

## THE MEANDERING CHINESE CULTURE INDUSTRY: THE BECLOUDED DRIFT OF PUBLISHING AND CINEMA

YEONGKU KIM\*

*The investigation into the current Chinese culture industry can be an effective way through which we can describe the current Chinese cultural status more practically. The idea of the culture industry is based on the Chinese industrial classification. This article will explore some aspects of the Chinese culture industry by using both publishing and cinema as examples.*

Since 1978, the Chinese culture industry has developed along with the Opening and Reform Policies. However, the growth rate of the Chinese culture industry in the post-1978 period has lagged behind the growth of both the GDP and manufacturing. The Chinese culture industry is experiencing hard times because of various factors including the wide spread use of color TV, the reduction of spare time, the complex administrative restrictions in China and the flourishing black market.

In controlling the culture industry, the CCP seems to prefer to manipulate it through their political agendas rather than to apply "law and order" to it. The party and government authorities which administer the manipulation system are closely interrelated and they rarely conflict with each other in the course of making decisions. The system turned out to be a powerful tool in the resolute readjustment after the turmoil of 1989. The invisible self-censorship gives this system an effectiveness as well as efficiency. This same self-censorship stabilizes Chinese society in company with the manipulation system. The CCP's conservative political attitude toward the culture industry seems to be almost inevitable as long as the CCP leaders stick to a definite separation between politics and economics and an unbalanced national development strategy.

The future prospect for the Chinese culture industry is not promising except perhaps for cassette tape and disc production. The CCP's plans and proposals lack practicality, and the arguments of Chinese intellectuals are restricted. Furthermore, the global cultural environment which exclusively carves the economy in extreme relief depreciates the dynamism of the Chinese culture industry.

### 1. THE PLACE OF THE CULTURE INDUSTRY IN MAINLAND CHINA

Since 1978, China has reconciled with the global trend of the economy first ideology. Together with the Opening and Reform Policies, the Chinese culture industry, which had long maintained the exclusive relation with the politics and the ideology before 1978, has continuously enlarged the relationship with the economy. Viewed from this point, the investigation into the Chinese culture industry can be a

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\*Associate Professor, Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Korea National Open University.

practical way in analyzing the complex socio-cultural changes in the post-1978 period. It can also be a window through which we can look into the richness and the versatility of contemporary Chinese culture beyond Chinese socialism, the flag of socialist spiritual civilization, the fin-de-siecle decadence, and the foggy global trend of economy first ideology.

Since the Chinese government's approval of the "Report on Categorization of the Tertiary Industry" in 1985, the culture industry has begun to be seen in Chinese official statistical data as a separate economic field.<sup>1</sup> The China Bureau of Statistics classified the tertiary industry into two major fields; circulation and service. The field of service is subdivided into three dimensions: (1) service for production and living (2) service for science, culture and leisure (3) service for public requirements. The culture industry is included in the second dimension along with six other fields: 1) education, 2) radio and TV, 3) scientific research, 4) sanitation, 5) sports, 6) social welfare.<sup>2</sup> The official use of the concept of tertiary industry and culture industry was accompanied by the thesis on socialist commercial economy put out by CCP (China Communist Party) theorists and officially approved by the 13th CCP Congress in 1987. The term "culture industry" used in this article to investigate the Chinese cultural situation more practically is related with the Chinese industrial classification.

This article will explore some aspects of the Chinese culture industry by using publishing and cinema as examples. One can argue that the culture industry should include, besides publishing and cinema, the various economic fields related to culture, such as fine arts, arts education, theatrical events, museums, libraries, cultural relics tours, even leisure and sports. However, the publishing, including cassette tape and disc production, and the cinema have significant meaning above the various cultural fields in contemporary China.<sup>3</sup> First, the cultural products of the two fields are produced for the mass market and circulated through the market system. Unlike other fields, they have a relatively higher ability to convey serious intellectual ideas on current Chinese society. In this sense, they can be situated exactly in the midst between the two extremes; scholastic activities and leisure sports. The use of the term "serious and intellectual" above may need to be more fully described. The words are used in the sense that they reflect more faithfully the political consciousness and general opinion among members of Chinese society, including those who are excluded from political and economic power, and it is expected that they play a

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<sup>1</sup>The concept of the culture industry in this article is different from that of the "cultural industry" presented by the Frankfurt School. In this article it only indicates one of the economic fields categorized by the Chinese government.

<sup>2</sup>This classification is based upon the official subdivision of the tertiary industry adopted by the China Bureau of Statistics. Refer to The Mainland Affairs Council, *Zhongguo dalu fuwuye xiankuang* (The Current Status of the Service Industry in Mainland China) (Taipei, 1993) p.28

<sup>3</sup>The economic field of publishing can have the various sub-fields, yet, in this article it will include the fields related to books, magazines and video-audio products. The electronic publishing and the software production are not included.

greater role in molding the cultural identity of China in the near future. In addition, it is hoped that these fields may function as a go-between for popular and elitist culture; two cultures which have previously been disconnected and have had little in common.

Unlike the products of the politically directed official culture or the elitist high culture, those of these two fields are being circulated through the Chinese market system.<sup>4</sup> The Chinese consumers make their own choices, and many Chinese publishers and film makers try to meet them as consumers of products. On the contrary, Chinese newsoutlets - newspapers, Radio and TV, do not faithfully follow consumers' preference nor take steps to function as plausible conveyers of peoples ideas.<sup>5</sup> They are engaging in the Chinese market system only in the domain of advertisement and in the compilation of entertainment accounts and gossip stocks. As yet, Chinese news media is the CCP's organ of speech and shows no sign of switching over to more flexible stages in the near future.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, among the various economic fields related to culture in mainland China, the two fields bear an important meaning beyond their relatively small economic scale.

