nationalism. CCTV music-entertainment television productions have continued to ensure that ‘red’ remains the *central* colour of party-state and Chinese national identity.

One pertinent example of colourful dancers flanking a singer dressed in red was the CCTV special ‘Love My China: Nationalities’ United Special Evening of Entertainment’ (*Ai wo Zhonghua: Minzu tuanjie zhuanli wanhui*). This program was broadcast on multiple channels two days before the

⁶⁴ The film ‘The East is Red’ (1965) (and song) can be viewed/heard online at http://www.56.com/u36/v_NDI0NTY1MDU.html.

celebration of China's sixtieth anniversary in September 2009.⁶⁵ The program was noted directly by one of the hosts as being sponsored by the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee (*Zhongyang Xuanchuan Bu*), the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee (*Zhongyang Tongzhan Bu*), and the State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the PRC (*Guojia Minzu Shiwu Weiyuanhui*). The same message of multi-ethnic unity was pushed strongly throughout the program through the verbal discourse of hosts, performed interviews with minority nationality performers, and various performances.

The television special emphatically concluded with a song and dance performance of the famous song, 'Love My China' (*Ai wo Zhonghua*), after which the entire production was named. It served to leave viewers with a final patriotic thought and clarification of the fact that China indeed is a happy and united multi-ethnic Chinese family. Through poetic metaphor, the song's lyrics reminded audiences that the '56 constellations, 56 flowers, and the 56 nationalities/ethnicities' brothers and sisters, make one family.' High-pitched notes in Mandarin worked as an emotional force to uphold the official language as a unifying force, particularly as the song climaxed with the lyrics, 'the 56 languages converge into one sentence: Love My China'.

The song, as is often the case on CCTV, was sung by the female singer Song Zuying, who gained significant international exposure through her duet with Placido Domingo during the Closing Ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. Given Song's important roles in unifying the state, promoting China on an international stage, and as a Miao person (an identity that she only occasionally performs on CCTV), she embodies a proud, unified multi-ethnic, Chinese position that fits perfectly with party-state messages.

⁶⁵ The CCTV clip for 'Love My China: Nationalities' United Special Evening of Entertainment' is available online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcA2l6y4ZH8&feature=related>.

In this September 2009 special, the lyrics of ‘Love My China’ were given visual emphasis through ‘56’ dancers in ‘56’ different multi-coloured costumes dancing around her. Unusually, in this case, Song Zuying wore an elaborate silver coloured (rather than red) dress, apparently the same one she wore at the Olympic Games, with a wide red belt around her waist. The dress seemed to allow for reflection on China’s pride and achievement in hosting the major international event.

As Song sang the final note, the dancers threw their red-coloured pom-poms into the air. The red pom-poms were then graphically ‘captured’ and transformed into the words ‘Love My China’ (*Ai wo Zhonghua*) on the screen. There was then a cut back to an image of the stage, with the same words written at the pinnacle of a ‘rainbow’ that framed the whole stage. In case it was still not clear enough to audiences, the four hosts summarized again the main message of multi-ethnic state unity while an instrumental version of ‘Love My China’ continued to be played softly in the background. Standing upright in a straight line each host, all well-known CCTV music-entertainment personalities, gave their concluding thoughts, mirroring the program’s beginning, and rounding off the production. First to step forward was host Wang Xiaoya, dressed in red:

Tonight we have used stories to describe the feeling of unity of the nationalities in the Chinese National Family. So many moving things have happened that we cannot possibly describe each one, one at a time.

Next was male host Sa Beining, wearing a modernized (cosmopolitan), chic grey Tang-style (nationalistic) suit (*Tangzhuang*):

The 56 nationalities are bound by fraternal love, and have stood together through thick and thin. Joined by blood, the ‘Chinese nationality’ (*Zhonghua minzu*) are united with one heart, and will forever be an indestructible cohesive force.

Dong Qing, who hosts a wide range of CCTV music-entertainment programs, summarized lessons about China's history and its future, and emphasized the necessity of the CCP for the country's stability:

In the Republic's sixty years under the leadership of the [Communist] Party, each of the nationalities have united and struggled together. Throughout these sixty years' [they] have flourished and developed together. We whole-heartedly wish the 56 nationalities a life in harmony, working together in times of difficulty, [towards] harmonious development.

Male host Bai Yansong, who likewise hosts a wide range of CCTV music-entertainment programs as well as more 'serious' programmes, concluded the program by affirming that:

In two days' time, we will together see in the new China's sixteth anniversary celebrations. This is a magnificent moment, indeed a completely new and historic starting point. The different nationalities brothers and sisters, hand in hand and side by side, have in the past walked together, and must even more intimately walk (together) towards the future, to fulfill the dreams of all of us. Tonight we bless the motherland. Tonight we bless the future.

These are amongst the most authoritative hosts of CCTV music-entertainment programs and speak with trained certainty, eloquence and professionalism. Such hosts, who are often also Party members (as declared on their websites), are the most obvious embodiment of the 'mouthpieces' of the party-state on music-entertainment television because they literally have the power and skills to guide interpretations and link disparate music and dance performances to particular political messages through their commentary. The camera often zooms in on their faces and blurs the background so that focus is on their eyes and mouths from which the

important words about national identity are emanating. The remarks of the hosts, and numerous others throughout the evening, supported the legitimacy of the CCP as the necessary vanguard of multi-ethnic Chinese society. Even if one were to disagree with the idea that China is a united and harmonious place for all 56 nationalities, or that the CCP's policy on matters of ethnicity is the only correct way, the convergence of image, music and spoken language in this orthodox frame makes it difficult to miss the intended message that China is a united multi-ethnic state thanks to the efforts of the party-state.

Hand-in-Hand, Striding Towards the Future

Another typical form of orthodox performance involves 56 colourfully-dressed performers, striding together, hand-in-hand. During the Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, audiences saw such images of 56 smiling, colourful Chinese nationality children walking together briskly behind a huge, red Chinese flag.⁶⁶ The unity of the colourful children swiftly walking across the mass expanse of the stadium floor formed the moving part of the scene. They marched forward towards uniformed soldiers (suggesting the power of the nation-state), who took the red flag from them and hoisted it up to its pinnacle position where it fluttered proudly in the (manufactured) breeze of the night sky. The forward and upwards directions of the scene, following a trajectory of the red flag, suggests unity of China's ethnic groups and a contentment with the current political status-quo that will advance well into the future. Parallel and encompassed within these movements was a static component of the scene, also centred on a figure dressed in red – in this case the girl, Lin Miaoke, whose youthful vibrancy also suggested a bright future ahead for China. The camera swirled around Lin as she stood still, upright, dressed in a plain red dress, appearing to sing (as noted earlier, it was later revealed she was lip-

⁶⁶ See clip for 'Ode to the Motherland' as sung during the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7EAeINa9h8>.

synching) a slow tempo version of the patriotic song ‘Ode to the Motherland’ (*Gechang zuguo*). While the song have been slowed and sweetened through the voice of a young female singer to tone down the nationalist sentiment for an international audience, it also seemed to help to symbolically mark a sense of stability and centrality of the Party and the Chinese nation that had stood the test of time and still remained salient for today’s youth.

This striding forward, hand-in-hand representation is also a regular feature of CCTV3’s daily music video show, which is strongly reflective of party-state politics. For instance, similar imagery of the colourful nationalities was used for the TV promo for the program during the period when the annual nationally-important decision making meetings – the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and the National People’s Congress (NPC) – took place in Beijing in March, 2008. Clearly, orthodox-style song and dance performances, which overtly promote a proud and modern, multi-ethnic and unified Chinese national identity, are prominent during political events of national importance such as national political meetings, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, and anniversaries of the Communist Party’s ascendancy to power. These events and their coterminous promotion through televised music-entertainment productions are a vital component of a drive to bolster support and prove the ongoing legitimacy of the CCP.

In each orthodox performance style, respect for so-called authentic, local or ethnic music and dance is of little concern, other than as political symbolism. The prime goal of orthodox productions is not to show local difference but to spread the message of multi-ethnic unity, as embodied in the hand-in-hand children striving forward together towards a future under the red flag, protected by a strong army, and united through a solemn and powerful song about the motherland.

While symbols of ethnicity are observable in costume, any traditional or sub-state national identity that could be expressed through musical expression or the language of lyrics are largely erased, transformed into, or composed anew, to fit a singular, unifying ‘national’ singing style. Regardless of the intention of individual singers to promote any other kind of minority nationality identification, the convergence of image, music and spoken language in orthodox performance moments points most strongly to the message of an integrated Chinese nation and patriotism to the Party-led state. Some performers may perform in orthodox styles strategically to gain television exposure to national audiences, which may in turn help them gain the right to perform other kinds of performances in their preferred styles that are less orthodox (e.g. see Baranovitch, 2009 for a case study on popular singer Teng Ge’er, who has sought to promote his Mongolian nationality).

4.3 Ethnic Inspirations and the State in Contemporary Pop

Ethnic-Pop and the Multi-Ethnic State

Not all programs on CCTV portray multi-ethnic national identity through such orthodox propaganda with as direct appeals to the nation and Party as those described in the previous section. Rather, there are indications of considerable dynamism and cross-fertilization in the ways that the Han majority and 55 minority nationalities are performed musically, linguistically, and visually. A different approach to the performance of multi-ethnic unity can be seen in musical performances that infuse minority and Han folk elements not with classical Western orchestral forms but with more contemporary Western-influenced/East Asian mass appeal music forms that try to appeal to a younger generation, known in Chinese as *liuxing* (popular) singing styles. These are forms that typically use electric keyboards, electric guitars, and a 4/4 pop beat, and are typically sung by

younger stars who often sing for commercial reward. However, while cosmopolitan pop culture is in one sense a creative departure from the orthodox style, pop songs performed on CCTV are still state endorsed, and work in tandem with other styles to promote state ideology. Most significant in the case of pop music is the way in which the style promotes the state as being open and cosmopolitan, whilst ethnicity is still presented from within the official framework of the 56 nationalities contained inside a single China.

I employ the term ‘ethno-pop’ to refer broadly to the hybrid type of pop music inspired by China’s internally diverse ethnicities. Musically, this refers to pieces where traditional musical instruments like the gourd pipe (*hulusi*), Chinese shawm (*suona*), and high-pitched vocals, or melodies from more traditional songs, are mixed with mainstream pop rhythms and chord structures. Performers in this style most often appear individually or in duos, rather than via collective performances of performing arts song and dance troupes typical of the orthodox style. They most often wear contemporary dress, but may also perform in ethnic-inspired colourful costumes with back-up dancers from time to time. Performers identifying as Han and those identifying as a minority nationality have been inspired by ethnicity for commercial and personal (artistic and spiritual) reasons (e.g. Baranovitch, 2009a, 2009b). This popular, cosmopolitan style seems to appeal to youth markets and may be part of an attempt to promote a unique ‘PRC’ identity in a context of where pop music is dominated by artists from Taiwan and Hong Kong (see Gold, 1995:257-260). It is most often seen on prime time music-entertainment variety shows like *The Same Song* and *Happy in China*.

The state and CCTV have co-opted different kinds of ethnically-inspired popular music to celebrate China’s multi-ethnic diversity, its national traditions, and contemporary cosmopolitanism. Tellingly, both orthodox and more contemporary pop styles were endorsed by officials and featured in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games ceremonies. While the Opening Ceremony was dominated by a more serious orthodox style, ethno-pop contributed to the ‘coming out’ celebratory party feel of the Closing Ceremony as people

performing as minorities and Han sang and danced together to upbeat versions of songs with an ethnic feel, such as ‘Visitors from afar please stay on’ (*Yuanfang de keren qing ni liu xia lai*). While this song appears to have originated in the early 1950s, it melds well with contemporary use of Confucian discourse, particularly the saying ‘How very glad we are to welcome friends from afar’ used extensively in pre-Olympic education and volunteer programs (see de Kloet *et al.*, 2011:124). In this section, I examine a few cases where Tibetan, Korean, and Han ethnicity are employed as part of popular music performances of contemporary multi-ethnic Chinese identity on CCTV in order to illustrate the kinds of popular music broadcast on CCTV that connect to themes of multi-ethnicity and help to construct the Chinese multi-ethnic state.

Tibetan-Chinese Pop

The Tibet Autonomous Region has been one of the most politically contentious areas in PRC history and the way that Tibet is performed for the national Chinese audience on television provides us with insights into how the party-state would like people to think about Tibet’s place within China. Historically, the People’s Liberation Army subsumed the eastern regions of Tibet between 1950 and 1955, and the whole of Tibet was later ‘liberated’ and annexed in 1959. As China opened, and the disposable income of its urban coastal populations increased, it became possible for this group to travel to the Tibetan regions in China. Since the ‘Tibetan fever’ in the 1990s many urban Chinese (as well as foreigners) have been enticed to taste the ‘exotic’ Tibetan culture. In this section, I contrast the performances of a Tibetan-Chinese pop star, Han Hong, and a Han Chinese star, Zhu Zheqin, both of whom draw on Tibetan culture to express and construct a sense of a modern Chinese-ness. My aim is to examine the blurred boundaries between the idea of an essential or inherent identity (what one is believed to be born with) and identity created through performance, as well as to examine how

artists work with CCTV and the party-state to build different versions of the Tibetan-Chinese/Chinese-Tibetan 'us'.

One singer who emerged as a television star during the Tibetan fever was Han Hong, a Beijing-based singer who identifies as Tibetan. Given her significant presence on CCTV, it is largely through Han Hong that the Tibetan-Chinese identity is constructed for national audiences in CCTV's music-entertainment programming. The way that Han Hong performs is significant as the Tibetan-Chinese identity is one of the most fraught identity positions (alongside the Uyghur and Mongolian identities) given the sensitivity of Tibet and global attention on the Tibetan independence movement. Han Hong was born in Shigatse in the Tibet Autonomous Region to a Tibetan mother and Han (nationality) Chinese father (Baranovitch, 2009b:191).⁶⁷ She became popular across the nation as a result of her CCTV performance in 1995 where she sang a song called 'Himalaya' (*Ximalaya*). Based on an interview with Han Hong, Baranovitch (2009b:194) notes that her main concern has been the creation of 'modern' Tibetan music that she contrasts with the orthodox style described above. She consciously avoids wearing traditional style colourful costumes to resist a stereotype of backwardness and has stayed clear of the 'national' operatic style of singing (*minzu changfa*).

The assertion of her Tibetan identity, rather than a Han or mixed Tibetan-Han identity works both politically and commercially. Not all of Han Hong's songs are Tibetan-themed, but she uses this identity to uniquely position herself in a competitive popular music industry. She primarily sings in Chinese rather than in Tibetan, which enables her to reach out to mainstream Chinese audiences. Her songs mainly cater to urban Han Chinese, for whom they provide a fantasy and escape from the stresses of modern life (Baranovitch, 2009b:184, 192-3). As Baranovitch argues (2009b:195-196), her high-pitched voice, and occasional 'Tibetan-style'

⁶⁷ Interestingly, the mixed-race metaphor is not used for children of intermarriages *within* China on CCTV, but only those that cross 'Chinese' state *and* ethnic boundaries.

voice inflections and instrumentation, have offered ‘something different and refreshing, authentic, simple, natural, and free, something full of tranquility and spirituality’ and have enabled people to ‘escape the stress, alienation, and chaos of modernity and the standardized, oppressive mainstream.’

For a number of artistic, commercial and political reasons Han Hong is one of the most famous singers in China today, but is not well known outside of mainland China. One reason for her lack of international exposure has been her decision to pursue a career in the army. She is a member of China’s airforce song and dance troupe (*Kongjun Wengongtuan*).⁶⁸ As well-known personality and senior army composer, Yan Su, explained on a CCTV interview program with Han Hong, joining the army requires a huge sacrifice for performers for a number of reasons. For a start, their commitments mean that it is not easy to engage in advertising, which is a big source of income for pop singers. They also cannot apply for their own passports and do not have many opportunities to travel overseas, and while pop stars can develop an independent career on the side, army work takes precedence. If artists have already been booked for a program they may have to cancel if called up by the army for certain activities. CCTV programs have constructed Han Hong as being widely respected in China because of her dedication to the party-state. For instance, on-screen audiences in the interview program described above, who (like Han Hong) wore army uniforms, clapped enthusiastically when she explained her commitment to her country and the army/airforce.

Domestically, Han Hong is a model, modern Tibetan in a contemporary multi-ethnic Chinese state. Perhaps largely because of this positive image and popularity within China, Han Hong is ignored outside of China, particularly in the West where Tibetan exiles dominate representations of Tibet (Baranovitch, 2009b:189). In the West, as Baranovitch explains, a

⁶⁸ See part of Han Hong’s CCTV interview on ‘Han Hong’s Entertainment: Culture Interview’ (Yule Han Hong ‘Wenhua Fangtanlv’) online at: <http://v.szonline.net/5806768>. For a picture of Han Hong saluting in her airforce uniform see http://news.51room.net/News/31957_14.html.

‘romanticized spiritual image’ prevails alongside the ‘ideological cause of Free Tibet...Tibet is seen as independent from China, and any Chinese influence is perceived as reflecting Chinese occupation’. The implication is that she is either ‘not authentic enough’ or is dismissed as a ‘collaborator’ with an ‘oppressive Chinese regime’ (Baranovitch, 2009b:189-190). On CCTV, however, Han Hong’s collaboration with the Chinese party-state is openly celebrated. In fact, as for all singers, just by appearing on CCTV, the pop singer is showing some kind of collaboration with the state, even when she sings a wide range of pop songs that seem to have nothing to do with party-state issues.

One of Han Hong’s most performed songs on CCTV across 2008 was her version of ‘Sky Road’ (*Tian Lu*), which is overtly ideological.⁶⁹ This song clearly fits with the party-state celebration of the engineering and technological achievement of the highest altitude railway in the world that was inaugurated on July 1, 2006. The railway connected the Tibet Autonomous Region’s ‘backward’ and ‘far away’ capital, Lhasa, to the modern Chinese capital, Beijing. This aim was made clear through both lyrics and visuals in her music video broadcast on CCTV’s music video program *China Music Television*. Significantly, the music video format generally offers a set of images that differ from on-stage performances, and in this case audiences of the clip were transported to Tibet. The lyrics ‘the railroad is my home’ were combined with images of modern technology and construction workers engaged in the building of the railway. The gratitude of Tibetans for the railway was cemented in the image of Tibetans running to see the railway construction and placing *hadas* (traditional Tibetan white scarves and signs of respect) around the necks of construction engineers. Smiling construction workers were seen picking up an impoverished (dirt-covered) Tibetan girl, presumably reflecting an act of kindness that was being delivered to the people of the area in a visually-direct way that an on-stage performance alone would not have been able to offer.

⁶⁹ The song was also sung in the ‘national’ style by Peng Liyuan, whose husband, Xi Jinping, is in line to become China’s next president.

The railway image, a symbol of the success of the national modernization drive, is frequently used across party-state ‘promotional’ music television clips,⁷⁰ providing a clear link between the party-state and their assistance to minority nationalities. Art anthropologist, Clare Harris (1999:126, 128), has described how Han Chinese artists have historically used the railway and roads as symbols of pride in the achievements of the Communist regime. The railway represented the triumph of culture over nature and the power of the People’s Republic that allowed ‘primitive’ herders to be assimilated into mainstream culture and people from the centre to be transported to the peripheries of the motherland through the modern transport system (Harris, 1999:127). The use of familiar symbolism highlights how popular music songs and videos produced by CCTV share a modernist, development position with orthodox styles.

Harris (1999:120-122) argues that artworks celebrating the ‘liberation’ of Tibet in the 1950s depicted scenes not of invasion, dissent and rebellion, but of a ‘party atmosphere’, ‘as if the arrival of the invading army were a gift requested gratefully by the Tibetan people’. The art depicted the ‘glorious battle’ that liberated the Tibetan people from feudalism and Tibetan Buddhism, both seen as oppressive. This art was tactfully deployed as part of a strategy to win the hearts and minds of Tibetans, for if there was no opposition ‘there would be no need for such cheery representations’. Han Hong’s singing of ‘Sky Road’ reflects an ongoing celebration of Tibetan gratitude to the Beijing-centred Chinese state on contemporary CCTV music-entertainment television.

Given her identification as a Tibetan, Han Hong could be seen to be caught in a difficult position in relation to her ‘own’ people. However, Tibetan-Chinese artists like Han Hong have had to reconstruct their own history by responding to (and within) a range of urban, Han-centred ideological and

⁷⁰ Another example aired in 2008 was a song called ‘A Round of Red Unity’ (*Lun hong tuan*).

stereotypical frames. The MTV clip of *Sky Road* clearly presents an 'internal orientalist' frame that is typical of softer or less orthodox constructions of minority cultures. The focus on rural images of grasslands in high-mountain areas re-enforces the stereotype of rural, Tibetan simplicity, primitiveness and harmony-with-nature, which starkly contrasts to the complexity of developed modern cities that feature in other clips where unmarked (presumably Han) artists perform. The image of a Tibetan girl walking alone on a mountain top reappears in conjunction with the lyrics 'high mountain ridge'. These images are inter-dispersed with those of the old people (smiling Tibetan women in traditional dress), old language (the carving Tibetan script), symbols of ancient religions (spinning scriptures), and timeless occupations (the herding of animals). Although they may be read as presenting a sense of respect for difference, they also reaffirm a belief in rural Tibetans being mysterious, old, and not quite modern.

In this clip Han Hong is both an outsider and insider. While she too stands in the open grasslands, her non-minority, 'modern' dress assures that she remains a symbol of the 'outside' world. Her big city identity is pin-pointed sharply by her modern sports jacket which is contrasted with the Tibetan clothes worn by the 'locals'. She is depicted as a guest, sitting inside a Tibetan house, clapping for the women who dance. At the same time, *Sky Road* depicts the grassy fields as her space, as she takes ownership through her singing and wide-open arms. She dances outside with Tibetans, and helps other Tibetan women tie on prayer flags. Han Hong appears to embody both the Tibetan identity of those who live in the remote rural areas where she was born, and the identity of a modern, city Tibetan who has embraced and benefited from China's economic and market reforms. The national CCTV pop star is a perfect advertisement for the imagination of what the CCP has brought to Tibet in the era of economic and market reforms, at a time when ethnic pride, the harmonious co-existence of all nationalities, and the natural environment are being celebrated, whilst still being underlined by a sense of Beijing-centred superiority.

Yet, it is not only those who identify as ethnic Tibetans who perform Tibetanness in a mainland China context. Zhu Zheqin is a non-ethnically-Tibetan (i.e. unmarked) artist from Shanghai (Lee and Huang, 2002:113) who has also developed her own fluid identity through Tibetan influences. Her unique style also draws on Tibetan iconography in her music video clips and she perhaps goes even further than Han Hong in her unique mixtures of language (Chinese and Tibetan chants), dress (original bohemian designs with Tibetan inspirations), and a vocal technique that is inspired by things she heard in Tibet and elsewhere. Like Han Hong, Zhu also originally gained fame through appearing on CCTV as a contestant on the *CCTV Youth Singing Competition* in 1990.⁷¹

Interestingly, Zhu Zheqin was the first contemporary Chinese musician to have her music released worldwide and became one of the most successful singers from China in the contemporary world music market at an international level. To appeal to this wider audience, she has also adopted a stage name, Dadawa, which is easily pronounceable in Chinese as well as in English. She taps deeply into the ‘romanticized spiritual image’ through the use of Tibetan Buddhist chants in her work. Her public discourse also fits the mould: ‘...my feeling is so strong. I feel in Tibet you can touch the soul’ (in English) (CNN).⁷² In many ways, Zhu offers the same thing to Western audiences as both she and Han Hong offer to mainland Chinese audiences – relief from the pressures of modern city life. The sanctioning of her performances on CCTV also suggests that the party-state is open, cosmopolitan, and able to provide the appropriate economic conditions for a comfortable life for its citizens. That is, while people are expected to work hard, the provision of television music-entertainment programming by the party-state is offered so that they can enjoy themselves and relax too.

⁷¹ Report on Zhu Zheqin, ‘Zhu Zheqin Guest on “Star Orient”, From the Youth Singing Competition to Goodwill Ambassador’ [朱哲琴做客《星光耀东方》从青歌赛到亲善大使], 22 July 2011. Available at: <http://ent.qq.com/a/20110722/000513.htm>.

⁷² CNN report on Dadawa available online at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHH_TCuqzcM&feature=related.

Furthermore, in the domestic context, Zhu's performances work with party-state television goals to celebrate the 'openness' of the state in terms of allowing for minority representation and individual expression. In 2008, Zhu appeared on a commemoration program celebrating thirty years of songs on CCTV and thirty years of China's opening up and reform. In the program, artists mirrored their earlier performances. She performed 'A Real Story' (*Yi ge zhenshi de gushi*) on stage in front of a video of herself ten years earlier singing the same song in the fourth *CCTV Youth Singing Competition*.⁷³ Audiences could compare and contrast the two settings on Chinese television in contemporary and earlier times to assess the great changes that have taken place in China's recent history. Zhu's appearance in 2008 was much more 'free' and 'natural' than her earlier one: she had flowing permed hair as opposed to stiff straight hair; her face looked more 'natural' instead of being covered with thick make-up; and she wore a free flowing dress instead of a stiff white jacket. Even the technology implied a greater freedom for performers as well as technical advancement as singers could now walk around with chord-less microphones. Zhu's personal journey was thus made to mirror the positive journey that China had travelled in its thirty years of opening up and reform in which each year was narrated as being better than the previous one.

Zhu has also performed for CCTV in an international location, Zhu was able to help promote the message of China's openness to Tibetan culture and religion, whilst simultaneously confirming that Tibet is a part of China. *The Same Song* program, staged in London in 2008, simultaneously promoted the coming Olympics (there was a large Olympic symbol on the stage backdrop) and the 'China-England Sisters Culture Week' (*Zhong-Ying Jienü Wenhua Zhou*). For this performance, Zhu sang her classic 'Sister Drum' (*A Jie Gu*), into which Tibetan Buddhist chants were embedded. At the end of a chant sequence, she put her hands together into a prayer position – although

⁷³ Clip of Zhu Zheqin's performance of 'A Real Story' is available online at <http://space.tv.cctv.com/video/VIDE1247573570076882>.

the camera was careful not to spend too much time focusing on this gesture.⁷⁴ Whilst asserting a sense of Tibetanness, and promoting a cosmopolitan outlook through the spiritual aspects of her performance (including the employment of an ephemeral voice and backing music), she also performed a strong sense of Chineseness, through singing most of the song in Chinese, wearing a red dress in line with a patriotic colour scheme, and performing in a space in which nationalistic discourse about China and the Olympics was being promoted. This performance may be seen as part of the ‘soft’ push by the Chinese media to reach out and impress global Chinese and non-Chinese audiences in the Olympic year. Significantly, as Nyíri *et al.* (2010) detail, the performance of Tibetan-ness as being a part of glorious China was not only a feature of state media like CCTV in 2008, but was also promoted through apparently spontaneous protests by overseas Chinese students in London and elsewhere during the 2008 Olympic Games torch relay. These students fought against the pro-Tibetan independence activists and the biased Western media and used CCTV (as much as CCTV used them) in their war against the Western media. Even though the party-state and the students may have had different aims in defending the place of Tibet within China and the Chinese government’s innocence in the March 2008 Tibetan riots,⁷⁵ sentiments expressed by the state media and many overseas Chinese youth in many ways reinforce one another. CCTV’s news and entertainment programs play a pivotal role as a site for pushing certain constructions of Chineseness and configurations of belonging (see Chapter 6 for further commentary on *The Same Song – enters London* and on displays of solidarity between overseas students and the motherland).

⁷⁴ CCTV directors commented on their earlier camera design, saying they had zoomed close up on Fei Xiang when he first came on CCTV with his ‘sexy’ dance moves in the 1980s in order to avoid showing audiences the full extent of his dance movements which were deemed to be too ‘open’ at the time.

⁷⁵ Nyíri *et al.* (2010) suggest that many students engaged in protests with more of an interest in making a name for themselves amongst the circle of Chinese netizens around the world than defending the party-state as such.

Korean-Chinese Pop

Ethnically-Korean-Chinese pop performances also provide an interesting lens for coming to terms with the boundaries between Chineseness, minority-ness, and foreign boundaries in the context of CCTV's music-entertainment programming. This is because citizens of three sovereign states concerning Korean nationality relate to the construct of Korean identity on PRC television: the PRC itself in which Koreans (*Chaoxian zu*) are one of the officially designated minority nationalities, the Republic of Korea (ROK, here referred to as South Korea) (*Hanguo*), and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea, *Chaoxian*). Chinese-Koreans (*Chaoxian zu*) perform most frequently on CCTV, followed by South Koreans. The labelling '*Chaoxianzu*' (for PRC nationals) and '*Hanguo*' or '*Han*', for South Koreans appear on screen in brackets next to performers' names to clarify their identities as being 'in' or 'out' of China (note: the character for South Koreans 韩 is a different Chinese character to the 'Han' 汉 of the dominant Chinese group). Korean identity in China, depending on its manifestation, can therefore be both 'foreign' and/or 'Chinese'.

The one Korean/*Chaoxian* designated autonomous prefecture in China and the one *Chaoxian* autonomous county, both in Jilin province, have featured in regular episodes of *Sinophiliac* (see ch.5 for analysis of foreigners, *chaoxianzu* and 'ordinary' Chinese, in this border town). The area of Yanbian⁷⁶ bordering on North Korea and Russia is home to about 850,000 of China's 1.9 million Korean/*Chaoxian* minorities (Pease, 2006:137).⁷⁷ Changbai *Chaoxian* Autonomous County is south of Yanbian, also on the North Korean border. Border towns are often a source of fascination because of the blurring of cultures between the colliding regions. In such border areas there is easy slippage between the internal and the external, the

⁷⁶ The area of Yanbian was formerly known as Kando.

⁷⁷ Yanbian celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in September 2002 (Pease, 2006:137).

self and the foreign 'other'. Border areas can be places where tensions within the Chinese identity can be more easily illustrated. Significantly, the CCTV programs show no signs of collision of influence from North Korea but plenty from further down the Korean peninsula with South Korea. Since the resumption of diplomatic ties with South Korea in 1991, a large number of Chinese Koreans now travel to, work in, or have emigrated to South Korea (Pease, 2006a:138). Well-educated youth have access to South Korean satellite television (widely available though illegal) and financial resources to visit karaoke bars, and they purchase fashionable clothing, food, music and dramas as part of the 'South Korean fever' (Pease, 2006a:138). According to Pease (2006a:138), this has created a divide between older Chinese-Koreans, particularly in rural areas with less education who prefer homegrown Yanbian culture, and younger more affluent Chinese Koreans who follow the South Korean style. However, showing an openness to South Korean popular culture is a way of expressing the cosmopolitan side of the party-state.

Culture workers including singers, dancers, and radio and television hosts within Yanbian have worked hard to establish a unique Yanbian Culture, or *Chinese Korean*, culture that distinguishes between Koreans living in China and those on the neighboring peninsula (Pease, 2006a:137). As many youth turned to South Korea for cultural inspiration, seeing no particular need for a *Chinese Korean* culture, local media and cultural bodies in charge of maintaining the Chinese Korean identity began to fear they would become largely irrelevant (Pease, 2006:139). In the 1990s, official songwriters of Yanbian 'campaigned against the flood of South Korean music that threatened to make them redundant', and sought to 'restrict young musicians with dyed hair [and] outlandish clothes, who seemed to be turning their back on Yanbian flavour in favour of South Korean styles' (Pease, 2006:143). At the same time, as television and radio have become entirely reliant on advertising income for production expenses, broadcasts have attempted to repackage Yanbian's early songs in a style deemed more appealing to modern ears (Pease, 2006:141). At a 'national' level, CCTV has taken on

board both the 'modern' image of South Korean-inspired Yanbian Korean culture as well as the more official/national/orthodox-PRC Chinese-Korean styles.

The most significant example of cosmopolitan PRC Korean identity of 2008 was Jin Mei'er, who was one of three winners of the 2008 CCTV3 *Star Avenue* contest. Her success in the competition provided a solid foundation for her singing career, and she has subsequently appeared in numerous CCTV and provincial programs, national events, as well as on South Korean television.⁷⁸ For a young woman of 'less than twenty' (according to her website in 2010) she has powerful voice, and sings in Chinese, English and Korean. In a different program (the more serious annual *CCTV Youth Singing Competition* in March 2008), judges commented that they preferred songs to be sung in Chinese for patriotic reasons, but also because performers let themselves down by attempting to sing in languages in which they could not pronounce the words 'properly'. Jin Mei'er did not offer perfect clarity in English expression, but her musical control and strength seemed to make up for any foreign language 'flaws', and quite possibly her Korean-Chinese accent in singing an English song was part of her appeal on this more relaxed competition program.

Jin Mei'er was able to present multiple identities in her CCTV performances, asserting a modern/Westernized image, mainstream Chineseness, and pride in her Korean ethnicity. This fits into the party-state's promotion of itself as open and cosmopolitan whilst still celebrating ethnicity as a component within a multi-ethnic Chinese state. Jin's rendition of Whitney Houston's 'Nothing' in English was a significant part of her winning repertoire on *Star Avenue* across 2008.⁷⁹ The performance is significant, partly because

⁷⁸ Even before her final win in October 2008, Jin Mei'er appeared singing a Korean traditional song 'Bellflower Ballad' (*Jiegeng Yao*) in traditional dress on the *Happy in China* program in Macau. Onclip clip available at: http://v.ku6.com/show/tYOv2PwV98AAqGa_.html

⁷⁹ See clip of Jin Mei'er performing 'Nothing' online at: <http://space.tv.cctv.com/act/video.jsp?videoId=VIDE1231146348861751>. Houston's 'I Have Nothing' has been part of the winning repertoire of televised singing and talent competitions around the world. For instance, see 14 year old Jack Vidgen's performance on *Australia's Got Talent*, May 3, 2011 online at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6Imk_-

English songs are rarely performed on CCTV, although it has become trendy to insert the occasional English word into Chinese pop songs. The television program offered her a chance to present a modern identity, dressed as a superstar in a golden gown, with dangling golden earrings and bubbles floating down in the foreground, and it allowed her an opportunity to display her talents outside of the orthodox constraints in performing minority identities. However, like many other *Chaoxian* minority performers she also sang the signature pan-Korean folksong, ‘Arirang’.⁸⁰ Dressed in a colourful ‘traditional’ Korean-style dress, she began by singing slowly, accompanied by backup dancers also in Korean costume with large drums hanging around their shoulders. However, about halfway through, the song turned upbeat and rap dancers entered the stage, giving her the chance to assert a modern ethnic Korean identity in a Chinese program, highlighting how styles are mixed even within a single performance. This mix of styles may be used for dramatic and artistic effect as well as to show different identity positions.

Another example of cross-cultural Korean-influenced mixing is the male singing group ‘Arirang’ who won the audience favourite award at the 10th CCTV National Youth Television Singing Competition in 2002 (Pease, 2006:150). The group, named after the Korean ethnic identifying song, continues to perform this folksong on CCTV with their own rap verses. Their style, dressed not in traditional clothing but in trendy suits, with one member wearing sunglasses, another a bandanna, a third with bleached hair, and a fourth with a bowler’s hat (on a CCTV Sinophiliac special on the Chaoxian Autonomous County in Jilin province in November 2008), is no doubt influenced by the South Korean-originating ‘K-wave’ (*Hanliu*) that swept across Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia in the early part of the twenty-first century (Howard, 2006:vii).

gypk. This highlights the international phenomena of the televised singing talent competition, of which CCTV is drawing on, and perhaps the fact that this powerful song just makes great TV.

⁸⁰ See clip of Jin Mei’er performing ‘Arirang’ online at:
<http://space.tv.cctv.com/act/video.jsp?videoId=VIDE1231146365066605>.

Both Jin and Arirang may be still be drawing on the popularity of South Korean popular culture more broadly in China, and may also be trying to establish themselves as Chinese and pan-Korean performers. According to Pease (2006:151), in South Korea, they can exploit the novelty value of coming from what is considered a remote backwater and thus may attempt to capitalize on their marginalization ('otherness' and 'foreignness') in both countries in ways that fit with political and market goals.

Han-Chinese Pop

It is not only minority nationality identities who are presented in an ethno-pop fashion. CCTV entertainment programs also showcase a few singers who exploit traditional Han peasant culture. Baranovitch (2001:375) argues that the search for pure Chineseness among Han peasants was rejected in the late 1980s after television programs like 'River Elegy' (*Heshang*) expressed deep disillusionment with the primitiveness of the Han self. The celebration of minority cultures, seen as more remote and exotic than Han peasantry, yet still part of the Chinese self, enabled the creation of a more modern mainstream Chinese Han identity (also see Schein, 1997). Yet, the jazzing up of a primitive, 'core' Han identity through contemporary popular music performances is evident and follows similar lines as the more remote, border area minority nationality cultures.

Contemporary Han identity is often centred on music from around North-West China particularly Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces, the imagined heartland of the Chinese nation. Shaanbei (the area of Yulin and Yan'an in Shaanxi province) is not only seen as the cradle of ancient Chinese civilization but was also important as the location of the CCP's Central Committee and military headquarters prior to 1949 (Yan'an Travel Guide, 2010). Emphasizing this region and the music from it as belonging to the Han generates a perfect metaphor for asserting the continuity of an ancient Chinese civilization in combination with modern Chinese prosperity under the Communist Party. Many singers on CCTV performing specifically as

‘Han’ use traditional songs, or songs that derive in style, from China’s northwest Shanxi/Shaanxi area.

Ah Bao, a male performer from Shanxi province is the most well known CCTV singer of this ethnically-Han pop style during 2008. He combines high-pitched traditional songs with contemporary pop and dance rhythms. Sometimes he wears cosmopolitan urban dress while at times he dresses in simple peasant clothing with a cloth wrapped around his head in rural Han style. His performance integrates the Han into the *minzu* system whereby the Han identity, like that of minority nationalities, is made unique by invoking rural, peasant, and traditional clothing and song styles rather than the literati Changpao (long robe) or delicate Qin music, or the urban dress traditions like the qipao or Majia jackets. The idea of *minzu* is rooted in a sense of ‘folk-ness’, whereby the rural serves as a marker of ‘otherness’ and exoticness within Han culture for the purpose of parading unity of the nationalities. The quaintness of traditional Chinese *minzu* identities is further connected to more recent ‘folk’ traditions that link to the Communist Party. One of Ah Bao’s most powerful and most plugged songs on CCTV in recent years has been his dance-style rendition of the revolutionary song ‘Our Leader Mao Zedong’ (*Zanmen de lingxiu Mao Zedong*), which links the Han to the state and Party in a trendy, cosmopolitan way.⁸¹

Popular Music, Minority Nationality Culture, and the Chinese Nation

Cross-fertilization between international pop, Chinese and minority nationality culture became symbolic of a new, trendy and even advanced individual expression among cosmopolitan youth, and today a number of pop songs on Chinese television include minority elements sung by Han and minority pop stars alike. Contemporary ethno-pop music thus provides a

⁸¹ See an example of Ah Bao singing a dance version of ‘Our Leader Mao Zedong’ on Guangxi TV http://www.56.com/u11/v_MjY5NDkzODQ.html; an audio version is available at <http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/ngF3oyTYtzU/>; an earlier upbeat version of the song by another singer with old clips is available online at <http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/a7k43kkvyUI/>.

platform for creatively playing with aspects of minority and Han ethnicity, and one that contrasts significantly with the orthodox national-style songs. Multimodally, the variety in the ways that sounds, images, and language combine create a less tight message than that of orthodox performances.

There is actually considerable slippage between styles. Performances may begin in more orthodox ways musically and visually, but then merge into an upbeat, ethno-pop rendition. Furthermore, performers may sing some ethno-pop songs in a repertoire that includes many other pop songs that may have nothing to do with ethnicity. Yet, the occasional expression of ethnicity allows such singers to stand out in a saturated mainland pop music industry in a way that also fits with political expressions of multi-ethnic cosmopolitanism.

Thus, while representing a creative departure from the orthodox style, ethno-pop performances are not necessarily any less political than the orthodox style. While the orthodox style more clearly points to the ‘hardened’ promotion of a tightly controlled multi-ethnic Chinese state unity, ethno-pop perhaps most effectively promotes the ‘softer’, outward-looking, cosmopolitan aspects of reform-era state policy.

4.4 *Yuanshengtai* and the Nationalization of ‘Original’ Difference

The Discourse of *Yuanshengtai*

The type of musical performance that I focus on in this section is called *yuanshengtai*. *Yuanshengtai* is an ambiguous term that refers to both a style of performance incorporating folk songs typically of minority nationalities as well as a concept that has become increasingly popular in the media since 2003 when Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao became China’s top leaders. It

became popular at a time when these leaders openly reflected on the limitations of rapid economic reforms, which have led to massive social inequality, environmental degradation, and unbridled commercialism. It roughly translates as ‘original ecology’ or ‘primitive’, and is used often to refer to traditional arts that require ‘safeguarding’ from modern, urban, and global influences that are seen as less pure or original. At the same time, *yuanshengtai* has clearly emerged from urban and global concerns, including the need to create a sense of ‘uniqueness’ to maintain a distinct identity and compete in a globalised, urbanized world. As a performance style, *yuanshengtai* is associated with minority nationalities who have long been presumed by party-state cultural producers to lead a more ‘primitive’ lifestyle than that of the Han majority. Yet in the *yuanshengtai* style, the purity of their lifestyle appears to be valued and in need of preservation, rather than in need of refinement and modernization as with the orthodox style. I argue that during the period from 2008-2010, when this study was conducted, *yuanshengtai* offered the most pluralistic impression of multi-ethnic nationalism in China.

