

成龙电影中的香港 文化身份认同

丁雅娟 著



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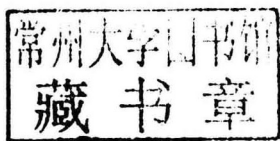


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**HONG KONG'S CULTURAL IDENTITY
REFLECTED IN JACKIE CHAN'S FILMS**

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my parents, who have believed in my dreams and supported me, to my husband, who has supported me tirelessly in all aspects as I pursued my Doctoral degree, and especially to my son, who stimulates me with his sweet words and smiling face.

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ABSTRACT

HONG KONG'S CULTURAL IDENTITY REFLECTED IN JACKIE CHAN'S FILMS

Ding Yajuan

July 28, 2009

In the 1990s, especially the years before and after Hong Kong's return to the People's Republic of China in 1997, some celebrated and talented Hong Kong film stars, such as Jackie Chan, Yun-Fat Chow and Michelle Yeoh, sought their career success in the Western world, especially in Hollywood. By studying Jackie Chan's representative films produced in Hong Kong and in Hollywood before and after 1997, the author explores how Hong Kong's cultural identity is portrayed in his films produced in the Western world and in a city with a legacy of over a century of colonization. Moreover, the author also tries to explore whether or not the portrayal of Hong Kong's cultural identity in those films is influenced by historical and political factors, such as the handover in 1997, and other social, economic and cultural factors through analyses of the news articles published by a Hong Kong media organization, popular songs, films with other Hong Kong stars in leading roles and some relevant scholarly works produced around the year of the handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China.

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INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that Hong Kong was a part of the global system of colonization from the end of the Opium War and became one of the colonies of Britain after an unequal treaty signed between the British and Chinese governments in 1842. In the 1980s and the 1990s, Hong Kong witnessed a phase of historical transition after the British and Chinese governments signed Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984. According to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, after the British handover of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997, Hong Kong, as a special administration (the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, or HKSAR), would retain its previous capitalist economy under China's sovereignty, which was guaranteed through the implementation of the "one country, two systems" and "Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong" policies. Scholars such as Eliza W. Y. Lee argued that the fact that China has the absolute final say on the sovereignty of Hong Kong results in the denial of the Hong Kong people's self-determination or voice in the negotiation process (13). Compared with other colonies of Britain, Hong Kong experienced totally different political and economic changes. Scholars believe these changes are responsible for Hong Kong residents' feeling of uncertainty as manifested in the debate about Hong Kong's present situation. Rey Chow regards Britain as an outgoing colonial power and China as an incoming authoritarian government and argues that the citizens of Hong Kong were deprived of their own voices by both British and Chinese governments and thus Hong Kong was in a situation of in-betweenness because of the "loss of voice between the patriotic rhetoric of China and the moral rhetoric of Britain (in claiming that it had the moral responsibility to take care of the interests of its colonial subjects)" (13). Lee believes that it is the feeling of political uncertainty concerning Hong Kong's sovereignty in the handover from Britain to the People's Republic of China that resulted in the 1980s and 1990s' massive migration of Hong Kong's well-educated and wealthy citizens, who are mainly managers, entrepreneurs and professionals, to Western

countries such as Canada, the United States, Australia and Britain (18). As described by Siumi Maria Tam, the “waves of emigration of Hong Kong people in the post-1984 and post 1989 periods” led to the appearance and existence of the so-called “astronaut families^①” (177). However, among those migrants, the most distinguished and attention-getting group of professionals was the film stars whose activities, behaviors and changes, especially in their private lives, are always the focus of the mass media and fan interest.

There has been an obvious trend of migration within the Hong Kong entertainment industry since the 1990s. Some distinguished and talented Hong Kong film stars have been making great efforts and trying to seek their career success in the Western world, especially in Hollywood—the world-famous center of film production—and are now involved in more and more Western film productions. For example, Jackie Chan, with the reputation as the best and most famous action film star in Asia, is well known to Americans with his *Rush Hour* series launched into the world film market after 1998. Yun-Fat Chow, who is well-known for his masculine and heroic screen figure in his Hong Kong films, starred in the Hollywood films *The Replacement Killers*, produced in 1998, *Anna and the King* and *The Corruptor* in 1999, and *Bulletproof Monk* in 2003. Another martial arts actor, Jet Li, who is of Chinese origin, is famous for his *Lethal Weapon* in 1998 and *Romeo Must Die* in 2000. Also there is the handsome “action queen” Michelle Yeoh co-starring with Pierce Brosnan in *Tomorrow Never Dies* in 1997.