The products of publishing and cinema can be produced with a relatively small amount of capital, and, in the course of production, the manpower plays a greater and more decisive role than any other means of production or facilities. This makes it possible for the products to maintain the individual ideas and feelings intended by their original designers or projectors, be they writers, scriptwriters, musicians, producers or directors. Due to this uniqueness in the economic and technical features inherent in publishing and cinema, the CCP's manipulation over them is frequently liable to be deprived of its shrewd stiffness, and the CCP's resolute operation of the control and supervisory systems against them often brings about excessive political and economic costs.<sup>7</sup> They have taken full advantage of their own mobility, owing to the specific factors like its small-sized economic scale, simple staff setup, relatively short term business cycles, fragmental dispersion of products and business in the unit of each piece of individual work, and so many other factors alien to the highly-centralized authoritarian officials. Thus, since the post-1978 reforms, in publishing

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<sup>4</sup>This means that the relative predominance of circulation through the commercial market system is observed in these two fields. This does not mean that all the products of the official culture and the elitist culture are circulated through a separate system different from the market system.

<sup>5</sup>On this disputable subject, several different viewpoints can coexist. However, as a relatively practical one, for example, one can refer to Wu Guoguang, "Command Communication: The Politics of Editorial Formulation in the People's Daily," *The China Quarterly* Vol.137 (March 1994)

<sup>6</sup>About this issue related to Chinese newspaper, one can refer to Edward X. Gu, "The Economics Weekly, the Public Sphere and the Voices of Chinese Independent Intellectuals" *The China Quarterly* Vol.147 (September 1996) especially to the "Conclusion" pp.887-888

<sup>7</sup>About the execution of the supervisory system, one can refer to Yi Chen "Publishing in China in the Post-Mao Era," *Asian Survey*, Vol.32 No.6 (June 1992)

and cinema, a centrifugal trend has constantly revealed itself over the fine web of the regulatory system. On the contrary, Chinese newsoutlets have consistently exerted a centripetal impetus toward the CCP's political agendas, through which they have reconfirmed themselves to be one of the core organs compounding the Chinese political regime. Though the overall trends in the contemporary Chinese culture or culture industry cannot be wholly integrated into the flow of publishing and cinema, they not only have significant meaning in discussing the current Chinese cultural situation but also contain many suggestive points. In this sense, this article will focus its exploration upon these two fields, and with the term "culture industry," it will point to the two fields of publishing and cinema.<sup>8</sup>

In discussing the Chinese culture industry, particular attention should be paid to the fact that during the latter half of the 20th century, in mainland China, not only was the dominating class which had exclusively exerted political power for several hundred years totally eliminated, but also the authoritative class which had monopolized the culture and intellectual life for several thousand years was completely eradicated. Together with the accomplishment of the Revolution, the two powers have remained in the hands of the CCP. While the CCP has, on the whole, succeeded in firmly keeping its political power without much difficulty, it has experienced many difficulties in maintaining its leadership in cultural and intellectual life. All throughout the history of the PRC, the CCP theorists continuously have had to deal with the various problems and obstacles obstructing their endeavors to hold onto their cultural and intellectual leadership. Nevertheless, in contrast to its political power, the CCP's authority and its leadership in the domain of culture and intellectual life has been rather unstable throughout the history of the PRC, and after experiencing the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 upheaval, the CCP lost a great part of its authority. Right now it seems that political power is firmly grasped by the CCP, but to the contrary its leadership in culture is unsettled. The directed official culture as well as the elitist culture finds no way to produce the appealing cultural products in response to the newly arising Chinese market system. It is not probable that the intellectuals' arguments can lead cultural trends, as most Chinese intellectuals themselves are supposedly well aware.<sup>9</sup> They are experiencing hard times in overcoming the overall confusion coming from the difficulties in interpreting and confronting the socialist market economy, the modernity and premodernity of the Chinese society, and the historical meaning of the post-1989 national system. Now, in mainland China, there

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<sup>8</sup>Publishing and cinema do not cover all the fields of the culture industry, but they have significant meanings in the current Chinese culture industry. In this sense, the concept of culture industry in this article cannot be said to be a general one, and its usage is limited within this article.

<sup>9</sup>Zou Ping, "Zhuanxingqi wenxue: dui jiuyi niandai wenxue de yizhong gaikuo" (Literature of Transitional Period: A Survey over Literature in 1990's), *Wenxue pinglun* (Beijing), 1995 No.5, p.51. Jin Yuanpu, Tao Dongfeng "Guanyu jiushi niandai Zhongguo zhishifenzi de wenti" (The Problems of the Chinese Intellectuals in 1990's), *Wenyi lilun yanjiu* (Beijing), 1996 No.3, pp.20-21

seems to be no stable authority in the culture or intellectual arenas.

## 2. THE CULTURE INDUSTRY VERSUS THE OPENING AND REFORM POLICIES

At the 15th CCP Congress, in September 1997, Jiang Zemin announced his report on national affairs, in which he emphasized the overall position of the Deng Xiaoping's Theory including the enlargement of the non-socialist ownership system, the accelerative reforms of state-owned enterprises, and various other political measures designed to adapt the Chinese national structure to the capitalistic economic system, while at the same time proclaiming devotion to the establishment of a Chinese socialist culture.<sup>10</sup> On the whole, the literature of his report referring to political reform, cultural development and socialist spiritual civilization was just the same or slightly more rigid as that of the 14th Congress in 1992. It can be understood that the CCP has rather definite ideas in maintaining and even reinforcing the political and cultural framework organized after the 1989 upheaval which was officially asserted through the 14th Congress. In a series of addresses presented during Deng's visit to southern China in early 1992, he integrated certain core ideas, including the separation between political reform and economic reform, the prohibition of theoretical discussions on national development strategies, and the maintenance of the existing policy for one hundred years.<sup>11</sup> These ideas were widely studied by party members and government officials, and incorporated as a part of their golden rule in the process of creating a unique Chinese socialism, and immediately raised them to a doctrine ranking as Deng Theory, with Marxist-Leninism and Maoism at the 15th Congress.<sup>12</sup>

Since 1978, the Chinese culture industry has developed along with the Opening and Reform Policies. The development of book publishing shows the results of Opening and Reform. According to a report published in Taipei, in 1978-1992, the number of publishing companies in mainland China increased from 105 to 519, employed 39,000 people in 1992, increased its book titles to 732,497 (average annual increase rate 13.9%), and increased printed copies to more than 80 billion (average annual increase rate 3.8%).<sup>13</sup> The Chinese publishing system has continuously

<sup>10</sup>"Quarterly Chronicle and Documentation (July--September 1997)" *The China Quarterly* Vol.152 (December 1997) pp.906-911

<sup>11</sup>The CCP Central Committee, "Deng Xiaoping tongzhi zai Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shanghai dengdi de tanhua yaodian" (The Summary of Deng's Speech in Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shanghai and Other Cities), *Jiushi niandai* (Hong Kong, April 1997), pp.42-47

<sup>12</sup>In the Report on National Affairs, right after the introduction, Jiang Zemin put the Deng Theory in the same rank with Marxist-Leninism and Maoism under the subtitle of "The Historical Position and Leading Meaning of Deng Xiaoping Theory." He proclaimed that Deng Theory established the scientific theoretical system of unique Chinese socialism.