The *yuanshengtai* concept, in many ways, sits in stark opposition to the orthodox styles of performance and to the kinds of mainstream music-entertainment practices that have, and continue to, dominate state television in China. As explained above, the orthodox style was used to address a concern about the need to ‘improve’ and ‘modernize’ traditional performance styles to fit the socialist and later nationalist causes through the use of more ‘scientific’ and ‘advanced’ Western instrumentation and singing styles drawing on Western opera. However, *yuanshengtai* involves performances of ‘original’ and ‘natural’ forms, supposedly unchanged by foreign operatic or non-local elements. *Yuanshengtai* singers are usually accompanied live with traditional acoustic instrumentation that are often made from ‘natural’ materials, like wood and horse hair (*matouqin*), clay (for the egg-shaped *xun*), and leaves (for leaf blowing). This is in stark contrast to the majority of CCTV performances in other styles that often employ recorded backings involving ‘foreign’ instrumentation such as

pianos and violins, and orchestral or electronic/synthesized instrumentation (see Long, 2007:11). Unlike the virtuoso, conservatory-trained singers of the orthodox style or commercially successful pop stars, *yuanshengtai* performers are usually little known, and therefore seem to come across as more ‘authentic’ (*didi daodao de*) locals. For urban (mostly Han) audiences, previous lack of exposure to local forms, due in part to historical and socio-political preferences for ‘modification’ (Rees, 2009:48), has meant that *yuanshengtai* sounds are perceived as ‘fresh’ and ‘exotic’. It is the trope of the ‘natural’ and the ‘exotic’ that most characterizes *yuanshengtai* in contrast to the modern, scientific, or commercially-developed discourses of national/operatic and pop music. *Yuanshengtai* has become a marker of a particular kind of identity – marked through particular constellations of voice, dress, instrumentation, and spoken explanation.

The use of *yuanshengtai* reflects the desire to preserve tradition and address anxieties over cultural ‘loss’ as a result of decades of ‘processing and modification’ (Rees, 2009:48). Out of all of the styles described in this study, *yuanshengtai* performances seem to be the most obvious attempt to showcase internal diversity and promote the ‘soft’ side of the party-state because political messages are much less overt than orthodox performances. Most *yuanshengtai* singers on CCTV do not sing in the national language, *Putonghua*, but rather sing in ethnic minority languages or local dialects, and this limits ease of communication nation-wide. They also perform musical styles that are unique to specific villages/towns and ethnicities. Visual and instrumental styles and language often need to be ‘translated’ through subtitles, introductions by hosts, explanations by musicologists, local informants, and occasionally the singers themselves.

It is through *yuanshengtai* that the party-state most obviously attempts to show – with varying degrees of success – how tolerant and open-minded it is to non-commercial exploitation of pluralism within its borders. *Yuanshengtai* allows for the expression of ethnic difference in a system that is nonetheless still fixated on promoting the fact that each nationality within

China comes under a single multi-ethnic nation-state. It is through *yuanshengtai* formats where power over ethnic representation is perhaps most obviously negotiated given that the different styles require translation or interpretation for mainstream Han audiences in a way that orthodox styles would not. Yet, at the same time, *yuanshengtai* remains an orientalising strategy, used to both distinguish China from the rest of the world, and to separate its internal others (minority nationalities) from mainstream norms by emphasizing their pureness, primitiveness compared to the civilized construction of the non-marked Han. Furthermore, while it purports to be against commercialism, in its televised forms *yuanshengtai* relies on commercial sponsorship to survive (for some programs more than others), ensuring that financial implications are of ongoing concern in airing the genre.

Yuanshengtai is at once in opposition to the urban, sophisticated ‘now’, and yet intimately constitutive of a contemporary, globalized psyche concerned with preserving the past. Its relatively recent emergence as a concept reflects broader shifts at both a domestic and international level from emphasis on development and modernization to a desire and recognition of a need to protect and preserve ‘nature’ in both environmental and socio-cultural terms. The local-global, push-pull effects of globalization has resulted in a paradox whereby local cultures are hardened, promoted, and constructed as a result global forces that are perceived to threaten to eliminate difference. In China’s domestic context, the market reform policies of the 1980s and 1990s, which celebrated ‘unparalleled economic growth’ and a ‘burgeoning consumer culture’, have come under increasing scrutiny. For all the celebrated outcomes of the reform policies, they have also led to ‘drastic economic stratification, widespread social inequality and social and ecological damage’. Since 2003, the new leadership under President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao has recognized these negative effects and has sought to repair the ‘damage’ turning to ‘coordinated and sustainable development’ instead. Environmental concerns have been intermeshed with

projects to build a ‘people-oriented’, harmonious society (Lin in Sun and Zhao, 2009:98-9).

At an international level, China’s increased attention to the preservation of folk music performance styles of Han and minority nationality populations has hastened since it signed the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in August 2004 (Institute of Ethnic Literature, 2010). UNESCO defines Intangible Cultural Heritage as ‘traditional, contemporary and living at the same time’, ‘constantly recreated’ by communities in response to their environment and interaction with nature and history (UNESCO, 2010). It is thus constructed as being simultaneously timeless and situated in the present time. The Convention itself has come at a time when there has been great concern globally about the ability of cultures and societies to survive in their current forms under the existing system of globalization (Rice 2003:152). This has led to heightened concerns over identity loss and increased calls around the world to protect cultures perceived to be threatened by the modern world order.

In China’s case, the signing of global conventions and partaking of international groups such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the Olympic movement, have also been a source of national pride and proof of their ability to ‘rejoin’ the ranks of the civilized world (see Zhao Y., 2003:37). Cooperation in such activities lends a sense of legitimacy to the Communist Party who, contrary to numerous Western media reports of China’s abuses of minority nationality ‘rights’, aims to show to the world it cares and is concerned about the preservation of minority nationality cultures. Alongside its promotion of a more ‘harmonious society’, being seen to try to understand and ‘safeguard’ intangible heritage of minority nationalities as well as that of the Chinese more generally is politically significant and adds to the social prestige of the CCP leadership domestically and in the eyes of the world with whom China is increasingly engaging (Heng, 2008:409). The discourse of *Yuanshengtai* is therefore entangled in ongoing local and global tensions surrounding

economic development and the preservation of ecology and socio-cultural traditions.

Yuanshengtai performance styles, which are assumed to be local and unaffected by pressures to ‘modernize’ from the state (unlike orthodox forms), are thus now upheld for the very reasons they were disregarded in orthodox performance styles. Social and political discourses have emerged to rectify apparent contradictions between disparate local notions and party-state preferences so as not to contradict the discourse of multi-ethnic unity. *Yuanshengtai*’s ‘primitiveness’, often equated with ‘backwardness’ (*luohou*) and its embodiment of the residue of the past, is no longer simply to be exchanged for the modernized, new, but is esteemed for surviving and proving the very ‘essence’ of ‘a’ society and culture. The society it is supposed to represent is both an essentialized vision of a local place or minority/local identity and that of the Chinese nation. One narrative suggests that the death of China’s *yuanshengtai* folksongs from any minority nationality is considered to threaten the memory (*jiyi*) and destroy the roots (*gen*) of the Chinese people as a whole (Long, 2007:12). The discourse of loss and the corresponding urgency argued as necessary to protect the *national* culture, and not just internal localized difference, creates a compelling story that can be sold to a unified *national Chinese* television audience. The distinctions amongst ‘us’ become the very essence of ‘us’. This idea of preserving the colourful ‘native’ aspects of Chinese culture ties in with the *xungen*, or ‘root-searching’ movement, introduced in Chapter 1, and links broader popular concerns with party-state objectives of harmony and national unity.

Acquiring the label of *yuanshengtai*, however, does not necessarily mean a particular musical performance is necessarily a continuation of traditions of the past. Nor does it denote any specific time in the past. Rather, the performance style suggests a *sense of timelessness*, in a way similar to the ethnically ‘rooted’ ‘world music’ genre of the recording industry in the capitalist West (Scott-Maxwell, 2004:46). Both are imbued with an

authenticity of tradition, the perception of having ancient or pre-modern origins, the perception of being ‘real’ as opposed to produced (hence the use of live instrumentation), and a sense that these artists are not tainted by commercial incentive (Taylor T., 1997:21-8; Scott-Maxwell, 2004:46). Like the world music genre, there is also an underlying sense of spirituality (Scott-Maxwell, 2004:46) connected with *yuanshengtai*. This is more a cultural-moral sense of spirituality, as opposed to a religious sense, which is muted in CCTV productions. Preservation of *yuanshengtai* traditions are also upheld in a moral battle against the exaggerated and unsustainable consumer and tourism culture that developed in the first thirty years of market reforms and that is seen to threaten ‘genuine’ Chinese culture. The Minister of Culture, Sun Jiazheng, has stressed that ‘local culture departments should undertake preservation in good faith instead of with the sole goal of fuelling local tourism or enhancing publicity’ (chinaculture.org, 2009).

Yet, just as performers have sought to tap into world music trends and expectations for commercial gain, the *yuanshengtai* movement towards the ‘protection’ of traditional performance styles has also allowed performers of traditional music in China to see commercial possibilities in ‘preservation’ leading to recordings and performances for tourism and the media (Rees 2003:163). These performances have necessarily involved a concomitant *construction* of traditions and unique ethnic identities (see Bai, 2007:245 on the construction of Bai ethnicity for tourism in Yunnan).

***Yuanshengtai* on CCTV**

In recent years, CCTV programs have become a major way in which the discourse of *yuanshengtai* has been promoted and validated in the national imagination. In 2003, CCTV’s specialized music channel, CCTV-Yinyue/Music, began to broadcast its program *Folksongs China* – the only television program in China specifically devoted in its entirety to

yuanshengtai folksongs. In 2004, CCTV inaugurated its ‘Western Region Folk songs Television Competition’ (*Xibu Minge Dianshi Dasai*). In 2006, CCTV3 featured *yuanshengtai* folksongs for the first time in its prestigious annual *Youth Singing Competition* (Wang L., 2009:162).

It is inevitable that broadcasting requirements change the context and nature of performance. CCTV needs to appeal to a national audiences rather than simply a local community. This is necessary in order to attract viewers, advertisers and sponsors. For this reason, the primary purpose of *yuanshengtai* for performances on ‘the CCTV stage’ is unavoidably ‘entertainment’, while any other ‘original’ functions that the music may have had (e.g. to complain about difficult work in the fields, to lament about a lost love etc.) become secondary. While most often framed in celebratory discourse of unity in diversity by the programs’ hosts, national audiences are, however, not denied significant exposure to these other purposes of singing. Through *yuanshengtai* performances, they therefore gain access to different forms of identity construction that are rare in other genres, particularly where the performance of minority nationality identity is concerned.

Nevertheless, the Chinese national character of *yuanshengtai* performances on CCTV is guaranteed by the technology and design. Although it is possible for producers to travel to villages and make ethnographic-style recordings that could show a greater desire to emphasize the ‘local’ nature of *yuanshengtai*, it is of note that all these three *yuanshengtai* programs mentioned above are recorded in studios in China’s national capital, Beijing. This requires the local artists to travel away from local contexts and enter into a new and very different national space in order to share their art with television audiences.

In the orthodox form, as outlined earlier, national unity is represented visually through performers on the same stage wearing different costumes, dancing together and singing the same song. But, in the case of

yuanshengtai performances on programs like *Folksongs China*, as discussed below, the songs sung are not the same, since they must be identified as local and, whilst still wearing colourful ethnic costumes, performers generally appear on stage at different times rather than together in a colourful mosaic. Nonetheless, a single, privileged ‘CCTV stage’ (*Zhongyang dianshitai de wutai*), becomes a key symbolic force that ties all the minority nationalities together into one Chinese nation. Through television, which is watched and heard in private and public settings around China, local traditions can become part of the treasury of ‘Chinese’ national culture. This does not mean that individuals in their living rooms are going to adopt the singing and performance practices of disparate ethnicities, but rather, by entering random homes across China, the television performances themselves become part of a shared or unified cultural space that has national reach (Zhao B., 1998:43; Guo J., 2009). China’s people across its massive landmass are able to imagine they are united in ways that take pride in internal difference. Just as the tourism industry’s catchphrases encourage Chinese and international citizens to ‘Visit the splendid landscape of the country. Learn about the long history of the country and about a multi-ethnic nation’ (quoted in Bai, 2007:246), *yuanshengtai* performances on television become a mediated platform through which audiences can learn about the multi-ethnic nation. I now turn to two programs that feature *yuanshengtai* performers *Folksongs China* and the *yuanshengtai* category of the *CCTV Youth Singing Competition* to examine how these themes of local-ethnic and national identity are negotiated in specific performances.

Folksongs China

Across 2008, *Folksongs China* was the only regular *yuanshengtai* program on CCTV (and possibly in China more generally). This program was broadcast twice a day, but outside of prime time, from Monday to Saturday at midday with a repeat in the late evening. Each day had a slightly different theme ranging from ‘Folk songs and stories’ to ‘Folksongs and Collections’

(literally 'Folksongs Museum', *Minge Bowuguan*). Collectors' volumes (books with CD) have been published based on the programs (e.g. Wang X., 2007a; Wang X., 2007b). Rather than being combined with fast changeovers, and upbeat, popular music as is the case in other programs discussed thus far, *Folksongs China* is slower paced and takes place in a darkened 'museum-like' studio without a live audience, or with the barest of audiences of several people who sit on the stage. The purpose of the program is to invite 'real, authentic' musicians (always in 'traditional' costume) from various localities around China, mainly minority nationality areas in the Southwest, to explain their music through both dialogue and performance and subsequently select 'representative' pieces for each group to put in the 'museum' (the published collection of songs). What is unique about *Folksongs China* is that it seems to be the only regular television program in China where *yuanshengtai*/minority nationality performers and culture bearers as well as representatives (sometimes they are Beijing-based ethnomusicologists) are able to talk about their performances in some depth. Through this program, a range of views heard directly from locals allows for contrasting depictions of social and performative life from the same ethnic group in different regions. There is significant negotiation of meanings between the Beijing-based host (generally assumed to be Han) and the visiting musicians and a contestation over who possesses authoritative knowledge.

The hosts of *Folksongs China* attempt a delicate balance between pushing the program along lines pre-devised by producers and showing respect for each guest and their local-minority nationality culture. They have an important role in controlling the nature of the conversation and limiting the kinds of topics that can be discussed. For instance, as noted earlier, religious use of music is rarely if ever commented on. However, they also go to significant efforts to look curious and interested in what culture bearers are saying (nodding, questioning), and by giving them space to speak.

The conservative and progressive aspects of the program design sometimes clash to reveal a variety of perspectives on the purpose of the program and how their musical performances should be presented/preserved. Indeed, across 2008, the 'Folksongs Museum' segment of the program reflected this desire to simultaneously contain and treasure the artistic output of minority folk music. In this segment, it was the host's role to guide the guests on the program to select a single piece of music out of several pieces performed to 'represent' the group and include in a special boxed 'collection'. Given that selected 'local' guests are sometimes given a speaking voice in this program, it is interesting to note that occasionally the whole design of the program can be challenged. In at least one program, it happened that out of the three performed pieces, no *one* piece was selected as required because both the culture bearers and other guests deemed all three pieces just as important in different contexts. There was a friendly tension surrounding the discourse of musical ownership and representation and a contest over the possession of authoritative knowledge that is rarely, if ever, seen on other programs.⁸²

As noted above, stage and set design can assist in creating a sense of 'national' space. The kind of national space that *Folksongs China* creates taps into the trope of 'nature' and sparse primitivism that is associated with *yuanshengtai*. In 2008, the stage design of *Folksongs China* was enclosed, dark and sparse, with willow trees to one side, a circular design on the floor, and colourful strips of material hanging behind – a subtle suggestion of both a secular reading of China's colourful minorities and accommodation of Tibetan Buddhist spiritualism. In 2010, there was a design change to a blue 'river' on the floor, complemented by star-like lights glittering in the darkness above. A background screen projected images of the local region such as terraced rice-fields, providing glimpses into the environments that make up the natural and agricultural Chinese landscape. While the more recent design was slightly more 'glitzy' in terms of lighting and television design features, both emphasized the rural nature of folk singing practices.

⁸² The CCTV - Music channel has similar programs involving in-depth interviews with singers and musicians of other styles as well, including the 'national' and 'bel-conto' style, but not much with 'pop' singers.

From the point of view of national ‘unity of the nationalities’ (*minzu tuanjie*), it is significant that *all* performers, no matter what their ethnic background or precise place of origin, stood on the *same* river and under the *same* stars while they sang their different tunes. Other elements of stage design, such as the large red Chinese characters with the name of the program *Folksongs China*, also in the form of a Chinese seal stamped onto the screen, constantly reminded audiences that these were *China’s* folksongs, not just disparate Yi, Miao or other minorities’ songs.

Given the vast differences in folksong traditions amongst the minority nationalities, although performed on a single stage, it is not easy for *yuanshengtai* performances to lend themselves well to strong images of multi-ethnic Chinese unity even though they may perform on the same stage. Yet, these performances of plurality still work within a party-state project that attempts to shore up support by showing how open they are in allowing ‘softer’ artistic styles that do not press for national unity in the ‘hardened’ style of orthodox forms.

To illustrate this point further, I provide an example of a Hani nationality folk artist named Dao Shu, from Mojiang in Yunnan province, who appeared on *Folksongs China* on 24 March 2010.⁸³ She performed her story ‘*Daoyaolao*’, a name that presumably transliterates Hani vocables. Before singing it in her own language, she was asked by the host to tell the story in official Chinese, a language she seemed not to be entirely comfortable speaking. Even though she plays the role as a modest guest simply doing what the host is asking her to do, her role as a cultural and linguistic translator for a general Chinese audience is significant, placing her in an esteemed or respected position in terms of cultural and linguistic knowledge (albeit limited to her local area). In Mandarin she explained her story, which began with an introduction to a brother and sister who lived ‘a long, long time ago’. The siblings were orphaned at a young age and depended on each

⁸³ See clip of Dao Shu’s performance online at: <http://ent.cntv.cn/enttv/mingezhongguo/classpage/video/20100324/100929.shtml>, posted 24 March 2010.

other for survival. The brother then married, but had to leave his hometown to find work in order to survive. While he was away, his wife stayed at home and began to treat his sister cruelly. She refused to give her food to eat and clothes to wear and his sister eventually starved to death. On his way back home, the brother stopped to rest on a small hill outside the village, where an insect landed on his shoulder. The insect told him about his sister's misery, and revealed to him that she had been transformed into a cicada.

Dao Shu then sang the story in (presumably) Hani language – a language that neither I, not presumably the majority of viewers could follow. However, as she had provided a verbal translation and because there were Chinese subtitles on-screen explaining the content of the song, this 'strange' language was rendered understandable, giving national audiences a means to associate with it and possibly even take it on as part of 'their' Chinese cultural heritage. Dao's powerful performance went on for some minutes and utilized a style involving the imitation of a tearful gasping for air that seemed quite personal. For Chinese audiences the chance to experience such expressive moments of sadness on television is extremely rare, particularly the individual sadness of China's minorities, as ordinarily music and singing constitute basic metaphors for happiness on CCTV.

Although Dao Shu, like most other performers on the program, continued to epitomize a stereotypical construction of minorities as rural and female, *Folksongs China* offers significantly more room for the negotiation of meanings between the 'knowledge bearers' from around China and the Beijing-based host in comparison to any other CCTV program. Ordinarily, the discourse of minorities on CCTV music-entertainment television in its orthodox style is strongly biased towards demonstrating, in a generalized sense, the 56 nationalities living happily together. This Hani story with its incredible sadness threatens this stereotype through stressing the difficulties of life in a particular locality. It also provides a very different performance of ethnic identity to that of cosmopolitan ethnic-inspired pop and the

orthodox ‘national’ style. Furthermore, it shows a range and variety within party-state television that is reflective of a ‘softer’ side of politics and a more subtle way of communicating China’s multi-ethnic identity.

The CCTV Youth Singing Competition – *Yuanshengtai* Category

CCTV’s prestigious *Youth Singing Competition* offers a different angle on *yuanshengtai* performances. *Yuanshengtai* is the most recent category to be added to the competition, which also includes ‘national’ (*minzu*), Western ‘operatic’ (*meisheng*), and ‘popular’ (*liuxing*) singing styles (see Chapter 2). *Yuanshengtai* is the category in this competition that most distinctly acknowledges internal difference. The vast majority of *yuanshengtai* performers in the *CCTV Youth Singing Competition* are of minority nationalities from across China who, as for the performers from other categories, are sent by provincial television stations or military performing arts troupes. Han Chinese are also sent, but predominantly limited to those from the Northwest Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces, reflecting the representation for well-noted CCTV Han ethno-pop singers.

In the *CCTV Youth Singing Competition*, the *yuanshengtai* category, with its unusual sounds produced through relatively unknown instruments and strange languages (for urban Han audiences), alerts us to tensions between the mainstream hosts, judges, and elite commentators, audiences (at least those who make their presence known on screen and through letters and SMS messages that are read aloud by hosts) and the contestants in ways that other competition categories do not. The internal ‘other’ is constructed as important to the nation, but much less modern compared to the civilized Chinese self as espoused in the ‘national singing style’ (*minzu changfa*) and ‘operatic singing style’ (*meisheng changfa*) categories. From the comments made by the mainly Beijing-based musical experts, it appears that many mainstream Chinese audiences have not had much exposure to ‘local’ musical cultures before, or have only begun to find this ‘primitive’ music as

something worthy of appreciation and preservation. Hosts and elites also go to great lengths to expose the beauty, freshness and rawness of *yuanshengtai* singing and its importance for the Chinese nation. As noted earlier, *yuanshengtai* is fresh and new in part because, in previous years, music always needed to be refined in orthodox or ethno-pop ways before being deemed acceptable for broadcast on television.

There is also an unacknowledged sense that the experts and judges on the *yuanshengtai* category in the *Youth Singing Competition* do not fully understand the music that they are judging. Even for the few judges who are *yuanshengtai* performers themselves, the music of other localities and ethnicities can be quite distinct from their own, making it difficult to compare. During the 2008 competition, music expert/composer Xu Peidong, asked the contestant for the name of the ethnic instrument they had just played, displaying his interest in minority music, but also reflecting his musical training that is based on a Western standard. The design of the television competition puts Xu in a superior position, as a conservatorium-trained professional, talking from behind an experts' lectern. While 'original' minority nationality music is welcomed, their music is judged by commentators and judges (Han and minority nationalities) who have mostly, if not all, been trained to some extent in China's conservatoriums where Western norms remain embedded. The design of the program is biased towards the experts lecturing to the contestants rather than *yuanshengtai* performers teaching the mainstream audiences, although there is clearly a two-way struggle over who has the right to assert 'who we are'. The expert commentators are privileged through their ability to express themselves through spoken language (rather than sung language) and through fluent Mandarin, while the performers share knowledge musically and are treated as students who are given verbal advice on their strengths and weakness from their teacher-judges. Significantly, *yuanshengtai* contestants are able to perform in full television spectacle with individual close-ups for 99% of their score. However, they are then immediately subjected to a test of general and musical knowledge unrelated to their singing or area of

expertise for the final 1% after their performance. After answering (generally a multiple choice question) ‘experts’ educate the contestant and audiences by elaborating on the correct answers in great depth, sometimes taking a much longer time than the original singing performance, thus diminishing their performance of ‘difference’. Contestants are expected to show modesty and politeness as they listen to their expert ‘teachers’, particularly social commentator Yu Qiuyu, and army-based musical expert Xu Peidong, and are not given the authority to stand as ‘teachers’ themselves. Nonetheless, their performances that offer languages and styles rarely heard on CCTV have the capacity to teach the experts and audiences something new.

The type of general knowledge questions asked during the 2008 *CCTV Youth Singing Competition* ranged from revolutionary music, folk songs, to the Olympic Games, to Chinese and international geography, knowledge of English, and classic performances and songs from around China and the world. While the inclusion of such questions seems to indicate a desire to educate audience members on items of ‘common knowledge’ deemed suitable for Chinese people, the contestants in the *yuanshengtai* category, who are mostly minorities, are often seen ignorant and uneducated as a result of their inability to answer the questions correctly. This is a tired stereotype and revealing of the continuing construction of Han chauvinism even as it remains unspoken. Minority nationality contestants seem to have been asked more simple questions than contestants in other categories, but in many cases were still unable to answer questions that are likely to be common knowledge to an educated Han urbanite, such as the location of major cities or well-known scenic spots in China. Judging by the body language of the judges and hosts, one of the most awkward and seemingly unplanned, but most interesting, moments during the 2008 competition was when Han Hong struggled to translate for one Tibetan contestant who seemingly could not even speak a dialect of Mandarin Chinese, nevertheless the official standard, *Putonghua*. It seemed to come as a surprise to hosts and the judges that some of its people could not speak Chinese, and whether

deliberate or not this allowed for a rare moment of internal cross-cultural and linguistic confusion.

Some flexibility has been built into the competition for performers and audience members to work through some of the complex questions about Chinese identity and culture that the competition brought to light. Television viewers sent in letters and SMS text messages that were selectively read aloud by hosts and experts. The issue of the level of difficulty of questions was raised on air during the *yuanshengtai* section of the 2008 *Youth Singing Competition* after a letter from a concerned audience member was read asking why the questions asked to contestants of the *yuanshengtai* category seemed to be much easier than those asked to contestants of the ‘national’, Western operatic or popular music categories. The esteemed cultural commentator, Yu Qiuyu, remarked that while he did not know for sure as he did not choose the questions himself (despite knowing the answer to every question in great depth!), he suggested that the reason was because most *yuanshengtai* singers had their own rich cultures and languages and it would have been impossible to test them taking into account such a diverse range of knowledge that drew on the background of every contestant. Therefore, they chose more basic questions to try to create a more level playing field as best as they could. Yu acknowledged the need to respect ‘other’ internal cultures, but dismissed the possibility of sharing this non-musical knowledge during such a ‘national’ contest. He also overlooked the need to have such a general knowledge test at all. Perhaps the mix of singing contest and quiz show formats was thought to be more attractive for audiences. Yu defended the need for ‘general’ knowledge, which in effect was a way of promoting mainstream, official knowledge and the same (‘equal’, patriotic) education for all Chinese people. While experts on the programs appeared to do their best to give ideologically ‘correct’ answers in line with the party-state ethnic classification system they were also involved in constantly clarifying choices and giving rationales to what could be read as discriminatory attitudes towards minority groups – particular those with limited knowledge of the official Chinese language. These moments reveal

aspects of national government policies relating to the ‘unity of the nationalities’ (*minzu tuanjie*) that have not been as successful as may have been imagined in terms of unifying the people through education of a common language and common knowledge.

Through its largely entertaining format, the CCTV3 *Youth Singing Competition* often works to constrain and fix mainstream Chinese views of minorities as timeless, backward, and colourful. However, like *Folksongs China*, it also offers a range of subjective positions not frequently seen on CCTV. While many minorities dressed in exquisite, colourful costumes (presumably made for the television performance), one performer, Ah Peng, a Bai nationality performer from Yunnan province, occupied the stage wearing an open sleeveless coat made of animal hide, long black pants and thong-like shoes. His head was shaved, and although short compared to the imposing, tall figure of female host Dong Qing, he came across as tough, and totally absorbed in his music. Unlike other southwest China groups who would sing in unison gently and seductively turn their heads, or dance enthusiastically while smiling for the audience, Ah Peng’s body language was completely different. He did not smile, not even while talking to the hosts. His song was about his personal suffering (heartache, sore stomach, fever) on being away from a girl he loves and how his illnesses completely disappear when he sees her. When they rejoin the moon quickly appears and the stars come out.

While these lyrics could be quite suited to a sentimental contemporary pop song, the overall performance was very different to mainstream pop performances. Ah Peng stood with his legs far apart, planted on the stage with a stringed instrument strapped around him, which he used to accompany himself in interludes between sung verses. Indeed, as a *yuanshengtai* singer he was privileged in being able to accompany himself with his own instrumentation, a possibility largely denied to pop/rock⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Even in contemporary times, few rock singers or rock bands are seen performing on CCTV at all, apart from a few who have adapted their lyrics to reflect patriotic sentiments

singers performing on the CCTV stage. He bent at his waist almost at right angles, often facing the floor, and at times wildly twisting almost as if feigning madness (in a manner similar to Hong Kong pop star Xie Tingfeng singing a nationalistic song, see Chapter 5). His voice was hoarse, and he made tremendous use of silence between lines and musical interludes to create tension. Tension derived from silence and his hoarseness of voice are two rarities on CCTV music-entertainment television. I do not argue that his performance was necessarily subversive, but that it is the *yuanshengtai* format that has opened up the possibility for performances that offer an artistic point of difference from the conservatory-trained operatic voices of the ‘operatic’ and ‘minzu’ styles, and the highly commercialized ‘popular’ music styles.

Ah Peng was popular enough to make it to both the official and audience favourites’ finals based on the judges’ and audience votes. It may have helped that he played the game strategically when it came to answering the general questions, particularly the long monologue that he used to talk about the kindness of a visiting musician from Beijing. However, my initial reading, based on my perception of this performance as somehow being quite unusual in the context of CCTV, was that it would have been surprising if he had been chosen as the winner given that his performances were so engrossed and idiosyncratic and the image of a single ‘wild’ man dominating the stage, while singing about a personal matter that seemingly provided little link to any notion of national unity. On the other hand, this wild performance may be interpreted as confirming the need for the Han civilizing mission, providing a rationale to both Han audiences and officials viewing the program of the need for leadership and guidance from the Han who remain higher up on the ladder of civilization.

Indeed, the winners of the 2008 (a no less talented group) were comprised of two ethnicities: two Tu male singers and two Miao singers from the same

(see Baranovitch, 2003: 234 on Gao Feng and his song ‘China’ which was written in order to appear on state television and become popular). However, if rock singers appear, they are more likely to come on stage with recorded backing rather than with their band.

village, each wearing exquisite ethnic costumes. They had powerful, high-pitched voices, and appeared kind and sweet, swaying gently from side to side, looking at each other lovingly. During the performance, the men carefully took the women's hands and a close-up of the 'hand-in-hand' image was carefully orchestrated, drawing on a technique that is common in orthodox style performances. This multi-ethnic group, who sang together happily and in a docile and non-threatening way, fully embodied the ideology of unity of the nationalities. CCTV happily showcased the winning group in various subsequent CCTV concerts.

Despite the fact that Ah Peng did not win, it is important to acknowledge CCTV's preparedness to increasingly show such acts of internal difference to its national (and international) audience through the *yuanshengtai* category. The *yuanshengtai* category serves to promote the party-state as being open to diverse representations of its multi-ethnic population, whilst still confirming that minority nationalities belong to a single China. Furthermore, in the *yuanshengtai* category, performers representing Han, who make up 92% of the population, are well under-represented in a category associated with 'primitiveness' and 'purity' and the performances of minority nationalities. The category therefore subtly educates national audiences on the the superiority of Han as a force required to civilize and unite the Chinese nation-state. Finally, *yuanshengtai* performances on *CCTV Youth Singing Competition* help to assert the need for a strong leadership under the CCP who are engaged in a civilizing mission to 'order' the nationalities within a national frame in order to maintain stability and harmony. Thus, while *yuanshengtai* is notably about 'preservation', the major concern appears to be the preservation of the legitimacy of the Communist Party, developed out of its attempts to create a unified multi-ethnic state.

Conclusion

Despite the relatively controlled nature of television programming in China, particularly of CCTV, the market era that began in 1978 has allowed for the opening of new spaces for television performers and producers to draw on folk music and use a greater range of styles than perhaps ever before. The styles of performance reflect changing and multiple directions within the Chinese party-state. A ‘hardened’ projection of multi-ethnic party-state nationalism continues in what I described as the orthodox form, while ethno-pop performances have incorporated ethnicity in a cosmopolitan way, reflecting the burgeoning market economy, and a desire of the party-state to present itself as open, cosmopolitan, and rapidly modernizing. The use of *yuanshengtai* in turn has come to reflect a desire to limit the kind of social inequalities, environmental degradation, and rampant commercialism that came with the open door policy, even though *yuanshengtai* is a market commodity as well.

Out of the three broad styles of performing multi-ethnic unity discussed in this chapter, I argue that the *yuanshengtai* frame, because of its focus on local difference, offers the most pluralistic impression of multi-ethnic nationalism in China. *Yuanshengtai* performances can offer insights and reveal a range of subjectivities, albeit in limited ways, that are not easily observable in other televised styles. For instance, performances of sadness mark a creative shift from the stereotypical performance of the collective multi-ethnic happiness in the orthodox and pop forms. *Yuanshengtai* offers a space whereby the ‘soft’ side of party-state politics can be promoted by allowing for minority languages and local dialects to be broadcast to a national audience via sung performances, and the expression of emotions beyond mere happiness. While CCP ideology is still reflected in *yuanshengtai* performances, it is done in a more subtle way than the orthodox style, which much more overtly trumpets the successes of the party-state.

Although many programs involve a variety of styles, as shown in the above discussion, a decision to feature a particular style of performance (e.g. *yuanshengtai*, national/orthodox, or popular) seems to depend on the purpose of a given television program. Spectacles designed to celebrate national occasions like the anniversary of the establishment of the PRC, which have significant input from party-state propaganda officials and which are broadcast on multiple channels, are likely to draw more heavily on orthodox performance styles with a hardened message of multi-ethnic state unity. Regular programs broadcast in the middle of the day or late at night, like *Folksongs China*, targeted at a narrower audience, appear to offer the most localized of all of the performances as well as the greatest space for a more flexible interpretation of national identity, despite ongoing limitations.

While ongoing assumptions of the superiority of the ‘national’ (*minzu*) style are still evident, artists are no longer always required to modernize the songs of local and different ethnic groups in orthodox ways. However, all styles continue to contribute to ongoing stereotypes of the backward nature of minorities in different ways. By focusing on the performances of minority nationalities in different ways, each of these styles helps to construct an impression of a stable Han entity, which represents the core of at least ninety-two percent of the Chinese nation-state. At the same time, the performance of the ‘unity of the nationalities’ in its various orthodox, cosmopolitan and *yuanshengtai* guises is used to cover the remaining eight percent of the population to give the impression of stability through the frame of a multi-ethnic Chinese state, which is inclusive of the non-Han.

The orthodox style constructs the multi-ethnic nation-state in the most constrained way. Pop stars may attempt to work against stereotypes by asserting their minority ‘difference’, singing in popular style rather than the more official-sounding ‘national’ style, and refusing to wear traditional costumes. Yet, they too work with mainstream political discourse,

continuing to spread messages *from* the political centre (Beijing) to the rest of China. Tibetan culture may be marvelled at, celebrated, and cashed in on for its uniqueness and exoticism, but it remains backward in contrast to what Beijing (the official, central Chinese) culture represents. *Yuanshengtai* most evidently expresses ‘original’ and ‘primitive’ cultures, but attempts to do so in a way that respects and praises the differences as part of a repository of the shared richness of Chinese culture as a whole.

Across all formats, the ideology of a single, unified multi-ethnic state remains prominent. The 56 categories of ethnicity are fixed and the official rhetoric that describes them is highly inflexible. Nonetheless, musical, linguistic, and visual hybridity are often visible in CCTV programming. As with all frames, the lines between these styles are not always clear cut. For instance, more ‘orthodox’ styles in Mandarin with recorded orchestral backing sometimes appear on *Folksongs China* mixed in with the more localized styles using traditional instruments and local languages. The blurring and mixing of styles reflects an accommodation of different artistic, cultural, political, and economic interests.

All forms involve the performance of ethnic identity for the spectacle of television, and this means that even the most localized and raw performances are transformed with the national interest in mind. The need for Chinese television to always reconcile local differences within the frame of a nation-state identity is inherently political, but broader national frames also help make the programs more accessible to audiences across the country. The more accessible programs are to national audiences the more attractive they will be to potential sponsors and advertisers. The three performance styles I have outlined here connect to particular configurations of national identity that are endorsed by the party-state, but are simultaneously the result of conflicting interpretations of what a contemporary multi-ethnic state should look and sound like. The orthodox, popular, and *yuanshengtai* styles, are significant components of overall CCTV music-entertainment design, and details of their production are

essential for understanding cultural, political and commercial pressures for both the transformation and preservation of different folk traditions within China's multi-ethnic state in contemporary times.

While the state itself attempts to imagine the Han as having an equal status to the other 55 ethnic groups, their sheer number and 'majority' status obviously impacts on how the all-encompassing 'Chinese nationality' is constructed. Clearly, the performance of Han chauvinism/ethnocentrism continues to exist in the everyday television enactments of the '55 + 1' formula (see Leibold, 2010:8-15 on popular Han ethnocentrism). The way that Han are most often signalled as being exceptional, more advanced, and more modern, through being the unmarked or non-labelled category works in similar ways to 'whiteness' or 'Anglo-Celtic-ness' in the West in relation to migrant communities (Leibold, 2010:10; cp Hartley, 2004:14). For instance, in Australia, while some migrants are rendered 'ethnic', the British or Anglo-Celtic are seen as some kind of 'ex-nominated established race' and are most often *not* seen as 'ethnic' (Hartley, 2004:14).

However, in China, classification applies to every citizen (Rees, 2000:17), and this means that Han representation matters just as much as any minority nationality marker, not least because it is also a limited construct designed to meet shifting political goals. Efforts are continually made to unify the notion of Han that allow for the production of a more solid symbol of overall Chinese national unity by limiting the representation of internal division within this massive, majority group. Yet, as was apparent in the discussion of Ah Bao, CCTV music-entertainment programming also often gives preference to particular Han groups from specific areas, particular the north-western Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces, thereby ignoring a vast range of other ways of performing Han.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Other 'Han' local art forms from different areas also feature on music-entertainment shows, including local forms of opera. These are performed in ways that acknowledge the unique form, but stress that it is within the realm of a single umbrella of Chinese culture. For instance, in October 2009, Cantonese opera was added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and was a matter of pride for Hong Kong, Macau and Guangdong/the mainland who all shared the honor (Li T., 2009).

China's music-entertainment television thus reveals a complex multi-ethnic state culture in which competing notions surround the performance of identity through song and dance. A more liberalized China has opened spaces for a variety of performance styles that uphold the ideology of a single, unified multi-ethnic state in both more subtle as well as hardened, orthodox ways. This does not mean that hard propaganda in the form of entertainment has disappeared. Rather, CCTV productions have become quite eclectic: as detailed in the subsequent sections, one can now see orthodox style performances where it is virtually impossible to miss 'hardened' ideological points about multi-ethnic unity; popular music that generates profits in a market-oriented society; as well as performances, such as *yuanshengtai*, in which understandings about the make-up of the Chinese nation are more open to interpretation and that paint a more open and cosmopolitan image of the party-state.

There are various configurations of the multi-ethnic family frame in the context of the PRC 'mainland'. While the '55 + 1 = 1' formula of multi-ethnic unity itself is never directly questioned in the programs, the *style* of performing multi-ethnic unity is shifting and multiple. Sometimes differences are smoothed over to create a sense of everyone in the group being 'the same', such as when everyone speaks or sings in the same national language, sings the same song, and dances the same moves. At other times individual performers and ethnicities are highlighted as being unique, such as when they sing in local languages and dialects, perform dances, and use musical instruments that are unique to a region. This chapter has discussed the range of styles used to express multi-ethnic unity and has reflected on the multiple political, social and economic influences and directions of the party-state impacting on the performances of multi-ethnic Chinese identity, in relation to both domestic and global affairs. While the multi-ethnic frame is predominantly relevant only in a domestic/mainland PRC context, the next chapter turns to a discussion of the range of styles used to produce a 'greater China' family that extends

beyond the borders of the PRC. It examines how the identities of Chinese performers from Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and across the world are accommodated in CCTV programming, and considers how China is constructed as a place within a 'greater Chinese' sphere that spans the world.

Chapter 5. Performing the Greater China Family

5.1 Re-Centring the PRC

In Chapter 1, I introduced the concept of Greater China. I showed how scholars like Tu Wei-ming (1994) were fixated on imagining the centre of this greater China as having shifted to the periphery – i.e. Chinese contexts outside of the mainland, such as in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and further abroad. Other authors, like Beng-Huat Chua (2001; 2006), have argued that there is in fact no centre, and that no essential connections between Chinese around the world exist besides a popular culture based on transient market trends. In this chapter, I argue that CCTV music-entertainment programming is not only making stringent efforts to re-construct for domestic and global audiences a sense of Greater China as a reality, but is also clearly attempting to re-centre mainland PRC within the Greater China sphere. In addition, I agree with Chua in that marketable popular culture is an important glue that is being used to bring diverse Chinese cultures together in some way, and CCTV clearly recognizes the importance of popular culture in constructing a sense of solidarity. In the projection of a greater Chinese identity on CCTV music-entertainment programs, popular music (*liuxing yinyue*) performances play a particularly significant role.