Dannern and Barry Long hold that the flow of Hong Kong film stars into Hollywood was mainly due to the unstable transition concerning the postcolonial situation of Hong Kong (Wang). Other researchers argue that Hong Kong's future was vague and uncertain upon its returning to China after it had been governed and colonized by British imperial rule for more than one hundred years. Hong Kong residents, especially the celebrities, were confused and anxious about their future life and career achievements. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's unique timesaving and economical way of producing action films and comedies attracted the attention of Hollywood

① Astronaut families: families in which one or more members of the immigrant family, mainly males, like astronauts, travel to and from the permanent base in home country or region and temporary space station in the host country where female members of the immigrant family and the offspring have set up a new household. See Lee (177)

moviemakers (Wang). As some Hong Kong film stars have steered much of their career into Western film production, their performances and the images they shaped or created in their Western films may have shifted or changed accordingly. As a world famous city with a unique cultural, economic and political legacy, Hong Kong has been regarded as an internationalized ideal place for business and entertainment, especially for shopping. The cultural identity of Hong Kong has been undergoing different transformations in the past century, and changes especially emerge around the year of Hong Kong's return to the People's Republic of China. Hong Kong's cultural identity has been frequently reported by the mass media and discussed in literary and academic works in the past decades. In addition, it has been the main theme of different forms of arts and expressed and depicted vividly by artists in their works such as paintings in recent decades. The cultural identity of Hong Kong has also been demonstrated and reconstructed consciously or unconsciously by various forms of popular culture such as music, television and film. In this paper, the author will use postcolonial theory to explore how Hong Kong's cultural identity is reflected in Jackie Chan's performances and in his Hong Kong and Hollywood films produced before and after 1997. Moreover, the author will also examine the correlations of his presentation of the cultural identity of Hong Kong with the changes of holistic social, economic, cultural and historical background from a new historical perspective.

Jackie Chan has produced over one hundred films since he made his acting debut when he was eight years old in the film *Seven Little Valiant Fighters (Big and Little Wong Tin Bar/The 7 Tyrants of Jiangnan, 1962)*. Because movies produced in different periods and locations are influenced by those periods and locations, they may differ in the performances, themes, plots, and the economic, social and cultural backgrounds. However, there may be some consistencies in these movies if they are produced by the same production companies or have the same actors or actresses as the leading protagonists. Therefore, new historicism is necessary to support the assumption of the correlations between the movies and the ages in which they were produced.

Traditionally, Jackie Chan's films cannot be regarded as representative of Hong Kong culture since most of his films are funny action films and therefore should be strictly categorized as popular culture, which by nature is excluded from the mainstream of art and highbrow culture. However, evidence shows that Jackie Chan's films are

actually regarded as typical Hong Kong films. According to Poshek Fu and David Desser (2-3), the first success for Hong Kong action cinema in the Western film market was the Shaw Brothers' production *Five Fingers of Death*, released in America in 1973. Later, Bruce Lee became a Hollywood superstar and attracted international attention to Hong Kong cinema. Although his first attempts in Hollywood in the 1980s were not successful, Jackie Chan finally became a transnational superstar in the 1990s and contributed significantly to the development of Hong Kong films in the international film market. In some sense, Jackie Chan's action films are believed to be a label of Hong Kong cinema. His performances are now accepted as representative of Hong Kong and the Chinese, especially in the Western entertainment industry, which is manifested by his household reputation in Western countries and the fact that he is one of few Chinese film stars whose name is engraved on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In recent years he has been working as a prolocutor for Hong Kong and the Chinese. Moreover, it is the transnational appeal of Jackie Chan, together with two other transnational filmmakers John Woo and Wong Kar-wai, and the 1997 handover that drew more scholarly attention to Hong Kong cinema (Fu and Desser 2). Therefore, Chan's performances and films deserve to be studied. In *Victory and Loneliness*, Jinhua Xu says that Jackie Chan's films in some sense represent the culture of Hong Kong and the values of Hong Kong citizens as reflected by the detective Lee with whimsical ideas in *City Hunter*, who tries every means to save the little girl Su Yang's life (183-185). Xu notes that there is no doubt that the protagonist in the *Dragon Fist* is a vivid representation of the values of the youth of the 1980s (50). Obviously the image seems to run in the opposite direction to the moral values of the old generations, but reflects the real nature of human beings and depth of culture.