<sup>13</sup>The Mainland Affairs Council, *Dalu dazhong chuanbo shiye touzi huanjing zhi yanjiu* -

developed and reformed. In 1982, the Chinese Government paved the way for the reform of its publishing system by announcing its "Decision on the Reinforcement of Publishing"; a plan so-called "3 supporting points and 1 retrenching point" which included the diversification of the circulation channels, the improvement of the management system and ownership system, the introduction of various types of bookstores, and the reduction of circulation stages.<sup>14</sup> In 1986 the Bureau of Publishing announced its "Plan for a Multi-Channel Book Market System." In 1988, the Central Department of Propaganda of the CCP and the Bureau of Publishing and Newspapers of the Chinese government in liason announced its "Decision on Reforming the Publishing System," which allowed for the collective and private economic units to take part both in book selling and in publishing.<sup>15</sup> Excited by these announcements and by the various measures which followed, the reforms of the publishing system showed remarkable progress. During the 1980's, both in book supplying and selling, the Xinhua Bookstore's monopolistic power had continuously decreased.<sup>16</sup> The newly-introduced consignment system allowed bookstores to decide the kinds and quantity of the books they would sell, and to select the publishing companies with which they wanted to do business. Thus, books were able to be supplied according to mutual contracts between publishing companies and the selling units independent from the Xinhua Bookstore. The direct and free connection between suppliers and sellers gave a great deal of flexibility into the flow of books and other cultural products. Furthermore, it gave birth to a flourishing black market, which was temporarily crushed after the 1989 backlash but spread out all over the country in the 1990's in an even more prosperous manner.

The number of feature films produced for distribution to the domestic movie market in mainland China increased from 46 titles in 1978 to 146 titles in 1995.<sup>17</sup> The immense potential influencing power of cinema made the CCP reluctant to expose film production to the flow and potential diversity of the Opening and Reform Policies. Nevertheless, considerable innovation took place in the realm of cinema. The highly centralized production system entered the stage of decentralization, when

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chuban bufen (The Report on the Investment Environment of the Mainland Mass Media Industry-Publishing) (Taipei, 1995), p.33

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp.153-154, also referable to The Mainland Affairs Council, Liangan chubanyezhe hezuo faxing shuji zhi xiankuang diaocha yu yanjiu (Report on Joint-Publishing of Both Coasts Publishers), (Taipei, 1993), pp.6-9 and pp.29-35

<sup>15</sup>The Mainland Affairs Council, Liangan chubanyezhe hezuo faxing shuji zhi xiankuang diaocha yu yanjiu, pp.8-9

<sup>16</sup>In Yanan 1939, the Xinhua Bookstore was established under the CCP Central Bureau of Publishing. Since 1949, the Xinhua Bookstore has monopolized all the domains of publishing in mainland China; planning, production, printing, circulation, selling and other businesses related. Only the publishing of ancient books and books written in foreign languages have been released from its monopoly.

<sup>17</sup>Resources from Zhongguo tongji nianjian (China Statistical Yearbook 1996) (Beijing), and Zhongguo jingji nianjian (Almanac of China's Economy 1996) (Beijing)

the CCP Central Department of Propaganda decided to turn its control of film production over to the Ministry of Radio, Cinema and TV of the Chinese Government.<sup>18</sup> This made room for the prosperity of the so-called 5th Generation Films. In 1988, to a considerable extent, the Ministry of Radio, Cinema and TV granted the introduction of a capitalistic management system both in production and in distribution, which made it possible for film companies as well as movie houses to improve their economic status and to develop new branches of the film business and of cinema art.<sup>19</sup> Until the 1989 crackdown, though running the risk of the financial instability, the Chinese cinema industry seemed to be carving out its own future.

When making an investigation into the Chinese culture industry, apart from political factors, careful attention should be paid to the economic environment. For all the blooming of cultural products, the growth rate of the Chinese culture industry in the post-1978 period has remained far under that of the GDP except in the field of cassette tape and disc production.<sup>20</sup> A great majority of existing publishing companies and bookstores experienced deficits which the state compensated reluctantly until 1985. Since the Opening and Reform Policies, the average printed copies per title of books decreased continuously, and the reading volume per person as well as the market share of the domestic films diminished rapidly. The widespread black market and overt piracy are other damaging factors menacing the economic basis of the Chinese culture industry.