I have divided the chapter into two sections that examine performances that construct a sense of a China-centred global Chinese solidarity in more or less ‘harder’ or ‘softer’ ways. In the first part, I examine the more hardened, or ‘orthodox’ performances of unification. While in the multi-ethnic frame ‘orthodox’ performances overtly stressed the unity and happiness of the 56 nationalities within mainland PRC borders, in the Greater China frame, I use the term ‘orthodox’ to refer to moments where music, visuals and language clearly work together to produce a hardened message of the success of unification between the mainland and Hong Kong, and the mainland and

Macau, and the desire for unification between the mainland and Taiwan on both sides. I also use it to refer to the performance of the ‘fact’ that all Chinese around the world are ethnically ‘the same’ and feel attached and attracted to their ancestral homeland in mainland China.

In the second part, I examine the more cosmopolitan performances of global Chineseness in which moments of ambiguity of identity and areas of difference are accentuated to varying degrees. I focus on the negotiation of Chineseness in relation to the performances of Hong Kong and Taiwanese performers as they appear on CCTV, and aim to answer such questions as: How are Hong Kong and Taiwanese performers labelled in spoken discourse and on-screen text? How do their musical styles, lyrics, dress and movements frame their identity? How are they positioned visually and thematically in PRC party-state television? And what does this tell us about the identity options available to Hong Kong performers in being able to access massive mainland audiences through CCTV? As for the multi-ethnic frame, the lines between what are more orthodox or hardened performances and what are softer or more cosmopolitan performances are blurred as both are constructed under the direction of party-state propaganda units and react to changes in the surrounding socio-political environment.

There are certain types of programs specifically intended to draw Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwanese, and overseas Chinese identities into a PRC-centred Greater China family frame. As pointed out in Chapter 2, Zhao Bin (1998) and Lu Xinyu (2009) have written about the significance of the annual *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* special. *China Music Television* is another program through which these identities are drawn together. The repeated music videos and snippets from former live concerts often attempt to forge feelings of nostalgia for presumed bygone eras of unity and to celebrate (or imagine, in the case of Taiwan) re-unification in the modern era. However, I argue that one of the most important and spectacular regular CCTV music-entertainment programs for promoting greater Chinese nationalism and sense of solidarity abroad is *The Same Song*. As I highlight

in this chapter, this program clearly attempts to harness China's 'soft power'. For recording, the set and performers physically travel beyond the borders of the mainland to Hong Kong, Taiwan, London, Vancouver, Japan, and elsewhere to produce party-state sanctioned performances of a global Chinese identity, such as through scenes of all Chinese singing in unison i.e. singing 'the same song'.

The Same Song has not been without controversy. Highlighting the international reach of this CCTV program, as well as political competition between official PRC voices and those of different overseas Chinese groups on a global scale, in 2006, the USA-based Falun Dafa Information Centre (2006) issued a media release claiming that the CCTV's *The Same Song* program had a 'darker agenda' that celebrated torture, and that its proposed live Chinese New Year concert to be held in New York's Radio City Music Hall in January 2006 should not be allowed to go ahead. The argument, for which a lawsuit was allegedly filed at a New York district court, was that the theme song 'features prominently in the program of torture and brainwashing that occurs across China's gulag and prison system', and that the program was specifically designed as propaganda for use in labour camps in China. The purpose of staging the program in New York was, they argued, to highlight New York people's support for *The Same Song* and not the Falun Gong (Falun Dafa Information Centre, 2006; Browde, 2006). Meanwhile, the New York-based, Falun Gong-run, New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDTV) held an even more spectacular performance at the same premises in New York in the same month. NTDTV in turn was accused by CCTV and audiences for disguising in advertising the fact that its own program was really extravagant propaganda for Falun Gong (Personal correspondence with Radio City Music Hall archivist, Diane Jaust, July 2010). Whether or not this particular claim is valid, *The Same Song* is clearly a politically motivated program, as I illustrate further below.

Youth-oriented popular culture plays an important role in CCTV's 'Greater China' productions, and political and economic agendas are clearly both at

work behind the scenes of these programs. On the one hand, CCTV clearly uses the star appeal from Hong Kong and Taiwan to generate large audiences and advertising dollars. While both Hong Kong and Taiwan artists have significant appeal in the mainland, at present Taiwan's Mandarin language pop music (Mandopop) currently 'dominates China's popular culture' and has 'consistently accounted for approximately eighty percent of Chinese-language music sales in the PRC' (Moskowitz, 2010:2). It is also significant that CCTV programs with the greatest array of Hong Kong and Taiwan superstars are often joint productions with commercial enterprises. For instance, CCTV's *The Same Song* program has joined with Toyota, Na'aisi Group (who make household goods like toothpaste and cleaning products), and Oupai (a company that makes kitchens) to create programs with stellar performance lineups. These programs are also predominantly staged in 'Southern' cities like Guangzhou and Shanghai where many Taiwanese, Hong Kong and foreign businesses are based.

On the other hand, Hong Kong and Taiwanese stars benefit by gaining access to a massive mainland audience. As Yiu-Fai Chow (2007:95-6) has described, a whole genre of nationalistic pop music has been developed by Hong Kong and Taiwanese artists in ways that meet politically sanctioned themes in mainland China. Amongst the most frequently aired songs performed by Hong Kong and Taiwanese pop stars on CCTV in recent years have been the anthem-like, heroic-sounding sounding 'nationalistic songs' sung in trendy R&B or rap styles, which Chow refers to as '*neo-minzu gequ*' (lit: new national songs). This type of music emerged at the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, and followed on from the anthem-like nationalistic songs developed by mainly Taiwanese artists in the 1970s and 1980s (Chow Y., 2007:96).⁸⁶ Through their performances, Hong Kong and Taiwanese stars have tapped into, and perhaps even helped to create, party-state sanctioned promotions of Chinese nationalism, and offered a seemingly

⁸⁶ Note that in Chapter 3 I used *minzu gequ* ('national' style) to refer to an 'orthodox' genre influenced by operatic/bel-canto styles following the categories used by CCTV in its national television singing competition categories. However, the lines between the popular nationalistic and 'national' nationalistic styles can be very blurred.

unified and steadfast expression of global Chineseness and an assertion of Chinese pride, directed towards domestic, overseas Chinese, and foreign television audiences (Chow Y., 2007:98-99). In more orthodox moments, old pop songs from the 1970s and 1980s (including some that were formerly banned) are re-worked in new ways to serve contemporary political goals, while songs are seemingly composed anew with lyrics clearly used for ideological purposes. In the more cosmopolitan moments, Hong Kong and Taiwanese stars (or budding stars) sing pop songs in R&B and hip hop that appeal to contemporary youth or re-new older pop songs in such fashion. While these moments may still promote a form of Greater Chinese nationalism, they may not as obviously promote a mainland-centred nationalism.

Noted examples include Hong Kong idol, Liu Dehua's (Andy Lau) song called 'Chinese People' (*Zhongguo ren*), discussed in Chapter 3. In more recent years, Taiwanese superstar, Zhou Jielun (Jay Chow) released a commercially successful R&B song called 'Nunchaku' (*Shangjiegun*) that promotes Chinese victory, self-assuredness, pride, and the fighting back against those who used to call China 'the sick man of East Asia' (Chow Y., 2007:100-101). While scholars Anthony Fung (e.g. 2008b; Fung and Curtin, 2002) and Yiu-Fai Chow (2007) have dedicated articles to Hong Kong and Taiwanese stars like Andy and Jay, describing their repertoire and performances in various contexts, in this chapter, I am interested specifically in how CCTV manages the appearances of such artists, incorporates them into a broader program design, and uses them to attract audiences to other national and party-state messages. I am also interested in how CCTV creates its own stars to fulfill political and commercial goals (e.g. Zhang Mingmin), and how CCTV deals with difference and more experimental pop performances (e.g. The VEGA from Hong Kong, and Taiwanese-American Fei Xiang [Kris Phillips]) in its attempts to construct a sense of Greater Chinese solidarity beyond the mainland in a range of 'hard' and 'soft' ways.

5.2 Performances of Unification

In this section, I examine orthodox moments that establish clear interpretable reading positions that emphasize unification between Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwanese and overseas Chinese from a PRC point of view. Notably these programs are all specials within regular programming that celebrate significant party-state events: the ten year anniversary of the return of Hong Kong to the PRC celebrated in Hong Kong; the National Day celebrated in Macau, and the Mid-Autumn Day, a traditional Chinese festival, celebrated in Taiwan. I also examine *The Same Song*'s ventures into London, Vancouver, and Japan to examine moments in which overseas Chinese are interpellated as belonging to the motherland. In the orthodox moments, the overt theme of unification (and the implication of a single China) is asserted through a host's discourse, body language (e.g. hand in hand), and other audio-visual techniques. The multimodal constructions work together to reinforce each other to spread the message that 'we are united' and there is a clear understanding that mainland PRC forces (e.g. its television programs) are responsible for bringing dispersed Chinese communities together. I highlight both similarities and differences in the way that unity is constructed in programs focused on building a sense of solidarity with people in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and with overseas Chinese abroad. Not every moment within these programs is 'hardened' propaganda. As noted earlier, CCTV blends hard and soft forms of entertainment propaganda in order to attract audiences. However, in this section where I cover CCTV's construction of Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and overseas Chinese identities in relation to the mainland, I focus on moments in which visuals, language, and music clearly work together to reinforce messages of unification and solidarity.

Celebrating Hong Kong's Return

Establishing a 'Chinese' Heart – Hong Kong Singer in Beijing, Pre-Handover

In 1984 on the eve of the Chinese New Year, a young male singer, Zhang Mingmin, from Hong Kong stepped onto the CCTV stage in Beijing. Millions of viewers across the mainland were watching their television screens, partaking in the new annual ritual of welcoming in the Chinese New Year by watching the *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*.⁸⁷ The song, 'My Chinese Heart' (*Wo de Zhongguo xin*), became immediately popular in the mainland (Da, 2005: npn) and the performance transformed the singer from a little-known performer into an instant star.⁸⁸ The song also helped solidify feelings of national pride and a sense that overseas Chinese (*haiwai chizi*) shared this feeling deeply with mainland citizens.

The lyrics of 'My Chinese Heart' expressed the sentiments of a man who wore Western-style clothing and had grown up in a place far away from his 'motherland' (*zuguo*). However, despite his foreign upbringing, he steadfastly asserted that he would always identify as Chinese, for he had been 'branded' (*laoyin*) as Chinese by his ancestors, and forever identified with iconic symbols of the Chinese nation: the Yangtze River, the Great Wall, and Yellow Mountain, which are included in the lyrics of the song. His heart, he sang, would 'never change' (*yongyuan bu bian*). British or English influence on Hong Kong and its culture was completely downplayed.

⁸⁷ The *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* began in 1983, and television itself was a new popular mass medium in China, which only became possible after the economic reforms of 1978 under Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. The reforms allowed for the development of the television industry and for people to earn an income and purchase television sets (Huang and Yu, 1997: 572; Zhu and Berry, 2008: 1-3).

⁸⁸ See clip of Zhang Mingmin's 1983 CCTV Spring Festival Gala Performance of 'My Chinese Heart' at: <http://www.letv.com/ptv/vplay/283655.html>

In the sound track accompanying Zhang's solo on-stage performance, a choir of voices echoed his words, reflecting a mounting feeling that was reinforced with sounds of the military, articulated through snare drums and trumpets. The tremolo in his voice (particularly as he sustained on the word 'heart'), and the use of strings (which are often associated with the sensation of pulling at the heart-strings), stressed a feeling of sincerity for his Chinese identity. In his first CCTV performance, Zhang, dressed in a conservative brown suit, opened his jacket to expose his heart, and repeatedly placed his hands on his heart, reaching out his arms as if sharing his feelings with viewers and gathering the hearts of all the Chinese viewers together at the centre of the CCTV stage. Presumably in this gesture he gathered the hearts of 'all' the Chinese viewers together, which he collected at the centre of the CCTV stage, in the capital of the People's Republic of China. Beijing thus becomes the symbolic 'centre' of global Chinese solidarity. The camera also engaged in a similar push-pull effect, slowly panning out and zooming back in. These movements reflected the ebb and flow of the music and the lyrics, reflecting the pulse of a heart, which constantly negotiates a foreign and Chinese existence but one in which the *Chinese* heart is shown as more powerful. With the lyrics expressing a yearning for the motherland, accompanied by the musical style, gestures, and camera work that are suggestive of the push and pull of foreign and Chinese cultures, and an ending that finally resolves with the importance of Chinese culture, I argue that this sung performance presents, multimodally, a rather hardened construction of Chinese identity.

Since the 1983 Gala, 'My Chinese Heart' has been constantly replayed in numerous CCTV productions as a classic and nostalgic representation of the unity of the Chinese people around the world, linking those on the 'periphery', such as in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the scattered overseas Chinese, to the PRC Chinese 'centre' where the great Chinese symbolic landmarks are located. The reception of the song in Hong Kong and the 'original' intention of the song by Hong Kong songwriter James Wong (along with Wang Fuling) are of minor significance to what the song has

become for CCTV in its attempt to use the song as proof of the reality of a great, united, indestructible Chinese identity centred in Beijing. The song was originally written in 1982 in protest against the Japanese Ministry of Education which was accused in the same year of distorting the history of Japanese aggression against China in primary and secondary textbooks. While this background may have set the groundwork for the song's patriotic appeal in the mainland, in Hong Kong where the song was first released, sales were low. Zhang was referred to as a 'patriotic singer', which was not particularly flattering at a time of deep ambivalence among Hong Kong residents with regards to their relationship to China (Ma, 2000a). The song also had little impact in Hong Kong where few people spoke Mandarin (Da, 2005: npn).

Zhang's performance on CCTV is most significant because of the way it highlights how music-entertainment programming on the television network with the closest connections to the central party-state leadership is engaging with, reacting to, and attempting to influence, social and political change, especially in its attempt to construct a preferred understanding of where Hong Kong fit into the Chinese nation. As the first Hong Kong performer to appear on the Gala, Zhang featured in the same year that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher went to Beijing to sign a Joint Sino-British Declaration that would 'restore' Hong Kong to China in 1997 and officially become the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the PRC (Da, 2005: npn; BBC, 19 December 1984). In 1983, after the Sino-British negotiations re-started following a period of hostility, CCTV's directors preparing for the 1984 Gala went to Fujian and Guangdong provinces near the border with Hong Kong to specifically scout for talent who could make a positive impression during this politically significant time. Zhang was selected after Gala director, Wang Yuande, heard a tape of the song 'My Chinese Heart' (*Wo de Zhongguo xin*) while travelling in a car in Shenzhen and was reportedly moved by the lyrics (Da, 2005: npn).

CCTV Stage in Hong Kong – Ten Years After the Handover

Zhang Mingmin's rendition of 'My Chinese Heart' was said to have moved millions of Chinese around the world with its lyrics asserting a strong Chinese (and not British, or even Hong Kong) identity. This was celebrated in CCTV as emblematic of Hong Kong people's desire to unify with the mainland, which eventually occurred officially in 1997. Yet, ten years after returning to the motherland, the reverse has occurred when the CCTV stage roamed to Hong Kong, the 'homeland' of the Hong Kong people where the Beijing-based network is essentially a guest. The purpose of *The Same Song* 2007 episode was to reflect on the ten years since the return (*huigui shi nian*). It tried to give the impression of equality between the Beijing-based mainlanders and the Hong Kong people by constructing the program as a joint production by CCTV and Hong Kong's Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), with two hosts from each station. The logos of the networks featured prominently on big 'drums' on either side of the stage providing both stations with promotional opportunities. The commercial nature of the program was emphasized through the sponsor ITAT (a Shenzhen based Hong Kong clothing retailer), which was clearly marked in the sub-title: 'ITAT night in Hong Kong' and whose logo could be seen on t-shirts of audience members and staff. The commercial nature and cooperation between the two sides seemed to offer evidence of how quickly the mainland has reformed in terms of adopting a modernized, market-based approach that has raised the living standards of Chinese people, such that it is now on par with Hong Kong, previously considered more advanced. While the program offered a mixture of performance styles, I focus on two moments that highlight how songs are used to both stress China's openness in offering Hong Kong people the freedom to assert a unique identity, and which are also used as levers towards communicating more ideological messages of China's successes in unification that are articulated in spoken discourse.

During the show, the actress Wang Mingquan first appeared on stage sing the sweet-sounding theme song to the popular film *Journeying over ten thousand torrents and a thousand crags – always love* (the trials of a long and arduous journey) (*Wan shui qian shan zong shi qing*).⁸⁹ Wang is a well-known Hong Kong performer who was born in Shanghai but moved to Hong Kong when she was young (All-China Women's Federation, Feb 6, 2007).⁹⁰ Unlike Xie's performance described above, Wang sang the song in Cantonese, emphasizing her pride in Hong Kong culture, and highlighting its difference with the official language of the mainland. The sung performance shows the relaxed attitude of the PRC government in allowing Hong Kong people express their unique identity, if only limited to language and love songs rather than overt expressions of political aspirations.

However, immediately after Wang sang the innocent love song she switched to the official mainland language of Mandarin in her dialogue with the mainland host, stressing her ease in switching between the two language cultures. In her dialogue with the host, she discussed the progress of the 'one country, two systems' arrangement over the past ten years. Standing together, seemingly happy to chatter along, the host and singer embodied the natural and easy relationship assumed to be the norm for relations between mainland and Hong Kong Chinese. Together, they alluded to the Hong Kong people's former doubts about the return of Hong Kong to the motherland, and to past and current difficulties. But these were quickly brushed aside as Wang emphasized that 2007 was the best year since 'the return', and even though the current situation hadn't come easily, 'everything is better' than before and 'the future (lit: tomorrow) will be even better'. The discourse used to describe the return of Hong Kong to the motherland as successful fits neatly with discourses that more broadly

⁸⁹ A more recent (2009) performance of Wang Mingquan singing 'Journeying over ten thousand torrents and a thousand crags' on *The Same Song – tomorrow will be even better* (*mingtian hui genge hao*) can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGpIm8bbL4Y&feature=related>.

⁹⁰ According to the article, Wang importantly 'still regards herself as a mainland citizen' and has had a political career having been nominated by representatives of Guangdong Province to represent the Hong Kong People's Congress (in those days people of Hong Kong did not make the selections) (All-China Women's Federation website, Feb 6, 2007).

accentuate the positives of China's thirty years of opening up and reform – a rhetoric that appears directly in the lyrics of more overt propaganda songs of mainland singers, particularly songs sung by members of military performing arts troupes. This Hong Kong singer, as with the case of Xie, was not forced to sing overtly ideological songs as this would go against the party-state's image of being true to the 'one country, two systems' cause. A more subtle approach had to be taken through the construction of a breezy dialogue and through the singer herself being used as a vehicle for expressing happiness and contentment with the status quo.⁹¹

The show concluded on a bright note with two mainland hosts firmly connecting the 'beautiful' Hong Kong with 'our' China/'our great motherland' (*women weida zuguo*). Significantly, unlike the mainland CCTV hosts, the two Hong Kong hosts expressed their hopes for the strong relations between the two sides in a more subtle way. They simply expressed their wishes for Hong Kong to be 'more beautiful', and that 'music and cultural exchanges would be more intimate in the future'. Nonetheless, the attempts made by the mainland hosts would have worked to constrain the kind of overall messages constructed. While Hong Kong singers were given plenty of airtime during the program, the final stamp was given to a mainland singer, Cai Guoqing, who most typically closes *The Same Song* by singing its theme song, normally accompanied by a choir of children to create a fresh and innocent atmosphere. When examining the

⁹¹ It is important to note that during the tenth anniversary of the return of Hong Kong to China, the success of the 'one country, two systems' model was emphasized in other contexts besides music variety programs. Some scholars claim that it was implemented 'unskillfully' in its early years, resulting in 'chaotic governance' and 'public outcry' (Lo, 2008: 253). However, by the tenth anniversary, the administration under Donald Tsang, and with the economic support of Beijing, Hong Kong seemed to be on a more stable path. Even these successes were said to have been 'politically overstated by official PRC media and increasingly self-censored HKSAR [Hong Kong Special Administrative Region] media' (Lo, 2008: 253). The media in general sent a strong message emphasizing the triumph of a common cultural Chinese identity that firmly linked Hong Kong to the mainland, while downplaying 'the existence of the strong Hong Kong identity' (Lo, 2008:256) – or rather, providing just enough hint of difference to try to satisfy viewers of the party-state's openness. Thus, even though people from the two sides may have a different 'dialect', they are all shown to speak the same 'language' and belong to one 'family'.

lyrics, it is evident that the phrase ‘the same song’ is a metaphor for shared feelings. It also articulates the hopes of, or denial of any essential difference between, the two sides (whether the two sides be between Beijing/mainstream China and Hong Kong or any other place in China or around the world where the program has been staged). The lyrics paint a picture of people from the two sides ‘holding hands’, with smiles ‘engraved’ on each other’s faces, eager to share stories about their happy lives. They assert that despite differences in location, people on both sides sing ‘the same song’ because they share the ‘same feelings’, ‘same hopes’ and ‘same happiness’. Differences remain unacknowledged.

As this final song was sung, the camera panned around Hong Kong’s Victoria Harbour, located next to the concert set, drawing Hong Kong into the same song as that sung by Chinese in the mainland and across the diaspora. In the middle of the song, while sentimental instrumental music continued in the background, Cai directly linked Hong Kong to ‘our’ China, highlighting *The Same Song*’s special role in uniting the two sides:

Tonight Hong Kong’s colours are so beautiful, linked to *The Same Song* stage, the stars are vast. Today so many stars have gathered on the *The Same Song* stage by Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong. We have gathered on a stage that is full of friendship...at this moment through *The Same Song*’s song, we will give our most beautiful wishes to spring, the beautiful Hong Kong, to *our lovely China*.

Afterward, in a final embodied act of unity, Cai encouraged the Hong Kong audiences, along with the mainland and Hong Kong stars, to wave their hands together in the air to the beat of the song. In such moments, the carefully constructed dialogues between and within acts, along with images of Hong Kong and mainlanders hand-in-hand, and the sound of voices singing a sentimental melody together, stress a strong message of Hong Kong’s successful return to China and positive feelings for the future of this cross-border unity. The metaphor of shared happiness and friendship, rather

than the anger and impatience or uncertainty imbedded in the songs of Hong Kong stars like Xie Tingfeng described above, underlies the most significant approach by the mainland singer and *The Same Song* production team to construct a non-confronting sense of shared identity with mutual benefit across the Hong Kong-mainland border.

Wang Mingquan's performance in Cantonese language shows the party-state's openness in terms of allowing points of difference between Hong Kong and the mainland – at least in terms of language. It also serves to highlight the strong contributions Hong Kong has made to 'Chinese' culture in general through popular songs and film. However, after singing in Cantonese, Wang quickly reverted to Mandarin, and through spoken dialogue with the host, helped to express more overt ideological messages celebrating the success of the 'one country, two systems' model and the Hong Kong people's satisfaction with the status quo. Popular songs, with or without overt imbedded ideology, can be used to help sing the party-state's praises through celebrating openness, but also by attempting to ease audiences into more overtly ideological dialogues and monologues that follow or are imbedded in songs.

Celebrating Macau's Return

Macau's Song of Return to the Motherland

Like Hong Kong, in CCTV music-entertainment productions, Macau and the people of Macau are framed within the discourse of returning to and firmly belonging within the arms of the motherland. Like many provinces, cities and towns around China, Macau has a much-plugged and dedicated song about itself and its link to China. Called 'The Song of Seven Lands – Aomen' (*Qizi zhi ge – Aomen*), it links the local area with the national culture. 'The Song of Seven Lands – Aomen' was originally written in 1925 as a poem to reflect on the seven places of China (*Zhonghua*) that had fallen

into the hands of British, French, Japanese, and Russian imperialists – Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Kowloon, Weihai, Guangzhou Bay, and Luda (Lushun and Dalian) (Du, 2009). In 1998 the words were used for the theme song of a CCTV TV series called *The Years of Macau (Aomen Suiyue)* celebrating the return of Macau. The following year the song appeared in the *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*, when a young girl, Rong Yunlin,⁹² born and bred in Macau, took the stage, sharing the sentiments of Macau's unity with the mainland. Her youthful image and pure, innocent child's voice were a sign that Macau had a bright future as part of China. This is similar to CCTV's use of a young girl's image and voice in the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games to convey a sense of China as having a bright future (discussed in Chapter 4). To reinforce the sense of national solidarity, Rong was accompanied by ancient Chinese musical instruments including drums, *erhu*, and *guzheng* (Zhang Y., 2010:52). A choir of over thirty Chinese-looking girls and boys (girls dressed in presumably Portuguese-influenced Western-style dresses, and boys wearing dress pants and yellow buttoned shirts with bow ties), sang happily in unison, nodding their heads as they sang to emphasize the importance of each word. The tune was lullaby-like and was accompanied by the tinkling of a xylophone, suggestive of childhood and a sense of safety and belonging within the mother's arms. The children sang to the studio and television audiences, telling them 'Do you know 'Macau' isn't my real name?' They plainly noted that even though 'I've been away from you for too long,' they (the unmentioned colonizers) only took my 'body', not my 'soul'.

After this verse, nine-year-old Rong Yunlin stepped out of the crowd and started to walk forward, demanding particular attention. She repeated the first stanza in her pure and innocent voice, as the other children followed behind, walking forward and repeating particular phrases for emphasis. The

⁹² See Rong Yunlin's performance on the *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* online at: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XODY1NTgxNjA=.html (CCTV3 MTV). A CCTV reflection on 'Song of Seven Lands – Aomen', including excerpts from the television series, and Rong Yunlin now aged nineteen, is available at: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTM5ODM4NzI0.html. Further information on Rong Yunlin and her performance is available at: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/63628.htm>.

visual image of children walking forward (like the minority nationality children walking forward with the Chinese flag during the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, discussed in Chapter 4) and the sound of many voices singing the same song together *en masse* are commonly used in CCTV's music-entertainment programming as symbol of national unity and strength. The performance gained momentum and a critical mass of voices could be heard as adults (a group of about thirty women who stood behind the children, and a separate group of around thirty men who stood behind the women wearing black suits and red ties) stepped in behind the children to back up their words and their feelings of national identity. Together they told the television audience that even though they had been separated for 'three-hundred years', they never forgot about who they really belonged to (the 'mother in my dreams'). They pleaded that 'us children' should be called by their pet name 'Aomen', not Macau. In increasingly authoritative tones, the young children, female adults, and male adults, called out 'Mother! Mother!' and 'I want to come back', ending emphatically with a final call symbolising national solidarity for the motherland.

The political relationship between Macau and its PRC 'mother' is thus made utterly clear for audiences through a combination of sound, images, and very clearly articulated song lyrics. These modes mutually reinforced each other to emphasize the message of unity between Macau and its motherland, mainland China. It is significant that, while the performers may wear 'Western' clothes (as with Zhang Mingmin's 'My Chinese Heart'), the performance of this song downplays the Portuguese influence on Macau and asserts its inherent Chinese identity.

Since 1998, 'The Song of Seven Lands – Macau' has been regularly preformed (or replayed) on CCTV music-entertainment programs, typically by children, emphasizing the mother-child relationship between Macau and the mainland. Rebroadcasts of the original 1999 *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* performance are also common. For example, in a *China Music Television*

episode called *Songs of Memories* (*Jiyi de gesheng*) aired in 2008, allowed audiences to recapture the nostalgic moment when Rong Yunlin and her fellow Macau compatriots expressed their yearnings to rejoin the motherland. Via its constant repetitions in various live and re-packaged forms for mainland television audiences (through CCTV-3 and CCTV-4), as well as for regional and global television audiences via satellite and the Internet, the song is clearly used to educate audiences about the ‘real’ history of Macau, its connection to mainland China and its reintegration into the PRC. It therefore plays a similar role in linking Macau to the motherland and the great Chinese nation as Zhang Mingmin’s ‘My Chinese Heart’ plays in linking Hong Kong to the motherland and a sense of Greater China.

Celebrating National Day in Macau

Large-scale extravaganzas performed in Macau also work hard to incorporate Macau into the PRC national frame through bringing language, visuals, and music into a comprehensible message of unity and belonging to the same nation-state family. One music-entertainment program filmed in Macau was a post-Olympic Games extravaganza, *Happy in China – National Day Celebration Special – Charming Macau* (*Huanle Zhongguo Xing – Guoqingjie tebie jiemu – Meili Aomen*), broadcast in October 2008⁹³. By choosing Macau as the location to celebrate one of the most important national moments, the 59th ‘birthday’ of the People’s Republic of China, Macau was shown to be fully incorporated into the family picture and fully integrated into the same geo-political and historical idea of the PRC. Even though Macau itself has only officially been part of the PRC since 1999, it was the number ‘59’ that was emphasized by host Zhang Lei, who announced that 2008 was the 59th birthday of the PRC, and this represented 59 years of ‘struggle/striving’, and 59 years of ‘pioneering’ a new course for the Chinese nation. She set the national celebratory tone for the program, explaining that ‘our motherland has experienced great changes’,

⁹³ See program excerpt *Happy in China – National Day Celebration Special – Charming Macau* at: <http://bugu.cntv.cn/ent/yue/huanlezhongguoxing/classpage/video/20100423/100586.shtml>

emphasizing the importance of the Olympics that had just concluded, the ‘great achievements of thirty years of opening up and reform’, and ‘feelings of pride’. While Macau was the setting, this program firmly incorporated all of the areas and people to which the PRC lays claim or includes in its Greater China worldview. Zhang called on ‘all the nationalities of the whole country, Hong Kong and Macau compatriots, Taiwan compatriots and overseas Chinese [to] together celebrate this great day for the motherland.’

Beyond verbal discourse and the framing of Macau through naming the program through its connection to the ‘national’ day, the visuals and music also confirmed Macau as being part of China. The design of the huge indoor stadium magnificently blended the Macau and PRC national cultures into ‘one’ from the opening scene until the finale. The opening scene began with the Chinese national anthem playing in the background and symbolic images of Beijing, representing the heart of the motherland (Tiananmen Square, soldiers of the People’s Liberation Army, Chairman Mao’s portrait, and the PRC flag). These shifted into images of Macau (e.g. the symbolic remaining façade of the ruins of St. Paul’s cathedral – *dasanba paifang*), with an emphatic male voiceover in official Beijing dialect that linked this unique ‘harmonious’, ‘peaceful’ and ‘beautiful land’ to the rest of China. Red and green were the colour themes reflecting the respective flags of the PRC motherland and Macau SAR. While on-screen seated audience members waved small Macau and PRC flags jointly, massive red PRC flags were held high by male youth, showing the strength and dominance of the motherland over the SAR. Red dominated the indoor setting: huge red lanterns hung from the ceiling, huge red drums were displayed and played, and featured dancers holding red fans, reflecting their passion for the motherland. Another group of dancers wore red and green costumes, reflecting the merging of the motherland and Macau. At the same time, lotus flowers, the emblematic flower of Macau, floated in pools of water below the stage, and a huge ‘lotus and five-star’ design of the Macau flag (the stars adapted from the PRC flag) was seen on the ceiling providing an artistic and

political ‘framing’ for wide camera shots of the action on stage and the stadium at large.

‘Macau friends’ (*Aomen pengyou*) were incorporated into the PRC family through various kinds of interaction and participation. Those in the audience were given both Macau and PRC flags as well as multicoloured ribbons. Although close-ups of actual audience members didn’t seem to indicate they were too excited, incorporation of on-screen audiences was a clear attempt to highlight unity. In addition, a young woman from Macau was invited on stage to sing with national male pop star Sun Nan. Her spoken words emphasized her ideologically ‘correct’ affiliation: she said that she chose to sing ‘Red flag fluttering’ (*Hong qi piao piao*), one of Sun Nan’s signature songs, in order to express her ‘passion for our motherland’. The patriotic lyrics merged magnificently with this uplifting pop classic. As they sang together about the ‘five-starred red flag’ whose ‘name is more important than my life’, a camera panning across the massive audience showed male youths waving the huge red PRC flags and audiences waving the smaller PRC and Macau SAR flags. The inclusion of ordinary people – the woman’s ordinariness was partly exemplified by her off-key, mediocre singing ability – implying that her feelings were typical of Macau’s people today. After the song, host Zhang Lei reiterated some of the lyrics of the song to emphasize national unity. She stressed that the ‘five-starred red flag flutters in *every one* of our hearts’ and this is what makes ‘our motherland a big strong family’.

In the *Happy in China* program, the history of Macau was also performed in ways that stress the PRC’s sovereignty, but which also emphasized the unique ‘blend’ (*jiaorong*) of Portuguese and Chinese cultures. As discussed in Chapter 1, this emphasis on the blending of cultures over the past four hundred years, noted directly by host Zhang Lei, offers a different perspective on Chinese nationalism to that of Hong Kong where British colonial history is not celebrated at all. However, besides the boasting of Macau’s unique buildings, which included both Chinese and foreign styles

(*Zhongwai jianzhu*), no other aspect of foreign/Portuguese cultural influence was included. Not surprisingly, this includes a lack of focus on the religious significance of many of the unique buildings, which are ruins of Roman Catholic churches. Production design in the ordering of performances is also revealing of an emphasis on the PRC as more significant than Macau's Portuguese history. Rather than linger on the mystery of the Portuguese impact on society in Macau, there was a sudden jump to emphasize the strength of a great and proactive PRC China today of which Macau is clearly a part. A brief mention of Macau's multi-national history was immediately followed by a dazzling routine by an acrobatic troupe from Beijing involving climbing and somersaulting up and down vertical poles. The ordering of events can at times be coincidental, but overall Macau is framed in CCTV's music-entertainment programs as firmly as belonging to the PRC, and as part of a Greater Chinese identity that spans beyond the borders of the mainland.

Blending Cultures and Developing Strategic Relationships with Portuguese-Speaking Nations

While CCTV's music-entertainment programs focus on Macau as part of a flourishing Chinese party-state, in the course of my viewing in 2008, I did note a couple of programs that included a subtext that may support to some extent Sheh and Law's argument that Macau is being used to try and build strategic relationships with Portuguese-speaking countries (see Chapter 1). One such program was a CCTV special celebrating the ten year anniversary since the return of Macau to China in 2009 (*Qingzhu Aomen huigui zuguo shi zhounian wenyi wanhui*).⁹⁴ While focusing on Macau as part of a great Chinese nation, featuring youth with red ribbons dancing excitedly and singing 'we will create the future of China (huaxia)' (*women qu chuangzao huaxia de weilai*), it also included elements that suggested an openness to

⁹⁴ See clip on celebrating the return of Macau at <http://bugu.cntv.cn/documentary/humanities/aomenshinianwenyiwanhui/classpage/video/20091227/100479.shtml>

the blending of Chinese and foreign cultures. The opening dance featured a sprinkling of white children alongside Chinese looking children. An on-stage orchestra was made up of Western instruments (e.g. timpani, violins, double bass, oboe, trumpet, sylophone, European metallic flutes) and Chinese instruments (e.g. erhu, pipa, Chinese wooden flutes, and Chinese cymbols). Dancers in various acts wore a mixture of traditional European and Chinese costumes.

Alongside two apparently Han Chinese CCTV hosts, the program also included two male hosts (apparently brothers) who appeared to be of mixed Chinese-Portuguese backgrounds. These Mekanese hosts engaged in a highly scripted dialogue in *Putonghua* about Macau (*Aomen*), which including the singing of a couple of lines of a song in Cantonese, as they reminisced on growing up in Macau. During the dialogue, one curiously asked the other ‘do you think you really know Macau?’ to which the other replied ‘Hey? I am a Macau/Aomen person (*wo shi Aomen ren*). Of course I understand Macau.’ This dialogue seemed to address an uncertainty over whether mixed-race Mekanese are valid Chinese, by casting doubt and then affirming their inclusion. The identity they resolutely expressed was significantly a ‘Macau’ identity not a ‘Chinese’ one. Their dialogue was clearly used to emphasize China’s friendly stance towards foreign countries rather than to highlight that some Chinese people have ancestors from Western nations.

The hosts emphasized that Macau has both temples and churches, again emphasizing the architecture over any deeper sense of identity. They stressed that people with many nationalities live in Macau, a point reinforced via an image of the audience that included white people, and noted that Macau is a socially integrated trendy, modern city. The two hosts concluded their dialogue together by stating in unison that the real uniqueness of Macau was its ‘blending of China and the West, old and new reflect each other’ (*Zhong-Xi ronghe, gujin huiyin*).

The Mekanese hosts' dialogue was immediately followed by an image of the modern city of Macau with tall buildings and neon lights, and the quaint sound of an accordion and into the performance of a Portuguese folk dance (*Putaoya tufeng wu*), which included white singers and dancers and some Chinese performers dancing in a traditional Portuguese style, wearing simple, traditional Portuguese costumes, playing simple folk instruments (one white woman played the triangle, with others on an acoustic guitar and accordion), and a 'simple' folk song in Portuguese about a boy in the north of Portugal who could not sing and dance, and girls who didn't care about his money or whether he wrote them letters as long as he would dance with them. Translated lyrics appeared in Chinese subtitles at the bottom of the screen, in much the same vein as the *yuanshengtai* genre discussed in Chapter 4. The dialogue and design of the program reinforced the notion of Macau as part of flourishing Chinese nation, and a Chinese nation which extended a friendly hand to its former colonizers, who now appeared quaint, old-fashioned and insignificant (refer my discussion of *The Same Song* in London in Chapter 6 regarding a similar approach to the construction of England).

Highlighting the ideological significance of the event, the live performance was attended by Hu Jintao, who sat in the front row of the massive audience. At the end of the program, Hu went on stage to extend his hand of friendship to key performers. In a scene reminiscent of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, Hu was seen on CCTV singing 'Ode to the Motherland' (*Gechang Zuguo*) with his compatriots, this time appearing on the same stage as the Chairman of the Macau SAR, as well as all the performers who had appeared on the program and who represented various groups of the Chinese nation through their dress (minority nationality costumes, red dresses) and appearance (e.g. mixed-race Mekanese). The white foreign-looking performers also served to suggest China's friendship with foreign countries and the attraction of foreigners to China (see Chapter 6). Clapping and singing together en masse, no less a song about the 'victorious singing voices' (*shengli gesheng*), the 'five-starred red flag' (*wuxing hongqi*), and

the ‘dear motherland’ (*qin'ai de zuguo*), offered a powerful message of Chinese national unity, inclusive of China’s multi-ethnic population and its special administrative regions like Macau.

Imagining Unification with Taiwan

As Taiwan’s unification with the mainland is still a highly contested issue, CCTV’s music-entertainment program adopts slightly different strategies to those used to highlight unity with the people Hong Kong and Macau. The events used to celebrate the unity of the cross-straits Chinese family are primarily based around politically safe traditional Chinese festivals, like the Spring Festival/Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival, rather than events developed to celebrate PRC political achievements such as the Chinese National Day (October 1), which was discussed in the earlier section on Macau. Similar to the narratives of the separation of mother and children in relation to Macau, and separated family in relation to Hong Kong, the narrative of lost brothers and sisters is utilized to reflect on the mainland’s relationship with Taiwan. To illustrate these points I draw on *The Same Song – enters Taiwan – Mid-Autumn Day special* (*Tongyi shouge – zoujin Taiwan – Zhongqiu jie tiebie jiemu*) broadcast in 2008.⁹⁵

Musically, visually, and linguistically, the ‘enters Taiwan’ program attempted to create a warm family atmosphere with a small group of people sitting around circular tables symbolizing reunion (*tuanyuan*) as is part of the tradition on mid-autumn day. The opening scene featured a group of hosts and a crowd of people from both sides of the Taiwan straits (*liang'an*) congregating on the stage singing and clapping happily together, acting out a ‘family reunion’. In pairs made up of one Chinese and one Taiwanese,

⁹⁵ Clips for ‘The Same Song – enters Taiwan – Mid-Autumn Day special’ broadcast available online at:
<http://bugu.cntv.cn/ent/yue/tongyishouge/classpage/video/20100205/100106.shtml> and
http://v.ku6.com/special/index_3354808.html

they stepped out on stage together and sung a song celebrating shared traditional customs, exchanging gifts of moon cakes, and looking at the moon together (*gongtong ming yue*). The song, which seemed to be composed specifically for this program, culminated with everyone chanting together themes of cross-straits unity and the special role that the CCTV program *The Same Song* has played in bringing the two sides together. It noted that for ‘nine years’ the family of ‘singing voices’ located in the three places (mainland, Hong Kong and Macau) on the two sides of the Taiwan Straits (*liang an san di*), have been happily singing ‘the same song’ together on mid-autumn day, as they express their hopes for an even brighter future (‘beautiful flowers’ and ‘an ever rounder moon’).