Jackie Chan is not only a celebrated martial arts film star in Hong Kong, but also a household name in other Asian countries and areas such as Malaysia, Japan and China's Taiwan and a widely known action film star in Western countries, especially in Hollywood. His funny performances in his action films make him a superstar among Chinese audiences all over the world. Furthermore, he wins the favor of audiences of different nations and nationalities; there are Jackie Chan fans even in the Sahara desert (Xu 83).

Another reason for taking Jackie Chan's films as examples to illustrate Hong

Kong's cultural identity in the present research is that Jackie Chan's films are regarded as a new genre of action film. They are funny, exciting, adventurous and feature true to life stunts, and are fundamentally different from Bruce Lee's serious action films. In 1987, Jackie Chan was unprecedentedly awarded a special prize, Jin Ma (Golden Horse) Prize, the highest honor for actors and actresses in Taiwan, which is well-known for its emphasis on art and refuses to classify action films into the genre of art or highbrow culture. The committee members of the Jin Ma Prize, based on the box-office of Jackie Chan's action films, acknowledged that action film is the only genre of Chinese film until now to be welcomed in the international film market (Xu 96). It indicates that Jackie Chan's performances and achievements in film production are gradually accepted by critics of formal art and high culture.

Jackie Chan's contribution to Hong Kong cinema and Hollywood cinema and even world cinema is unequalled and unique, and therefore, he is not regarded only as a talented kung fu film star. In *Hong Kong Cinema: the Extra Dimension*, Stephen Teo says that Jackie Chan is "the star who most successfully continues the tradition of the kung fu action spectacles which Bruce Lee brought to international prominence" (122). He further states that Jackie Chan "should be admired as one of the best of the purely physical performers in world cinema" and his fabulous stunts and "derring-do spirit have shown a face of Hong Kong cinema that is utterly irresistible" (134). Jackie Chan continues to preserve "Bruce Lee's tradition of kung fu as instinctive but disciplined art linked to a cultural and national identity" and the "overtone of nationalism of Lee's espousal of kung fu" in his movies (Teo 122). Therefore, it is feasible and practical to take Jackie Chan's movies as an example to explore the representation of Hong Kong's cultural identity.

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CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE, SIGNIFICANCE, PERSPECTIVES, AND RESEARCH METHODS USED IN THE PRESENT RESEARCH

*T*he purpose of the present research is to see how Hong Kong's cultural identity is reflected in Jackie Chan's performances and his films produced in Hong Kong and Hollywood before and after 1997. In addition, the paper also explores the correlations and influences of changes in cultural, economic and historical background on the representation of the cultural identity of Hong Kong in Jackie Chan's films by examining how the issue is discussed in scholarly works and portrayed in different forms of popular culture such as film, music and mass media.

The present research will be a pilot study on interpreting Jackie Chan's films. The significance of this research is reflected in the following aspects. Some film scholars in the academic world have used cultural critical theories in their analyses of films.