The stagnant situation intimidating the Chinese culture industry has been generated by the complex synergic operation of various negative factors. The wide and rapid spread of color TV in the post-1978 period has functioned as a huge sponge absorbing the readers of books and the audiences of cinema.<sup>21</sup> Newly-appearing cassette tapes and discs claim an equal share of consumers as that of the traditional cultural products. To make matters worse, the foreign culture industry encroached on the territory of the Chinese culture industry.<sup>22</sup> The introduction of the capitalistic economic system reduced the spare time needed for the consumption of cultural

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<sup>18</sup>The Editorial Committee of *Zhongguo gaige quanshu* (China Reform Series), *Jingshen wenming jianshe juan* (Volume of Establishing the Spiritual Civilization) (Dalian, 1992), pp.10-11

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.10-11 and also referable to Zhu Hua, Chen Qinghui, "Lun shichang yishi yu wenhua yishu de fazhan" (The Market Concept and the Development of Culture, Art), *Wenyi lilun yanjiu* Vol.1997.5 (Shanghai), p.34

<sup>20</sup>We can compare the growth indices in the period of 1978-1995: GDP 496%, Manufacture 679%, Book Publishing 167%, Feature Film Production 317%. Resources from *Zhongguo tongji nianjian* (Beijing), *Zhongguo jingji nianjian* (Beijing)

<sup>21</sup>The possession rate of color TV has increased rapidly in the recent years: from 17.2% to 89.8% in urban area, from 0.8% to 16.9% in rural area (1985-1995, per household). Resources from *Zhongguo tongji nianjian* (Beijing), *Zhongguo jingji nianjian* (Beijing), *Zhongguo guangbo dianshi nianjian* (Yearbook of China's Radio and TV) (Beijing)

<sup>22</sup>The foreign culture industry mainly includes Hollywood Films and audio-video products of the so-called Gangtai Culture influx from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

products from the Chinese people, especially of urbanites who were its main potential consumers. The low academic careers of new urbanites offer another negative factor oppressing the culture industry.<sup>23</sup> The people's average academic career is guessed to be between elementary school and middle school. Moreover, the attempts to break through the stagnant situation has shrunk due to the rigid regulatory web both of the party and the government. The Opening and Reform in the field of culture industry was allowed only as far as economics were concerned, and its diffusion into other dimensions was restricted. The detailed executive regulations of the "Law on Foreign Capital Enterprise" prohibits the establishment of foreign enterprises in the field of culture industry.<sup>24</sup> An absolute majority of registered publishing companies are established by and managed by the party and government agencies, official institutions, semi-official associations, vocational organizations, newspaper offices, big publishing companies, and scholastic institutions including universities and institutes.<sup>25</sup> All the film production units are under the direct control of the Ministry of Radio, Cinema and TV and its regional branches. The chief editors of publishing companies and the heads of film studios are nominated through the complicated process managed by the CCP organs. Both publishing companies and selling units should abide by the principle of low price supply,<sup>26</sup> which invited the inactiveness of the elite culture publishing and, on the other hand, drove the publishing of popular culture down into the black market. Yet, critical intellectuals, brilliant modernists, bright young writers, 5th Generation Film Directors and their descendants, free-spirited underground papers and movies have failed in joining the mainstream of the culture industry.

Nevertheless, the CCP's attempts to break through the current stagnant situation do not seem to be effective. In 1990, the CCP allowed the establishment of the China Academic Publishing Foundation, in 1991 along with the promulgation of the "Copyright Law," which officially abolished the long-lasting uniform standards of collecting manuscript fees.<sup>27</sup> In 1994 the Ministry of Radio, Cinema and TV announced the "Regulation on the Administration of Audio and Video Products," and decided to import foreign feature films to make up for the economic loss of cinema houses and

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<sup>23</sup>According to a statistical data of 1990 showing the academic careers of Chinese people, the percentage of college graduates is 1.4%, that of high school graduates 8.0, middle school graduates 23.3%, elementary school graduates 37.1%, illiterates and semi-illiterates 15.9%. Resources from Seol Tonghun, "Population and Labor" (in Korean), in Chang Kyeongsup, *The Understanding of Contemporary Chinese Society* (in Korean) (Seoul, 1994) p.211

<sup>24</sup>Tairyuk Yeonkuso (*The Center of Mainland China Studies*), *The Collection of Chinese Laws and Regulations* (in Korean) (1994, Seoul) p.2467

<sup>25</sup>The Mainland Affairs Council, *Dalu dazhong chuanbo shiye touzi huanjing zhi yanjiu - chuban bufen*, p.17

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.40-43

<sup>27</sup>Zhu Hua, Chen Qinghui "The Market Concept and the Development of Culture, Art," *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art* Vol.1997.5, p.34



stimulate the domestic film industry.<sup>28</sup> The government established various film awards such as the Government Awards, the Rooster Awards, and the Hundred-Flower Awards, and in 1995 the Ministry of Radio, Cinema and TV made a rule compelling all movie houses to project key domestic films over 15% of the time.<sup>29</sup> However, these measures are not likely to function as an effective means for activating the Chinese culture industry.

### 3. THE ELABORATE FRAMEWORK OF CONTROL AND MANIPULATION

In mainland China, there are no specific laws concerning the culture industry except the "Copyright Law".<sup>30</sup> Since the establishment of the Bureau of Publishing and Newspapers, and the organization of the Drafting Committee for Preparing the Laws on Newspapers and Publication in 1988, the Chinese government has put out many reports to draw up laws acting on the field of publishing and newspapers, but has yet to reach a definite conclusion. The Chinese culture industry, as before, seems to be regulated by the complex assembly of political agendas issued by the various party organs and the governmental authorities for the time being.

In mainland China, the highest decision making authority connected to the domain of the culture industry seems to belong to the Central Department of Propaganda in the CCP. However, the government agencies actually control the process, such as the Bureau of Publishing and Newspapers, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Radio, Cinema and TV. They are closely interrelated to each other in the execution of their official duties as well as in that of human relations.<sup>31</sup> Yet, they rarely conflict with each other in the course of making decisions or handling affairs. Special attention should be paid to their respective roles. In the Central Department of Propaganda, newspaper printing and publishing are managed separately by the Bureau of Newspapers and by the Bureau of Publishing, while in the central government they are administered together by the Bureau of Publishing and Newspapers. This implies that the Central Department of Propaganda of the

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<sup>28</sup>Cui Lili, "Facing the Challenge from Hollywood," Beijing Review, February 5-11, 1996, pp.13-14

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp14-15. The key domestic films are those films which the Chinese government authority recommends every year as model films. In 1995, as key domestic films, the Ministry of Radio, Film and TV confirmed several feature films including *July 7 Incident*, *Yang Kaihui*, *Red Cherry*, and two documentaries.