The politically neutral moon theme continued with a duet between female mainland star, Na Ying and male Taiwanese star, Qi Qin singing the Chinese classic ‘The Moon Represents/is a Reflection of My Heart’ (*Yueliang daibiao wode xin*). This romantic ballad, originally made famous by the sweet-voiced and elegant Taiwanese superstar Deng Lijun (Teresa Teng) in the 1980s, continues to be used by CCTV to unite the PRC Chinese people with other Chinese around the world. Significantly, Deng and her song were banned in mainland China in the 1980s due to Deng’s officially supported role as a ‘patriotic entertainer’ for Taiwan/the Nationalist Party and its army (Tsai, 2008:224). She also performed for overseas Chinese, but only in the territories of ‘free China’ and its allies, and played a special role in comforting homesick mainlanders and the general population in Taiwan with her sweet ballads after Taiwan’s succession from the United Nations in the 1970s (Tsai, 2008:224). Yet, alongside audiences in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and elsewhere, she became hugely popular with mainland audiences, who accessed her music through pirated tapes. This scene between Na Ying and Qi Qin singing Deng’s sweet song about love highlights how the same nostalgic pop song can be used for multiple purposes in different socio-historical circumstances, particularly in an attempt to bridge distances between people living in different geographic, cultural, and political spaces (see Tsai, 2008:225, 242). In this performance,

Na Ying and Qi Qin were shown holding hands, looking at each other sweetly, arm in arm, and providing a solid symbol of close cross-straits relations. At the same time, the emphasis on friendship between the two sides through such constructed symbolism hints at how far apart the PRC and ROC are. Significantly, the song is also used in CCTV programming to unite Chinese with Japanese, with whom China has a notoriously ambiguous relationship, given the long history of cross-cultural relations where China was the dominant power, and the more recent history of Japan's occupation of China. It was sung by Cai Guoqing and a female Japanese singer hand in hand, dressed in each other's national costumes in *The Same Song – enters Japan* concert in 2007.⁹⁶

In another song on *The Same Song – enters Taiwan* program, Taiwan's Chen Mingzhen called on someone from the audience to sing with her, explaining that she was very happy to get closer to mainland/inland friends (*neidi de pengyou*). Clearly choreographed, yet also attempting to provide a sense of the natural affinity and desire to get closer to the other side of the Taiwan straits by those on both sides, a man in the audience, dressed up and ready with microphone got up casually from his seat in the front row and joined her on stage. They held hands for the entire song and looked dreamy as they sang another beautiful classic 'Pray' (*Qidao*).⁹⁷ An elderly couple, as well as teenagers in the audience looked on sweetly, smiling and clapping along, seeming to confirm that those across all age groups approve the union. At the same time, to paraphrase the lyrics, the song compelled everyone to look beyond the disappointments and to hope for a world where poverty is exiled, where spring lasts forever, where the sun never sets, and where success is forever around us. It is a classic case of a romantic ballad being used to promote the political rhetoric of harmony and reunion and to create a reality through symbolic performance on television of a preferred state of affairs.

⁹⁶ http://www.56.com/u77/v_NDQwODE0NjY.html (Cai and the Japanese singer appear about half way through).

⁹⁷ Clip for 'Pray' (*Qidao*) available online at: <http://v.ku6.com/show/-qc1AJn899Ou5eFZ.html>

Orthodox CCTV music entertainment productions make particular use of Taiwanese residents who have family in the mainland. As noted in Chapter 1, in the context of Taiwan, ‘mainlanders’, or ‘outside-province people’ (*waishengren*), also refers to the people who left the mainland for Taiwan at around the time of civil war (1945-1949), as well as their offspring. It is through these Taiwanese that the family unification discourse can be most succinctly embodied. Old people in *The Same Song – enters Taiwan* program provided tangible family links between Taiwan and the mainland, similar to the ‘lost brothers’ discourse described by Pan *et al.* (2001) in relation to Hong Kong at the time of its return to the motherland. The ‘aunts’ and ‘uncles’ interviewed by hosts shared how they ‘missed’ the mainland, because they still had family there – mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters. Sitting around a circular table (a symbol of unity) in the ‘audience’, an elderly couple shared with two hosts from CCTV their happiness and warm (*wenxin*) feeling at being able to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival with mainland compatriots. In expressing that they felt ‘just like children’, they implied that Taiwan (like Macau) is a child of the mainland/motherland. The dialogue also emphasized connections through the trope of ‘hometowns’ and the use of local accents, both forms of local knowledge that suggest feelings of intimacy and ‘authenticity’ aimed at connecting the elderly Taiwan couple to the mainland. Yet, while the hosts were curious to know why they returned to their ‘homes’ to visit relatives, they were never asked to comment on reasons *why* they left or what life in Taiwan has been like. Instead the focus was on ‘missing’ and ‘separation’ – with a clear attempt to generate a desire to re-unite. These people, who had lived for approximately sixty years of their lives in a completely different socio-political context, were presented as ‘the same’ as their brothers and sisters who remained on the mainland – kind people who simply cared about family unity rather than politics. Given that the rhetoric of ‘mainlanders’ was not used to describe the elderly guests, the program implied that *all* Taiwanese were simply lost brothers and sisters of relatives on the mainland.

In the dialogue between the host and an elderly couple, the personal family narrative operated as a microscopic parable for a greater geo-political story. The story suggested that the suffering of the mother was automatically linked to her missing her child, and that once reunited all ‘illnesses’ would be cured, suffering would disappear, and everyone would be happy:

- Male host: So, since you left your home, have you been back?
- Old man: I’ve been back twice.
- Male host: [Was] the main reason for going back was to visit friends and relatives?
- Old man: To visit relatives.
- Male host: Why did you go back the first time?
- Old man: The first time my mother was seriously ill, so I went to see my mother.
- Male host: And the result?
- Old man: The result was after my mother saw me, she wasn’t ill, she was better.
- Male host: [She] missed her son!

At the end of the dialogue, the hosts asked their elderly guests directly to give their wishes and blessings to their relatives in the mainland and Taiwan as well as to the television audiences, thus symbolically uniting *all* mainland, Taiwanese, and Chinese viewers globally into one Greater China frame.

While two hosts from CCTV and two from Taiwan (as identified through on-text bracketing of ‘Taiwan’ next to the names of those from Taiwan) ran the program, it was clearly a ‘CCTV’, PRC-centred production. Unlike *The Same Song* production in Hong Kong described earlier, the ‘enters Taiwan’ production offered no evidence of a being a joint production with a Taiwanese broadcaster or a sponsor and thus appeared to be entirely ideologically motivated. There was an attempt to incorporate Taiwanese hosts to give the appearance of a mutually produced program, but the

Taiwanese hosts were not identified with any particular organization suggesting that there was less (if any) institutional support from the Taiwanese side compared to the production in Hong Kong. Furthermore, unlike other productions of *The Same Song* in other cities and countries, no clips of outdoor scenes were shown, and the indoor location was not revealed. The entire program was performed in a dark, indoor studio and was constructed as being on Taiwanese soil – judging by the program name ‘enters Taiwan’ and the rhetoric of hosts and guests. Beyond these implications, there was little evidence that the program was in fact shot in Taiwan suggesting sensitivities in performing on Taiwanese soil. Overall, the restricted nature of the visuals and verbal discourse, and the selective use of nostalgic pop music and newly created chants with overtly political lyrics, served to emphasize a clear, hardened PRC mainland message that Taiwanese and the PRC mainlanders are essentially and traditionally ‘the same’. The program also provided an opportunity to imagine perfect unity and harmony between the two sides, while social/cultural and political differences between the two sides (especially those with native born Taiwanese/Minnanese culture) were generally avoided. CCTV producers and directors were therefore able to use the music-entertainment genre to carefully construct a preferred image of Taiwanese people as culturally and ethnically ‘the same’ as mainland citizens. This construction was possibly made with the belief that if Taiwanese are presented as separated family then the predominantly mainland audiences may be more likely accept the party-state policy of unification.

Performing Solidarity with Overseas Chinese in the West and Japan

The Same Song is not just engaged in interpellating Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwanese people into the Greater China frame for audiences watching at home in the mainland, but is also part of China’s soft power push instruct Chinese who live overseas on who belongs to the Chinese world. At the

same time, it highlights to mainland China's audiences the continuing sense of global Chinese solidarity. Hosts of *The Same Song* and other music-entertainment programs on CCTV are particularly fond of the phrase 'domestic and foreign viewing friends' (*haineiwai guanzhong pengyoumen*), thus directly attempting to reach out to mainland and global Chinese audiences. In highlighting overseas Chinese support for such productions through their attendance as on-screen audience members, the program infers the support of overseas Chinese for the current status-quo and thus the continuing legitimacy of the party-state.

It is of critical significance that when *The Same Song* travels to overseas locations where Chinese are a minority, it tends to focus much more significantly on the 'Chinese' people rather than any other local group. The titles and introductions and conclusions may set up the program as having the main purpose of building friendly bilateral relations through cross-cultural exchange between two countries. However, the idea of 'cultural' or 'international exchange' is often secondary to the focus on constructing foreign places as part of a great 'Chinese world'. That is, foreign cultural landscapes are almost always rendered 'Chinese'. By moving the 'same' CCTV stage around the world, by drawing in overseas Chinese to participate as the major 'foreign' on-screen audiences, and by intermingling with performers flown directly from the PRC especially for the event, the programs actively transform 'foreign' places into ones that are almost exactly the same as those in 'China'.

Similar to the findings of Nyíri in a study of Chinese tourists' perceptions of Western Europe, I also argue that 'the Chinese state' through television, attempts to 'assert its cultural authority over foreign landscapes'. Nyíri found that written guides and people who introduce attractions to Chinese tourists 'reject, or more precisely, do not engage with, locally dominant representations of the localities' (Nyíri, 2005:52). CCTV's roaming music-entertainment programs likewise pay little or no attention to local representations of the foreign places they visit, but rather have their own

‘master cultural narrative[s]’ for enacting each foreign space in a ‘standardized’ way (Nyíri, 2005:48).

The ‘lack of attention’ to local subjectivities ‘is linguistically manifested in the wanton misnaming (or renaming) of sites’ (Nyíri, 2005:52).⁹⁸ In music-entertainment productions renaming is conducted through the use of Chinese language in the form of voiceovers, hosts speech, and on-screen text that frames each place, as well as ‘naming’ through choice of music and visuals. For instance, in *The Same Song – enters England* program in early 2008 (the first time *The Same Song* entered the UK), large Chinese characters 伦敦 (*Lundun*, London) were stamped across the screen during the program promo, in front of a backdrop of visual stills of historic buildings like Westminster Abbey and the London Bridge, virtually the only outdoor images of England seen on the program. They were accompanied by the slow ‘archaic’ sounds of bagpipes and a deep, authoritative voice of a Chinese-speaking male who further marked the city as ‘historic’. This combination of language, image and music seemed to construct London as a relic of the past. It was starkly contrasted to the modernity of China and its cultural productions, marked by a sudden shift to modern, upbeat music and the unleashing of rapid images of the CCTV evening concert and its stars who were actively moving. While the program claimed to be ‘revealing China-England Culture and Customs’ and ‘The hearts/minds of both sides’ through ‘musical communications’, as well as ‘transmitting the Olympic spirit/Singing aloud/praising the Olympics and The Year of China’, it was really much more about the latter.

Interestingly, in *The Same Song – enters Vancouver* (Feb. 2007),⁹⁹ the choice of Chinese characters used to translate the name of the city brought it directly into a family-like relationship with China. The characters used for Vancouver in Chinese – 温哥华 (*wen-ge-hua*) literally translate as ‘warm-

⁹⁸ Nyíri’s comment is in relation to the overwriting of Tibetan village names with Chinese names for scenic spots.

⁹⁹ *The Same Song – enters Vancouver* is available online at: <http://v.ku6.com/show/pbJ9wuYYEg9fylej.html> (uploaded 24 July 2008).

brother-Chinese'. Like the 'enters England' program, the vast number of Vancouver 'faces' in the program, including practically the entire indoor audience as well as performers, were 'Chinese'-looking. There was only a sprinkling of white 'foreign' faces and very few non-Chinese performers. Even though ethnic Chinese are a significant minority in Vancouver,¹⁰⁰ the program re-creates a scene of audiences similar to programs that are made in China. The scattering of white Canadians were like the 'foreigners' who appear in the audiences of many China-centred programs, while the majority of Vancouver's people appeared to be 'just like us'. Just as in films, television dramas, and fiction, CCTV music-entertainment programs clearly go to great effort to produce a sense of 'familiarity' for its viewers by turning global cities of the West into 'national sites' (Nyíri, 2005:46; also see Sun, 2002:67-111).

Ethnic Chinese people living abroad who participate in *The Same Song* are given few opportunities to perform 'foreign' or 'hybrid' identities no matter how long they have lived abroad, although in some instances they try. For instance, in the 'enters England' production, one young female, presumably a student, when asked her name in an entirely Chinese-speaking production gave her English name, noting that she had been living in England for six years. However, similar to the case with 'mainlanders' in Taiwan, hosts never dwell on these 'mixed' identities, and no questions are ever asked about adjusting to British culture, why they departed China and whether they intend to return to China. The length of time away is simply linked to the amount of time one has been separated from the motherland. The hosts equated living in England for six years with missing 'home' for six years. This gives the impression that all Chinese people overseas are fully committed to their Chinese cultural backgrounds and to China no matter where they are or how long they have been outside of China.

¹⁰⁰ Vancouver has a strong Chinese presence. Ma (2003:27) notes that fifty percent of all immigrants to Vancouver from 1991-6 were Chinese. This includes a large number of migrants from Hong Kong who were apprehensive about their political future prior to 1997, and since 1984 were able to migrate to Canada under the Entrepreneur Immigrant Program.

As for programs staged in Western countries, *The Same Song* in Japan in 2007¹⁰¹ highlighted ‘friendly’ bilateral relations between the two countries in the program’s promotional rhetoric, such as through voice-overs and large on-screen text used to introduce the program. However, a much more limited focus was given to the bilateral relation compared to the focus on solidarity with overseas Chinese in Japan. Like in other programs, the CCTV program *The Same Song* itself was credited for the special role it played in bringing the two sides together. While ‘the two sides’ seemingly refers to Chinese and Japanese nationals, it is much more about bringing together the Chinese people in Japan and the Chinese people in the PRC for Chinese television audiences in mainland China and around the world via satellite and the Internet. In an attempt to solidify the spirit of Greater Chinese national identity, a Chinese national ‘entrepreneur’ who presumably lived in Japan went on stage to say he was ‘very happy that *The Same Song* had come to Japan and this was a big celebration for the overseas Chinese community (*huaren shehui*)’.

The link between Chinese people in Japan and in China was also extended to incorporate on-screen audience members, a technique used across CCTV music-entertainment programs to give the impression that ‘ordinary’ local audience members at each location are united to their Chinese brothers and sisters both in mainland China and across the world through the mutual viewing of the program. One host walked into the audience with his microphone and questioned a man about his origins. When the man told the host he was from Beijing, the host emphasized their hometown connections, rather over-enthusiastically remarking ‘as soon as I heard [you] I knew you must have been a *laoxiang* (a person from the same town)’. He shook the man’s hand, who smiled cautiously, then asked him how long he had been in Japan. The man responded ‘over 10 years’. The hosts did not ask how long he has stayed in Japan or how he might have negotiated cross-cultural relations or changed as a result of moving to Japan. Instead, he moved on to

¹⁰¹ ‘The Same Song - Enters Japan’ is available online at: http://www.56.com/u77/v_NDQwODE0NjY.html (as above)

inquire about his family (drawing on the family metaphor), and had a discussion in Mandarin Chinese with the man's daughter who was sitting beside her father:

Host: How old are you?

Girl: This year I'm nine years old.

Host: How many years have you been in Japan?

Girl: Nine years [laughter from audience]

Host: What song do you like?

Girl: I want to hear 'My Motherland' (*Wo de zuguo*)

Host: Oh, can you sing it?

Girl: Yes

Host: Can you sing it for us?

Whilst standing in front of her seat in the audience, the girl then took the microphone and sang the first stanza of the song perfectly. The first stanza's lyrics seem innocent enough. They detail a naturally idyllic life beside a wide river. Yet, the song is frequently performed on CCTV, particularly by distinguished female Party singer Guo Lanying,¹⁰² but also by younger Party stars like Song Zuying, Peng Liyuan¹⁰³, Han Hong, Zhang Ye etc.¹⁰⁴, and regular audiences are likely to know that the rest of the lyrics are aimed at celebrating a 'beautiful', 'heroic', and 'strong motherland' – 'the place where I grew up'. The dynamics at this moment are significant for understanding the way in which Chinese families abroad are constructed in orthodox CCTV programming for mainland Chinese and greater Chinese television audience. This girl had apparently spent her whole life thus far in Japan, but at nine years old demonstrated her Chinese identity through her perfect Mandarin and perfect rendition of one of the most patriotic Chinese

¹⁰² See Guo Lanying's rendition/Music Video of 'My Motherland' online at <http://v.sohu.com/20080518/n256935290.shtml> (with Zhang Ye, army singers etc.) (earthquake concert May 2008), and another performance http://www.56.com/u12/v_MjA0NzE4ODE.html

¹⁰³ See Peng Liyuan's rendition/Music Video of 'My Motherland' online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R5SCXKrWpo&feature=fvww>

¹⁰⁴ See Han Hong's rendition/Music Video of 'My Motherland' online at http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/rMQX_irbsh4/

songs on Chinese television. One could speculate that the audience laughter highlighted an apparently incongruous situation of being patriotic to China having potentially never lived in China. However, the performance seemed to suggest that even if one isn't physically living in the mainland, their Chinese heart is there – just as in the case of the Chinese heart that lasted over three-hundred years under Portuguese rule in Macau, and under British rule in Hong Kong.

Indeed, it is no coincidence then that that next song was 'My Chinese Heart', with precisely such words, sung by the Chinese hosts, Chinese PhD students studying in Japan and Chinese entrepreneurs working in Japan who were all on stage. This song was constructed to look like an impromptu feature. Without instrumental backing, they sang together out of tune (again, the out of tune nature helped to give the impression of being an unstudied and impromptu act of unity), arms over each other's shoulders and swaying from side to side in an obvious attempt to construct an image of national camaraderie. Even if the performers seemed somewhat awkward with their roles, the attempt to provide a message of transnational Chinese unity was made abundantly clear.

Along with entrepreneurs, students are a key feature of overseas Chinese productions on *The Same Song*. Narrowing the possible reasons for why Chinese wished to leave the mainland to their desire to expand their knowledge through studying enables students to be held up as a kind of model for viewers and linked to China's growing global strength. The emphasis on study is significant because it carries with it an assumption that one can learn knowledge that does not interfere with a stable, fixed cultural background. This aligns perfectly with the design of the program which itself 'travels' abroad, but culturally barely changes in comparison to its productions on Chinese soil. For instance, in the *The Same Song – enters England* program around thirty representative Chinese students came onto the stage, many wearing sweaters with 'London' or the name of a prestigious British university, tapping into the pride and prestige of studying

at some of the most elite universities in the world. Yet, what individual student representatives emphasized was not their life in England, but the fact that ‘even though we aren’t in the motherland’, ‘our hearts are joined together’, and they would ‘study hard’ (presumably to make the motherland proud).

Songs and the image of singing together are vital for demonstrating a united identity and patriotism. In the ‘enters England’ program, the students together with male singer Guo Feng, who gained quite a bit of exposure on CCTV prior to the Olympic Games for solidarity-building songs, sung ‘Fill the World with Love’ (*Rang shijie chongman ai*). This song, which was frequently heard on television music-entertainment programs in the wake of the Sichuan earthquake (May 12, 2008), provided a strong link between the overseas students and the domestic context later in the same year. Adding to the image and feeling of a global Chinese solidarity, the students sang together, arm in arm, hand in hand, swaying together from side to side as a collective, along with members of the audience who also sang along, smiling happily and waving glow sticks in the dark.

In the context of overseas students’ lives, the lyrics ‘you will never be alone again’ seemed to imply that living in England must be a lonely experience, and any Chinese student who goes there must be making a sacrifice to be away from ones family and homeland. This relates to Yang’s (2002:200) observation of urban Chinese ‘going to alien lands where they must struggle to survive through their own labour and wits’ as being comparable to ‘the image of city people in the Cultural Revolution going down to the harsh life of physical labour on a production brigade in the countryside.’ Given such ‘hardships’ they need to be reminded through CCTV’s presence and through the lyrics that there is a support group, that fellow villagers and countrymen and women are always standing by, holding one’s hand, wiping one’s tears, sharing the same happiness, the same burdens, and the same hopes, and going through the same ups and downs. The ‘warmth that will never change’, encased in the touching sentimentality of the sweet melody,

emphasizes a preferred reading of this feeling being something natural, even if one were to read against the grain and see it as overbearing. While popular television dramas in the 1990s like *A Beijing Native in New York* (*Beijing ren zai Niuyue*) dispelled myths that one could rely on relatives overseas (Yang, 2002:202; Sun, 2002), contemporary CCTV music-entertainment programs like *The Same Song* are trying hard to reconstruct this myth by suggesting that all Chinese people, no matter where in the world they live, are part of one big Chinese family who are there to support them.

The imagination of patriotic Chinese overseas who continue to show a desire to identify with the motherland despite having left suggests the existence of a 'global Chinese village' that achieves cohesion by 'common allegiance and support to the Chinese nation' (Sun, 2002:192). This promotion of patriotism, in turn, increases political legitimacy for the Chinese government (Sun, 2002:190). In stressing a strong cultural unity between Chinese in foreign lands and those 'at home', they are also tapping into Chinese 'fears' 'of being corrupted by alien outside forces, of losing one's self and identity' (Yang, 2002:202-203). The 'world' of the song 'Fill the World with Love' and the world created by *The Same Song* program is clearly a macrocosm of the internal image of the PRC. In a multi-ethnic frame, the imagined Han centre is surrounded by colourful minorities dotted around its boundaries, while in the global view the dominating 'Chinese' group is surrounded by a sprinkling of white and black foreigners.

As Sun (2002:213) suggests, many homesick and nostalgic overseas Chinese like to be interpellated through the CCTV productions, thus enabling them to re-connect with their 'homeland' and maintain links with China. This suggests that CCTV music-entertainment programs may serve an important role for mainland Chinese migrants in particular. However, the programs themselves are not necessarily designed to actually encourage these overseas Chinese to return home. The issue of return to China is cautiously sidestepped in the productions. The reality is that according to an

International Organization for Migration study of Chinese students studying in Europe in the early 2000s – mainly in the UK, Germany, and France – only thirty percent of them ever return home (Omelaniuk, 2005:194). In fact, since 1949, the PRC government has had a fairly passive policy towards the return of overseas Chinese, and has imposed a policy of supporting and encouraging them to freely settle in host countries, to assume the nationality of host countries, and live in harmony with its people (Liu, 2005:307). Returning overseas Chinese often add to social problems as their reintegration is not always a smooth process. Some have difficulty finding work, particularly as a result of salary expectations that are too high compared to locally educated graduates (Omelaniuk, 2005:204), and others place a heavy burden on the state given its preferential policies for returned overseas students (Liu, 2005:308). If unsatisfied back in China, they may return to the foreign country, escalating the financial cost and damaging China's global reputation (Liu, 2005:307-309). On the other hand, since the 1990s, overseas Chinese who are often highly skilled are welcomed back to China for investments and expertise. Thus, maintaining positive, family links with overseas students and entrepreneurs, encouraging them not to 'forget' China is significantly in China's ongoing interests in relation to economic and scientific development.

Concluding Thoughts on The Same Song, the Global Chinese Nation, and Re-Centring China

Overall, the focus of *The Same Song* programs shot in locations outside of the mainland is on creating a sense of greater Chineseness that extends beyond the borders of China. In the orthodox moments described here, CCTV, and *The Same Song* in particular, clearly attempts to establish the PRC mainland as the important political centre for all Chinese and is invested with the appearance of having the power to bring Chinese people from all regions of Greater China and around the world harmoniously together. *The Same Song* is broadcast on CCTV-3, which is a domestic focused channel (compared with CCTV-4), and although it is available via

the Internet for non-mainland PRC audiences, it is likely that the majority of viewers of this program are mainland PRC citizens. Whether or not it is accessed by large numbers of overseas Chinese, it is significant that CCTV is attempting to reach out to both mainland citizens and Chinese around the world and trying to educate them on the strength and (imagined) unity of Chinese globally. The fact that PRC China is centred in this vision is significant as it helps to promote the view of China's growing importance in the world and that it should be taken seriously in world affairs.

With some differences reflecting different political situations and sensitivities, Chineseness appears to be defined in similar ways in CCTV music-entertainment programs shot in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and abroad in Vancouver, London, and Japan. In the orthodox frame, there is no evidence of any particular desire to engage directly with, or to inform mainstream PRC audiences about, differences within the Greater Chinese population, nevertheless the cultures and histories of non-Chinese populations from foreign countries or in Hong Kong or Macau. Unlike the multi-ethnic frame, internal difference within the global Chinese community is severely downplayed in preference for the image of a single, global nationality. However, as I will show in the next section, CCTV does not sustain a hardened, Party-centred approach all the time. It mixes orthodox style productions with softer approaches, allowing for more cosmopolitan styles and for some artists to cross national and cultural boundaries in more ambiguous ways. The mixture of hard and soft approaches reveals internal tensions with the cosmopolitan aspects used to attract audiences and keep them engaged, thus satisfying both the commercial and political goals of the party-state broadcaster.

5.3 Performances of Global Chinese Cosmopolitanism

In this section, I focus on less orthodox methods of asserting a Greater Chinese identity, in which a 'hardened' sense unification is emphasized

through lyrics, visual symbolism, and musical style, and more on moments in which there is some flexibility in showing difference within the construction of Chineseness and/or greater degree of ambiguity. I examine ways in which CCTV music-entertainment programming addresses mixed identities, through the incorporation of Hong Kong and Taiwanese stars as well as lesser known artists trying to make it on the mainland market. I examine two performers/groups from Hong Kong and two from Taiwan who performed on CCTV in mainland China, each of which offers some element of difference to the more orthodox moments described in the above section.

I argue that these moments encourage more diverse readings and are focused on presenting China as open to change through its flexible incorporation of elements of difference. The lead of superstars rather than politically trained CCTV hosts, for instance, make these moments seem more cool, trendy, and somewhat less ideologically-loaded and more interested in attracting youth audiences and sponsorship dollars. Instead of offering layers of language, visuals and music that work to emphasize a relatively hardened official party-state message of unification, these more cosmopolitan moments offer a greater sense of global Chineseness, or 'national' identity.

More ambiguous messages connected to the projection of individual artists mixed identities (Chinese-American; Chinese-Japanese etc.) are also evident in CCTV's programming. There may be a greater degree of intra-Chinese difference, or Chinese-foreign hybridity on display, which come through the lyrics, use of non-official languages like Cantonese and English, or experimentation with new styles of singing etc. Performances of these differences seem to reflect a more open and cosmopolitan, or 'softer' side, of the party-state. While softer moments can also be seen in roaming shows, in this section I focus on examining shades of experimentation with the performance of a Greater China identity in selected moments performed in the PRC mainland. The programs chosen were staged in autonomous areas

where the display of multi-ethnic identities is also a feature, and in the political capital Beijing.

As noted above, I wish to re-emphasize that these more open, cosmopolitan moments are usually mixed into the very same programs that present more overt, hardened orthodox moments. Often the more hardened, ideological and multimodal moments take place through spoken discourse with hosts in between sung performances. It is important to recognize the flux between these two tensions. It is also important to note the political roles that Hong Kong and Taiwanese stars play in attempting to attract and rev up audiences in CCTV productions. Particularly significant is the emphasis on contemporary pop songs imbued with nationalistic elements as well as old pop songs revitalized in contemporary styles that seem to operate as appeals to cosmopolitan youth. As I show, their performances are often strategically aligned to meld with the more open, cosmopolitan images of the party-state that link to more orthodox messages that follow. Like the last section, the key programs commented on here are *The Same Song*, *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*, and *China Music Television*. I have also included a moment from the *CCTV Youth Singing Competition* featuring the only Hong Kong group to make it to the latter rounds.

Chinese identity plays out on a number of levels. On the one hand, ‘otherness’ and difference of Hong Kong and Taiwanese performers are marked as different to mainlanders, and yet they are still presented as ‘one of us’. Also, while Chinese are multi-ethnic within the mainland, Chineseness is conceptualized as a single ethnicity when all areas outside of the mainland are taken into account. Yet, the two frames interact on mainland-centred CCTV productions and are used in ways that appear to emphasize one another. Often Hong Kong and Taiwanese stars, for instance, are used as vehicles for connecting and promoting the two frames.

Promoting Pan-Chinese Nationalism – Xie Tingfeng

As discussed earlier, ‘My Chinese Heart’, sung by Hong Kong singer Zhang Mingmin, is an example of a song that has become a popular classic of pan-Chinese unity, as well as a television performance that is treasured by CCTV itself, as evidenced by its numerous replays on television. But Zhang is not the only Hong Kong star to make his mark through a nationalistic anthem-like pop song, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Chow Yiu-Fai, a lyricist and academic, has written about Hong Kong singer-actor Xie Tingfeng’s (Nicholas Tse) desire to follow suit in the 2000s and have his own patriotic song that would rev up the crowds. Chow wrote the song ‘Yellow People’ (*Huangzhong ren*), which is the subject of discussion below, to meet this request. In two articles (2007, 2009), Chow himself notes that he took on the task whilst simultaneously attempting to challenge a dominant and essentialist reading of Chineseness (defined through collective success, an unbreakable strength, and a strong blood-line) by focusing on the vague notion of yellowness¹⁰⁵ and alluding to negative aspects of Chinese culture and history. However, as in the case with Wong’s and the writing of ‘My Chinese Heart’, the original intention of lyricists and songwriters quickly becomes irrelevant when the mass media takes the reins and when other people involved in the production of meaning have other ideas about both the performance and about Chinese identity. In this case, Xie Tingfeng has other ideas about the song he was singing.¹⁰⁶ Instead of constructing Chineseness in a vague and uncertain way, Xie’s added lyrics establish a fiercely nationalistic and essentialist tone, referring to ‘us’

¹⁰⁵ For critical discussions on ‘yellowness’ as a ‘racial’ term introduced during the colonial era by the West to assert ‘white’ superiority over Chinese, and adopted by Chinese to assert their own superiority over ‘blacks’, see Dikötter (1992: 161) and Teng (2006: 149). Also see Jones (2001) for a discussion on ‘yellow music’, the so-called lewd, low-class music of the folk, influenced by the ‘black’ idiom of jazz, popular in China in the 1920s.

¹⁰⁶ Note that Taiwanese singers like Zhou Jielun (Jay Chow) (see Fung, 2008) and mainland singers, like Gao Feng (see Baranovitch, 2003: 234) have also successfully used the tactic of singing nationalistic songs the purpose of generating airtime on CCTV by fitting in with the mainland’s political and cultural agenda of celebrating traditional Chinese values and thereby promoting themselves to massive audiences.

Chinese with ‘yellow’ faces as a single collective of ‘1.3 billion people’ who are constantly ‘marching forward’ (see Chow Y., 2007: 103).

CCTV has welcomed Xie on-stage to sing this pop song, which helps to build a sense of national unity between PRC citizens in the mainland and in Hong Kong. ‘Yellow People’ was one of two songs Xie sang during CCTV’s *The Same Song* special entitled *Entering into Inner Mongolia – Booming Ordos* (*Zoujin Nei Menggu – Tengfei E’erduosi*) on 24 August 2007.¹⁰⁷ The hosts explained early on that the show’s aim was to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) and the celebration of the successful ending of the second Ordos International Culture Festival, which was drawing to a close. This was the first time *The Same Song* program had entered Ordos, a city in the IMAR, and was created in partnership with the local city and prefecture governments and Inner Mongolia Television station.

The IMAR is classified as part of mainland China, but one of China’s officially recognized 55 ‘minority nationalities’, the Mongols (*Menggu zu*), have nominal ‘autonomy’ status over the region. The reality, however, is that the Han majority in fact outnumber the Mongols in the region and the multiethnic ‘IMAR identity’, which includes both Hans and Mongols as well as members of any other ‘ethnic’ group living in the area, is promoted on CCTV just as much as the Mongol culture, which is used to give the area an exotic and unique flavour (see Bulag, 2010). This particular show was also a massive advertisement for the Erdos company which sponsored the show. The company is one of the most lucrative textile brands in China. It is listed on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanged and has the same name as the town Ordos, but uses a different English spelling. Like the CCTV brand in this particular episode Erdos accrues value by appropriating Mongolian ‘minority’ cultural elements and symbols (such as Chinggis

¹⁰⁷ See Xie’s CCTV performance of Yellow People online at: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XODAwOTg0NA==.html.

Khan and pastoralism), although the company itself is dominated by Han Chinese (Bulag, 2010:282-83).

The event appeared to serve two main goals. Firstly, it sought to affirm China's image as a unified multi-ethnic state, made up of Mongols, members of China's other 55 officially recognized 'minority' nationalities, plus the Han majority. The 'unity of the nationalities' (*minzu tuanjie*) was implied through the co-hosting of the show by two 'mainstream', ethnically unmarked, Beijing-based, national-level CCTV hosts and two hosts from the provincial-level Inner Mongolia TV station. While the theme song, 'The Same Song', which opened and closed every program, was usually sung in Mandarin (*Putonghua*, or 'common language'), the impression of China's openness to diverse internal ethnic expression was reinforced this time through the unusual choice to sing the song in Mongolian language. The young girl who sang the song also performed 'as Mongolian' through the wearing of a Mongolian costume. One of the co-hosts from Inner Mongolia TV also spoke in Mongolian, and mainland pop star Sun Yue even expressed her desire to learn Mongolian language. As such, the show opened with a clear attempt to present China's internal nationalities as equals (even though traditional clothing and other languages may also be interpreted as markers of a culture that is more backward to the advanced national culture).

The second goal of the show seemed to be to project China as a world player, with an 'international' festival, and cosmopolitan outlook. China was presented as a place that was attractive to people from around the world, and as a nation that allowed different ethnic groups internal to mainland China to keep their unique cultures alive and share them harmoniously with other 'Chinese' people.¹⁰⁸ Such an approach may be an attempt to appeal to the cosmopolitan consciousness of urban Chinese across China and their

¹⁰⁸ Not everyone would agree with the 'reality' of this image. Bulag (2010), for instance, discusses how most Mongolians in Inner Mongolia have actually lost their ability to speak Mongolian.

sense of pride in their ‘unique’ country. It may also assist in creating an image of China as a strong and stable place for investment.

In this particular episode, the two perceived goals, namely, international openness and ethnic openness met up against each other. While a sense of ‘Mongolian’ agency was given importance in the opening scenes, it was suddenly disrupted by the appearance of Xie Tingfeng and his song ‘Yellow People’: a performance that called for a strong, united Chinese nation and a sense of national pride through popular music. Xie, the ‘Hong Kong’ performer, played an important role in uniting mainland Chinese (no matter what ethnicity) with ‘the Chinese people’ outside the mainland PRC border in Hong Kong. In this context, a single, united ‘greater Chinese’ identity was created, while the Mongolian identity became almost irrelevant. In other words, the unique, exotic Mongolian identity that was used to draw audiences to the program, suddenly became overridden by an all-encompassing regional/global Chinese identity asserted by a music star from outside the mainland, but still within the remit of the PRC. While many Mongolians in the IMAR may see themselves as part of a global ‘Mongolian’ identity, and wanting to unite with ‘fellow’ Mongolians over the border in the Republic of Mongolia (e.g. see Bulag 2010), this performance denies Mongolians a position of ‘greater Mongolian’ identity that spans across the PRC borders. Instead, it suggests that when faced with a global perspective, Mongolian-Chinese are part of a ‘greater Chinese’ identity, and must have more in common with Hong Kong people than other Mongolians in a neighbouring country. A differentiated Mongolian identity—one separate to the mainstream, majority Han Chinese—is restricted to an internal, domestic multi-ethnic frame within mainland borders.

Drawing on Chua (2008: 86–87), I argue that CCTV makes use of Hong Kong stars like Xie to present a united ‘Chinese’ culture because this kind of Chinese popular music is being consumed by large numbers of Chinese (in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and in diasporic Chinese communities

around the world), and as youth consume the works of similar singers, they may feel a sense of community. Hong Kong is still widely known for being economically advanced, and having strong connections with a ‘modern’ West. The ‘foreign/Western’ aspect of Xie’s Hong Kong identity may be alluring to many mainland Chinese audiences. Indeed, youth in the audience were given the opportunity to participate in a sense of modernity with Xie as they waved their glow-sticks, took photos of the star, and held placards with neon lights depicting Xie Tingfeng’s name, and sang along. Unlike the well-trained hosts who much more clearly act in the roles of ‘mouthpieces’ for the party-state, the voice and presence of a Hong Kong star may make the party-state’s propaganda more effective. In this case, the presence of a Hong Kong star is an effective presenter of the message that China is opening up, reforming, and deepening positive links with fellow Chinese in the autonomous areas, in special administrative areas, and beyond.

If one paid close attention to the main lyrics originally written by Chow, and had read Chow’s article or spoken to him about his intentions, one might have read into it a desire to challenge the status quo. But in the totality of the CCTV production there is very little evidence of such a challenge. At most, one could suggest a point of ambiguity at the end of the rap section: as the end of the phrase ‘only us Chinese’ was sustained and when the music turned into a descending melody, it was matched with psychedelic swirling images on the back-screen and Xie taking a few steps forwards and then backwards as if falling into an abyss. However, as the Chinese flute (the *dizi*, an emblematic ‘Chinese’ instrument) was heard in the musical accompaniment in a jazzy interlude, Xie stepped forward again, encouraged the audience to sing the next verse along with him, and the performance closed in the same way as it opened, with images of a massive, undifferentiated ‘collective’ audience waving glow sticks in the dark—a visual sign of unity. Overall, the sounds, visuals and lyrics tended to reinforce a brash Han-centred Chinese nationalism, with Xie’s face marked by a sense of determination and anger, matched by his body language with his feet wide apart and stepping steadfastly to the beat. The rap lyrics and

rhythm continued to build to a crescendo as Xie Tingfeng walked down to the end of the catwalk-like stage where he could almost touch the audience, preaching the myth of a people united by a single colour, 'yellow'. Yellow lighting and a simulated raging yellow fire on a back-screen seemed to be employed to fire up the hearts of viewers with a hope that they may identify with the lyrics of the 'yellow people'. Even if they disagreed with the term 'yellow', television audiences were interpellated as belonging to the same race through this recognizable symbol of Chineseness.

In order to perform on CCTV, Xie's songs would have already been approved by the censors and there is little chance of him singing his more controversial songs, such as the drug-referencing ballad 'Without Me', which includes the English lyrics 'too much pot and heroine, too much crack and coke'.¹⁰⁹ Xie's visual performance style (his signature stance of legs planted wide apart) and graphic back-screen images (fires ablazing) are quite similar to previous performances, suggesting that CCTV is adopting some of the 'trendy' production techniques used in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the 'modern' world. However, it is very unlikely that CCTV would replicate such 'bad boy' images of Xie smashing a guitar on stage as he did during a May 2003 outdoor anti-SARS concert at the Hong Kong Stadium.¹¹⁰ In the anti-SARS concert, Xie came on stage posing with a guitar strapped around him, while a long and convoluted instrumental opening comprising grunge guitar sounds and violins raged on before he finally started singing, sharing the stage with two other electric guitarists. CCTV, however, rarely features pop/rock bands on stage. The focus is usually entirely on the singer who sings (or lip-synchs) to recorded music. This may reflect the desire to assert more control over the performance.

Lyrics are a powerful medium through which to convey specific ideologies. Many state-run musical troupes, particularly military singers who frequently appear on CCTV, sing songs with carefully crafted ideological messages

¹⁰⁹ This song was used for the soundtrack of the 2001 Hong Kong film titled *2002*.

¹¹⁰ View Xie's performance at the 24 May 2003 anti-SARS '1:99' concert online at: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTMyNDg1MjE2.html (accessed 1 June 2011).

that promote party-state policies and slogans (such as the idea of the harmonious society). However, Hong Kong singers themselves do not need to directly promote political ideology in their lyrics, for that would be contradictory to their role in helping to promote the party-state as open and reforming. It would also go against CCTV's clear attempt to use Hong Kong stars to attract audiences who may be put off by overtly ideological songs. It is significant, however, that when performing on CCTV, Xie mainly sings in the official language, Mandarin, rather than in Cantonese as he does in other concerts. Mandarin is noteworthy here because it is used to highlight the unity of all Chinese, because the language itself has been used on CCTV as a metaphor for the glue that bonds China's minorities, mainstream Han, and Hong Kong people together as one, even if it is not the first language for many Chinese people.