However, the common practices and mainstream research methods in this field are to interpret films by using Western film theories such as text analysis, montage theory, experimental or avant-garde, or cultural theories such as Marxism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism and Psychoanalysis. There are also a number of scholars discussing the cultural identity of Hong Kong by taking Jackie Chan's films as an example. But few scholars present a whole picture and comprehensive analysis of Jackie Chan's films to the readers to see how the cultural identity of Hong Kong is represented in his performances and films. Even fewer scholars explore the correlation of his presentations of the cultural identity of Hong Kong with the holistic historical environment, i.e. social, economic and cultural background, of the time when the films were produced and launched into the film market in Hong Kong or the Western world. The significance of this research also lies in its attempt to use New Historicism to interpret the relationship between the representation of cultural identity in films and social, political, cultural and historical factors, which is not very common in the field of film criticism. Furthermore, the research attempts to use the findings from forms of popular culture such as popular songs, mass media, in addition to scholarly discussion, to provide evidence to support the main theme of this paper—the cultural identity of Hong Kong reflected in Jackie Chan's films. Therefore, the present research may provide a novel research perspective or approach for academic research in the fields of both film criticism and Hong Kong studies.

Quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis will be adopted in the present research. Moreover, this paper will employ cultural critical theories such as Postcolonialism and New Historicism to explain in detail the representation of Hong Kong's cultural identity in Jackie Chan's performances and films.

The bar chart and Table 1 below show that of Jackie Chan's films produced between 1987 and 1996, 85.7% were produced in Hong Kong and 10.7% were produced in Hollywood. However, during the period from 1997 to 2006, 47.3% of Chan's films were produced in Hollywood, a much higher percentage than that produced in the previous decade. The figures in the two graphs clearly show Jackie Chan's tendency to seek his career success in Hollywood instead of Hong Kong. They also suggest that he pursued the internationalization or globalization of his performance career, which in some sense provides a good rationale for employing postcolonial

theory.

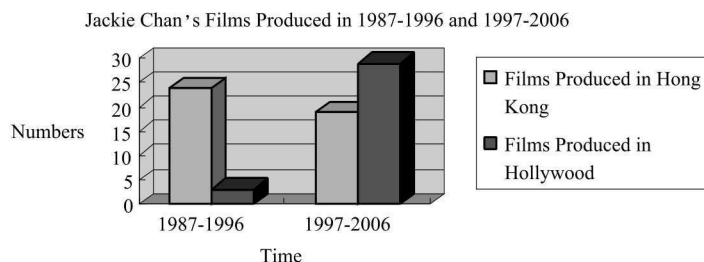


Table 1 Jackie Chan's films produced between 1987 and 2006^①

Time \ Jackie Chan's Films	Total	Films Produced in Hong Kong	Films Produced in U.S.
1987-1996	28	24 (85.7%)	3 (10.7%)
1997-2006	55	19 (34.5%)	29 (47.3%)

In order to have a relatively full picture and illustrate elaborately how Hong Kong's cultural identity is reflected or represented in Jackie Chan's films, 23 films are used as samples in this research. The films, categorized on the basis of their production time and location, were selected by taking into consideration their representativeness and continuity of the main themes of the films, as well as the diversity of the themes and genres of the films. Group I includes eight Hong Kong films produced before 1997: *Drunken Master/Drunken Monkey/Zuiquan* (1978); *Drunken Master II/Zuiquan II* (1994); *Project A/Pirate Patrol/A Jihua* (1984); *Project A II/A Jihua Xuji* (1987); *Police Story/Jingcha Gushi* (1985); *Police Story II/Jingcha Gushi Xuji* (1988); *Police Story III: Supercop/Jingcha Gushi III: Chaoji Jingcha* (1992); *Police Story IV: First Strike/Jingcha Gushi IV: Jiandan Renwu* (1996). Group II contains five Hong Kong films produced after 1997: *Who Am I?/Wo Shi Shui* (1998); *Gorgeous/BoLi Zun* (1999); *New Police Story/Xin Jingcha Gushi* (2004); *Myth/Shenhua* (2005); *Rob-B-Hood/Baobei Jihua* (2006). Because Jackie Chan had few opportunities to be involved in the film production in the Western world before 1997, only four Hollywood films are included in Group III: *Battle Creek Brawl/The Big Brawl* (1980); *CannonBall Run* (1980); *Cannonball Run II* (1983); *The Protector* (1985). Group IV is comprised of six

^① Source : 6 Jan., 2007 <<http://p0000329.people.mov.cn/>>