<sup>30</sup>The Copyright Law was promulgated in June 1991 and has come into effect since June 1992. The purpose of the promulgation of the Law is not supposed to meet the demand of the Chinese domestic culture industry, but to compromise with international agreements concerning the intellectual property rights. The Mainland Affairs Council, *Liang'an chubanyezhe hezuo faxing shuji zhi xiankuang diaocha yu yanjiu*, pp.111-113

<sup>31</sup>The Mainland Affairs Council, *Dalu dazhong chuanbo shiye touzi huanjing zhi yanjiu - chuban bufen*, pp.152-153

CCP differentiates between the political function of the two fields, while the government takes notice of the technical similarities of the two fields. Another point is that in 1988 the Chinese government, by enlarging the Bureau of Newspapers, newly established the Bureau of Publishing and Newspapers, and put it under the direct leadership of the Prime Minister to administer the overall duties related to the field of publishing and newspapers. At the same time, book publishing was separated from the Ministry of Culture, and the affairs related to audio and video products were separated from the Ministry of Radio, Cinema and TV.<sup>32</sup> This process seems to be due to the CCP's intention to reinforce the control over the culture industry which has been growing day by day to the extent that the development of the culture industry would be beyond the control of the personnel in charge of the publishing in both Ministries. The CCP leaders, supposedly expected that the highly specialized officials of the Bureau of Newspapers would share the affluent experience in controlling the mass media with the officials of the two Ministries. On the other hand, the regional organizations of party and government, probably due to its high costs, did not change; the Department of Propaganda in each regional party committee took charge of the political affairs, while the Bureau of Culture in each regional government managed the practical affairs in close co-operation with each other. However, to reinforce the regional regulatory system, the CCP left the direction of organizing the various associations and committees to retired party members and other experts, so that they together would function as a faithful extra-governmental body.<sup>33</sup> All the organizations and departments, both on the central level and on the regional level, and both in the party dimension and in the governmental dimension, have announced their own regulations and plans.

Going through the turmoil of 1989, the elaborate and huge web over the culture industry turned out to be sufficiently powerful. In 1989, the Bureau of Publishing and Newspapers proclaimed the complete rectification of publishing, aiming at the eradication of illegal publications.<sup>34</sup> All the publishing companies had to go through rigid inspections and, after passing such inspections, they had to re-register to be officially approved publishers. According to a mainland report, in a 1989 inspection, the authorities cancelled the registration of many publishing houses and newspaper companies; 12.3% of newspapers, 14% of magazines, 8% of publishing houses.<sup>35</sup> When the rectification process was finished, 501 publishing houses received certificates of registration. Foreign investment to the culture industry was prohibited and collaboration with foreign enterprises was restrained. The power to do this was

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p153

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p.154, and about the example of the actual function of these extra-governmental bodies also referable to Yi Chen "Publishing in China in the Post-Mao Era," pp.577-578

<sup>34</sup>The Mainland Affairs Council, *Dalu dazhong chuanbo shiye touzi huanjing zhi yanjiu - chuban bufen*, pp.97

<sup>35</sup>Song Muwen, *Dangdai Zhongguo de chuban shiye Publishing in Contemporary China* (Beijing, 1992), pp.108-109

emphasized intermittently with the slogan of the Chinese socialist spiritual civilization, especially when China met with increasing political tensions, such as the CCP Congress, the military crisis over the Taiwan Strait, the death of Deng, and the restoration of Hong Kong.

However, except for the short period of the 1989 rectification, the actual results of this complex and elaborate accord does not seem to be so remarkable. There were still widespread black market publishing and readily available prohibited books, cassette tapes and discs. According to a report published in Taipei, in Mainland China the black market publishing developed to form a closed society of brokers equipped with their own nationwide network, where a specialized system is set up in accordance with the securing of manuscripts, rapid printing techniques, bookstore connections, and many other special duties.<sup>36</sup> It was reported that they even have regular meetings to arrange their businesses. A further example is the overt circulation of feature films produced by the so-called 6th Generation Film Directors. They gave up their troublesome sophisticated movie cameras and made their own underground movies with manual camcorders.

The CCP leaders probably are aware of the black market and the new underground movies, and also they probably know that their manipulation system, though elaborate and tight, is too serious to be put into operation frequently. Furthermore, they surely are well informed of the estimated account statements, including accurately figured costs needed in the operation of the huge network. Most of all, they supposedly share the idea that "law and order" will reduce by half the power of the elaborate manipulatory system based upon the synergism of the political agendas and the invisible self-censorship which has developed along with the history of Chinese socialism. Obviously, this invisible self-censorship gives the system political effectiveness as well as economic efficiency. The history of the culture industry since the post-1978 period demonstrates that they prefer the usefulness of this system to that of "law and order."

#### 4. SELF-CENSORSHIP AND SELF-ACCUSATION

Because of the absence of definite laws in publishing and cinema, it is easy to believe that publishing and cinema have not fully developed in China. Another possible argument is that, from the viewpoint of "law and order," the current Chinese legal situation can be interpreted as the inevitable result of the CCP's unreasonable treatment against the culture industry. Yet, the Chinese culture industry not only has a long history and tradition, but also maintains a considerably developed vast market and their own systematic production system, which makes it difficult for foreign

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<sup>36</sup>The Mainland Affairs Council, *Dalu dazhong chuanbo shiye touzi huanjing zhi yanjiu - chuban bufen*, p.53, also referable to Zhu Hua, Chen Qinghui "Lun shichang yishi yu wenhua yishu de fazhan," and Yi Chen "Publishing in China in the Post-Mao Era," pp.573-574

enterprises to take part in it. In this sense, contrary to the arguments cited above, another hypothesis can be reached; the absence of definite laws does not always promote disorder or ineffectiveness, but can contribute to the stabilization of the existing socio-political order in China. It seems that the absence of definite laws is not so effective in pursuing the economic goals, yet it is effective for the CCP to actualize its political agenda.