By singing a song with strong nationalist sentiments, following the tradition of other Hong Kong singers like Zhang Mingmin, and embodying an entity (Hong Kong) that has been widely perceived as more advanced and modern than the mainland, Xie's performance in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region seemed to offer a link between China's internal minorities, the mainstream majority, and Chinese on the outside of the mainland borders. He sang in the official language Mandarin (which has political and commercial implications as it allows him to tap into the massive Mandarin language market), and stressed that 'we are all Chinese'. Even if lyricist Chow's label of 'Yellow People' had originally attempted to dismantle essentialist notions of national identity, in the context of CCTV, the performance offered very little hint of irony or challenge. By incorporating mega stars like Xie, who is well known across East Asia and the Chinese speaking world, CCTV is able to showcase itself (and the party-state) as open and adapting to the world – an important message on which its legitimacy rests in the opening up and reform era. Furthermore, by incorporating a star from outside the mainland, it may attract more audiences and raise advertising dollars necessary for the commercial viability of the network. Also, the use of a non-mainland, non-state-

sponsored artist, who draws on but Sinicizes musical genres from the West that still seem comparatively fresh in a CCTV context, may allow for more effective propaganda if it doesn't look like it is government speaking. Even though Xie clearly has to adapt his performances to meet the requirements of the party-state broadcaster, he may benefit from massive exposure to mainland audiences, who may then be attracted to his other songs and films that are not shown on CCTV.

Defending the Dragon and the ABC Identity – Wang Lihong

Wang Lihong (Wang Leehom) is an American-born Chinese singer born to Taiwanese parents, and who is known for blending Chinese minority and traditional music with rap and hip hop. Wang is identified on CCTV as being from 'China Taiwan' (*Zhongguo Taiwan*), rather than as an American or as a foreigner. Like Xie, he has chosen in part to ride on the back of previous successful 'Greater Chinese' performers. While (following Andy Lau) Xie promoted a new song that tapped into nationalistic themes, Wang has included as part of his repertoire his own rendition of singer/songwriter Hou Dejian's classic 'Descendants of the Dragon' (*Long de chuanren*) (discussed in Chapter 1). He made his own version in 2000, adding a rap style enjoyed by contemporary Chinese youth. Interestingly, he also has family ties to the song, which although written and performed by Hou Dejian, was made famous by Wang's uncle, Li Jianfu, in the 1980s.¹¹¹

Wang's CCTV performance of the song 29 years later highlights how a single piece of music can be adjusted and used for changing political circumstances and interpreted in new ways. Amongst his many performances of the song, Wang Lihong performed his version of

¹¹¹ Hou himself did not profit much financial from the song's success. When he wrote it he was only a student and never imagined it would become a megahit. He sold it to a record company for about one hundred and fifty American dollars, which he thought was a good deal at the time. The record company got another singer, Wang Lihong's uncle, Li Jianfu (later to become CEO of Yahoo! in Asia), to record it. It was released in April 1980, and sold millions of copies (Jaivin, 2001:10, 421). Twenty years later in 2000, Wang Lihong, created a megahit with his new version of 'Descendants of the Dragon' (Jaivin, 2001:421).

‘Descendants of the Dragon’ on CCTV’s *The Same Song – Enters Ningxia, Qingxi Hui village*, a special program in 2009 that served to celebrate sixty years of New China and the establishment of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. In choosing this particular instance for comment, I wish to highlight how the performances of greater Chinese nationalism and multi-ethnic national identity crisscross in CCTV’s music entertainment programming creating a richly entangled view of Chinese people and their place in the nation and the world.¹¹²

In many of Wang’s performances of this song, he has developed his own tactics for audience interaction that may make local audiences feel as if they are equal participants and performers. This fits in with CCTV’s desire to promote greater ‘interactivity’ and can work to promote a sense of common identity. As part of his style he uses the audiences’ knowledge of the lyrics to fill in the blanks. The words he passes over to the responsibility of the audience to articulate are all ‘naming’ words associated with the Chinese mainland or Chineseness. For instance:

Its name is called ‘everyone, let’s sing together’ [He holds out the mic for audience members to say ‘Yellow River’]

...

Its name is [called] [Silence – He lets the audience sing ‘China’]

...

They are all- what kind of people? [He lets the audience sing ‘descendants of the dragon’]

Wang also plays with his and the audiences’ identities in different locations as a performance tactic. For the program located in Ningxia Hui

¹¹² See *The Same Song – Enters Ningxia, Qingxi Hui village* at: <http://v.ku6.com/show/AjqaT4XhHqPSYHEc.html>, <http://www.yinyuetai.com/video/26709>

Autonomous Region, and performing on a huge stage adorned with the dazzling neon outline of Islamic-style structures typically associated with the Hui Muslims in the area, Wang greeted the audiences as ‘all the descendants of the dragon’ and as ‘all the Bahamut people’. Interestingly, Bahamut is a fish that supports the earth in Arabian mythology and that subtly links to the Hui heritage. It is also a powerful dragon deity from a role-playing game called ‘Dungeons and Dragons’ whose its exact colour is ‘hard to specify and may depend on Bahamut's mood, ranging from sky-blue to frosty indigo’, and his guise changes in different settings – just as Wang’s does.¹¹³ Wang’s attempt to ‘localize’ the dragon metaphor provided a link between the traditional Hui, the ‘ordinary’ Chinese people in the audience, and the contemporary Taiwanese-outsider pop star.

In another concert of Wang singing the same song in Taipei, Taiwan,¹¹⁴ he applied similar tactics to promote different identities. He similarly omitted saying all the place names in the mainland, but when it came to the part that normally reads ‘Its name is the Yellow River’, he instead shouted out ‘What’s the river called’ then answered ‘Tamsui River, right?’ The Tamsui is Taiwan’s third largest river, which flows into the Taiwan Strait (i.e. the opposite to the Yellow River), clearly claiming the song for a local Taiwanese audience. In this performance, he began the song by using the racial features to appeal to the audience, calling on ‘all the black-eyed, black-haired, and yellow-skinned [people]’. At the same time he complicated his own identity by referring to himself as ‘this ABC’ (American Born Chinese). It seems that Wang is working various nationalistic readings of the well-known song to his own advantage depending on the location of his performance, giving him a variety of positions to play with to appeal to diverse audiences.

¹¹³ According to ‘Complete Divine’ (author David Noonan, 2004) and ‘Races of the Dragon’ (Authors: Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, and Kolja Raven Lique, 2006) Association with Taiwanese gaming company?? <http://www.gamer.com.tw/>

¹¹⁴ See Wang Lihong’s Taipei performance at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuCL3xYekKc&feature=related>

In an English-language rap section, Wang asserts not only his ‘Chineseness’, but also his ‘Taiwanese’ and ‘New York-English-language’ identity. He re-emphasizes a sense of ‘sadness’, drawing on Hou Dejian’s own interpretation of his song. While ‘Descendants of the Dragon’ quickly turned into chauvinistic chant and an expression of Chinese glory by audiences, Hou had said that when he wrote the song he simply wanted to ‘get off my chest all the feelings...that the word “China” has inspired in me from the time I was a little kid listening to my father telling me stories of life in Sichuan before the revolution’. Hou himself was adamantly against encouraging uncontrolled chauvinism as a result of nationalistic readings of his song, arguing that ‘if people would reflect on recent Chinese history, they would see that being a descendant of the dragon was ‘nothing to shout about’ (quoted in Jaivin, 2001:9, 52-54). In Wang Lihong’s version, he refers to a second-stage removal away from the symbols of the Chinese nation – first to Taiwan, and now to America. Presumably referring to his parents, he raps in English about ‘a girl and a homeboy’ who came ‘straight from Taiwan’ without work or the ability to speak English, who persevered in difficult circumstances, worked hard, managed to ‘graduate with honours’, got married, entrusted their lives to God, and made their children proud.¹¹⁵

Then in Chinese, he connects the story more explicitly to his own family and their nostalgia for home after moving to New York. While Taiwan is listed as their ‘home’ in the previous stanza, the lyrics are vague enough to include the whole of ‘China’ as home and thus to incorporate all of CCTV’s audiences. While he strongly articulates his added lyrics, claiming his New York and American migrant identity in both English and Chinese, he also allows the audience to assert a sense of unified Chineseness through filling in the gaps of the original lyrics allowing them to articulate and embody their sense of being racially united with the same ‘black eyes, black hair and yellow skin’.

¹¹⁵ Wang’s reference to ‘god’ is also significant in a context in which religion is rarely mentioned. He possibly gets away with it due to the rapid lyrics. Whereas Hui identity is largely based on a Muslim connection, the religious identity is also ignored in CCTV productions. The Hui buildings are presented as being much more ‘cultural’ than religious (just like the religious identity of Macau is reduced to the unique design of buildings).

For CCTV, the presence of a pop star of Wang Lihong's calibre is often used to attract audiences who can then be educated on party-state ideology. Wang Lihong has the star factor necessary to draw crowds that would enjoy the contemporary nature of his work and who would keep on watching during the more orthodox moments because of his presence. The number of songs he performed stressed the star factor he was for the CCTV production. There was also massive cheering from the crowds that veered off as far as the eye could see; excited girls waved their cameras and coloured blow-up sticks; a girl went on stage to give Wang give flowers; there were posters and neo signs with his name and signs with 'I love you' written in English and Chinese. In this case, Wang's presence appeared to assist in spreading the message of multi-ethnic unity as well as Greater Chinese unity in a program designed to celebrate sixty years of the PRC and the establishment of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

After performing 'Descendants of the Dragon' as a solo with back up dancers on *The Same Song – enters Ningxia*, Wang was then asked to by the host Liang Yongbin play the song again with Hui minority women, dressed in 'traditional' costumes, playing traditional 'minority' instruments. A short dialogue with Wang allowed Liang to ease into a discourse that was more within the *yuanshengtai* frame. The hierarchical dominance shifted to the host. Liang assumed his educator voice and used information about the instrument to connect minorities with the Chinese nation as a whole: 'This musical instrument is called the *kouxian*. The *kouxian* is a first grade national intangible heritage [item] (*guojia yiji feiwu wenhua yichan*).' Wang positively expressed his interest in China's minority nationality instruments in response to Liang's questions.

In the performance, Wang backed the women on the *kouxian* using his Western acoustic guitar. Although it didn't really sound like 'Descendants of the Dragon' until host Liang Yongbin started singing along, visually and aurally it was quite a unique performance, and the novelty of a well-known

Taiwanese pop star playing on guitar with unknown minority nationality performers in the *yuanshengtai* style would have surely attracted some viewers. This signalled a creative and relatively open cross-cultural moment in CCTV's production. At the same time, Wang's presence and his ability to attract audiences were important considerations in the decision to educate audiences about China's rich and colourful national culture. Apart from the hosts monologue about the instrument, text subtitling along bottom of screen provided further details about the *kouxian* and *Hui* people. Wang's overall performances on this particular program, helped to build on an array of Chinese identities based within and stretching beyond the borders of the PRC who could all be unified through the metaphor of 'descendants of the dragon' in linguistic, visual and musical ways. Wang's performances offered a variety of identity positions not acknowledged in the orthodox frame, while in his dialogue with the host, he assisted in the building of the state-sanctioned *yuanshengtai* frame emphasizing a softer side of multi-ethnic unity.

While Wang does assert a Taiwanese/ American/English-language identity, and is labelled as being from 'Taiwan China' by CCTV, his performance on the whole tends to gloss over mainland-Taiwan differences. In terms of ethnicity, Taiwanese artists are on par with the Han who do not need separate labels unlike minority nationalities. In the current era of economic vibrancy across the region, many songs of contemporary Taiwanese superstars, including Wang Lihong, and Zhou Jielun (Jay Chou), promote this kind of nationalistic identity based on themes of common descent, a Confucian tradition, unification, and the steadfastness of a single Chinese nation (Chow Y., 2007:98). Shu-mei Shih (2007:23-35, 191) argues that the Sinitic speaking groups outside the PRC mainland are being appropriated by the Chinese state in order to emphasize its global influence and centrality as a valued motherland for all Chinese around the world. However, even if CCTV tries its best to present a unified image and minimizes differences in language and culture across the regions, differences are also simultaneously embraced. At the same time, international Chinese stars like Wang Lihong

are actively toying with the notion of unity in ways that both pleases the censors and no doubt attracts larger audiences, which is good for their own careers.

Experimenting with Difference – The VEGA

For many years, Hong Kong has been an attractive and trendy label for performers, making ‘Hong Kong’ stars competitive in the mainland market. In reality few performers out of the many who try actually make it, but Hong Kong still has a special allure. A few mainland singers have chosen to find Hong Kong managers to help them remake themselves as Hong Kong singers, who are still often considered to be more stylish than mainland singers, with the Hong Kong identity applied precisely to try and break into the mainland market. Fung and Curtin (2002) have noted how Faye Wong, from Beijing, made her name as a Hong Kong singer in the 1990s. At this time audiences often regarded Cantopop (Cantonese language pop music) as superior to Mandarin songs of the mainland. The change in her image, including the adoption of a new name, language, and personality (traditional to offbeat and obstinate Chinese woman) was a product of Hong Kong executives. As mainland China became more dominant on the global stage, it a mainland-centred Chinese identity has become increasingly popular. Faye Wong in turn has since reclaimed her Beijing identity. Whilst not guaranteeing success, the Hong Kong identity continues to offer struggling mainland singers a strategy for entering the mainland market.¹¹⁶ Many Hong Kong artists still seem to offer a sense of cultural dynamism that are able attract large audiences in ways that most mainland artists cannot, and CCTV often spices up their programs with artists from Hong Kong (and Taiwan) in order to attract audiences and boost ratings.

¹¹⁶ Chen Sitong is a more recent example of a mainland singer who has tried to repackage herself as a ‘Hong Kong’ singer, under the name of Vivi/Vienna Chen. She believed this identity would have a better chance of market success than the identity of a ‘Yunnan girl’, which failed to make inroads (Leung, p/c 2010).

However, while Hong Kong identity is still known for being stylish, it has not been as potent since the 1997 handover. Taiwan cultural production has in many ways taken over this role (Moskowitz, 2010), while styles reinforcing a unique mainland identity are also gaining in popularity (Ma E., 2000a:175). This means that Hong Kong star management groups who wish to promote their stars to a massive mainland market must work hard to appeal through a sense Hong Kong uniqueness and modern-ness, and tap into changing audience interest in performances suggesting a strong mainland-centred pride. To appear on CCTV, which is one of the most effective ways of promotion mainland Chinese audiences, requires meeting social, political, and commercial demands.

To illustrate the dynamic interplay between Hong Kong singers and CCTV in meeting political and commercial goals, I turn to a relatively unknown classical/operatic pop group called The VEGA. They offer a different approach to Xie Tingfeng, and therefore highlight how CCTV is accommodating Hong Kong artists in a variety of ways. The VEGA were the only group sent by RTHK, the state sponsored Hong Kong television station, to represent the Hong Kong and Macau region for the *CCTV Youth Singing Competition* in 2008.¹¹⁷ The four-piece *a cappella* operatic-pop group, the brainchild of the manager of a Hong Kong-based management company, comprised of two males and two females, with the name of the group based on the first letter of each member's name.¹¹⁸ Competing on the CCTV stage in the 'popular music' category of the national competition was a specific strategy used to launch this new group for the mainland Chinese market (Eve Leung, personal communication, 10 April 2010; bigbangmusic.com).

¹¹⁷ See Th VEGA on CCTV at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgZ7DmmHIjE&feature=player_embedded#
The VEGA's own website:
<http://www.nme.com/awards/video/id/qgZ7DmmHIjE/search/%E9%BB%91%E5%A4%9C%E4%B8%8D%E6%8E%A2%E6%88%88vega>

¹¹⁸ 'V'alerie, a classical singer based in London; 'E'dan who gained his attention through winning a university competition, singing in opera style; 'G'abby, a soprano and music college student; and 'A'-Him an *a cappella* talent who had a role in the Hong Kong Children's Choir.

Dressed in modern, trendy, dark-coloured outfits, The VEGA performed a song called ‘No Tango in the Dark Night’ (*Hei ye bu tange*) in Cantonese. The combined classical/operatic and pop style was very different to other music in the popular music category on the competition, and on CCTV music-entertainment television more generally. While many artists lip sync their songs for television, the VEGA appeared to embody their music (it was, after all, a singing competition and they were presented as being judged on their live performances). Visually, the highly choreographed performance, in which they looked up as they sang and dropped their heads when they were silent, somewhat robot like, was also different to other performances in the competition, and significantly different to Xie Tingfeng’s rough, tough stance that accompanied the performance of his nationalist song. Importantly, they also sang in Cantonese, which is not common for CCTV productions and, as far as I could tell, the only instance of a non-standard Chinese dialect being used in the pop category of the 2008 *CCTV Youth Singing Competition*. The combined message of these unique musical, visual, and linguistic expressions is ambiguous, hard to pin down, and could be read in multiple ways – especially for audiences who don’t understand Cantonese and thus cannot frame the message via the lyrics. Like the *yuanshengtai* frame, the acceptance of such a performance on CCTV highlights the desire of some producers, performers, and political leaders to at least give the impression of China as an open and cosmopolitan place that is accepting of difference.

However, while in their sung performance they tried to present something quite unique as ‘outsiders’, in their dialogue with the host and on-stage experts, the group made efforts to fit with the more hardened ideological aims of the CCTV production in which Hong Kong people are firmly marked as part of a Greater Chinese unity. After singing, they tried their best to speak in Mandarin, although some members were clearly not comfortable in the language/dialect. They also made an effort to show their allegiance to the motherland. For instance, as for all contestants, they had to

answer a general knowledge question. Their question was particularly easy, given that the answer was strongly promoted in all Chinese media that year, and related to the event for which the PRC was most proud in 2008:

On what date will the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony be held?

The correct answer (August 8) was given by one of the males in the group. Social commentator, Yu Qiuyu, responded with a comment that emphasized Hong Kong's membership in the PRC:

You, like the whole nation's people, are very familiar with this date.

In what seems to have been a rehearsed answer, one of The VEGA contestants added:

Yes, because Hong Kong is a part of China.

Praise for CCTV as the force unifying the Hong Kong group with centre of China (Beijing) was reinforced by the contestants as they emphasized the importance of performing in Beijing on the CCTV stage: it was the first time the four of them had been to Beijing, and the first time they had been on CCTV. One by one, they modestly expressed how honoured they were to be on CCTV, one of them putting his hand on his heart, while the others nodded. The appreciation for bringing the Hong Kong compatriots to Beijing via CCTV was further emphasized through the audience's applause and a shot of host Dong Qing looking very pleased. Dong Qing later praised them for being 'our' only combined overseas-Hong Kong group in the top ten of the semi-finals, using inclusive language to draw the Hong Kong compatriots into a PRC/Beijing-centred Chinese world.

The group did not make it any further in the competition, nor, according to Leung (personal communication, 10 April 2010), did it have any great

further success as a group either in the mainland or Hong Kong. However, their attempt is significant as it shows how some Hong Kong performers and star management teams are trying to enter the mainland market through a negotiation of a Hong Kong and PRC identity, as well as how CCTV productions are negotiating Hong Kong identities in their programming. Their modest body language and use of Mandarin were used in ways that suggest an eagerness to merge with mainstream mainland discourse, while their Cantonese singing and attempt to introduce a new style of music and choreography suggests a desire to break into the mainland market with something unusual, different, and somewhat foreign. Through their spoken language in *Putonghua*, they expressed a united Chinese identity in a way that fits in with the party-state sanctioned constructions of greater Chinese nationalism, while their unusual singing style, movements, and Cantonese language performance highlighted a softer, more cosmopolitan side of the production that promotes China as an open environment and welcoming of artistic (if not political) difference.

Embodying Hybridity – Fei Xiang

Fei Xiang (Kris Phillips), born in Taiwan to an American father and Chinese mother, became an overnight star in mainland China after his performances during the 1987 *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*.¹¹⁹ Already popular in Taiwan and Southeast Asia, Fei Xiang brought to the mainland a sense of freshness and energy in his style of singing and dancing. He was the first performer from Taiwan to appear on the *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*, an opportunity

¹¹⁹ See a *Culture Express* (CCTV9) clip on Fei Xiang's life at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h91OJFNNTFE&feature=related>; Fei Xiang's performances at the 1987 CCTV New Year's Eve Gala can be viewed online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bW1Axxlea28> (Clouds of My Hometown) and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOGm0raEwn4&feature=related> (Flame in the Winter); Also see a CCTV13/News report reminiscing on former *CCTV Spring Festival Galas* [专辑：盘点 28 年来春晚上唱火的经典歌曲]. It includes a reference to Fei Xiang, <http://xiyou.cntv.cn/p-11330-f5b5c492-29e2-11e0-89a1-001e0bd5b3ca-asc.html>.

possibly given to him because he was an American citizen,¹²⁰ and one which came one year before Hou Dejian's *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* performance of 'Descendants of the Dragon'. In the later part of the 1980s, every avenue and narrow alley were said to be burning with Fei Xiang's upbeat 'Flame in the Winter' (*Dongtian li de yi ba huo*), one of the two songs he performed during the Gala. The other was a powerful but slower song called 'Clouds of My Hometown' (*Guxiang de yun*). Seeing the 'mixed-race [lit: 'mixed-blood'] Chinese-American young man' (*Zhong-Mei hunxue de xiao huozi*) was for some just as exciting as lining up at KFC for the first time. His handsome, tall figure and mysteriously foreign 'blue eyes' are said to have conquered the hearts of a billion ordinary [Chinese] people (Ri, 2001:46). While songs from Taiwan in general were foreign to PRC audiences in a country that was just beginning to let in outside influences after almost thirty years, and when access to Western culture was still highly restricted (Moskowitz, 2010:5, 21), Fei Xiang was perhaps the ultimate example of the embodiment of both a 'Chinese' and 'foreign' identity.

Like many transnationals, Fei made a career for himself in both China and in the USA, although he is much better known in China. After spending some time on Broadway, he 'returned' to China in 1997 (Song K., 2002:58). His return instilled a sense of nostalgia among many fans who had grown up with his songs, now in their thirties, forties and fifties.¹²¹ This nostalgia allowed audiences to reflect on their own development over this time and on China's progress as a whole. Re-visiting Fei Xiang's sexy, vigorous dance moves and amorous song lines, thought to be exciting and even shocking at the time, reminded audiences of the 'beautiful' innocence of their youth (Song K., 2002:58) as well as naivety in relation to developments outside of the Chinese mainland. A former director of the 1987 *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* who appeared on stage during the 2008 CCTV special *Sounds of Singing Over 30 Years* (*Gesheng Piao Guo 30 Nian*), reminisced on how

¹²⁰ According to The Internet Movie Database:
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1191525/bio>.

¹²¹ Cp. Evocation of nostalgia on Japan New Year's Eve program at NHK Hall in Tokyo (Brunt, 2003:11).

she had ordered the cameraman to zoom in on his face to protect innocent audiences by restricting their view of his shocking dance movements, such movements that had become rather old fashioned by contemporary standards. A number of commentators claim that Fei Xiang, using the language of Fei himself, returned to China in the late 1990s as a much more ‘mature’ artist (Ri, 2001:47; Song K., 2002:58). But this quite possibly also reflected a self-sense of maturity of the Chinese mainlanders as well. From the way he was framed on CCTV, Fei Xiang has come to symbolize a China that was still in its early stages of ‘opening’ as well as the ‘maturation’ of the country. The naivety of mainland Chinese folk reflecting on their own earlier reactions serves to highlight just how far and how quickly China has changed and developed.

This was his second major ‘homecoming’ to the mainland. Fei Xiang’s first homecoming was when he joined his mother to visit his grandmother – a link publicly displayed in between songs during the 1987 *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*. Fei’s grandmother had been separated from the family and was living alone since the rift between Taiwan and the mainland in 1949. During this visit, Fei Xiang apparently risked being blacklisted by the Taiwanese government and therefore his future career.¹²² In both his ‘returns’ to China, he has come to play a symbolic role in the cross-straits ‘reunification’ discourse in CCTV’s constructions of his identity where he is clearly marked, not as American, but as being from ‘China Taiwan’ (*Zhongguo Taiwan*).

China as a rapidly developing and modernizing nation was highlighted in Fei Xiang’s video ‘Clouds of My Hometown’ (*Guxiang de yun*),¹²³ which was broadcast on CCTV3’s MTV program in 2008 (but presumably made during the previous decade). The video ‘re-claims’ Fei Xiang as China’s ‘own’, a trend that Moskowitz (2010:6) has noted more broadly of singers

¹²² According to a blog written by one of Fei Xiang’s fans, available at <http://www.myspace.com/feixiangbrazil>.

¹²³ Music Video of ‘Clouds of My Hometown’ available at: <http://you.video.sina.com.cn/b/13427367-1357005971.html>.

from outside the mainland. He is depicted in Shanghai standing on top of a skyscraper on a helipad (a sign of technology and modernization) with views of a modern city. He is also shown on an escalator, riding on the underground, walking across a large modern bridge, standing on the side of a freeway, and looking up at a helicopter – looking up at the buildings and the sky, twirling around with his arms outstretched, admiring the development of the city, and ‘claiming’ it as his own. In the lyrics, the ‘wind’ and the ‘clouds’ and the ‘soil’ ‘call’ (*huhuan*) him back to his ‘hometown’ and command him not to go roaming far away again (*bie zai sichu piaobo*). His homecoming is marked by his deep, resonating, and ‘mature’ male voice. Instrumentally, he is supported by a throbbing bass drum, the uplifting call of trumpets and choral backing, and the ‘open heart’ emotional sound of the panpipes – together suggesting a mounting pace and urgency to return and take in the immense changes that Shanghai (and China) has faced. Whilst also featuring a close-up of his ‘blue eyes’ and thus his ‘foreignness’, throughout this song and music video, Fei Xiang is presented as an insider, much in the same way as Han Hong in Tibet in her video of ‘Sky Road’. Similar to the strategy used to depict Han Hong on top of the tall Tibetan mountains, Fei Xiang stands with his arms wide open on top of the Shanghai skyscraper, the symbol of post-reform China’s modernization drive. Fei Xiang, the outside-insider, is thus fully shown to be asserting his Chinese side, and possibly gives the impression that he is not the only Chinese from outside of the mainland who acknowledges the PRC mainland as his hometown.

Like others of ‘mixed race’ backgrounds, Fei Xiang has been able to successfully ‘take advantage of multiple, dynamic, and ambiguous racialized spaces’ (Mahtani, 2002:425). He has ‘strategically employed’ certain aspects of his identity (Mahtani, 2002:429; cp. Luke in Murad, 2005:492) to fit into the particular racially ambiguous space of the CCTV music video. At the same time, it must be assumed that CCTV has made ‘commercial use of racial mixture’ (Santa Ana, 2008:457) to attract curious audiences. Fei’s mixed-race image, his dance movements, his voice, style of

singing (Broadway-style), are all points of difference with orthodox programming, and when he first came on CCTV they must have appeared exotic for many mainstream audiences.¹²⁴ At the same time as attracting audiences, Fei's performances also fit in with certain party-state messages, like the promotion of its opening up and reform successes.

Concluding Thoughts on Contemporary Pop Music and Chinese Nationalism on CCTV

The four artists/groups addressed in this section highlight varying degrees in which hybridity and expressive difference are incorporated into CCTV music-entertainment programming as well as how the artists engage in more orthodox PRC ideology. In the first part I noted how lyricist Yiu-Fai Chow tried to play with the perceived clarity of an essential Chinese identity in his lyrics for a new song for Xie Tingfeng designed to appeal to cosmopolitan youth. However, Xie himself added a rap section that re-asserted a strong sense of greater Chinese nationalism. Chow's article highlighted that there is negotiation between all sorts of players in the industry leading towards the final performance. Wang Lihong, on the other hand, updated an older song pop song to fit in with the trends of contemporary urban Chinese youth. While this song was imbued with nationalistic overtones from history, Wang also used the song as a platform for asserting his mixed identity as an ABC – singing in both English and Chinese. The VEGA experimented with

¹²⁴ In 2001, Fei Xiang starred alongside English singer/actor Elaine Paige in a live show at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in a show featuring songs from Andrew Lloyd Webber's musicals – the first time Broadway musicals were introduced to mainland China (The Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1191525/bio>). The performance, held in one of the most symbolically significant political venues, highlights the ongoing attraction of Fei Xiang and his Broadway/musical style and his endorsement by the party-state. It is also interesting to see the way in which the show featured songs in English, but was also adapted for Chinese audiences. For instance, the show featured two Chinese and two foreign stars and ended with a song of friendship sung by all four. The Chinese words 'friends forever' (*yongyuan pengyou*) were added to the English version of 'Friends for Life – Amigos Para Siempre', the theme song for the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, and all four sang in Chinese in a sign of cross-cultural exchange. The production can also be seen on DVD: Really Useful Group Ltd (2002) Andrew Lloyd Webber Masterpiece – Live from the Great Hall of the People, Beijing, 2001. Warner Vision Australia.

a new hybrid operatic/pop style of music and unusual movements. Unlike the previous two performers, they sang entirely in Cantonese, thus offering an overt expression of difference with most songs sung on CCTV. Yet they still made efforts to conform to the mainland-centred frame through the use of Mandarin, and modest demeanour in the spoken dialogue after their performance. Fei Xiang visually embodied a mixed identity through his mixed-race heritage. He strategically used his Chineseness and unique looks to meet both Party and market goals. Due to linguistic, musical, and visual expressions of difference by non-mainland identities, it can sometimes be more difficult to infer any one particular message from cosmopolitan moments as compared to orthodox moments that are much more highly managed to impart a particular party-state defined message.

Conclusion

In the above analysis of more ideologically constrained and more cosmopolitan moments related to expressions of a Greater Chinese identity

I also argued that language plays a particularly key role in defining Greater China on China's terms. It is often through verbal interactions between hosts and singers *in between* songs, or even *within* songs, that more ideological messages about China, the motherland, and unification are presented. Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwanese Chinese are marked by CCTV as different *and* as securely belonging to PRC China through the ubiquitous on-screen text that identifies performers as being from *Zhongguo Xianggang* (China Hong Kong), *Zhongguo Aomen* (China Macau), or *Zhongguo Taiwan* (China Taiwan).

Hardened expressions of identity, in terms of belonging to 'China', are often reinforced in the verbal introductions of guests by hosts. Generally, the only unmarked group is the mainland Han, who are constructed as the default position to which all others are compared. This serves to centre the

mainland PRC within the Greater China frame. Furthermore, Chinese citizens within the PRC mainland are distinguished by multiple (56) 'ethnicities' within the mainland, but are distinguished by 'place' (political geography) beyond the mainland. Chinese in the global frame are generally constructed as ethnically the same. Taiwan's 'Gaoshan' minority nationalities are only occasionally mentioned. One rare instance was the appearance of a Taiwanese 'Gaoshan' minority nationality duo on *Star Avenue*. They were made a feature across 2008 and made the finals. I suspect that their ability to prolong their stay on *Star Avenue* across the entire year was more ideologically than artistically motivated, given that it was a competition in which it would have been easy to manipulate the results.¹²⁵ The reinforcement of the Gaoshan duo as firmly imbedded in the family of 56 nationalities throughout the year, also reinforced the fact that Taiwan was part of China.

However, occasionally, in more cosmopolitan or 'softer' moments, artists are able to express their external, hybrid migrant or bi-racial backgrounds and offer a point of difference to the orthodox moments that stress essential Chinese characteristics. Hybridity may be expressed linguistically through the use of Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese (The VEGA), or Mandarin and English (Wang Lihong); it may be visually embodied (Fei Xiang); or it may be expressed musically through, for instance, combining African American originating R&B and hip hop with Chinese flute in a contemporary style that appeals to youth, or through experimenting with hybrid operatic-popular music forms. These expressions of difference can be attractive to CCTV in that they can provide something fresh for audiences and may entice them to watch, which in turn increases ratings and draws advertising and sponsorship revenue. The more open moments may also satisfy conservatives pushing for more overt hardened messages in that they draw

¹²⁵ The exact nature of voting on this show is unclear. The winner appears to be based on the results of selected studio audience members voting with electronic devices. However, people watching the show through their television screens cannot clearly see people voting. The focus remains on the stage and on flashing lights that increase in steps behind the contestants, with the contestant with the greatest number of steps being the winner of that segment. Even if studio audiences are actually voting, these audience members are carefully selected, and are often groups of public servants e.g. nurses, police, teachers etc.

viewers to programming that mixes cosmopolitan performances with more orthodox and conservative messages of sameness, unity, and unification. Clearly, the hardened, orthodox and softer cosmopolitan frames constantly interact and work side by side. The juxtaposition of styles is likely to satisfy both different political extremes drawing on internal tensions within party-state media as well as different tastes among the variety of audience groups to whom CCTV attempts to appeal.

As noted earlier, popular music plays a particularly significant role in making the Greater Chinese identity a reality. At both the orthodox and cosmopolitan extremes, old pop songs are used for new political purposes and new songs composed with certain party-state sanctioned themes. Messages of unification are stressed during the orthodox, ideologically hardened moments, while a sense of greater Chinese nationalism is stressed during the more cosmopolitan and softer moments. Both frames highlight the success of China's opening up and reform policies. CCTV's music-entertainment programs described in this chapter work hard to emphasise the PRC's dynamism and the important role it plays in bringing together all Chinese in a global context. In the next chapter, I move from the construction of an ethnic Chinese global identity centred in the PRC mainland, to consider a multi-ethnic global construction of Chineseness, which features the attraction of non-Chinese background foreigners to China and Chinese culture.

Chapter 6. Performing China-Loving Foreigners

6.1 China's Soft Power and the Re-vitalization of the Middle Kingdom

In this chapter, I focus on how producers, directors, editors, performers, propagandists and others involved in the production of music-entertainment television seek to mark China's own uniqueness in relation to other nations through the on-stage performances of foreign nationals on CCTV. Here, the more orthodox moments are defined as those in which overt messages of foreigners' attraction to China and mainstream Chinese culture are presented through linguistic, musical, and visual modes which work together. For instance, foreigners often express their interest in and love for China and Chinese culture through 'acting Chinese' – speaking in Chinese, having patriotic Chinese names, singing in Chinese, wearing traditional-style Chinese clothing, playing traditional Chinese musical instruments, even acting as program hosts. Foreigners are presented as 'friends', who are welcomed in China, who are attracted to China, and love China. They may live in China and even marry Chinese people, thus almost making them 'family'. The main markers of difference with 'ordinary' Chinese people are their looks and through direct labelling as foreigners from other countries by hosts and through on-screen text. They are often presented as being under the tutelage of an expert Chinese teacher, and their 'Chineseness' is often made light of in jokes and friendly banter. While foreigners can adopt Chinese cultural practices, in the orthodox CCTV frame their foreignness restricts them from becoming completely 'Chinese'.

The basis taken for the orthodox frame is the one regular CCTV music-entertainment program that specifically specializes in showcasing the performances of foreigners. It is called *Sinophiliac* in English, and its Chinese name literally translates as 'Same Happiness Five Continents' (*Tongle wuzhou*). The weekly show is always shot in China, mostly indoors

in the CCTV studios in Beijing, and occasionally outdoors in different, and usually minority nationality, areas around China. The same set of foreign hosts (Aihua from the USA and Da Niu from the UK) and regular performers from different continents appear each week alongside their Chinese counterparts. Similar to *The Same Song*, this program is often framed through different weekly episode titles and hosts' introductions to each show that appear to stress cross-cultural exchange as its main aim. The program claims to reach a relaxed and harmonious 'unity of opposites' (*dui li tong yi*) between Chinese and Western culture. Yet, at the same time it is biased towards showing foreigners and 'Western' culture 'entering into' China's culture (Sinophiliac website, 2010). The majority of acts serve to highlight the power and attraction of Chinese culture and civilization to foreigners. The English title, *Sinophiliac* itself points to an issue of pride in China's growing cultural influence on the world – and the idea that there is a global 'craze' or 'obsession' for Chinese language and culture. Chinese language and traditional culture are often the focus of this program.

There is no obvious advertising in *Sinophiliac* (no product placements, no advertising breaks) and the broadcasting time of 10pm on a Monday night (repeated 9am the following Monday) is outside the 'golden' or prime time viewing hours. My personal feeling is that it is in general a fairly flat production compared to the more dynamic episodes of *The Same Song*, which is able to attract and budget for mega stars from Taiwan and Hong Kong. On-screen audiences on *Sinophiliac* are often older Chinese with a scattering of foreign faces, many of whom may be friends of the performers.¹²⁶ Unlike the high-rating spectacle of *The Same Song*, there are few appearances of famous artists – Chinese or foreign – popular with the youth. This has led me to speculate that political messages, rather than commercial pursuits are the main motivation for this program. However, the spectacle of foreigners performing as Chinese is no doubt an attempt to attract television audiences.

¹²⁶ When I performed for the *Global Chinese Storytelling Competition* I was offered two tickets to give to friends to sit in the studio audience.

Foreigners are not often seen or heard performing on CCTV's other music-entertainment programs like *The Same Song*, *Star Avenue*, and the annual *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*, which are on at prime-time and are more commercially-oriented. But every now and then a foreign 'star' will appear. In the second part of this chapter, I focus on African singer Hao Ge and his performance on *Star Avenue*. His success on this competition show also gained him a spot on the *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*. I also examine the performances of Russian singer Vitas, various stars from Korea, and the dreadlock-haired Japanese star Joe Yamanaka on *The Same Song*. I investigate how these rare but illuminating cosmopolitan moments show foreigners' engagement in productions in ways that not only highlight their attraction to Chinese culture, but also reveal the freshness they can inject into the culture of the show. In the cosmopolitan frame it is not just the novelty of their foreign looks that are used to attract audiences as they pretend to be 'Chinese', but their more multimodally diverse offerings, particularly in the display of their unique personalities and dynamic styles of popular (*liuxing*) singing in both Chinese and foreign languages. While 'Western' (American and British) global superstars are rarely seen on CCTV (selected concerts or snippets of shows of superstars from the West, Japan, and Korea are occasionally broadcast on CCTV's 'TV Guide' channel), the performers who become stars on CCTV programs energize ordinary music-entertainment programs and make the programs seem more cosmopolitan. They highlight China's 'soft power' (the power of attraction of China to foreigners) as well as the party-state's openness to modern, cosmopolitan identities and global interactions.

In this section, I argue that both orthodox and cosmopolitan moments serve to promote the allure of China in the modern era. They highlight to both domestic and global audiences how outsiders are being attracted to the civilized, dynamic, superior, and revitalized Middle Kingdom. It is significant that while CCTV actively reaches out to overseas Chinese around the world with *The Same Song* program, most foreigners on CCTV

music-entertainment programs are shown on the CCTV stage *in China* and not in their own or other countries. The programs are working hard to give the impression that ordinary foreigners and stars alike are flocking to China, and are particularly attracted to the Chinese mainland. In both frames, foreigners also seem to act as a vehicle for Chinese viewers to rediscover the grandness of their country and culture, which is validated by the appreciative gaze of foreigners. Foreigners who are in a sense seen as superior become a pre-requisite for asserting in turn a superior Chinese culture.

6.2 Performances of Foreigners' Attraction to China and Chinese Culture

Performing Global Harmony in China

As outlined in Chapter 4, in the orthodox multi-ethnic frame, the 56 nationalities are seen happily singing and dancing together in a sign of national multi-ethnic unity. In this chapter, orthodox performances depict foreigners from the 'five continents' (*wu zhou*) of the world singing and dancing together on the CCTV stage. The CCTV stage and a rich Chinese culture are presented as having the ability to bring diverse groups together into harmonious unity. In the global orthodox frame, foreigners look different, but act 'Chinese' – they speak Chinese, wear Chinese clothes, and sing Chinese songs – but are still labelled as foreigners.

The 'Five Continents Singing group' (*Wu zhou changxiang yuetuan*) in the *Happy Singing Voices* (*kuai le gesheng*)¹²⁷ episode of *Sinophiliac* broadcast in March 2009 was a typically orthodox pro-China, multi-national act. In this performance, there were white and black performers, with a male, Chinese-looking performer standing at the centre of the group, and a

¹²⁷ 'Sinophiliac - Happy Singing Voices', broadcast in March 2009
<http://space.tv.cctv.com/video/VIDE1242055412438888>

Chinese-looking female *erhu* player providing accompaniment (an *erhu* is a Chinese stringed instrument played with a bow). The clothing worn by members of this group – modernized black Chinese-style robes – also emphasized their connections to Chinese culture, as did their Chinese-language singing. The group sang two songs during this program, one of which was called ‘Sing Towards China’ (*Changxiang Zhongguo*). It included the lyrics ‘We want to ensure that the more we sing the brighter Great China will be’, emphasizing their support for, and interest in, China. Placing the Chinese man at the centre of the group emphasized both the central role of Chinese people within this microcosm of world relations, as well as his mediating and possibly teacherly role in the group. The Chinese-looking female *erhu* player also had an important role in sustaining the rhythm and energy of the group, while the foreigners danced excitedly and followed along. At one point a black man was seen playing African drums alongside the Chinese woman playing an *erhu*, a visual symbol of cultural exchange. However, in the soundtrack the African drums could not be heard at all, while the *erhu* completely dominated. Overall, the use of official Chinese language, the wearing of Chinese-style clothing, the playing of traditional Chinese musical instruments, and the direct singing of support for China while dancing and smiling on the same stage, provides a fairly easy to read multimodal message of foreigners’ attraction to China and Chinese culture and presents a scene of harmonious global unity on Chinese soil.