A thesis of the Chinese socialist market economy, initiated by Deng in early 1992 and officially approved through the 14th CCP Congress, asserted the main axis of the definite separation between politics and economics. It manifested the overall marketization and reinforced the Opening and Reform of the Chinese economy, while the CCP made it clear that the existing policy and the political system should not be changed.<sup>37</sup> This political agenda shows the CCP's conservative idea toward the various problems which provoked the 1989 upheaval. The CCP tried to resolve the problems through tightening the political web and by laying aside all the factors which caused the turmoil.<sup>38</sup> Deng's lectures, directly converted to the CCP's official agenda, prohibited critical arguments against the Chinese socialist market economy and the unbalanced national development strategy. This self-confidence of Deng and the CCP leaders, which have induced the resolute countermeasures against the 1989 upheaval, is by no means a boastful obstinacy or anachronism. It stands on the basis of their confidence toward the Chinese manipulation system constituted by the immense supervisory tactics and the invisible self-censorship mechanism.

Unlike the supervisory web, in mainland China the censorship does not exist officially.<sup>39</sup> However, it's an old practice that writers and scripters submit manuscripts to the editors or even the officials of the party and the government prior to its publication.<sup>40</sup> It is always authorized as the result of the voluntary decision of writers and scripters to cooperate with the publishing companies and the social order. Because of this practice, what can be acknowledged to be the political repression of expression in other countries, is frequently asserted to be the proper process of requiring voluntary cooperation. The most critical factor in the study of Chinese censorship is "voluntariness." The request for voluntariness does not only serve to accomplish the harmonious accord between the individuals and the society, but also serves as a highly developed process of Chinese censorship. Unlike the period of

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<sup>37</sup>The CCP Central Committee, "Zhonggong Zhongyang guanyu chuanda xuexi Deng Xiaoping tongzhi zhongyao tanhua de tongzhi" (The CCP's Notice to Spreading and Studying Deng Xiaoping's Important Speech), "Deng Xiaoping tongzhi zai Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shanghai dengdi de tanhua yaodian," *Nineties* (April 1997), pp.42-47

<sup>38</sup>Seokhung Seo, "The Trend of Economic Reform and the Future of Chinese Socialism" (in Korean), *The Study of Regional Society* (1994.6, Seoul) pp.27-28

<sup>39</sup>The investigation into Chinese censorship is very difficult because of the official absence of the censorship. Refer to Yi Chen "Publishing in China in the Post-Mao Era," pp.568-569

<sup>40</sup>The Mainland Affairs Council, *Dalu dazhong chuanbo shiye touzi huanjing zhi yanjiu - chuban bufen*, pp.36-38

Cultural Revolution, since 1978, in most cases, the political sanctions exerted upon writers, film directors and producers of the cultural products have not taken aim at the specific subversive issues or politically sensitive expressions included in their work. Rather than those problems, the criticism was focused upon the lack of voluntariness to harmonize individual viewpoints with that of the party.<sup>41</sup> This process is different from that of legal procedures, as the main focus is the actual conduct and concrete results. The cardinal point of this invisible censorship practice can be epitomized as the request for voluntary cooperation with what would hardly be given voluntarily. This process, so-called self-censorship, is actually something like an unavoidable self-remodelling through which the remodelled is doomed to experience the severe modification of his mentality. The self-accusation, being persistently required by CCP authorities, seems to be the process of confirmation which will drive the modified mental status to a more stable stage of admitting the strained accord of contradictory viewpoints. This self-censorship obviously seems to have taken its root deep in the ultra-leftist legacy against which such CCP leaders including Deng and Jiang frequently have casted warnings. However, contrary to their expectations, the desirable overcoming of the legacy is not likely to be accomplished in the recent future, as long as the CCP leaders stick to the definite separation between politics and economics and the unbalanced economic growth strategy. The practice of the ultra-leftist regulations including self-censorship, which has been latent all through the history of PRC and has rushed out onto the whole sphere of mainland China in the late 1960's, seems to be maintained for the time being. The CCP leaders will hardly be able to find any substitute for it in the near future, while they will always feel comfortable in using it, because it will greatly save the political burdens and the economic costs for them.

The current inactivity and the stagnation of the so-called 5th Generation Film Directors in part seems to be related to the effects of this system. In 1988, Zhang Yimou made the film *Red Sorghum* which showed the immense possibility of the Chinese film and culture industry through its box-office success in the domestic film market, its awarding of prizes at international film festivals, the participation of expert scripters and professional cinema musicians, and most of all the beginning of the rise of Chinese stars, with Gong Li probably the first true popular icon of the Chinese culture industry. Chen Kaige, who initiated the new wave of Chinese film in 1984 with *Yellow Earth*, succeeded in the complicated experiment of combining the potential power of the Chinese culture industry with the refined touch and modernist color of Hong Kong Noir. In 1992, Chen's the *Farewell to My Concubine* opened the new horizons for the Chinese film and the culture industry; it not only succeeded in the domestic film market but also attracted worldwide attention, reminding us of the immense potential power of the Chinese culture industry.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, it drew

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<sup>41</sup>David Anson, "Raising a Red Flag," *Newsweek* (October 9, 1995), pp.23-25, also referable to George Wehrfritz, "Banned in Beijing," *Newsweek* (October 28, 1996), p.47

<sup>42</sup>Hu Xingliang, Zhang Ruilin, *Zhongguo dianyingshi* (The Chinese Film History) (Beijing,

special attention when Hong Kong's turnover was just around the corner. However, the culture industry has been experiencing hard times in the 1990's. The bright film directors, including Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Tian Zhuangzhuang and Wu Tianming were persistently criticized, due to their harsh look at the Cultural Revolution and the socio-political status of China. What was requested to them, was the self-accusation about the frequent attempts to deviate the manipulatory web. In spite of their brilliant success, Zhang was criticized on account of his dark description of the Chinese tradition and his excessive emphasis on adultery. Chen was accused due to his immoderate inclination to the west and his overt exposition of homosexuality. Tian, the "notorious" director of *Blue Kite*, was severely condemned because of his secession from the old practice of submitting the detailed scripts and of his striking depiction of the Cultural Revolution's tragic impact on a family.<sup>43</sup> What were required to them at the very first was self-accusation. In early 1990's, they submitted to the request for it. In their films after that time, like Zhang's *Shanghai Triad*, Chen's *Life on String* and *Great Parade*, the dynamism of the Chinese culture industry is barely recognizable.

In the early days of the 20th century, Lu Xun retaliated against the history-long mechanism of the distortion of mentality which always put up the rhetorical shibboleth of humanity and justice.<sup>44</sup> It will be supposedly embarrassing for the CCP leaders to maintain the old practice against which Lu Xun manifested such a hatred, though it is the unavoidable choice to maintain social stability. However, it is not likely that CCP leaders will find a more effective and reasonable measure to cope with the various ill effects inherent in the unbalanced national development strategy. The current political situation in mainland China reminds us of the political tension between the Legalists asserting the effectiveness and reasonability of the legal administration and the Confucians affirming the usefulness of the political and mental manipulation. It seems that an unpredictable experiment pursuing the Chinese golden medium is under the progress in the realm of culture and the culture industry, as the CCP is scrutinizing the actual process in expectation for the new, indirect and more stable golden system which will enable it to cope with the various socio-political factors threatening the national stabilization.

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1995), pp.423-431. Wang Yuhua, *Zhongguo xiandai yinyueshi gang 1949-1986* (The Contemporary Chinese History of Music during 1949-1986) (Beijing, 1991), pp.229-230.

<sup>43</sup>David Anson, "Raising a Red Flag"

<sup>44</sup>Lu Xun's anger and despair against the history long distortion of mentality was symbolized as the "murder with the humanity and morality" in his famous early novel *Kuangren riji* (The Diary of A Mad Man). This theme was continuously pursued all through

## 5. CULTURE, CULTURE INDUSTRY AND SOCIALIST SPIRITUAL CIVILIZATION

Since the Opening and Reform Policies were made, CCP leaders have continuously emphasized the concept of a unique Chinese socialism in which the establishment of the socialist spiritual civilization has always been included, in most cases, by the means of manifestos. A clue to their highly abstract presentations mentioning the establishment of socialist spiritual civilization can be found in more explanatory articles written by the CCP theorists. A great majority of them assert that the culture, especially the popular culture under the Chinese socialist market system should always be in the faithful service of the people, and that it should not follow the way of the capitalistic popular culture in the western countries.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, referring to the theory of western popular culture developed by the Frankfurt School and Marcuse, they often insist that popular culture in western countries has functioned as a huge repressional device cooking up the people's mentality concealing evil intention and reinforcing obscurantist policy.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, westernized popular culture is understood as the dark side of capitalism and westernization. In this sense, they claim that the Chinese cultural market and culture industry to be under the protection as well as sustained by political power. The rapid spread of pulp fictions like Jia Pingao's *Feidu* (*The Ruinous Capital*) is easily pointed out to be typical cases of the inevitable ill effects derived from the enlargement of the market economy by many CCP theorists and literary critics.<sup>47</sup> His *Feidu* flew straight up to the peak of record-breaking best seller through the bold and vivid description of sexual matters which has been regarded as a taboo. His overt acknowledgement of materialism, the justification of the pursuit of sensual pleasures, the disregard of the general moral standard and the resultant mockery of the official ideology provoked the violent criticism of Chinese intellectuals. But, on the contrary, the criticism against his work contributed to boosting its popularity. It paved the way for the appearance of new pulp fiction writers. According to serious critics, the high popularity of the *Feidu* is an undesirable symptom forecasting decline of the serious or good literature.<sup>48</sup>

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his works.

<sup>45</sup>There are many articles having this tone. A typical one will be Cheng Daixi, "Dazhong wenhua tan" (Telling the Popular Culture, Qiushi, Vol.96-4)

<sup>46</sup>Zhang Rulun, "Lun dazhong wenhua" (An Argument on Popular Culture), Fudan Journal Vol.94.3 (Shanghai, Fudan University). Xue Min, Fang Jinggang, "Falankefu xuepai wenhuagongye lilun shuping" (A Review of the "Cultural Industry" Theory of the Frankfurt School), Fudan Journal Vol.96.3

<sup>47</sup>Li Jiefei, "Xinshengdai xiaoshuo tantao" (The Study of Fictions of the New Generation), Xinhua wenzhai, 1997.7 (No.223) (Beijing), p.122

<sup>48</sup>Zou Ping, "Dui jiushi niandai wenxue de yizhong gaikuo (The Literature in a Transitional Period: A Survey over Literature in the 1990's), Wenxue pinglun, 1995 No.5 (Beijing), pp.59-60

The CCP not only bids the Chinese culture industry to abide by its political agenda but also requires it to succeed economically to the extent of building a great wall capable of holding off the attack of the Hollywood culture industry. The CCP's contradictory request seems to be rather too weighty for the Chinese culture industry. The Chinese culture industry seems to be staggering due to this heavy burden. Actually, the remarkable features of the Chinese culture industry and the cultural market will include the enlargement of the black market network, the retrenchment of the traditional cultural products and the overflowing of the audio and video products related to the Gantai Culture, which were imported along with the economic and cultural influx from Hong Kong and Taiwan.<sup>49</sup> The high popularity of the *China Can Say No* in 1996, though tacitly praised by the CCP, seems to be simply an example of the distorted expression of the nationalistic feeling latent among Chinese people. In 1997, under the wholehearted support of the CCP and the Chinese government, the magnificent film *Opium War* was produced for the amplification of national feelings which witnessed the restoration of Hong Kong. However, neither the books like the *China Can Say No* nor the film *Opium War* is a desirable substitute for *Red Sorghum* or *Farewell to My Concubine*.<sup>50</sup> On the whole, the arguments of the CCP and its theorists seem to fall short of the capability of making a reasonable diagnosis and an effective prescription for the current Chinese culture industry.