The sharing of languages, particularly as sung lyrics, is another way in which happiness between foreigners and the Chinese people appears to be exchanged and harmony produced on the *Sinophiliac* program. However, Chinese language and culture are always foregrounded. For instance, in the *Happy Singing Voices* episode, four groups were separated by hosts into the ‘internationals’ (foreigners/*waiguoren* and South Koreans/*Hanguoren*) and the ‘Chinese’ (ordinary Chinese/*Zhongguo ren* and an Yi/Yi *ren* minority nationality group). While the four groups were asked by the host to sing in

different languages and Chinese,¹²⁸ they were all to sing the same Chinese song. Interestingly, it was the popular Chinese love song, ‘Sweetness’ (*Tianmimi*), originally made famous by Taiwan’s Deng Lijun in the 1980s. Although her music was banned in mainland China at that time, as noted earlier, old pop music from this era has become a nostalgic memento of the success of China’s rapid development and opening up reforms. Later in the program, all groups gave performances in Chinese language as well, except for the ‘Chinese’ group who shared their skills singing in English and Yi (an unusually ‘cosmopolitan’ act for a presumably non-minority group) on CCTV. Overall, Chinese language and Chinese popular music were highlighted as the unifying forces for all groups: Han/mainstream Chinese, Chinese minorities, and foreigners.

As in orthodox frames discussed in earlier chapters, hosts’ spoken discourse plays a special role in framing messages in orthodox moments. This is matched by visual and aural displays of unity through smiling and singing together on the same stage. In the ‘Happy Singing Voices’ episode, female host Bing Xian highlighted to audiences a sense of pride in the ability of China, or more precisely the specific CCTV program, to bring these groups peacefully together on their own turf. In bringing the program to a close, wearing the ubiquitous ‘red’ dress that suggests the centrality of China, she clearly enunciated the fact that ‘friends of the five continents [were] gathered on our *Sinophiliac* stage’. Drawing on the global village discourse, she noted that ‘the world is small’, and that ‘music draws us close together’. Fellow host, Zhao Baole, also elaborated on the ‘singing=happiness/friendship’ metaphor, hoping for ‘our’ long lasting friendship and for ‘our’ singing voices to continue. This idea was matched by the final image of performers from different countries around the world, happily standing together, singing in Chinese a song entitled ‘Everlasting friendship’ (*Youyi dijiutianchang*), to the well-known tune of ‘Auld Lang Syne’.

¹²⁸ Host Zhao Baole asked that the ‘foreigners’ sing in ‘English’, Koreans sing in Korean, Yi nationality sing in Yi language, and later requested them to also sing in *Putonghua*/Chinese.

After singing, Bing happily said that ‘by singing in a loud voice we will forget all our worries’. The allusion to ‘worries’ makes passing reference to the fact of historically fraught relations between China and the West, similar to the reference to Hong Kong people’s doubts prior to joining the motherland described in Chapter 5. While CCTV news programs sometimes overtly stress China’s position in relations to sensitive issues like Taiwan and Tibet that are often at odds with Western media reports, in CCTV’s music-entertainment programs like *Sinophiliac*, sensitive issues are rarely if ever overtly dealt with. Projecting a sense of happiness is the main aim of these music-entertainment shows. The two hosts conclusively ended the program speaking in unison the same final slogan repeated at the end of every episode: ‘Same Happiness Five Continents, Same Happiness Every Week’, urging audiences to leave the program with a happy memory of global solidarity on Chinese terms where difficult issues are dissolved through singing.

There are variations on this theme of presenting foreigners from around the world happily together on Chinese soil. The English version of the official theme song for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games Torch Relay, ‘Light the Passion, Share the Dream’,¹²⁹ for instance, featured a choir of contestants from the 2007 Miss World Beauty competition¹³⁰ singing in unison ‘forever as one’. The one-hundred-and-six contestants from different nations around the world were pictured hand-in-hand, swaying together, smiling sweetly at each other and the camera, and singing directly about ‘shar[ing] [their] hearts together’. The music video featured them dynamically singing not in a dark studio, but atop the Great Wall in Beijing and in front of the Bird’s

¹²⁹ Music Video of ‘Light the Passion, Share the Dream’

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0ee0TCiUeY>

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0ee0TCiUeY>). This song was plugged continuously during the period of the torch relay in the lead up the Opening Ceremony, particularly on CCTV5 – the sports channel – which had been re-labelled CCTV-Olympic [designated through the use of the Olympic rings] until the end of the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games.

¹³⁰ Blog on Miss World 2007 Contestants singing ‘Light the Passion, Share the Dream’

Nov 20, 2007. Available at: <http://mykiru.blogspot.com/2007/11/light-passion-share-dream-2008-olympic.html>

Nest in Beijing. Beijing was foregrounded visually alongside the lyrics as the ‘place where we join in harmony’. The uplifting soft rock beat lead towards a climax that sustained and repeated the word ‘Love’, and resolved with a shared sign of unity ‘all as one’, which was sustained with a final climax of a wild rushing electric guitar solo, fireworks and the Olympic rings sealed in a raging fire. This particular music video clip served to highlight not just an orthodox construction of Chineseness but a projection of the cosmopolitan transnational culture of Beijing, through depicting people with different skin colours singing about global harmony on Chinese soil together *in English* and in a soft rock style.

Significantly, the song was written by well-known East Asian composer, arranger, and performer, Chris Babida, who was born and bred in Hong Kong and also studied jazz at Berklee College of Music in Boston. Babida noted in his online blog that he wrote it in very little time (one hour) while sitting in his recording studio (apparently in Taiwan) imaging the scene ‘looking far out in[to] China Mainland, then looking up the sky and imaging the Olympic Stadium in front of me’. Like Zhang Mingmin’s ‘My Chinese Heart’ and Hou Dejian’s and Wang Lihong’s ‘Descendants of the Dragon’, the outsider’s perspective seems to offer validation of the grandness of China. Babida also alerted to ‘duties’ he had in writing the song in that it ‘had to have a “Grandness” with a lot of Depth and Width’ as well as warmth, power and an appealing “Chorus Section” so as to let people remember the song easily, in other words a commercial touch.’¹³¹ Commercial as well as ideological goals were being actively considered in music-entertainment events in the lead-up to the Olympics.

The music video of ‘Light the Passion, Share the Dream’, which was played almost daily on CCTV during the period of the torch relay, appears to have been developed to please both foreign and domestic audiences, and offers a cosmopolitan picture of multi-ethnic unity, harmony and colourful diversity. It depicts the global community similar to the way it depicts China’s

¹³¹ See Chris Babida’s blog at <http://www.chrisbabida.com/news.asp?menuid=1&ln=en>

officially recognized nationalities native to China's geobody: as colourful and happy, coming in from the periphery and gathering together in Beijing (Leibold, 2010:3). What is unique about this video is it was actually one of the few Olympic-related music-video clips or on-stage performances featuring foreigners at all on CCTV music-entertainment programming in the lead-up to the Olympic Games (apart from the few who appeared on *Sinophiliac*). The majority of music videos and on-stage performances related to the Olympics focused on Chinese people and on generating a sense of national Chinese pride. Many other music videos broadcast on CCTV at the time featured red flags, Chinese gold-medal winning athletes, geographic and cultural symbols like the Great Wall, and signs of economic development and modernization like freeways and airplanes.

Promoting Foreigners' Attraction to China's Language and Culture

Chinese Language and Culture Competitions

The global uptake of students learning Chinese language and culture is another important way in which foreigners' are seen to be attracted to Chinese culture. Apparently produced by the *Sinophiliac* production team, the 'My Chinese Life' *Global Chinese Storytelling Competition Awards Gala* specifically highlighted this endeavour to promote to audiences the popularity of Chinese language and culture outside of China. This program, which I happened to appear on, was shot in July and broadcast in October, 2009.¹³² The production was a joint effort on the part of major media and educational organizations in the PRC that are reaching out together as part of China's 'soft power' push to highlight the attraction of China. The

¹³² I appeared on the awards ceremony show on CCTV along with contestants from thirty-eight countries. The early rounds were conducted in random places around the world: universities, tea houses – in my case – and through the Internet. The CCTV ceremony was run by the *Sinophiliac* production team, with the same stage design, and featured the finalists singing, dancing, storytelling, and reciting poetry in Chinese – proof of the fact that the world was embracing China.

competition overall was run by Beijing People's Radio/RBC.com (*Beijing Renmin Guangbo Diantai*), and as noted by hosts, had the support of the national 'Hanban' (*Guojia Hanban*), a 'public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, [which] is committed to providing Chinese language and cultural teaching resources and services worldwide' (Hanban website, 2010), China International Publishing Group (*Guojia Waiwenju*), which 'has over 20 subsidiaries as well as 12 overseas branches located in the USA, Britain, Germany, Belgium, Russia, Egypt, Mexico, Japan and Hong Kong' (CIPG website, 2010), and other related institutions. Hanban, which also establishes the Confucius Institutes around the world, describes itself as going 'all out in meeting the demands of foreign Chinese learners and contributing to the development of *multiculturalism* and the building of a *harmonious world*' (Hanban website, 2010, my emphasis).¹³³ China International Publishing Group's mission is to 'introduce China to foreign countries through books, magazines and websites' (CIPG website, 2010, my emphasis).¹³⁴ Hanban's conflation of Chinese language and harmony can at one level be read as an advertising slogan to sell 'Chinese' learning to students from foreign countries. The use of the phrase 'harmonious world' seemingly melds with the peace-building rhetoric of international relations, seeking to downplay negative impressions and fears about China's 'rise', much in the same way that 'harmonious society' discourse is being used domestically to cover deep divisions and inequalities within China.

The emphasis of these educational and media organizations, which are both politically and commercial operations, is on introducing China and Chinese language and culture to the world, rather than on introducing foreign cultures to China.¹³⁵ The CCTV production, however, was clearly aimed at

¹³³ See Hanban's website for further details <http://www.hanban.edu.cn/>

¹³⁴ Currently, CIPG has a staff of nearly 3,000 people, including over 100 foreign experts. Every year CIPG publishes over 3,000 titles of books and 30 periodicals in more than 10 languages. CIPG operates www.china.org.cn and another 30 websites. It organizes book exhibitions and cultural exchange activities overseas each year http://www.cipg.com.cn/about_cipg/overview/ Also note: Chinese Bridge speaking competition.

¹³⁵ Beijing Radio, however, has a foreign language channel (Radio 774) designed to bring foreign languages to Chinese listeners. Beijing Radio channels, including the foreign

introducing to Chinese audiences foreigners' mastery of Chinese language and culture – i.e. the 'results' of the efforts of such groups of teaching institutes and publishing houses to educate foreigners. In the case of this competition, the performing foreigners were mostly living abroad and were sent to China to participate in the program as part of the award for being a finalist. It showed that foreigners were not only learning in China/Beijing, but also learning Chinese *outside* of China. The program highlighted that Chinese was becoming increasingly popular around the world and that China's rise and self-confidence was leading to a more widespread popularity of all things Chinese. At the end of my performance, for instance, CCTV host Zhao Baole asked me to encourage more friends to study Chinese when I returned to Australia.

The theme song for the CCTV awards gala, 'My Chinese Life', confirmed the sense of mystique and happiness foreigners were supposed to feel for the Chinese language. It sought to establish a sense of pride in the language for domestic and overseas Chinese audiences, but also seemed to be a cry for global recognition for the 'ancient' and 'wise' language. Gathered together on the stage as a happy family in the grand finale, waving flags of both China and our respective countries, we contestants sang in Chinese, alongside the foreign and Chinese hosts, about how 'happy' (*kuaile*) we were to be learning the melodic-sounding Chinese language, which comes from an 'ancient China with five-thousand years' history' (*laizi wuqian nian gulao Zhongguo*).

The lyrics clearly tap into a cultural nationalists' belief that traditional the Chinese language contains essential 'Chinese' thought, a 'Chinese' conception of the world, and a sense of Chinese uniqueness (Guo Y., 2004:8). Set to a breezy pop tune, other lyrics allude to the harmonious global village discourse, reminiscent of the Olympic theme song 'You and Me', sung by Chinese male pop singer Liu Huan and English soprano Sarah

language channel, can be accessed online:
http://audio.rbc.cn/calendar.form?radio_id=8&week=1277654400000&day=1277827200000
0

Brightman¹³⁶ during the Opening Ceremony (discussed below). According to the lyrics of the theme song for the *Global Chinese Storytelling Awards Gala*, everyone gets along because, after becoming a global village, there will ‘no longer be distinctions between you and me’ (*bu zai fen shi ni shi wo*).

Presumably, everyone can become the same by all learning (the superior) Chinese language and culture. The lines ‘Meeting in the East, greeting with ‘Ni hao’’ suggest that the Chinese language and geographic space both act as strategic unifiers and peace-builders. The Chinese language is constructed as having the power to bring people ‘harmoniously’ together, and is capable of making one’s life ‘rich and colourful’. The lyrics emphasizing the harmonious coexistence between the old East and the new, modern West through ‘cultural fusion’ mirror the kind of discourse de Kloet *et al.* (2011:129) discovered in posters and promotional materials released prior to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

Promoting Chinese as a Global Language through Taiwanese Pop – S.H.E.

While ‘My Chinese’ Life’ was apparently composed specifically for the awards show to reinforce the message that the Middle Kingdom plays an important role in establishing a sense of global unity, it is important to note that the promotion of and nationalistic pride in the Chinese language has also been embedded into highly plugged, commercially oriented, cosmopolitan pop songs by non-mainland Chinese groups tapping into the officially sanctioned nationalistic discourse for exposure and commercial gain. Most prominent and popular among youth in the PRC around the years 2008¹³⁷ was the Taiwanese girl group S.H.E.’s song entitled ‘Chinese

¹³⁶ Interestingly Sarah Brightman and Fei Xiang co-starred in a 1995 Andrew Lloyd Webber concert called ‘Webber’s The Music of the Night Concert’ staged in New York’s Radio City Music Hall and forty-three cities in the USA. The same concert, discussed, was taken to Beijing in September 2001 with Elaine Paige replacing Brightman. See The Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1191525/bio>.

¹³⁷ I often heard the song blaring from ‘trendy’ accessory, clothing and other shops popular with youth in Kunming.

Language' (*Zhongguohua*).¹³⁸ This song, which included complex rap lyrics made up of Chinese tongue twisters, also featured a chorus that clarified a global craze for the language. It told audiences that the 'whole world' (*quan shijie*) is learning to speak, and is speaking, Chinese; that 'Confucian thought is becoming increasingly international' (*Kongfuzi de hua yuelaiyue guojihua*); and that the whole world will listen to 'us' and whatever we have to say (*women shuo de hua, rang shijie dou renzhen tinghua*).

The re-working of the Taiwanese stars' pop song 'Chinese language' on the CCTV stage during the 'My Chinese Life' Awards Gala by foreign performers is significant. It in turn supported key messages of the program, in which PRC-centred Chinese nationalism and the projection of China's soft power were conflated. Host Wang Yige welcomed friends from China, America and the West African nation of Gabon to show their passion for Chinese language by singing about their 'Chinese Language'. Together with Chinese backing dancers, they tried to look cool and at ease with the language, breezing through the tongue twister lyrics. Foreigners performing the song on *Sinophiliac* further validates S.H.E.'s message that Chinese is taking off around the world and that Chinese people should feel proud of their superior and attractive culture.

The lyrics of 'Chinese Language' also directly alert to racial differences, referring to people of 'different skin colours' (*ge zhong yanse de pifu*) and 'different hair colours' (*ge zhong yanse de toufa*) attempting to roll their tongues and speak the ever popular Chinese language. They also indicate a need to correct an imbalance in power relations between English and Chinese speakers. English, a compulsory subject for most students in the PRC and Taiwan, is taken as an unjust imposition as a result of a post-colonial world order and is widely seen as merely a 'tool' for international

¹³⁸ S.H.E. is a hugely successful girl group from Taiwan, whose name is based on the first letter of the three singers' English names Selina, Hebe, and Ella (created to fit the title of the group). Apart from S.H.E.'s own performances of their song on CCTV, they also have an MTV clip (which I haven't seen on CCTV). The clip features the three singers in a bamboo forest, Chinese kungfu artists, as well as black and white foreigners breakdancing, and foreigners asking the way (in Chinese) in Shanghai. The music video clip for S.H.E.'s 'Chinese language' (*Zhongguohua*) is available online at <http://6.cn/watch/553037.html>.

business. In the song, the lyrics directly refer to the struggle that ‘we’ had in learning English pronunciation and grammar (*duoshao nian women kulian yingwen fayin he wenfa*). Chinese, on the other hand, is advertised being a sophisticated and ‘elegant’ language, developed by and belonging to the ‘clever Chinese people’ (*hao congming de Zhongguo ren, hao youmei de Zhongguohua*).

Names Expressing Love for China - Aihua and Aiguo

Just as many Chinese students adopt English names to help them identify with an ‘English’ language and culture, foreigners’ adoption of Chinese names is another important way in which foreigners on the programs express and embody an interest in Chinese culture and China. Adopting a Chinese name may demonstrate foreigners’ desires to integrate into Chinese society and contributes to their own sense of inclusiveness in the society without any necessary relationship to national Chinese politics. I myself have developed a comfortable new persona through my Chinese name ‘Gao Rui’ (lit: ‘tall wisdom’). However, sometimes the choice of names for foreigners, as for many Chinese people, can be used to promote particular political positions. White, female American *Sinophiliac* host, Aihua, is a prime example. Her name literally translates as ‘Love China’. Her special role as a host makes this name even more significant. Furthermore, the program only offers her Chinese name and never reveals her other name, which is one way of emphasizing her interest in Chinese culture.

Aihua’s name has been a focal point in her performances as a host on *Sinophiliac* and became a platform for negotiating her identity as a foreigner in China. On the one hand, she attempts to come across not only as attracted to China, but as a patriotic Chinese person. When Aihua was introduced to audiences in a *Sinophiliac* program in March 2008, her Chinese speaking ability in ‘official’ host-speak was impeccable, and she wore a red-coloured top that is symbolic of both the Communist Party and the Chinese nation. Fellow host, Chinese male performer, Jiang Kun, noted that she had a

perfectly genuine Chinese name (*Zhongguo mingzi*, literally ‘name of China’) and repeated her name several times for the audience to fully grasp the significance of a foreigner seeming to show such a profound sense of love for China. Speaking in perfect Mandarin as a Chinese host, Aihua referred to ‘our’ ancestors in China attempting to further the bond and make it seem that she not only loved China but was assimilated. However, Aihua could not truly be acknowledged as ‘Chinese’ largely due to her racial/ethnic differences. Host Jiang directly announced to audiences that ‘no matter how you look at her, she doesn’t look Chinese’. He referred to her by saying ‘you Americans’, and Aihua then shifted her identity to ‘us Americans’. The performance of foreigners as Chinese is rarely total or long-lasting and is often treated as a kind of ‘joke’ accompanied by laughter. This fits with my argument that the main point of such orthodox performances is to highlight foreigners’ attraction to, not assimilation into, China and Chinese culture.

In the same program described above, a man with the name Tang Aiguo came on stage. Aiguo literally means ‘Love the country’. Playing with their names, he joked with Aihua, saying that if you put Aihua (Love China) and Aiguo (Love the country) together then we are *cousins*. This comment seemed to bring the China-loving foreigners into the greater China family tree, once removed from the *brother-sister* relationship between the 56 nationalities. However, this ‘family relationship’ comment was also taken as a joke, evidenced by visual and aural displays of laughter from the performers on stage and the audience, and it was not expressed in the serious manner in which the 56 nationalities are said to be related. Nonetheless, it is still an important pointer to perhaps a softer side of political thinking regarding the bringing of, and the desire to bring in, friendly foreigners into the fold of China.

In another episode of *Sinophiliac*, this time staged outdoors in Guizhou, Aihua had a slightly different subjective starting point that connected her with the colourful minority nationalities. Guizhou is a province that as a

result of effective place-based marketing in reform era China immediately gives rise to an image of colourful and happy minority nationalities. Pre-introduction song and dance acts highlighted the 'colourful' flavour of the program. For this program, Aihua wore a pink, embroidered 'minority nationality' dress and the male Chinese host, dressed in a modern, Western black suit, made a special point of highlighting her dress as opposed to her name. He chivalrously held Aihua's hand as if about to introduce something special, and as he let it go gesturing at Aihua, he said to the audience, 'Everyone, what do you say? (Is she) beautiful? (Does she) look good?! Aihua laughed exuberantly, and some murmured cheers were heard, before she expressed how much she liked the dress, suggesting it was something exotic. The male host then asked the audience whether Aihua, in wearing Yi girls clothing, really looked like an Yi girl. Aihua modeled the dress and called out 'So do I look alike?' The male host jumped in to succinctly answer the question on behalf of the live audience 'Don't kid me. To me she doesn't look like (an Yi girl). No matter how you look at her, she is still an American.' Aihua acted rejected and disappointed, although still with a smile on her face suggesting she was just playing. At the same time, the male host put his arm on her back as if to comfort her, and left it there as he told her not to worry 'because up next we'll see what *real* Yi girls look like'. Aihua then apparently accepted this distinction and they resolved the issue by announcing in unison the name of the song: 'Yi family girls' (*Yijia meizi*). The girls who came on stage dancing and throwing flowers out of baskets were dressed almost identically to Aihua, the only obvious difference being the colour of their skin and eyes. These Yi girls did not speak at all, but were merely sung about in Chinese, in the 'national' style, by a Chinese man in Western-style white suit. So, while there appears to be constant to-and-fro-ing between Aihua's identity as a Chinese or a foreigner based on her dress, speech, and acting as a Chinese host, the line between Chineseness and foreignness is finally drawn sharply in the Chinese host's speech because of her racial appearance and country of origin.

Attraction to Traditional Han Culture and Civilization

After performing a Peking Opera piece on *Star Avenue* in 2006, dressed in traditional costume with a long beard (that was partly coming undone!), black Liberian, male R&B singer, Hao Ge (discussed later in this chapter) was asked by host Bi Fujian why he wanted to learn Peking Opera. His response was:

I like China. I like Chinese culture, and what I want to say is, I've been to many countries and the feeling China has given me is very warm [he puts his hand on his heart] and safe. I have many friends here and many friends that like my music. I hope one day I can become a Chinese person. I love (*re'ai*) China.

Direct expression of love for China, as well as through the performance of traditional Chinese arts like Peking Opera, is another way of highlighting foreigners' attraction to China on CCTV music-entertainment programs. Through the visual spectacle of foreigners' performances, audiences are able to rediscover Chinese cultural traditions. As foreigners demonstrate their curiosity and desire to learn Chinese art forms they become objects for the Chinese gaze. Foreigners' performances of local arts, often with their Chinese teachers, help to create a sense of pride in China's national culture. In *Sinophiliac*, China's unique civilization is often promoted through foreigners shown to be learning, appreciating, acquiring skills in, and performing Chinese traditional arts.

In 2008, there was also an episode specifically devoted to *quyi*. *Quyi* refers to Chinese folk art forms that include ballad singing, storytelling, comic dialogues, clapper talks and cross talks. Throughout the program, the phrase 'China's folk arts' (*Zhongguo quyi*) or 'our Chinese (China) folk arts' (*women Zhongguo quyi*), was emphasized thus connecting the foreigners to

a ‘Chinese national’ culture.¹³⁹ The majority of folk arts featured in this episode were presumably ‘Han’ traditions given that they were otherwise unmarked. However, as well as stressing accomplishments in standard Mandarin, *Quyí* is interesting because there is an emphasis on the use and mastery of *local* Mandarin dialects and not just *Putonghua*. This allows for performances that suggest an ‘original’ form much in the same sense as the *yuanshengtai*. However, rather than being rendered exotic, these traditions are reified in a discourse of civilization. This is often done through older, distinguished master teachers coming on stage to perform with their foreign students who have apparently taken the endeavour seriously and spent long hours learning specific skills.

This production seemed to address an imbalance whereby the traditions of ‘exotic’ minorities have been marketed in the name of China’s contemporary vibrancy and openness to the virtual exclusion of Han traditions, meaning that a ‘wealth of distinctive but little-known regional folk traditions belonging to citizens classified as Han’ are often ignored (Rees, 2009:72). This program is possibly one of the few television spaces in which *local* Han traditions are hanging on in the face of competition from the minority nationality arts, which remain exotic to both mainstream/Han Chinese and foreigners alike – and probably many minorities as well.

Even if foreigners do not actually acquire skills in particular artistic forms, exaggerated utterances of the idea that foreigners are attracted to Chinese culture through the connection to specific arts is reinforced. For instance, in one episode of *Sinophiliac*, host Aihua remarked that ‘*all* foreign friends’ come to China to appreciate Chinese folk arts (*Quyí*), and that they can even sing a couple of lines. An appreciation for aspects of Chinese culture can be conflated with an appreciation for China itself and its socio-political status quo.

¹³⁹ See more on *quyi* at <http://www.shuoshu.org/default.htm>

Playful Foreigners and Rediscovering Exotic China

Sinophiliac also emphasizes foreigners' attraction to exotic, minority nationality cultures and areas of China. As guides to foreigners in tourist areas that are known for their minority nationality flavour, Chinese hosts often act as mediators between 'minorities' and 'foreigners', between the global and local 'other' (see Tan, 2001:17). For instance, when *Sinophiliac* has travelled to minority nationality areas (e.g. Guizhou and Changbai in 2008), female outdoors/on-the-scene reporter, Le Le (乐乐 lit: happy, happy – the same character in the word for music) has given introductions to audiences and guided her foreign guests around the areas. In the introductions and clips, foreigners often act surprised and excited by their experience of the colourful diversity of Chinese life. In the episode on Changbai Korean (*Chaoxian*) Autonomous prefecture in Yanbian Korean Autonomous County, broadcast in 2008, the foreigners overacted a sense of amazement and awe of the local minority peoples who became objects of both the 'Chinese' and foreign gaze. At the same time, the Chinese host remained calm and used the opportunity to educate audiences about China's multi-ethnic splendours.

The exoticism of the natural beauty of minority nationality and border areas is often emphasized through exploration with exotic and fun-loving 'foreign friends' who are fascinated by China's diversity. There is thus a kind of 'double exoticism' of seeing minorities and foreigners on television. This may attract audiences, and allow them to rediscover 'their' colorful national heritage, which could only be truly appreciated when foreigners are shown to be interested. In the episode based in the 'border county' (it borders on North Korea/the DPRK) Changbai Korean nationality autonomous county, hosts announced that the special area attracted (*xiyin*) 'the whole world'.

The foreigners performed bizarre acts of falling in love with the natural beauty of the area. Stopping at a waterfall, black Cameroon male actor, Jie Gai, lifted his hand up to the waterfall and in a dramatized voice, in

perfectly staged slow speech of the *langdu* reading-out-aloud style, called out ‘ah Changbai, so beautiful’. Following suit was white, male actor, Da Niu, an occasional host of *Sinophiliac*, who spoke in Chinese but wore his foreign identity on his T-shirt, which was emblazoned with a British flag. He gestured to the waterfall and dramatically repeated ‘ah so beautiful’. While the two men were still pointing up to the waterfall, Sierra Leone’s Maliya, a black female actor, came in and further dramatized the scene: ‘Jie Gai, Da Niu, what’s wrong with you?’. The men turned around and in unison called out ‘Changbai, I love you’. When reporter Le Le then came calmly into the picture to find out what was going on, the two foreign men shouted out ‘we’re not leaving’ because ‘this place is too beautiful’ (Jie Gai) and because ‘I’ve decided I want to be a Changbai person’ (Da Niu). The two men then engaged in a mock argument about who should stay and who should go, as if it were a competition, while the reporter Le Le was calmly seen talking directly to viewers about the magnificent, green scenery. The suggestion is that the spectacular scenery of China had turned the foreigners crazy and therefore should be a place within the Chinese nation-state of which Chinese audiences should be proud.

There is a curious interplay between internal orientalism with respect to Han/mainstream portrayals of minorities and the way that ‘othering’ operates in relation to on-screen foreigners, wherein foreigners and minorities are exotic spectacles for mainstream Han Chinese television audiences. The ‘Changbai’ program also depicted a series of stereotypical links to food, clothing, singing and dancing. The two foreign men were seen curiously watching men and women who wore traditional Korean dress pound rice with a hammer. Women in traditional dress were also seen feeding Jie Gai, putting food directly into his mouth. This follows a stereotype described by Schein (1997:70) that was widespread in the 1980s, particularly in relation to minority nationality women catering to the needs of urban Han men travelling to rural minority nationality areas, an example of what she refers to as ‘internal orientalism’. Viewing ‘foreigners’ engaged in such acts with minorities is perhaps thought to be doubly exotic. Indeed,

in another program, even foreign women (black female Maliya and a white Argentinean) were seen rather shockingly, though all in jest, pinching another foreigner's nose and forcing him to drink spirits for being knocked out of a singing contest game. To follow anthropologist Eileen Walsh (2001:111), such scenes seem to be designed to gratify viewing 'tourists' (in this case television viewers) who are seeking a "primitive" and happier past, a more 'natural' existence where people are less distracted by the cares of an advanced society'.

This 'double exoticism' also appears to be used in ways that supports the political status quo. Later in the production, we saw not just the 'Chaoxian' people singing and dancing on the stage, but foreigners singing and dancing as well, individually and all together in a mixed minority nationality-foreigner performance. The medley design where each foreigner performed one after another, and then together, was similar to the pattern noted for minority nationalities in Chapter 4, suggesting 'othered' subjects receive similar treatment. The unifying song was a sweet and uplifting 'red classic' (*hongse jingdian*), 'The Red Sun Shines on the Border Regions' (*Hong taiyang zhao bianjiang*). This revolutionary song celebrates the beauty of Changbai and achievements in farming, mining, building dams, as well as the local people's will to fight, their unity with the army, and the Communist victory. It seems almost incongruous to see a young, white British man, host Da Niu, singing the praises of Chairman Mao as he 'leads us towards victory' more than thirty years after Mao's death. However, the scene offers a sense of proof that the struggle towards the goal of national strength and prosperity has been achieved thanks to the guiding role of the Communist Party, and that friendly foreigners support its ongoing legitimacy. The scene of foreigners *and* minority nationalities singing a revolutionary classic about border regions happily together on the CCTV stage in the reform era promotes the image that China's internal and external 'others' are willingly supportive, not just of China, but of the Party's ongoing role.

Marrying China and Mixed Families in the Olympic Year

Foreign Wives

International/intercultural marriage is a sensitive issue in relation to the performance of Chinese national identity as it can seem to threaten an essentialized Chinese identity by diluting it. In CCTV music-entertainment television, the issue is generally tackled in a way that stresses a sense of fun and exoticism of international marriages, and more significantly stresses foreigners' falling in love with China and Chinese people as the reason for such liaisons, rather than the other way round. Foreigners falling in love with and marrying Chinese people becomes another way of demonstrating foreigners' love for China and Chinese culture. At the beginning of this study, I noted that in my own performance on CCTV that I was introduced to the viewing audience as a 'wife of China', stressing my connection to the Chinese nation as a result of my marriage through the joke that I should get an award for this accomplishment.

At the time of this study, Sierra Leone's Maliya (Maria/Mariatu Kargbo), also Miss Sierra Leone in 2009, became quite well known for her CCTV performances of a catchy up-lifting pop song called 'Marry a Chinese man' (*Jia gei Zhongguo ren* lit: marry a person from China).¹⁴⁰ The lyrics seem to have been written especially for her, with the first line: 'I am a girl from Africa whose heart has turned towards the mysterious East'. The lyrics go on to describe a girl carrying her travel bags to find her dreams. It describes Chinese people as being honest, simple and kind-hearted, always smiling, and whose young men are elegant and natural and love girls most dearly. This is how she has found the man she loves who makes her feel 'like flowers opening in her heart'. Chinese men are constructed as the ideal husband for foreign women, as 'to marry a Chinese man, is to become a

¹⁴⁰ Clips of Maliya singing 'Marrying a Chinese Man' are available at: <http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/oXVgjUDlwN4/> (CCTV-4/CNTV) and <http://blog.sina.com.cn/mariatukargbo>. Her music video (which I have not seen on CCTV) is available at: <http://share.renren.com/share/297317868/3065855282>

happy bride'. The final phrases describe a scene where a foreigner wearing an embroidered wedding dress, gets into the bridal sedan chair, sings opera, and looks on shyly 'with sweetness/happiness in her heart'.¹⁴¹ It is a fun, upbeat song, accompanied with a sense of novelty. However, no matter how genuine Maliya's love for China is and no matter how big her 'dream to bring the cultural heritage of Africa and China together to improve social harmony',¹⁴² like other performances of songs by foreigners on CCTV, the performance as a whole does not attempt to promote with cross-cultural issues on an equal basis. The foreigner is constructed as behaving in Chinese ways and experiencing joy in marrying a Chinese man. It doesn't focus on Chinese people being interested in adopting foreign cultures. The fact that this song is sung by an African woman may simply be used to highlight to Chinese audiences how far the reach of China's attractiveness has extended, given that for many ordinary Chinese people, Africa is a very distant place.¹⁴³

Foreign Husbands

The performance of 'husbands', or at least 'grooms', of China are also evident in CCTV's music-entertainment programming, and these also stress foreigners' attraction to China and fun sense of adventure. In the final scene in the *Sinophiliac* outdoor special in Changbai Korean nationality autonomous county, a mock wedding took place in what looks to be a kind of tourism 'nationality village' that has become ubiquitous across China. Black Cameroon actor, Jie Gai, was seen talking to the camera saying 'I am today's groom', while a post-production heart shape superimposed on the

¹⁴¹ What is particularly curious is the choice in back-up singer, Li Yugang. Li, a man, is famous in China for performing as a woman, having acquire the skills to ding with the sweet tender voice of a woman, and dance exceptionally - colourful ribbon dancing in women's clothing. Clearly it is all part of the spectacle, I have never seen theme perform the song together but his voice can be heard in the musical backing. – cross-dresser, sings female voice, in interlude

¹⁴² See article on Maliya, 'Model Behaviour' in Global Times, 30 September 2009. Available at: <http://www.globaltimes.cn/DesktopModules/DnnForge%20-%20NewsArticles/Print.aspx?tabid=99&tabmoduleid=94&articleId=473825&moduleId=405&PortalID=0>

¹⁴³ For more on Maliya – a CCTV documentary on her 'ordinary' life learning Chinese and cooking, see: <http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/i7rRoDHkX5Q/>

screen appeared as a transition to the next shot as is typical of wedding videos. Both Jie Gai and white UK actor, Da Niu, who both expressed their undying ‘love’ for the local place ‘Changbai’ and threatened never to leave, were seen carrying roses towards women whose heads were covered and whose faces the audience could not see. As the men walked down towards the two brides, the expectation was that they were marrying beautiful Changbai Korean/*Chaoxian* minority nationality women, the women of the *place* they ‘loved’. But finally it was revealed to audiences that one of the people they were ‘marrying’ was Maliya, who sings ‘Marry a Chinese man’. Everyone pretended to be shocked, before collapsing into a fit of laughter. The final shot was a happy global ‘family’ picture made up of Chinese, minority nationalities and ‘ordinary’ Chinese, with all the actors and other Changbai people together shouting out the slogan: The Same Five Continents, Five Continents The Same Happiness!’ (*Tongle wuzhou, wuzhou tongle*). Thus, the picture expanded out to a happy ‘global’ family with separate national identities, not one messily intertwined through intermarriage. Despite being presented as a bit of fun, however, the scene does suggest a degree of uncertainty about how much China should accept the foreign ‘other’ as well as possibilities for ongoing and deeper relationships.

The image of foreigners engaging with and integrating into Chinese life fits with what Farrer (2008:23) identified in an ethnographic study of intermarriage in Shanghai.¹⁴⁴ Farrer found that foreign spouses were expected to ‘make some accommodations to a Chinese lifestyle’ and were ‘most admired when they mastered elements of Chinese culture and language’. While Chinese spouses using marriage as a ticket out of China can be suggestive of an abandonment of a weak China, the reverse trend towards foreigners choosing to live in China with their spouses and adapting to Chinese ways of life highlights the attractiveness of China for foreigners and a reason for greater pride in a strong nation.

¹⁴⁴ Based on interviews with spouses and a Shanghai television program ‘OK! Xintiandi’ (1999-2006) which featured interviews with couples.

The 'Same' Human Race but Different Families, Mixed-Nationality Couples and Children

Perhaps not surprisingly, foreigners and Chinese were more 'seriously' incorporated into an image of a global family at the height of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. This was most evident in the music video for the official theme song for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Theme Song, 'Me and You' (*Wo he ni*), sung by Liu Huan and Sarah Brightman. Like the theme song for the torch relay, in the context of regular CCTV music-entertainment programming, the approach taken was in some respects quite innovative and unusual. As opposed to the common scene of *en masse* solidarity of representatives from around the world gathered together in Beijing, the music video clip of the theme song¹⁴⁵ tried to achieve this effect through the images of people who mostly appeared *individually*, focusing on close-ups of faces of individuals, accompanied with on-screen text identifying them by their personal names (in English letters if in a foreign language, and Chinese characters if in Chinese), along with labels of their country of origin. Their unity was expressed visually, by appearing in the *same* unidentified 'womb-like' spaces with water reflections on the dark panels behind them. The scene began with a close-up of the face of a young Chinese-looking woman with a surgical cap on straining to give birth. Then there were close-ups of individuals, beginning with a Chinese-looking baby, followed by other children and adults, implying a unity of the world's children with the Chinese mother. The majority of individuals in the clip were from China (including the Chinese male singer Liu Huan), but other young men, women, boys, girls and older people were from Pakistan, the USA, Cape Verde, Germany, Costa Rica, Italy, Columbia, South Korea, and England (Sarah Brightman).

¹⁴⁵ Theme Song 'You and Me' MV: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELUQRiEjDtE&feature=related>. The MV was sponsored by China Mobile (中国移动通讯有限公司) (hence the girl watching sports events on a mobile phone, and a close up of hand and mobile along with the words 'extend your hand' *shenchu ni de shou*). The clip was dated 2008.8.8 – the day of the Opening Ceremony – and would have been released only from this date onwards.

Going well beyond the norm of regular music-entertainment programming, there were also close up images of happy couples of different races kissing and whispering into each other's ears: a woman from China and a black man from Benin, and a man from China with a woman Germany. There were also snapshots of 'families', although with quite different definitions applied to Chinese and foreign families. The happy white family comprised of a mother and father and four children, while the Chinese-looking family comprised of an elderly couple (grandparents), the mother and father, and a single child, thus upholding the one-child policy. While there were no clips of 'mixed families' per se, there was a shot of two children, a girl and a boy (apparently brother and sister) who were given hyphenated identities China-America (中-美) but presented with their Chinese names. The actual 'mixed-identity' labelling, as opposed to the visual image of a mixed-race identity like Fei Xiang with his blue eyes and black hair, is very unusual on CCTV's music-entertainment programs. Overall, the video, which was clearly directed towards both domestic and global audiences, suggested a desire to come across as more cosmopolitan and seemed to promote a sense of global identity designed to dissolve tensions in China-foreign relationships.

China's Strength Expressed in Subtle Ways

In a documentary on the CCTV program 'People' (*Renwu*) on CCTV-10¹⁴⁶ about Chen Qigang, the composer/lyricist of the theme song, artistic director Zhang Yimou revealed that the song would offer the exact opposite of what he thought foreigners were expecting:

From an international image point of view, many
foreigners will expect us to sing out our great strength [he

¹⁴⁶ Documentary 'Beijing Olympics Musical Director Chen Qigang' [北京奥运音乐总监陈其钢]

is available at <http://search.cntv.cn/tansuo/index.shtml?qttext=%u5F20%u827A%u8C0B> (broadcast date: 24 September 2009).

waves his arms violently around], but in the end we'll suddenly sing 'You and Me' are one family [nods from other music/artistic directors around the table].

Zhang Yimou hoped that the song would be gentle, comfortable, and a 'solemn promise', rather than just a catchphrase. He wanted it to 'speak small not big', to have feeling, to be about me and you, hand in hand, heart to heart. The gentle, slow beat of the song certainly gave this impression, and was not the kind of fast-paced song that often sets the theme for international sporting events. However, the reactionary tone (foreigners will expect x, but we will show them y) continues to pit foreigners as being against Chinese, and the 'family' he proposes reflects tensions based on internally felt perceptions of negative outside views of China. What Zhang Yimou presumes foreigners are thinking is no doubt another side to what he and other Chinese colleagues are thinking (cp. Hamilton, 1990:16). When foreigners perform, Chinese audiences are shown a complex image of themselves, desiring at once to be included as equals in a modern, cosmopolitan world, and as wanting to assert a sense of pride in their unique and superior culture. For this reason, I argue therefore that foreigners in CCTV music-entertainment programs, in much the same way as is the case for minority nationalities, play important ongoing roles in the various manifestations of Chinese national identity construction. This happens not just when 'the world' is watching, but also on a regular basis.

Conclusion: Strength and Resilience of Chinese culture highlighted by foreigners attraction to China

While people from 'the five continents' may perform happiness together, the kind of diplomacy offered in *Sinophiliac* is not often one of equal cultural exchange. Foreigners on the program often demonstrate a willingness to adopt various elements of Chinese culture, thus highlighting their attraction to China. They often dress in traditional-style Chinese clothes, whether Han- or minority nationality-style, speak the official standard (often Beijing-inflected) dialect of *Putonghua*/Mandarin, and show

their skills in various Chinese art forms like cross-talk and Peking Opera and contemporary Chinese popular music. Despite the occasional exception, audiences are given few glimpses of ostensibly foreign art forms, and Chinese performers are rarely shown performing ‘foreign’-style acts, except those that are already part of mainstream Chinese life. Chinese people, on the other hand, are shown to maintain their Chinese identities. In this way, the strength of Chinese culture is often highlighted. This is similar to the way that the Chineseness of Chinese students and residents living overseas is emphasized, while any degree of assimilation into other cultures as they live their lives in other countries is downplayed in the program *The Same Song*.