It is always confusing to apply reason to the Chinese culture industry. For this, a compound of contradictions often disturbs the insights which are needed. Its vast territory and population, unique secularism and Chinese socialism, socialist spiritual civilization and economy-centered national development strategy, dire poverty of inland rural areas and sybaritism in newly industrialized coastal cities - all these turbulent factors occasionally intervene in the course of inquiry into the Chinese culture industry. Now, a relatively stable starting point will be the consideration upon the younger urbanites, who occupy the greater majority of consumers in the culture industry. Having relatively low academic careers and strong inclinations to making money, even at the relatively low wages they offer immense unskilled labor for rapid economic growth in China.<sup>51</sup> Except for a very small minority, they have no religion or ideological bias which can exert the inhibitive action against the consumption of specific kinds of cultural products. Their secularism has been strengthened by the CCP's principle of separating the economy and politics, along with the economy-centered national development strategy. In addition to those

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<sup>49</sup>Thomas Gold, "Go With Your Feelings: Hong Kong and Taiwan Popular Culture in Greater China," *China Quarterly* Vol.136 (December 1993), pp.909-913

<sup>50</sup>Sui Shengzhao, "Chinese Intellectuals' Quest for National Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990's" *The China Quarterly* Vol.152 (December 1996), especially refer to the "Conclusion" pp.730-732

<sup>51</sup>Seol Tonghun, "Population and Labor" (in Korean), in Chang Kyeongsup, *The Understanding of Contemporary Chinese Society* (Seoul, 1995), pp.208-213



factors, a deep concern should be cast upon the global change, which could be depicted as a widespread economy-for-economy ideology. Its destructive power, originating from capitalist countries, has been reinforced by the CCP's economy-centered national development strategy.

One of the outstanding consequences of the various motives acting on the Chinese culture industry is the rapid development of audio and video products.<sup>52</sup> On the contrary, books and magazines are experiencing hardship. Another one is the wide influx of the so-called Gangtai Culture developed by the "economic animals" and well matched with the current secularism and escapism in mainland China. The first one seems to maintain its sustaining power for the moment, yet, the durability of the second one is not likely to be so strong. Unlike Hong Kong and Taiwan, mainland China is a huge country and has an intensive revolutionary history. On that account the political concern is potentially liable to draw public attention. The characteristic tone of the Gangtai Culture is rather weak per se. Its characteristics, represented by music and film, include the easy-listening and easy-watching features which always lay emphasis on the entertaining property, the perfect elimination of socio-political shades, the soft and flowing sentimentalism without the excessive mental stress, the easy and soft dance beat back music, the adolescent love affairs between young man and young woman and the like. It is based upon the unique escapism of Hong Kong and Taiwan, and in detailed features it is basically monotonous, reiterative and lacks in the affluency to develop to another stage. Given the daily living of young urbanites who have entered a stable stage with relatively secure employment and regular income, and in company with the accumulation of cultural experience among the city dwellers, the Gangtai Culture might face a time of gradual disappearance.

The conversion and miscarriage of the 5th Generation Film Directors is suggestive of the description of the current Chinese culture industry. Tiding over the tumultuous backlash, these directors have continuously tried to join the mainstream of Chinese cinema.<sup>53</sup> They submitted to various political requests, including the self-censorship and the self-accusation, endowed a brighter tone onto their screens, tried to make their scripts easier for young audiences, and directed several government-patronized films to obtain the permission to use foreign capital. All of these endeavors allowed these directors a chance to make a few good films such as *Ju Dou*, *Raise the Red Lantern*, *To Live*, *Sing While Walking*, *Life on the String*, *Blue Kite*, *Beijing Rogue*, and *Changing Faces*. However, for all their devotion to the cinema art and the high artistic values of their films, their works do not seem to be competent enough to overcome the former accomplishment of the *Red Sorghum* and the *Farewell to My Concubine* in the viewpoint of culture industry. Their works

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<sup>52</sup>The Mainland Affairs Council, *Zhongguo dalu fuwuye xiankuang*, pp.329-330

<sup>53</sup>Zhang Zhenhua, "Cong Zhang Yimou dianying kan wo guo 'di wu dai' daoyan wenhua guannian de zhuanhuan" (The Transformation of Cultural Ideas of "Fifth-Generation" Directors in China As Is Seen in the Movies Directed by Zhang Yimou), *Fudan Journal*, 1997.5, pp.66-67

seem to have failed in attracting the Chinese people's favor and in cultivating the artistic property of the Chinese cinema. Their works could not fully depict the real problems of the current Chinese society, inevitably they began to show the diminution of vitality and frequently showed excessive intellectualist tendency. They achieved little box office success and failed to obtain better results in the international film festivals. Though they were welcomed by the critics of the western world, they were too serious for the ordinary Chinese people, and they were rather closer to the film noir of the western cinema than to Chinese cultural ideas and traditions.<sup>54</sup> Since the middle of 1990's, the Chinese film industry has not yet fully succeeded in edifying and absorbing the potential cultural momentum of the Chinese people who have always retained a rather vigorous inclination toward knowledge, education and intelligence throughout their long history. Consequently, Chinese people are leaning towards the various entertainment led by TV, foreign films, dance halls, karaoke restaurants, and billiard halls. Apparently, with all the richness and versatility of its cultural tradition and productivity, the Chinese culture and the culture industry are confronted with a hardship which they have never encountered.

In the process searching for a more reasonable future prospect of the Chinese culture industry, several points should be included. First of all, the careful and practical attention should be paid upon the actual direction of the CCP's economy-centered development strategy which seems to contain the considerable flexibility. How the Chinese cultural elites set up a reasonable mutual relation with the culture industry will be another important point. It is closely related to another one; the discussion of a favorable fusion of the 1980's experience and the 1990's vitality, which is expected to be initiated by CCP theorists, cultural experts and other intellectuals of China. Gradually they should be able to have more flexible and open arguments. However, right now, lots of Chinese intellectuals are wondering about exposing their lack of confidence in dealing with the sophisticated socio-cultural changes created by the socialist market economy. One other significant point will be the trend of the global cultural environment, which exclusively carves "economy" in extreme relief, and therefore eliminates all other competing figures including "culture."

*Mailing Address: Yeongku Kim, Associate Professor at the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Korea National Open University. 169, Dongsung-dong, Chongro-ku, Seoul 110-791, Korea. Tel: 82-2-3668-4574, Fax: 82-2-3673-0612. E-mail: ygkim@av9500.knou.ac.kr.*

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<sup>54</sup>Sungil Jung, "The Encounter of Art and Capital" (in Korean), Cinema, Jan.1994 (Seoul), pp.56-60.