6.3 Foreign Stars and the Building of a Cosmopolitan China-Centred World

In this section, I highlight the roles of foreign pop singers who have gained or being attributed a degree of star-status through performance on CCTV and their roles in building a cosmopolitan image of China in CCTV’s music-entertainment programs other than *Sinophiliac*. I argue that in the performance of foreigners still work within the status quo party-state messages highlighting the attractiveness of China, but at the same time promote a softer side of politics through showing foreigners bringing something fresh and exciting to Chinese viewers, particular through their popular music and unique styles. These foreign performances work in similar ways to the cosmopolitan blending of ethno-pop, and the unique identities and styles brought to the mainland by Hong Kong and Taiwanese stars. They assist China in the construction of its image and in the development of a contemporary culture. Similar to previous sections, I suggest that the performances are less about cross-cultural exchange and learning about ‘other’ cultures and more about presenting an image of a revitalized China at the centre of world civilization, and as a place that attracts foreigners and allows them to realize their dreams. However, by

delving into the performances of artists from Liberia, Russia, Korea, and Japan, I also highlight how historical relationships and tensions are either dealt with or ignored in performances that take place in a nexus between CCTV Party-politics, commerce, and the negotiation of foreign-Chinese identities.

Mixing Red and Black – African Brother, Hao Ge

During the period around 2008, the most successful ‘foreign’ CCTV star was undoubtedly black, Liberian singer, Hao Ge (Uwechue Emmanuel). Hao Ge, whose name most appropriately sounds like both ‘good brother’ and ‘good song’ came to fame through being a contestant on CCTV’s only regular singing based competition program, *Star Avenue* (in 2006). In the years prior to 2009, Hao Ge seemed to be the only non-Chinese, non-Asian foreign ‘other’ who had gained success as an accomplished ‘professional’ singer through regular performances on CCTV. He was certainly the only elite professional singer discovered through a CCTV competition, in the way that many local singers become famous. He won the first monthly competition and was runner-up in the yearly finals – the first success of this kind for a foreigner. Many fans were disappointed he wasn’t chosen as the overall winner. Hao Ge lost out to two other ‘colourful’ performers, Pumi nationality Rongbashennaduo, from Yunnan province,¹⁴⁷ and female impersonator Li Yugang who attracts audiences through his dances in spectacular colourful dresses and singing in a high-pitched voice.¹⁴⁸ Hao Ge stimulated audiences on a number of points: as a black foreigner he is still a novelty for audiences of CCTV music-entertainment programs, he sings in a gospel-R&B style that is highly unique in the context of CCTV, he looks comfortable and in control as an individual performer. Significantly, he

¹⁴⁷ Rongbashennaduo: http://www.yndaily.com/html/20061015/news_91_97817.html;
Rongbashennaduo’s winning performance Nuijiang Big Song [怒江大小调]:
http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjI3OTQ0ODg=.html

¹⁴⁸ Li Yugang provided vocal backing for Maliya’s song, ‘Marry a Chinese Man’, described earlier.

mixes his unique image and sounds with popular, sentimental, and revolutionary Chinese classic songs.¹⁴⁹ Hao Ge brings a freshness to the CCTV stage that may be attractive to audiences, and at the same time he is able to promote the state's desire to appear cosmopolitanism, and make revolutionary songs and their attendant messages about the successes of the Party trendy again.

To give an example, one of Hao Ge's most spectacular performances was of the song 'In Memory of the Brother in Arms (*Huainian zhanyou*) on the *Star Avenue* finals. The song was in the classic 1950s revolutionary film called *Visitors to the Icy Mountain* (*Bing shan shang de lai ke*) about the Communist Army's liberation of Xinjiang. According to one report, Hao Ge watched the film in detail numerous times before the performance.¹⁵⁰ Apart from the original film version, he no doubt also drew on a number of contemporary male singers who have performed the classic song with their own signature styles. They include Liu Huan; Daolang – a Han pop star who became famous singing Xinjiang styled music; Teng Ge'er – a Mongolian pop singer from the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region; and Dai Yuqiang – a 'operatic/national' style military singer.¹⁵¹ Hao Ge, thus joins this list of strong Chinese, male luminaries who have performed national salvation and strength in different ways.

¹⁴⁹ Hao Ge's album R&B (Red and Black) makes a point of the mix between Chinese/Revolutionary and Black (racial dimension):

<http://www.verycd.com/topics/160636/>

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.verycd.com/topics/160636/>

¹⁵¹ Original Film version of 'In Memory of the Brother in Arms' [怀念战友]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrV3OBDUjwg&feature=related>

A number of great male singers with their own signature styles have sung this song

Liu Huan's version (karaoke video – small black room)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-Y11yAdWn8>

Daolang's version – music video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJk7VITOp0w&feature=related>

Dai Yuqiang's version (in army clothes, operatic style, live orchestra, big concert hall)

<http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/YFS-HvzF9pw/>

Teng Ge'er's version (wearing a jacket with a picture of the wolf totem howling under the moon, big screen with old film, live orchestra huge hall) <http://6.cn/watch/4040863.html>

Hao Ge's performance¹⁵² was highly choreographed to establish him as bringing something unique to, but wholly in line with the needs of, the Chinese nation. With a short piano introduction build up, he stepped out of the blackness through a huge star towards the studio audience, and the spotlight was on him. Dressed in white, a symbolic offering of peace, audiences then saw him close up and heard his powerful gospel-inspired voice belt out the famous opening line in Chinese 'Tianshan [in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region] is my beautiful hometown'.

Savoring each word, the lines connected this man from far away Africa to the furthest (from Beijing) reaches of the Chinese nation – Western China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Province, but also to the Han Chinese/Central efforts to liberate the nation. The black African man and the Uyghur are quintessential 'others' to the Han Chinese, but Hao Ge was in the process of becoming an important symbol of 'us' to whom most Chinese could associate. Given the song's popularity, there was a positive audience reception, and before the first line was finished the audience was cheering and clapping. The camera panned out for audiences to absorb the atmosphere. By line three, Hao Ge had put his hand on his heart (as Dai Yuqiang, for instance, does) as a sign of respect and offering. The audience joined in and began to clap along in time. As the speed picked up, audiences were given glimpses of the backing instrumentalists (keyboardists), significant as the visual performance of instrumental backing is a rare sight on CCTV music-entertainment programs that usually relies on recorded backing and is only usually evident during important events. The camera panned across the stage so that audiences could now see lit up actors in old CCP soldiers' uniforms posing on both sides of Hao Ge. They stood like statues, upright and kneeling, looking ahead, holding their rifles. By the time the chorus came, Hao Ge looked thoroughly absorbed in his performance.

¹⁵² Hao Ge's performance of 'In Memory of the Brother in Arms':
<http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/f-8hXWHMv0o/>

More orthodox patterns of performance were mixed in with Hao Ge's unique elements. To back up his words was a large choir of men and women to the side. They stood upright, holding black books with lyrics in the pious way of church choirs. The women wore long white Western style dresses and the men black suits, white shirts and bow ties, stressing the solemn importance of this moment. As the climax of the verse towards the chorus was being reached, the camera panned the studio, beginning with a high, wide angle shot of the dramatic scene, containing the backdrop of moving stars in a deep universe on screen panels on the left, and a tiny Hao Ge in lights at the bottom right corner of the screen sharing his heart with the audience to the accompaniment of great cheers.

As the tension resolved with the slowing tempo at the end of the chorus, a sublime moment of solidarity between the foreign performer, Chinese accompanying singers, dancers and instrumentalists, and the on-screen audience united in emotion was established. Hao Ge closed his eyes and put his hand on his heart again, as he sang of the dear soldier who 'will never hear me play the piano again, [or] hear me sing songs'. Audiences were seen clapping and nodding, then, a mournful trumpet solo (imitating a soldier's bugle) was heard, with images of the conductor, and the whole audience waving glow sticks in unison. For verse two, the camera panned around the whole studio, which was lit with warm red lights, giving an impression of a closed and safe space, inter-dispersed with close-ups of Hao Ge, still absorbed until the end when he bowed, followed by more cheers from the audience at the end.

This was one of the rare moments I have seen on CCTV where a foreigner has commanded centre of attention and been the driving force of such a significant construction of national emotion. It is likely that he has been able to achieve this through luck, finding the right connections, talent, and the prospect of a commercial market. Hao Ge does not simply imitate Chinese artists, but brings to the songs his powerful voice and unique R&B renditions of Chinese classics. While he shows a respect for Chinese culture,

language, and politics through his choice of repertoire, his differences bring a fresh visual- and sound-scape for Chinese audiences. Hao Ge's well packaged blend of 'Red and Black' (the name of his album), playing on his unique style that blends 'R&B' with Chinese classics, integrates mainstream philosophies that merge party-state ideology and market forces. He incorporates difference and similarity in ways similar to minority-inspired pop, which producers no doubt believe can be accepted by and sold to Chinese television audiences.

Success on *Star Avenue*, given his popularity with audiences and positive adjudication from authorities, opened the doors for Hao Ge to appear on multiple programs including the *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*. In the 2007 Gala he appeared with Beijing-based Tibetan pop star Han Hong, singing 'The Place Far Away' (*Zai nar yaoyuande difang*). His co-starring with a successful minority nationality pop star helped to further promote a cosmopolitan image of China where both internal and external 'otherness', exoticism, and colour is celebrated. Such acts serve to both attract Chinese audiences and highlight mainstream Han as the Chinese core. The greater Western province Xizang (Tibet), like Xinjiang in the earlier performance, may in some audiences' minds be conflated with his embodiment of a far away 'foreign' place. This arguable served to establish Beijing as the central meeting place for all the world's people, from minority nationalities to foreigners.

My impression is that Hao Ge is not used by CCTV to help promote relations between China and Liberia, or Africa in general. His performance is more about what he as an individual star can offer in terms of revitalizing China's image as a cosmopolitan place for both domestic and global audiences. It is about highlighting how attractive China is to foreigners from all over the world, and its 'new' image following thirty years of opening up and reform. China is now presented as place for people to pursue their dreams, a place where opportunities for self-development are abundant. In a CCTV documentary on Hao Ge, it was revealed that Hao Ge, like Maliya,

came to China to pursue his dreams. He had long wanted to be a professional singer and had travelled the world looking for an opening without luck until he came to China. Hao Ge's discovery of China alongside CCTV's discovery of Hao Ge has allowed him to find success in the market through adopting Chinese as the medium of expression, and classic Chinese songs as the basis for his CCTV performances.

Interestingly, according to the documentary, Hao Ge received mentoring from Liu Huan, a well-loved Beijing based pop star who sang the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games theme song. He sang a song originally made famous by Liu, who also wrote the lyrics, called 'A Question Asked Ten Million Times' (*Qianwan ci de wen*), the theme song from the television drama series *A Beijing Native in New York* (*Beijing ren zai Niuyue*), popular in the 1990s (see Barme, 1996; Sun, 2002:68-85,101; Yang, 2002:201-202).¹⁵³ The song conjures up images of the protagonist Wang Qiming struggling to survive in his new life in New York, eventually emerging stronger and transformed (Sun, 2002:81). Only now, this is the story of a foreigner who has struggled to survive around the world, including in New York and in Beijing, and finally gains success through transformation in Beijing. Times have changed!

While the documentary does not link Hao Ge's story to a broader context, it is significant that he is performing at a time when there has been a rapid increase of African economic migration to China, particularly since the 1990s (Li Z., 2008). A large number of Africans have studied at universities in Beijing since the 1960s when Chairman Mao welcomed students in the name of Third World solidarity and helped train African studies in development oriented subjects like engineering, medicine, and science. However, but the trend of Africans migrating to China to live and work is a relatively new phenomenon, and the government is still working out how to respond to this situation in which there is a degree of discrimination (e.g.

¹⁵³ http://www.cctv.com/video/xingguangdadao/2006/11/xingguangdadao_300_20061122_5.shtml (<http://6.cn/watch/319485.html>) on the *Star Avenue* stage, huge outdoor concert. He also sang this song during the 'My Chinese Life' Awards Gala in 2009.

Lin, 2011). While I would speculate that this background is probably not a motive for including Hao Ge on the programs, his performances may help to address sensitivities through the promotion of a positive image of inclusion.

Hao Ge's performances appear to be a win-win situation for both him and CCTV. He at last has a major platform for which to perform and exposure to a massive audience, and he is able to attract audiences to party-state messages of a revitalized and open Chinese state through his unique voice, singing style, and image mixed in with revolutionary classics of the CCP and nostalgic Chinese popular songs. Hao Ge may have even have started a trend of African signers singing Red Classics, some of them apparent spoofs. For instance, a blogger calling himself Red Song Prince, Hao Di (lit: Good Little Brother – a play on the name 'Hao Ge', which sounds like 'Good Older Brother'), marches, dances, and sings red classics like 'If there was no CCP, they'd be no New China' and 'Chairman's Words Remembered by Heart'. He stands in what looks like a dorm room, in front of a poster of Chairman Mao and a Chinese flag, dressed up in an army green t-shirt and cap with a red star, and red book in hand. In one scene in typical official discourse, on the occasion of the CCP's 90th birthday, he expresses his wish that Chinese and Africans be good brothers forever before 'passionately' picking up a gun and casually brandishing it around while singing (or lip-synching) the original lyrics of the red classics: 'No matter how fierce and aggressive the enemy, put down the dragnet (traps), take those bandit jackals and wolves, and bury them all', a message embedded in the lyrics and visuals that does not correspond to a contemporary CCTV focus on a stable and harmonious society.¹⁵⁴ CCTV thus provides fodder for, and has to compete against, the increasing popularity of the Internet, while at the same time using the Internet as a tool to try and engage the Internet savvy middle-class, urban youth.

¹⁵⁴ Young African Man Hao Di Sings Red Song (2) 'If there was no CCP, they'd be no New China' (*Mei you Gongchangdang jiu mei you xin Zhongguo*) http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjY5MjQwNzY0.html; African Red Song Prince Passionately Sings China Red Song 'Chairman's Words Remembered by Heart' (*Zhuxi de huo ji xin shang*). Available at: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjY4MTA1Njg4.html (22 May 2011)

Internationalizing China – Russian Superstar, Vitas

White Russian male performer Vitas (born Vitaliy Vladasovich Grachyov, *Weitasi* in Chinese) has more recently made inroads in the Chinese market, and this has included a number of high profile performances broadcast by CCTV. Like Hao Ge, I argue that his presence mainly serves to promote the open and cosmopolitan image of contemporary China. His style is individually unique, and makes use of an incredibly high-pitched voice and energetic use of falsetto, and performs in spectacular, self-designed costumes. Coupled with his handsome looks, an energetic push into Asian markets since around 2005 (he has signed with Universal who distributes his music in Taiwan and has toured extensively in China), and a willingness to learn and speak in Chinese, he has become somewhat of a hit in China as well. He has appeared not only on CCTV, but other television stations (e.g. the *Beijing Television Spring Festival Gala* in 2010) and in Chinese films.¹⁵⁵

Vitas has strategically marketed himself in China by connecting with key national events and folklore. His own website proudly highlights his achievements in relation to performances associated with the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. This included an invitation to perform at the *Centenary Dream – Welcome to Olympics – 2008* show held in Beijing on July 29, which was ‘organized by China’s Ministry of Propaganda, the national Gym chief Bureau, Beijing Olympic Committee, the Government of Beijing and CCTV.’¹⁵⁶ A note appeared on his website thanking ‘Mr Vitas’ for his

¹⁵⁵ BTV featured Vitas in 2010 and Lara Fabian in 2011 in the *BTV Spring Festival Gala*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QULd3mDAXkc> Vitas was one of the stars in the Chinese film *Mulan* about the life of legendary patriotic heroine Hua Mulan, which premiered in Beijing on November 16, 2009 (Mulan Official Website, 2010 *Mulan* (2009 film) Official Website: <http://mulan.ent.sina.com.cn/>, and also recorded music for the film's soundtrack (Vitas Official Website, 2010). In online discussions, Vitas was applauded for persevering to perform his dialogues in Chinese, rather than relying on voice-overs as per the norm - <http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2009-04-20/00102481390.shtml>.

¹⁵⁶ Vitas Official Website: http://www.vitas.com.ru/pressa_eng.php

participation in the event designed to ‘declare [the] ‘countdown’ to the Opening Olympic Games’ and to be watched by ‘millions of people all over the world’ (Vitas Official Website, 2010). Vitas was also declared part of the ‘gold team of superstars of world culture’ who cooperated in presenting a magnificent Olympics in Beijing and was invited by the Organizing Committee of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games to take part in the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Sailing Games event in the seaside city of Qingdao on August 9, 2008 (Vitas Official Website, 2010). He also tapped into the earthquake commemoration discourse, by performing ‘Star’ in a benefit concert in Sichuan in memory of the victims of the earthquake on 12 May 2009, one year after the disaster. He also released a song ‘Mommy and Son’ in late October 2009 in remembrance of earthquake victims.¹⁵⁷

Vitas was invited by CCTV to take part in ‘The Year of Russia in China’ in Beijing in June 2006, performing ‘Star’ and ‘Opera No. 2’. He also appeared on *The Same Song* for the first time in 2009, a fact proudly announced by one of the hosts.¹⁵⁸ As noted earlier, it is rare for foreigners (especially white foreigners) apart from overseas Chinese to perform on CCTV music-entertainment programs other than *Sinophiliac*. Furthermore, while other foreign and non-PRC Chinese stars (e.g. Hao Ge, Fei Xiang etc.) have made their mark singing in Chinese, even more unusually Vitas has been able to command the stage with a performance not only foregrounding his unique vocal style, clothing designs, and on-stage movements, but also his own ‘foreign’ language: Russian. Although he spoke a few words in Chinese – ‘I love you’, ‘Thank you’, ‘dear friends’ – his performance was dominated not by Chinese classics, but by two Russian pop songs, with Russian accordion accompaniment in the backing track. Even more unusually, he also spoke to the hosts and the audience in Russian, through a

¹⁵⁷ Interestingly, other foreign singers also aimed to connect with the Chinese people through this tragedy. American singer, Michael Maley, and his group SIRUS, also released a new tribute song on May 12, 2009. It was called ‘God Bless Sichuan’ (*Shangtian zhufu Sichuan*) and according to one blogger, ‘has become very popular in Mainland China and has been covered by all the media, including the Chinese government.’ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lh_54vt7iOs&feature=related the first group to ever release an original Chinese language album in 1997.

¹⁵⁸ ‘The Same Song - enters Ningxia’: http://www.56.com/u17/v_NDY1MzAxODI.html.

translator – a rare privilege for a foreigner on CCTV music-entertainment programs, further highlighting his star status. Most foreigners on CCTV are expected to speak Chinese.

This appearance was clearly a commercial performance designed to bring kudos to both the 'Vitas' and *The Same Song* brands through the trope of 'internationalisation'. The hosts gave the superstar a huge plug as they introduced his 'spectacular' style, and noted the amazing feeling they felt having attended his concert previously. They also made a big point of revving up fans between the two songs. Following a mediocre off-key performance by Chinese-Malaysian singer Liang Jingru, his was 'truly an international' performance. Vitas sang his classic Opera No.2 (*Geju2*)¹⁵⁹ with highly choreographed movements that were a constant advertisement to his brand. The 'V' stitched onto his sleeve was the focus of the camera as he turned to the side, leant back, and slowly lifted his outstretched hand up, as he began his famous falsetto crescendo.

Similar to Hao Ge and Greater China pop stars Xie Tingfeng and Wang Lihong, Vitas' performance on the CCTV stage linked him with China's minorities, emphasizing China's 'colour' and vitality both domestically and internationally in the current era. Vitas appeared on the 'enters Ningxia' program (the same program as Wang Lihong), which featured the culture of the Hui minority nationality. Commanding the huge outdoor stage with a Hui/Muslim building design, outlined by flashing neon lights, this foreigner seemed to bring the world to the minority nationality area. This magnificent international performance transformed the stage and Ningxia into a transnational space, and the residue of the high feeling associated with Vitas' performance no doubt intermeshed with subsequent acts that emphasized an internationalized, modern multi-ethnic Chinese culture. After Vitas' performance, the hosts re-entered the stage in colourful Hui minority

¹⁵⁹ Vitas Opera No.2 on *The Same Song*: <http://video.sina.com.cn/v/b/24608399-1286625320.html>

costumes and through their spoken discourse linked the local, the national and the world in one breath.

While China has strong historical and political links with Russia/the Soviet Union, Vitas' appearances seem more geared towards generating interest in CCTV's programming among youth rather opening a space for reminiscing about bonds or overcoming difficult moments in the past. Nostalgia for a Soviet past is, however, reinforced through popular renditions of classic Russian songs like 'Red Plum Flowers are Blooming' (*Hong mei huaer kai*). The choice of a Russian as the only white foreign super star I had seen on CCTV's regular music-entertainment programs up until 2010 may reflect political sensitivities on the part of some officials in a context where appearances of stars from America and the West are even more highly restricted. For instance, while the Chinese authorities finally allowed The Rolling Stones to perform in China in 2006, they were asked to cut five songs due to their suggestive lyrics (BBC News, 2006). Another CCTV channel, CCTV Guide, however, does air ad-hoc pre-recorded concerts of foreign stars with footage likely coming from transnational music or television companies. In 2008, I saw old concerts of Kylie Minogue, Celine Dion, and various Japanese and British stars screened, which suggests that different channels are taking different approaches to the kinds of foreignness that can be shown to mainland audiences.

Dynamic Cultural Exchange with Korea – the Korean Wave

I outlined earlier that most Chinese-foreign exchanges on CCTV music-entertainment television take place on Chinese soil and overwhelmingly emphasize foreigners' attraction to China rather than a sense of mutual exchange. Performances of pop singers like Vitas and Hao Ge also appear to reflect more a sense of China's cosmopolitanism over an attempt to promote cross-cultural relations between two countries. A possible exception to this finding is the CCTV performances of South Korean (*Hanguo*) artists where

popular culture and music is used to draw the two sides together. Mutual exchange has been promoted in *dynamic* pop concerts with not just individual Korean artists but a number of Korean and Chinese stars on Korean soil. Similar to the Greater China frame in which transborder popular culture works to create a sense of solidarity (Chua, 2001; 2006), a feeling of familiarity is established with Koreans based on a shared 'East Asian pop culture' (Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008:2).

As noted earlier, China's Korean nationality performers like Jin Mei-er, have been building on the popularity of what PRC audiences have called the Korean Wave (*Hanliu*) since the late-1990s (Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008:2). However, in this East Asian popular culture, the flow of Korean and Japanese pop culture, including television dramas and popular music (Shin, 2009:106-8), is overwhelmingly *into* the huge ethnic Chinese markets, and there is little reverse flow of Chinese culture into Korea and Japan (Chua, 2008:89). The flow of Korean popular culture into the PRC has become quite significant following the greater push for pop cultural exports by the South Korean government after the 1997 East Asian financial crisis, and following an increased liberalization of the PRC's film and television industries (Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008:3-4; Chua, 2008:73). The direction of flow is from the more developed capitalist consumer cultures of Korea and Japan into the least economically developed area of the region, mainland China (Chua, 2008:89).

While local and provincial stations such as Hunan Satellite Television have been particularly successful in using dubbed or translated Korean language dramas to compete with CCTV (Leung, 2008:54), CCTV itself has not been immune to this trend. CCTV was the first Chinese broadcaster to air a Korean drama in 1993 (*Jealousy, Jidu*) (Leung, 2008:59). However, CCTV also shows Korean popular singers striving for a strong presence on China's national broadcaster in more regular ways through strategic placement and adoption of Chinese language. South Korean artists who perform on CCTV blur national boundaries in the pursuit of artistic and commercial success,

and work particularly hard to fit into the ‘Chinese’ environment. One such notable group of South Korean artists performing on CCTV in the years surrounding 2008 was Super Junior-M. The group, based on the group ‘Super Junior’, was established by a South Korean management group (SM Entertainment) specifically for the greater Chinese market. The ‘M’ stands for ‘Mandarin’ as this male group comprises South Korean singers who have been specifically taught to sing in Mandarin. Also, Korean dance music star Rain (Jung Ji-hoon),¹⁶⁰ was plugged on CCTV promoting the ‘Longliqi’ brand shampoo, the official sponsor of the 2008 *CCTV Youth Singing Competition*, during every ad break.

While the overall flow is extremely unbalanced in the direction of South Korea into China (Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008:3), CCTV seems to be attempting to balance the flow of Korean popular culture into China by at least giving an *impression* of an equal and opposite flow of PRC Chinese culture into Korea. At least two major CCTV music-entertainment programs have been produced on South Korean soil in recent years. One was *The Same Song – China-ROK Friendship Concert / The Same Song in Korea* (*Zhong-Han youhao daxing gehui*), sponsored by the South Korean-Japanese food and shopping enterprise, Lotte ‘*Le Tian*’ on 16 January 2009 – highlighting the commercial importance of the event.¹⁶¹ Another was *The Same Song – enters the ROK/Hanguo* broadcast in December 2007.¹⁶² This program was entitled the ‘4th China-ROK Pop Fest’ (*Zhong-Han Gehui*). It was a joint production by the Korean Broadcasting Station (KBS) and CCTV and was hosted by four hosts, two from each station. This program consistently stressed the close relations between the two countries and a level of familiarity with each other’s cultures. Given the joint nature of the

¹⁶⁰ Rain videos: Rainism (English version – a video that did not appear on CCTV)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6kevrqwTLU>

¹⁶¹ *The Same Song – China-ROK Friendship Concert* available at:
http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTUzMDY0NzY=.html;
<http://6.cn/watch/6926183.html>

¹⁶² *The Same Song – enters the ROK/Hanguo* available at
http://v.ku6.com/show/hh3yadyaD_p62qDM.html (Part 1);
http://v.ku6.com/show/KPMiJLR1_-1gQX67.html (Part 2)

production, it had a good basis for constructing a relationship based on a feeling of equality in cultural exchange. The program stressed the dynamic relations in a contemporary context through a significant proportion of the program being dedicated to uplifting ‘youth’ music and contemporary pop idols from both sides.

The close relationship born out of a dynamic period of cultural exchange was directly stressed in the hosts’ explanations. In the opening remarks each of the four hosts emphasized the large number of people from Korea who travel to China for leisure and business and vice versa, as well as the close political and economic ties. Chinese host Liang Yongbin emphasized the important role of music-entertainment in bringing the two sides together, again drawing on the program name *The Same Song* to stress its function as a unifying force:

We use songs to enhance cross-cultural exchange, as singing *the same song/s* and dancing the same dance/s strengthens understanding on both sides and gives people on both sides a good impression.

Like the Greater China frame, contemporary popular East Asian cultural products – songs, films and television programs – were the links through which mutual familiarity was based (Chua, 2001; 2006; Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008:2). Hosts stressed that many famous Korean artists were known to Chinese people, while a few Chinese artists were known to Koreans. There also mention of the popularity of South Korean TV dramas and actors in China. When asked by a South Korean host whether he could sing any Korean songs, male CCTV host Liang Yongbin expressed his familiarity with Korean songs, saying he had known the pan-Korean classic Arirang (*Alilang*) since he was young. Arirang is a popular representative Korean song both in South Korea and among the *Chaoxian*-Korean nationality in the PRC, and thus creates a smooth link between the ‘two’ peoples. Liang also said he knew the Cantonese (*Guangdonghua*) language adaptation of

‘Love in Deep Autumn’ (*Ai zai shen qiu*), and the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games theme song ‘Hand in Hand’ (*Shou la shou*), providing a bond between the two nations who had entered the elite club of countries who had hosted this prestigious international event. In return, Korean female host Huang Xiudong also showed familiarity with the Chinese classic pop song ‘Sweetness’ (*Tianmimi*), at least with the tune if not the lyrics. Overall, more seemed to be known about Korean culture by Chinese than vice versa, but the attempt to present the cross-cultural exchange as even through alternating praise for each other’s cultures by hosts, and through alternating Korean and Chinese on-stage singing performances is important to recognize. It is also significant to note that the sense of bonding between the Chinese and Koreans did not appear to go any deeper than these pop culture connections. Even a quick quiz between hosts on traditional foods from the respective cultures revealed a lack of knowledge beyond these most well-known cultural texts.

While Korean dramas are dubbed or subtitled on other provincial Chinese television stations, CCTV marked the dynamics between the two nations in completely different ways, presumably to give an impression of an equal and opposite and natural flow of communications between the two sides. Mutual exchange was highlighted through mixed-language conversations among the hosts. They conversed as if they had understood what the other had been saying each in turn responding in their respective languages without the use of interpreters. It was made to seem entirely natural even though it is unlikely that the hosts understood each other’s languages. They still gave the impression of fully understanding as they nodded at each other’s comments, saying ‘yes, that’s right’ etc. at the appropriate moments. CCTV audiences could see what was being said through Chinese subtitles, which translated the Korean parts. Singers too sang in each other’s languages, using prepared notes – showing familiarity with musical tunes rather than each other’s languages. This cross-linguistic fluidity served to promote China’s openness and cosmopolitanism.

The closest and most touching moment of the program came at the end when Chinese-Korean brotherly love made possible as a result of popular cultural exchange was performed. Two stars, China's Sun Nan and South Korea's Shen Chenxun (Shin Seung-hun) sang the song 'I believe'. This song, which was originally sung by Shen as the theme song for a Korean movie 'My Sassy Girl', became popular across Asia when the movie was released in 2001. The song was translated into other languages and Sun Nan is well-known in China for his Chinese rendition. However, in this CCTV-KBS program Sun did his best to sing in Korean with Shen, reading the lyrics using prepared notes. The two 'trendy' men, both famous for the same song, clearly had fun singing together. For a brief moment, Sun Nan switched to Chinese and Shen quickly pulled out his piece of paper pretending to follow in Chinese for a moment before reverting back to the 'original' Korean. This act was clearly designed to be a crowd-pleasing grand finale. As the song drew to a close the two men sang with their arms around each other, wearing playful smiles on their faces. The performance drew many cheers from the crowd. As the hosts wrapped up the program, they re-emphasized how touching it was to see these two singers 'like brothers'. This moment was the closest the program got to including Chinese and South Koreans together in a family metaphor. Despite the somewhat forced construction of mutual exchange, there are moments that seem to work, and pop stars through their musical, lyrical, and visual links, can play a vital role in making the politics of exchange, compassion, and unity seem 'real'.

The fact that South Korean cultural exchange is celebrated is significant. I do not believe that the construction of cultural affinity or expression of brotherly love has much to do with Korea being a Confucian-based East Asian culture for the same reasons as Chua (2001; 2006) noted. There is also a potential for a sense of shared history with Korea, having both borne the brunt of Japanese colonization. Yet, there was a great gulf between the nations from the end of the Second World War until 1992 when South Korea became the last Asian country to switch allegiances and recognise the

PRC rather than Taiwan. Only since then have the two sides been able to rebuild cultural ties. This puts the PRC in a strange position with North Korea with whom China has shared strong cultural ties as socialist brothers. In the 1950s, 2.97 million Chinese soldiers fought in ‘the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid (Socialist) Korea’, and over 100,000 volunteer soldiers lost their lives as a result of the conflict (China Daily, 2010). The boundaries between South Korea and the PRC have softened greatly since diplomatic relations were restored, and contemporary popular culture in a transnational commercial environment is playing a significant role in bonding between the two sides.

Pop Culture, Nostalgia, and Japan – Qiao Shanzhong (Joe Yamanaka)

Unlike South Korea whose cultural relations with China appear to be thriving, Japan’s image suffers from ‘a troubled history’ and ‘unresolved legacy’ of colonization in China and across the Asian region. It is an image that is difficult to forget ‘even when focusing on contemporary cultural processes’ (Shin, 2009:103). Even Japanese popular culture (which includes J-pop, or new forms of music in Japan inspired by Western pop), which was popular across the East Asian region including in China in the 1990s and has been a model for Korean, Cantonese, and Mandarin popular cultural activities, has not been able to totally erase the taste of Japan’s colonial past (Monty, 2010:127). In addition, since the 2000s, J-pop has re-focused back on the Japanese market¹⁶³ and does not have as significant a presence on Chinese television as Korean popular culture in the 2000s. Yet, CCTV’s music-entertainment programs still engage with Japan and Japanese artists in a friendly, neighbourly spirit.

¹⁶³ Unlike Korean popular culture, which is supported by the Korean government, J-pop was largely promoted through its cultural hardware industry through brands such as Sony and Panasonic (Monty, 2010:123).

Some Japanese stars, like singer Qiao Shanzhong (Joe Yamanaka), play important roles in making CCTV appear trendy and cosmopolitan in similar ways as described for Korean pop stars, Vitas, and Hao Ge. Qiao has appeared on at least two occasions on CCTV's *The Same Song* in the years around 2007/2008 in both Japan and China. He was introduced as a famous Japanese singer on *The Same Song – Enters Japan* (*Tongyi shouge zoujin Riben*) held on 14 December, 2007,¹⁶⁴ and was given the prestige of being the first performer after the obligatory theme song. Born to a Japanese mother and black American father, he is multimodally striking for his 'black mixed blood' (*heiren de hunxue*)¹⁶⁵ looks, his dreadlocked hair, hoarse and versatile voice, and reggae inspired singing style. His visual and aural points of difference are likely to attract audiences and highlight CCTV's cosmopolitan openness.

Like in the 'enters Korea' program and with the 'Greater China' frame, nostalgic use of popular culture is taken as the point for drawing the two sides closer together. Each time Qiao appeared on CCTV he sang the same song – 'Straw Hat Song' (*Cao mao ge*), which was the theme song of the Japanese movie 'Witness' (*Renzheng*). Although there have been various Chinese renditions of the classic song, Qiao's original version is in English, a language not commonly used on CCTV's music-entertainment programs, but that is well-known as a regional and international language. The movie, which was popular regionally in the 1980s, also has a transnational theme and a life that spans the boundaries of the East and West. It is about a boy, played by Qiao, born to a Japanese mother and black American father. After separating, his father sends him from overseas to Japan to find his mother. The lyrics of the theme song are about a straw hat his mother gave him. It was the 'only one [he] really loved', but the hat was blown away by the wind. This hat is compared to the life his mother gave him. The strains in his voice and the deceptively simple tune are emphatic and touching. His

¹⁶⁴ [Tongyi shouge 2008-5-3]

¹⁶⁵ As described on a the CCTV 'Film Legends' (*Dianying Chuanqi*) program on the background to the film 'Witness' (*'Renzheng' zhi mama*, 'The Mother in 'Proof') on 19 Nov 2007.

attraction seems to come from his unique talent, individual style, and a common cultural point of transnational interest in negotiating a modern life between Asia and the West.

Apart from focusing on limited elements of a shared popular culture, CCTV's music-entertainment programs in relation to Japan appear to attempt to soften tensions between the two nations through spoken language. The Chinese party-state is in a difficult position as it must show tacit support for hostile anti-Japanese sentiment popular opinion in China. On the one hand, the party-state basis its ongoing legitimacy on a 'victim narrative' focused on Chinese suffering during a 'century of humiliation' (*bainian guochi*) (Gries, 2005:847). At the same time, it must attempt to change public opinion on Japan in order to meet its economic aims, which affects its legitimacy. China benefits immensely from investment and technology as a result of strong economic ties with Japan (Sun, 1995:203; Gries, 2005:848). Given that the CCTV music-entertainment genre is a non-confrontational genre that aims at providing happy entertainment, I have never seen the victim narrative brought up in any of these programs. However, the CCTV stage is occasionally used to present messages that stress the need to overcome tensions in China-Japan relations with messages of hope for the future. While the exact nature of the tensions is never mentioned, they may be hinted at. For instance, on CCTV, at the end of *The Same Song – enters Japan* concert, a recorded interview with noted Japanese male singer Gucunxinsi (who performed at Opening Ceremony of the Shanghai Expo in 2010) was shown. Speaking in Japanese with Chinese subtitling, he spoke directly of the important role music can play in overcoming political difficulties, as well as his particular interest in using music to set up a bridge between China and Japan. Gucunxinsi's comment thus hinted at the soured relations between the two countries without threatening the spirit of friendship that is the purpose for all CCTV's music-entertainment programs.

Multimodally, on-screen text and voiceover promos for this program worked together in a more stilted way than the upbeat joint production with Korean television, and stressed Japanese and Chinese singers coming together politely in friendship in the spirit of honest communications. Many of the same techniques as the ‘enters Korea’ program focusing on popular culture were used to highlight mutual exchange: Japanese singers greeted the audience in Chinese; Chinese singers greeted in Japanese. Male singer, Cai Guoqing, well-known for singing *The Same Song* theme song, dressed in Japanese clothes, and sang the classic Chinese romantic song ‘The Moon Represents My Heart’ (*Yueliang daibiao wode xin*) with a Japanese female singer dressed in a Chinese *qipao*. The camera made a point of ensuring a close up of their interlocking hands. However, although pop stars from both sides performed, the spirit of the program seemed more constrained than the dynamic contemporary popular culture programming in South Korea. Most significantly, unlike the production in South Korea, the focus of the ‘enters Japan’ program was on Chinese living in Japan (described in the previous chapter) and not a celebration of a flurry of transnational cultural exchange. Like most other programs, more orthodox messages of equal and friendly bilateral relations are mixed in with displays of cosmopolitan performances in which expressions of difference are highlighted through visual and musical expressions; and messages about transnational friendship are mixed in with those about Greater Chinese solidarity.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the construction of Chineseness in terms of foreigners’ attraction to and assimilation into Chinese culture and civilization. I focused on the one program that specializes in showcasing foreigners ‘entering into’ China, *Sinophiliac*, as well as star performers on other programs. Foreigners are labelled as outsiders e.g. as Australian, Japanese etc., and remain exotic outsiders by virtue their appearance, a feature that is likely to assist with audience interest and ratings. But at the

same time, foreigners are shown to 'become' Chinese through their performances.

At the hardened, orthodox extreme the various modes work together to provide strong messages of foreigners' attraction to China and Chinese culture: they speak Chinese, sing in Chinese, wear Chinese clothes, learn traditional Chinese arts, and adopt Chinese names. Foreigners' attraction to Chinese culture links to Chinese nationalism and efforts to revive ideas of the Middle Kingdom where China is imagined as being the centre of the civilized world. At the cosmopolitan extreme, however, there are more points of difference. Artists bring their own individually unique singing, dress, and dance styles. They are sometimes able to showcase their own languages, and they often create new hybrid spectacles for CCTV audiences. The more cosmopolitan moments appear to offer a freer celebration of China's openness and modernity, often making strong use of popular music. I therefore argue that spaces exist in the programs for a range of reading positions in relation to the boundaries of foreign and Chinese identities. While *Sinophiliac* may have a greater concentration of the more orthodox moments than the other programs described, in reality hard and soft moments are constantly oscillating and revealing of internal tensions within all programming where foreigners perform. The question of where to place foreigners in relation to the Chinese nation is constantly being negotiated.

This 'double exoticism' of internal and external 'otherness' in the simultaneous performances of minority nationalities and foreigners is another feature of CCTV music-entertainment programming. This approach perhaps offers audiences an attractive way to draw attention to the 'fact' of Chinese harmonious multi-ethnic society, and learn about the multi-ethnic 'us' vis-à-vis the foreign 'other'. At the same time, whether deliberate or not, audiences are educated on a degree of Han ethnocentrism, given that Hans remain the only unmarked group in interactions. In exploring minority nationality areas, foreigners are often guided by the unmarked (and presumably Han) Chinese who stands between the 'internal' and 'external

others'. As foreigners show how captivated they are by the exotic minority nationality cultures when the program travels to border regions, an opportunity is provided to educate audiences on China's diverse multi-ethnic culture, as well as how the diverse groups are unified within China's geographic boundaries. Apparent foreign interest in minorities is used as a tactic for drawing attention to the party-state's 'multi-ethnic' definition of Chineseness. Han ethnocentrism is also suggested through foreigners' use of spoken Chinese, which, just like most Chinese and minority nationalities on the network, is almost always *Putonghua*. Very rarely do foreigners speak minority languages on CCTV or even their native languages, although they may occasionally dabble in local Han-Chinese languages or dialects as appropriate to local performing art forms.

Foreigners on CCTV are overwhelmingly shown to perform on the PRC mainland and not in their 'own' or 'other' countries. This is significant in light of the fact that CCTV programs that travel abroad, as discussed in Chapter 5, tend to focus on overseas Chinese rather than non-ethnic Chinese 'locals' from those countries. One advantage of having foreigners perform in China is that it is much easier to construct them as trying to adjust to Chinese culture, in a way that cannot be done when the television organization itself is a guest outside its own home. It may also be much more practical for the television producers to use foreign talents in China. But more than anything, depicting foreigners in China, allows both the state and cultural nationalists to highlight the significance and attractiveness of the 'Chinese civilization' to the world and its rightful place amongst the world's top nations. By blurring the boundaries between Chinese national culture and the Chinese party-state, the PRC state itself is highlighted as legitimate and worthy amongst the world's leading political entities.

Foreigners expressing their desire to act and even 'become Chinese' may also offer a dramatized depiction of a reversed image of a much bigger trend of emigration from China where Western developed countries in particular have been seen as more attractive than China. Since China has opened up,

large numbers of Chinese have migrated overseas or maintained transnational lives (e.g. Sun, 2002; Lull, 1991; Nyíri, 2003). In this context, CCTV may be attempting to offer the perception of an equal and opposite flow in a way that highlights the attractiveness of a contemporary China to foreigners as well.

Foreigners also work within the context of CCTV for their own purposes, and position themselves in various ways in relation to Chinese people. For some professional performers like Hao Ge, Vitas, and hosts like Da Niu, there may be commercial rewards and incentives. As a prize-winner, I was awarded with an air-ticket to Beijing and a small amount of cash, but, unlike this one-off prize, professionals may treat CCTV performances as their regular job. Like the 'Greater China' stars, foreigners may strategically adjust their acts to meet the requirements of state and cultural politics as well as the market, thereby increasing their potential for further exposure and contracts with CCTV and in other performance contexts.

Conclusion

It has been the aim of this study to try to make sense of the politics of national and ethnic identity being negotiated across a range of music-entertainment programs on China's national broadcaster, CCTV. It has focused on understanding the kinds of constructions of Chineseness that are sanctioned by the nation-state within the context of this single, powerful media institution, and how such performances contribute to both hegemonic and orthodox, as well as more fluid or cosmopolitan, constructions of Chinese national identity. As a party-state broadcaster, all performances on CCTV are assumed to adhere to acceptable state-sanctioned constructions of Chinese identity. However, given my interest in uncovering various constructions of Chineseness, my purpose was not to pit hegemonic state representations against outside, oppositional forces, but rather to examine tensions within state-sanctioned, mainstream televised performances of nationalism. In the introduction, I posed three main questions on the framing of Chineseness in CCTV music-entertainment programs that I set to answer throughout the thesis. I now sum up the outcomes of this research by returning to these questions.

The Framing of Chineseness

Based on my intense viewing of CCTV's music-entertainment programs covering a period of more than a year (focusing on the Olympic year, 2008), I proposed early on that the programs built a sense of Chineseness around three major frames. In Chapter 1, I provided substantial contextual background on the cultural construction of a multi-ethnic Chinese identity, a Greater China identity, and a sense of Chineseness established around foreigners' assimilation into Chinese culture. In Chapters 4-6, I set about investigating through detailed program analysis multiple ways in which

these frames of identity have been actualized through linguistic, visual, and musical performance.

I argue that these frames are the result of artistic experimentation and taste based on what is technically possible through television, and its multimedia extensions such as online TV, as well as political and economic concerns of the party-state. The dominant message in each of these frames relates to a sense of unity, stability, harmony, and happiness, but are executed in different ways through different musical performance styles that offer a spectrum of ‘open’ and ‘closed’ reading positions. The spectrum of performance styles reveals tensions within CCTV about what the party-state and CCTV directors would like to project about China and the Chinese national identity.

It should be emphasized that while these frames were salient at the time of the study, they are not set in stone. Rather, they are constantly being re-made to reflect changing and multiple notions of who the Chinese are. There are also overlaps between these frames, with new ways of projecting the self through new juxtapositions of the modern and the traditional, and between ‘our’ forms and ‘foreign’ forms of culture. For instance, while the Greater China frame assumes a singular ethnic identity, I examined how China’s minority nationalities are also caught up in moments where the multi-ethnic and greater China frames clash or dissolve into one another into a kind of pan-Chinese frame. Also, foreigners are not just positioned as ‘others’, but can play important roles ‘as’ Chinese, in both ways confirming a great and unified Chinese identity.

It is worth reflecting on *why* these frames and their associated messages have been emphasized at this time, and why the music-entertainment format has been chosen as a dominant mode for expressing them. Drawing on Sun’s (2009:64) idea of ‘indoctrainment’ introduced earlier, the party-state may believe that relaxing forms of popular entertainment makes it easier to subtly infuse audiences with particular ideologies, particularly messages

about happiness, unity, stability, and harmony. Fostering a general belief that China is a stable and harmonious place is vital to the CCP's overall objective of maintaining political legitimacy and music-entertainment programs are one significant way in which this message can be spread. Harmony is a feature of music, as is the idea that sound unifies through tapping into emotions (van Leeuwen, 1999:196-7). Furthermore, the sounds, images, and linguistic rhetoric of people happily singing together in unison across space and time can be symbolically powerful. The trope of 'The Same Song' has extended beyond the title of a program and the name of a song, to a metaphor of unity that covers the 56 ethnic groups and Chinese people around the world. *Happy in China* frames the entire nation, inclusive of citizens in every city to which the program roams, as being blessed by a single feeling of joy. In the current era under the Hu-Wen leadership, the discourse of a harmonious society has been advocated, and happiness through song and dance has been put to the task of effectively spreading these messages. The sheer number of 'fun' programs helps the party-state to appear stable and unified, while at the same time showing its openness to 'colourful' differences. This is of paramount importance to the CCP and the party-state for securing and maintaining its political legitimacy (Sun, 2010a:66).

Different frames are required as CCTV is attempting to reach out to multiple audiences simultaneously, including the entire PRC state of 1.3 billion people, as well as Chinese in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, overseas Chinese, and increasingly, the entire world through satellite transmissions in multiple languages and through the Internet. While there is little in the way of empirical evidence of CCTV's effectiveness in actually influencing any of these audiences to believe in China's stability, multi-ethnic unity, greater Chinese solidarity, or the importance of China on a global scale (e.g. see Zhong, 2003; Zhang X., 2011a), CCTV's *attempt* to influence different audiences is significant. This is because, in its continuing role as the mouthpiece of the party-state, CCTV offers a window into the complex

ruling powerhouse that has so much influence on the way things are done both in China and increasingly around the world.

Brady (2006:60) and others have noted differences between propaganda for the domestic population and propaganda for foreigners/outside. However, with new technology it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between 'domestic propaganda' and 'international communication' (Zhang X., 2009:115), especially when it comes to Chinese language content. Therefore producers have to keep both domestic and overseas audiences in mind when producing the programs. This is likely to be the reason why, even though control of content is said to be more relaxed for outsiders and stricter for insiders, there is still a 'paternalistic tone' carried through in both domestic and internationally-oriented programs (Zhang X., 2009:115).

An image of unity and happiness makes it easier for the state to control and gain the support of different groups. The inclusion of different constellations of performers – local, global Chinese, and non-Chinese around the world – is potentially able to make content meaningful to a broad spectrum of audiences. On the one hand, CCTV may believe that viewers will be interested in watching images of people like themselves on television, so Taiwanese Chinese may be interested in watching a program that includes other Taiwanese, and Chinese-speaking foreigners may be interested in programs with other Chinese-speaking foreigners. On the other hand, CCTV may think that audiences are attracted to difference. That is, performances of Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and foreign people on CCTV, as well as the 'colourful' minority nationalities, are included to draw the majority Han, urbanites to the screen. By drawing in more mainstream Chinese audiences through exotic content, ratings may increase, and sponsorship and advertising revenue may be obtained, which is necessary to keep the station alive.

As outlined in the introduction and in Chapter 2, art and entertainment are not separate from the politics of identity. Entertainment, like the news,

reflects an understanding of the world through signs and symbols, and constructs ideas about ‘self’ through negotiation among people with the power to influence and produce content. As one of the most controlled media, contemporary television in China is subject to particular control not just from party-state officials, but also commercially-savvy, urban-based media professionals, producers and directors, sponsors and advertisers, and intellectuals, including cultural nationalists. Tensions and negotiations between these powers are evident through the variety of content and artistic forms that make it to the final broadcast products that are sent across the country and the world.

Strategies of Production – The Political Significance of Linguistic, Visual, and Musical Modes in Interaction

The method of critical multimodal discourse analysis used in this study has helped to reveal the process of cultural production and has provided insights into the cultural-politics of language, music, visuals and movement. In each of the three main frames proposed, national and ethnic boundaries are marked in a spectrum of hard and soft ways, reflecting desires of the party-state to simultaneously project a strong sense of unity that is easier to control, and a sense of openness, which allows the Party to maintain its legitimacy in the era of ‘opening up and reform’.

The different styles reflect both politics, economic imperative, and artistic experimentation. At the hardened extreme, linguistic, visual, and musical modes reinforce each other to create relatively easy to read and fixed party-state ideological messages of unity, unification, and the importance of China in a new world order. Even if one were to disagree with the message, the expression of Chineseness is clear. For instance, in the orthodox multi-ethnic frame, the only marker of difference is dress. Performers dance together, march forward, or hold hands in a visual sign of unity. One singer, often dressed in red (the colour of China), provides the voice that represents

the group, and sings in the ‘national’ style, with lyrics directly emphasizing the unity of the 56 nationalities. In the greater China frame, hardened party-state messages focus on unification, including the successes of Hong Kong and Macau, and the imagined family unity with Taiwan, and overseas Chinese are firmly linked to China. Foreigners are also shown to be absorbed by Chinese culture entirely as they adopt Chinese names, speak Chinese, sing Chinese songs, play Chinese musical instruments, and wear traditional Chinese clothes. Choral singing is another technique used across all styles to assert a notion of unity.

At the other extreme are softer expressions of Chineseness where the linguistic, musical, and visual modes may pull in different directions, offering different and hybrid identities, and a celebration of abundance and dynamism in a changing world. In this frame, mixed identities are celebrated: Tibetan-Chinese, Chinese-Americans, and mixed-race stars like Fei Xiang. In the softer constructions, crossing ethnic and cultural borders is actively performed. Differences are marked through the ‘blending of opposites’, through the use of different dialects and language, through different styles of dress and body movements, and through the blending of different types of music and musical instruments. Internal others (minority nationalities), external ‘others’ (foreigners), and mainstream Han, are brought together in a ‘unity of opposites’, and boundaries between these are blurred. The focus on difference rather than sameness allows for more ambiguity in the meaning of this multimodal content, although still emphasizes a particular message that the party-state itself is open and accepting of change.

These hard and soft extremes reflect an internally diverse spectrum of conservative and cosmopolitan views on how artistic (TV music-entertainment) performances should be used to attract audiences to meet both the political and commercial requirements of contemporary TV production in China. The different performance styles offers evidence that there is no single political position emerging from these performances on

party-state TV on the notion of what the Chinese nation is, and that these programs, despite coming under significant political control of the party-state, in fact provide a space (although still limited) for an ongoing ‘conversation’ about the identity of the Chinese nation and party-state.

In the introduction, I noted that CCTV appeared to be distinguished by its unique intermixing of popular, folk, and other styles. One of the reasons for this may be that the national network is still mandated to appeal to *all* PRC citizens – the young, middle-aged and elderly, rural and urban, farmers, workers, and professionals, men and women – and increasingly to people who have not grown up in the PRC. Different musical performances may thus be used to appeal to different audience tastes. This may be one of the major differences with Hunan television’s super girl for instance, which may have had a more clearly delineated urban, youth market. Furthermore, being the mouthpiece of the central party-state, it clearly offers content with the most significant attachment to the central party-state leadership’s ideologies. For this reason, hardened, orthodox moments are still prominent, but CCTV realized that it must offer a range of styles to appeal to different audiences and not appear monotonous, or come across as overly ‘politicized’.

Different genres of televised music seem to connect to different national and political aims. Popular music focuses on building a ‘greater China’ through bringing together popular Chinese singers from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore, mainly on ‘mainland’ soil, and occasionally in roaming concerts outside the mainland. The ‘national’ style of singing emphasizes through its lyrics and modern operatic tunes messages of a strong nation and Party, and this genre is used to spread numerous ideological messages and Party slogans that include a vision for the place of China in the world, including songs about a ‘harmonious society’. *Yuanshengtai*, made up largely of a body of ‘unknown’ works of minorities and rural Shaanbei Han, reflects concerns about the need to ‘preserve’ national culture within a global framework of sustainable development, and

inclusion of this genre serves to highlight China as a responsible world leader. Ethno-pop and *yuanshengtai* also relate to the changing circumstances of increased consumption and the tourism industry. It is these three forms, plus the operatic *meisheng* style that have been defined by CCTV itself in the categories of the *Youth Singing Competition*, but there are many blurred boundaries between them.

The way that language, music, and visuals are used and interact on the programs discussed in this study are reflective of the kinds of forms that were deemed acceptable for television broadcast during the period 2007-2010, whether for political, commercial, or cultural reasons. Yet, the modes of expression that are sanctioned for broadcast are constantly changing, and there are already signs of change. For instance, while I noted that acoustic and electric instruments are rarely ever seen on the CCTV stage, and unseen audio backing tracks are used instead (except for *Yuanshengtai* music), there appears to be some move towards the inclusion of guitars and other instruments along with the singers. For instance, much was made during the 2011 *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* of two rural migrant workers who were the winners of the program *I want to enter the Spring Festival Gala*, who sang one of Wang Feng's songs 'In Spring' (*Chuntian li*), one with an acoustic guitar in hand.¹⁶⁶ The choice to include migrant workers on the CCTV stage, singing a rock-influenced song with their own hoarse voices, and emphasizing their hardships in the city, is part of a marked shift in expressions of recognition of an underclass in China. The party-state's recognition of the problems of development and inequality as a result of rapid change lends legitimacy to the leadership, and melds with the need for middle-class urban viewers to release feelings of sympathy (see Sun and Zhao, 2009). This shift in politics has been match with the use of new symbols and sounds – the Western acoustic guitar being a prime symbol of resurgence from below.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ 2011 *CCTV Spring Festival Gala* – Xuri Yanggang duo singing 'In Spring' (*Chuntian li*) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fbT9q67b_8.

¹⁶⁷ Wang Feng's own MTV of 'In Spring' seems to offer a much more ambiguous and threatening questioning of China's present state. The contrast between the pure, colourful

Spaces for the Negotiation of National/State Identity in Entertainment

The various frames of Chineseness and the variation within these frames highlights that there is some space for negotiation of Chinese identity on the programs, but it is still restricted by politics, commerce, and intellectual and artistic preferences by those with power to influence productions. The three frames of Chineseness that are privileged – multi-ethnic, Greater China, and a Chineseness that absorbs foreign cultures – stress constructions of national unity that assist the party-state establish itself as a stabilizing force, and the music-entertainment genre itself is restricted in the way it presents these frames. While it is possible to express sadness, hostility, irony, or criticism through song and dance, these sentiments tend to be avoided in CCTV's music-entertainment programs, which prefer to concentrate on music itself being constructed as a fundamental source of happiness and harmony. Based on informal conversations with Chinese university students, the message that music means happiness and relaxation is widespread, no doubt thanks in part to the power of party-state television. To find sadness in CCTV music-entertainment television, one has to dig deep to uncover the rare offering of different sentiments of sadness, such as on the *Folksongs China* program, discussed in relation to singer Dao Shu in Chapter 4. To find irony, one usually has to turn to the Internet for spoofs of CCTV performers, such as Hao Di's imitation of Hao Ge in the singing of red classics, as discussed in Chapter 6.

life of the 1980s and the dark insantity of the present is expressed through juxtaposed images of the 'former' carefree life where Wang rode bicycles down the lane, played an acoustic guitar and sang around an open campfire with friends (alongside nostalgic clips from party-state propaganda celebrating China's development and modernization achievements), with the 'current' lonely images of Wang dressed in black as he screams out the lyrics which are about death and getting old and wanting to be buried in the 'spring', alongside the band members dressed in black, playing in a dark indoor setting, and belting out the chorus with piercing and contorted sounds of electric guitars. See clip online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLU0twQ2eb4>.

However, while overtly hostile identities, i.e. those against the framings of a PRC-centred unity are not present in the programs, the idea of Chineseness is constantly negotiated within acceptable parameters. For instance, even though the number 56 cannot be questioned in terms of the categories of China's internal ethnic make-up, there are a variety of ways in which multi-ethnicity can be expressed, resulting from political, economic, intellectual, and artistic influences. The boundaries of the 'Greater Chinese' identity have also been pushed by artists like Wang Lihong who has asserted his Chinese, Taiwanese, and American (ABC) identities, although mainly in subtle ways such as through rapid rap lyrics. Fei Xiang, who actively appears on CCTV, also embodies difference through his mixed-race identity.

Moments of hardened boundaries of identity, asserting Tibetans, Mongolians, and Uyghurs (the three biggest separatist concerns for the PRC government) as part of a happy and harmonious multi-ethnic China, may also be understood as a reaction to hostile movements such as the Falun Gong (seen in the competition between CCTV and NTDV on a global scale) and in light of sporadic riots and ongoing tensions. However, the *yuanshengtai* frame does increasingly offer mainstream Han audiences different perspectives that may occasionally seem threatening, as the format can show that some internal 'others' have not assimilated into mainstream culture, cannot even speak Chinese, and have their own separate and strong cultures even after sixty years of CCP rule. Thus, while music-entertainment programming on CCTV is largely designed to create happiness through a sense of unity, it can occasionally reveal tensions in 'family affairs'.

While CCTV has opened and adjusted to new and popular styles, there are still certain artistic forms that are considered politically, morally, or indeed, commercially unacceptable for televised performance. For instance, certain styles of music, like rock music, particularly in the form of rock bands, are rarely seen on the CCTV stage. However, upbeat songs with rock beats containing lyrics with nationalistic sentiments in line with state-sanctioned projections of nationalism, like that of Xie Tingfeng, are used to rev up

crowds. Oppositional, anti-establishment rock, music with satirical lyrics, or music that expresses disillusionment with society is rarely seen (Wang Feng's 'In Spring', discussed above, may be an exception). Few artists, Zhu Zheqin being one, are able to push an individually unique style of music on CCTV, although this is probably no different to most commercial stations around the world who stick to what is likely to sell to the majority of viewers.

A China-Centred World

One of the major findings of this research is based on CCTV's role in establishing and maintaining an official discourse on the central place of mainland China in the world. This theme may have been specifically emphasized in China's Olympic year in which China was consistently framed as the centre of global civilization, as a strong, culturally-rich and superior, central figure in the ongoing narrative of 'who we are'. In the song 'You are my hero' (original English title), by mainland male pop duo Yuquan, which came out in 2008, China and its people was inferred as the duo's 'hero in this world',¹⁶⁸ while in another extremely catchy rock influenced song 'I love you China' (*Wo ai ni Zhongguo*) with the hoarse voice of Wang Feng, it was the subject of intense affection, with lyrics 'I love you China, dear mother, I cry for you and am proud of you' often accompanied by a blaze of red flags and cheers from the audience.¹⁶⁹

One of the interesting features of CCTV is the way in which it acts as a centralizing force, emphasizing the PRC not only as the centre of the Chinese-speaking world, but as the centre of the world at large. The programmes act as a strong centrifuge by pulling favoured artists, in cooperation with market enterprises, from competing cultural centres of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and South Korea towards the CCTV stage (usually in Beijing), and creating a strong image of Beijing as

¹⁶⁸ Yuquan 'You are my hero': http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTA5MDQ4MTI4.html.

¹⁶⁹ Wang Feng 'I love you China' on *Happy in China* in 2009
<http://www.letv.com/ptv/vplay/430383.html>.

the ‘Chinese’ capital of the world. Similarly, for participants from ‘non-Chinese’ countries or regions or with ‘mixed’ identity backgrounds, they are also shown to be attracted to China and in particular, Beijing.

In 2008, CCTV’s music-entertainment programs also positioned China as open, changing, and as embracing the world. However, this embrace is more about drawing foreigners into the fold of a China-centred Chinese civilization, rather than about equal sharing of foreign cultures. Even when roaming shows like *The Same Song* travels overseas, the programs do not really attempt to show the outside world at all, but rather focus is on drawing overseas Chinese back to China. Rather than focus on what the outside world is like, the programs are more concerned with showing how the outside world *likes us* and *is like us*. This suggests an inward rather than outward focus, firmly aimed at bolstering support for internal political status quo by showing that life is good at ‘home’, overseas Chinese are ‘returning’ and non-Chinese people are being attracted to China’s rich culture. From a global perspective, the programs point to a desire to highlight the attractiveness of China and its current political status, rather than a desire to dominate the world. The programs only go out as far as small-scale audience representatives of its international ‘population’ allows, aiming to capture those communities to demonstrate a united and loyal global Chinese collective. The involvement of foreigners (*waiguoren*) appears to be more of an attempt to show audiences that China is a civilized and diplomatic country with peaceful aims, that it is aiming to create a global family and sense of friendship on its own terms, and that is resolving for a domestic/Chinese audience the reality of having an international community who do not understand China.

Through CCTV’s music-entertainment programming, the party-state appears to be re-emphasising the old notion of China as the Middle Kingdom, with foreigners being absorbed into the great Chinese culture. While foreigners (other ‘Asians’ are rarely defined as foreigners) hardly ‘look’ Chinese, and are likely to never meet the expectations that will allow

them to become ‘fully’ Chinese, they are shown to struggle towards a goal that is shared by the multi-ethnic and greater Chinese families. That is, they are shown to love China and Chinese language and culture in an ideologically ‘correct’ way, based around the official spoken language *Putonghua*, and an expressed ‘love’ for China through singing and other kinds of performances. Incorporation of ‘outside’ people into ‘Chinese’ family frames in varying ways also highlights CCTV’s attempt to ‘pull in’ to the Middle Kingdom as many people as possible, regardless of race or nationality, who simply by participation and performance on the programs serve at least to the minimum degree allegiance to the political status quo. The construction of families and unities of people always requires a constant negotiation of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. In discussing the boundaries, we can begin to assess how CCTV’s music-entertainment programs engage in the construction and definition of who is Chinese and who is not, and how those who are not Chinese help to define those who are. I have uncovered production techniques that attempt to smooth over boundaries between Chineseness and foreignness, as well as those that reveal different socio-political stances among production teams over the nature of relations within and beyond the Chinese family.

Local-National-Global Interactions

While interactions between local, national and global forces and the politics of place-based identities were not the focus of this study, it does lay the groundwork for further exploration of such issues. Global and regional forces play important roles in influencing CCTV productions and the ways in which notions of identity and Chineseness are constructed in its programs. Different musical choices based on economies of scale have different effects on the production of identity. For instance, as pop music is designed to sell widely and appeal to a broader audience, it tends not to refer to particular places as much as other genres like folk music. For instance, Han Hong may promote her Tibetan identity but most of her music (at least that performed on CCTV) does not suggest a specific location or town within Tibet or any

other Tibetan area, although there are sometimes general images of snow-capped mountains, and tropes about the capital of Tibetan Lhasa. Foreign pop singers may include elements that are suggestive of their origins, such as the accordion in some of Vitas' songs and the gospel in the voice of Hao Ge, but they do not point to the specificities of place. Most performers from outside the mainland are labelled as representing their region or country (e.g. Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Korea, Australia, America) rather than specific cities or towns within. Wang Lihong's mention of New York in his version of 'Descendants of the Dragon' is one of the few exceptions of place-based identity outside of the PRC. Even when CCTV programs travel abroad, the cultures shown are not local to those areas but almost exactly the same as if they were produced in Beijing, when foreigners come to China. The majority of acts performed are 'Chinese' acts. *Yuanshengtai*, is the most significant framing to emphasize identity in relation to specific locations within China through musical and linguistic difference.

China's preference for bilateral, rather than multilateral relations is also emphasized through the design of music-entertainment programs, although this may also be partly due to logistics. For instance, China-Korea, China-Japan, and China-Canada relations are emphasized in *The Same Song* when it travels abroad. However, especially in the lead-up to and in the wake of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, Chinese television hosted a range of multilateral productions, which highlights its desire to present itself as playing a leading role in harmoniously bringing different countries together, particularly on Chinese soil. Recent international events with large-scale televised music-entertainment include the augural Asian Youth Arts Festival (AYAF) in Guangzhou and the Special Olympics in Shanghai in late 2007, and the Shanghai Expo and Asian Games in Guangzhou in 2010.

The themes used in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games opening and closing ceremonies were projected in international (practice) events prior to the Games and continued in post-Games productions. For instance, the theme song of 2007 Asia Youth Arts Festival, 'Youth Asia' (*Qingchun Yazhou*),

sung by the dynamic female singer Sun Yue and heartthrob male singer Sha Baoliang (both PRC mainland signers),¹⁷⁰ featured similar lyrics to the theme song of the Olympic Games focusing on ‘you and me’ in relation to Asian youth. Other lyrics, ‘Today’s Asian theme is harmony and friendship. We are the legends of the East. We are the sunny new century,’ emphasized key themes in China’s push to present itself as being at the forefront of constructing a harmonious world. The music was a standard upbeat pop song, with instrumental interludes of ‘minority’ stringed instrumentation, as well as *yuanshengtai*-like voicing (a-i-ye, a-yi-o) mixed in with scat singing, thus attempting to merge the ‘East/Chinese’ and the ‘modern’. The male and female duo, as is typically used in ‘modern’ international events, highlighted the harmony between men and women. Dancers on stage wore white costumes with wings, again a symbol of peace and harmony. It appears that China and CCTV are taking as many opportunities as possible to highlight their leading role in forging peaceful relations between nations through artistic performances on China’s soil.

Future Studies

This study provides a baseline for comparing techniques and content with music-entertainment programs on local and provincial stations (e.g. on Hunan Television) in the future and for understanding just where the ideological differences between stations lie. Comparisons could also be made with comparable music-entertainment programs in other countries to assess the extent to which this form (and the types of performances of national identity embedded in the programs) is unique to China. Future comparative studies with music-entertainment programming in other countries may be useful for highlighting the extent to which CCTV is integrated into a mutually influencing global market, made up of public, government-controlled, and commercial television operators. Comparison of this period (2007-2010) may also be made with any future or past period to

¹⁷⁰ Theme song of 2007 Asia Youth Arts Festival, ‘Youth Asia’:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAXxuVXdhbK>.

compare political and artistic changes at different moments in time, construct a history of the music-entertainment genre, and assess early domestic and international influences on China's music-entertainment programming.

Utilizing a textual approach, this study has been limited to particular findings resulting from a close examination of the production of discursive positions through detailed analysis of visuals, music and language. Further studies may combine analysis of artistic productions with interviews with producers, performers and audiences and may offer different perspectives on how the programs are interpreted. Furthermore, I have focused on national and ethnic identity, examining hardened state defined identities. I have attempted to push at the edges of these categories by pointing to blurred lines between mainstream and minority, Chinese and foreign, and traditional and modern constructions. Future studies on CCTV music-entertainment television may, however, tackle multimodal constructions of different types of identities, such as class, rural/urban identities, youth/aged identities, gender, disability (e.g. the lead-up to the Paralympics offered some interesting insights into the construction of people with a disability), as well as the important role of the army/navy/airforce performers (professional identities) in CCTV music-entertainment programming, and how these interact with national/ethnic identities. The weekly, roaming CCTV-3 program *Passionate Square* (*Jiqing Guangchang*) is a particularly apt case for analysing state constructions of the semi-rural working class, for instance.

I would like to end by stressing the significance of the postcolonial perspective on complexity and multiplicity in the face of expressions of essential identities. Like de Kloet *et al.* (2011:131) and many other scholars, I have focused on the idea of the 'state-driven ideal of an imagined community' as one that is actually comprised of 'different, contested articulations of "China" and "Chineseness"... [of] what China stands for and what it means to be Chinese.' CCTV attempts to fix an image of a

single Chinese identity. But at the same time, it reflects the idea that Chinese identity comes in a multiplicity of forms. CCTV does not only offer ‘hardened’, monolithic, static, orthodox framings of Chineseness, but does attempt to take into account a changing society and accommodate ‘softer’ expressions of Chineseness coming from both within and outside of the mainland PRC, even if it remains restricted by party-state ideology. Like all identities, Chineseness is never fixed because producers, propagandists, intellectuals, and marketers are constantly engaged in imagining who ‘we’ (the Chinese) are by interpreting the performances we see and hear (and feel and smell and taste) and by relentlessly positioning ‘us’ besides and against those of others with whom we come into contact in a constantly changing world. It is through various forms of human communication that life is both formed and complicated through the drawing of boundaries around ourselves, and in our attempts to define differences and similarities with others through words, images, and sounds. The notions of complexity and multiplicity are a result of constant change, while the desire to fix identities is part of a need to limit change, in order to retain a status quo, stability, and a sense of solidarity. The last thirty years has seen rapid change in China and in its relations with the world as a result of its opening up and economic and political reform. At the same time, the CCP has tried hard to maintain stability and legitimacy in difficult circumstances. It seems only reasonable that its mouthpiece CCTV reflects both the softer, blurred, changing boundaries of China’s identity as well as the desire to control the image of itself through ‘harder’ and more certain constructions in its music-entertainment programming.

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Appendix

Glossaries

Key Terms by Chapter

Introduction

China wife	中国媳妇
Chinese	华夏
Citizens	公民，国民
Evening variety show	晚会
Going Out (strategy)	走出去
Harmonious society	和谐社会
Harmonious world	和谐世界
Pan-Chinese nation	中华民主、中华民族
Peaceful development	和谐发展
The Chinese people	中国人民
Yellow Emperor	黄帝
Yuanshengtai ('original ecology')	原生态

Chapter 1

Academy of Chinese Culture	中国文化学院
Central Nationalities Song and Dance Troupe	中央民族歌舞团
China expert	中国通
China Confucius Research Centre	中国孔子研究所
Compatriots	同胞
Confucius Institutes	孔子学院
Foreign friends	外国朋友
Foreigners	外国人
Global village	地球村
Greater China	大中国，大中华
Han nationality	汉族
Hong Kong	香港
Hong Kong Asia Television (ATV)	香港亚视
Hong Kong TVB	香港无线台
Macau	澳门
Mainlanders (Taiwan residents who moved to Taiwan during or after the civil war and their descendants)	外省人
Minority nationality/ethnic minority	少数民族

Nationality	民族
Open	开放
Overseas Chinese	华人，华侨
Overseas Chinese friends	华人朋友们
Root searching	寻根
Star Satellite	星空卫视
Taiwanese (local-born)	本省人
Television audience friends	电视机前地广众朋友们
Unitary multi-ethnic state	统一的多民族国家
Unity of the nationalities	民族团结

Chapter 2

Development	发展
Longliqi brand	隆力奇
Mid-Autumn Festival	中秋节
National Day	国庆节
New Year	元旦
Ordinary people	老百姓
Service	服务
Special Television Shows	特别节目
Throat and tongue	喉舌
Unity of opposites	对立统一
Western culture	西方文化

Styles of singing:

National	民族唱法
Operatic (lit: beautiful music/Bel canto)	美声唱法
Popular	流行唱法
Yuanshengtai ('original ecology')	原生态

CCTV Channels:

CCTV-3 (Comprehensive Arts)	CCTV 综艺
CCTV-4 (International)	CCTV 国际
CCTV-Music	CCTV 音乐

Chapter 3

Chinese flute	笛子
Common language (official spoken Chinese)	普通话
New Socialist Countryside	社会主义的新农村

Chapter 4

Airforce song and dance troupe	空军文工团
Authentic	地地道道的
CCTV stage	中央电视台的舞台
Chinese shawm	唢呐
Gourd pipe	葫芦丝
Hada (traditional Tibetan scarf)	哈达
Korean (minority in China)	朝鲜族
Matouqin (Mongolian horse-hair fiddle)	马头琴
Modernization	现代化
Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee	中央宣传部
Roots	根
Shaanbei (Northern Shaanxi province)	陕北
South Korea	韩国
State development	国家发展
Tang dynasty style suit	唐装
The State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the PRC	国家民族事务委员会
United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee	中央统战部
Xun (egg-shaped instrument made from clay)	埙

Chapter 5

Mainlanders (Taiwanese residents who migrated to Taiwan after the civil war and their descendants, lit: 'outside-province people')	外省人
A person from the same town	老乡
Blend (of cultures)	交融
Both sides of the Taiwan straits	两岸
China Hong Kong, China Macau, China Taiwan (labelling of regions by CCTV)	中国香港, 中国澳门, 中国台湾
Chinese and foreign buildings	中外建筑
Domestic and foreign viewing friends	海内外广众朋友们
Erdos (a brand that manufactures cashmere, clothing, and other products)	鄂尔多斯
Façade of St. Paul's cathedral	大三巴牌坊
First grade national intangible	国家一级废物文化遗产

heritage item	
Hui nationality	回族
Jin (unit of measurement)	斤
Kouxian (mouthharp)	口弦
Looking at the moon together	共同明月
Macau friends	澳门朋友
Mainland (PRC)/inland friends (as referred to by people in Hong Kong)	内地的朋友
Mixed-race Chinese-American	中美混血儿
Motherland	祖国
Na'aisi Group	纳爱斯集团
One Country, Two Systems	一国两制
Oupai (kitchens)	欧派
Overseas Chinese community	华人社会
Reunion	团圆
The two sides and the three places (the two sides of the Taiwan Straits: China's mainland, Hong Kong and Macau and Taiwan)	两岸三地
Vancouver	温哥华
Warm (feeling)	温馨
Western style clothing	洋装

Chapter 6

Beijing People's Radio/RBC.com	北京人民广播电台
Black mixed blood (person)	黑人的混血
Century of humiliation	百年国耻
China International Publishing Group	国家外文局
Erhu (a Chinese stringed instrument played with a bow)	二胡
Five continents of the world	五洲
Hanban (National Chinese language and cultural teaching organization affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, in charge of Confucian Institutes)	国家汉办
Korean Wave	韩流
Quyi (traditional Chinese folk arts)	曲艺
Red classics (songs, films)	红色经典
Same Happiness Five Continents, The Same Happiness Every Week (program slogan)	同乐五洲，周周同乐 (also: 同乐五洲，五洲同乐)

Personalities

Singers, hosts and other personalities referred to in the study:

Ah Bao	阿宝
Ah Peng	阿彭
Aihua (host)	爱华
Bai Yansong (host)	白岩松
Bi Fujian (host)	毕福剑
Cai Guoqing	蔡国庆
Cha Maosheng (ATV Chairman)	查懋声
Da Niu (host)	大牛
Dai Yuqiang	戴玉强
Deng Lijun (Teresa Teng)	邓丽君
Deng Xiaoping (former Chinese leader)	邓小平
Dong Qing (host)	董卿
Fei Xiang (Kris Phillips)	费翔
Five Continents Singing group	五洲唱响乐团
Gao Rui (author's Chinese name)	高睿
Gu Mu (former Vice-Premier of the State Council)	古牧
Han Hong	韩红
Hao Di	好弟
Hao Ge (Uwechue Emmanuel)	郝歌
Hou Dejian	侯德健
Jin Mei'er	金美儿
Le Le (reporter)	乐乐
Li Guyi	李谷一
Li Yugang (female impersonator)	李玉刚
Li Ting (CCTV Deputy Editor)	李挺
Liang Yongbin (host)	梁永斌
Lin Miaoke	林妙可
Liu Dehua (Andy Lau)	刘德华
Liu Huan	刘欢
Maliya (Sierra Leone)	玛利亚
Mao Amin	毛阿敏
Na Ying	那英
Peng Liyuan	彭丽媛
Qi Qin	齐秦
Qiao Shanzhong (Joe Yamanaka)	乔山中
Rongbashennaduo	茸芭莘那多
Rong Yunlin	容韵琳
Sa Beining (host)	撒贝宁

Song Zuying	宋祖英
Sun Nan	孙楠
Tang Aiguo	唐爱国
Teng Ge'er	腾格尔
Vitas (Russian singer)	维特尔斯
Wang Feng	汪峰
Wang Lihong (Wang Leehom)	王力宏
Wang Mingquan (actress, singer)	汪明荃
Wang Xiaoya (host)	王小丫
Xie Tingfeng (Nicholas Tse)	谢霆锋
Xu Peidong (composer/singer)	徐沛东
Xuri Yanggang (duo)	旭日阳刚
Yan Su (composer)	阎肃
Yang Peiyi	杨沛宜
Yu Qiuyi (commentator)	余秋雨
Yuquan (duo)	羽泉
Zhang Lei (host)	张蕾
Zhang Mingmin	张明敏
Zhang Ye	张也
Zhang Yimou (artistic director of Beijing Olympics, film-maker)	张艺谋
Zhao Baole (host)	赵宝乐
Zhao Huayong (CCTV Director)	赵化勇
Zhou Jielun (Jay Chou)	周杰伦
Zhu Zheqin (Dadawa)	朱哲琴

Song Titles

Song titles referred to in the study:

A Place Far Away	在那遥远的地方
A Question Asked Ten Million Times	千万次的问
A Real Story	一个真实的故事
Arirang (Korean traditional song)	阿里郎
Because of Love	因为爱，所以爱
Blooming Raspberry Flowers	红莓花儿开
Chinese	中国人
Chinese Language	中国话
Clouds of My Hometown	故乡的云
Descendants of the Dragon	龙的传人
Everlasting friendship (sung to the tune of Auld Lang Syne)	友谊地久天长
Fill the World with Love	让世界充满爱
Flame in the Winter	冬天里的一把火

Hand in Hand (Seoul 1988 Olympic Games theme song)	手拉手
Himalaya	喜马拉雅
I love you China	我爱你中国
In Memory of the Brother in Arms	怀念战友 [lyrics]
In Spring	春天里
Light the Passion, Share the Dream (official Torch Relay Theme song for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games)	点燃激情，传递梦想
Love in Deep Autumn	爱在深秋
Love My China	爱我中华
Marry a Chinese man	嫁给中国人
Me and You (Beijing 2008 Olympic Games theme song)	我和你
My Chinese Heart	我的中国心
My Motherland	我的祖国
No Tango in the Dark Night	黑夜不探戈
Nunchaku	上结棍
Ode to the Motherland	歌唱祖国
Our Leader Mao Zedong	咱们的领袖毛泽东
Portuguese folk dance	葡萄牙土风舞
Pray	祈祷
Red flag fluttering	红旗飘飘
Red Plum Flowers are Blooming	红梅花儿开
Sing to China	唱响中国
Sister Drum	阿姐鼓
Sky Road	天路
Straw Hat Song	草帽歌
Sweetness	甜蜜蜜
The East is Red (also a film)	东方红
The Glory of Blood	血染的风采
The Moon Represents My Heart	月亮代表我的心
The Moon Represents/is a Reflection of My Heart	月亮代表我的心
The Red Sun Shines on the Border Regions	红太阳照边疆
The song of seven children – Aomen	七子之歌 – 澳门
Visitors from afar please stay on	远方的客人请你留下来
Yellow People	黄种人
Yi Family Girls	彝家妹子

Television Programs

Television programs referred to in the study:

A Beijing Native in New York (TV Series)	北京人在纽约
CCTV “Longliqi” Youth Singing Competition	中央电视台青年歌手大赛（青歌赛）
CCTV Spring Festival Gala	春节联欢晚会（春晚）
Charming Music (station)	魅力音乐
China Music Television	中国音乐电视
China Music Television 60 Minutes	中国音乐电视 60 分
Evening Concert Celebrating 10 Years Since the Return of Macau to the Motherland	庆祝澳门回归祖国10周年文艺晚会
Folksongs China	民歌中国
Folksongs Museum (a section of the Folksongs China program)	民歌博物馆
Happy in China – National Day Celebration Special – Charming Macau	欢乐中国行 - 国庆节特别节目 – 魅力澳门
Happy in China (lit: Happy China travel)	欢乐中国行
Happy Singing Voices (episode of Sinophiliac)	快乐歌声
Hello2008	你好 2008
I Want to Appear on the Spring Festival Gala (special series)	我要上春晚
Love My China (special show)	爱我中华
Love My China: Nationalities’ United Special Evening of Entertainment	爱我中华：民族团结专题晚会
Music Television City	音乐电视城
Music Tells You	音乐告诉你
My Chinese Life Global Chinese Storytelling Competition Awards Gala (special)	我的汉语生活 – 全球汉语故事大赛揭晓晚会
Our Chinese Heart	中华情
Sinophiliac (lit: Happy Five Continents)	同乐五洲
Songs of Memories (episode on China Music Television)	记忆中的歌声
Sounds of Singing Over 30 Years (CCTV special)	歌声飘过 30 年
Star Avenue	星光大道
Super Girl	超级女声
The Same Song	同一首歌
The Same Song – China-England	中英接女文化周

Sisters Culture Week (special)	
The Same Song – China-ROK Friendship Concert / The Same Song in Korea	中韩友好大型歌会
The Same Song – Enters Japan	同一首歌走进日本
The Same Song – Enters Ningxia, Qingxi Hui village special	同一首歌 – 走进宁夏, (情系回乡
The Same Song – enters the ROK/Hanguo – 4 th China-ROK Pop Fest	同一首歌走进韩国 – 中韩歌会
The Years of Macau	澳门岁月
Western Region Folk songs Television Competition	西部民歌电视大赛

Films

Films referred to in the study:

Cape No.7	海角七号
Confucius	孔子
Journeying over ten thousand torrents and a thousand crags – always love (the trials of a long and arduous journey)	万水千山总是情
River Elegy	河殇
Visitors to the Icy Mountain	冰山上的来客
Witness (Japanese)	人证