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**Nation State Meets Popular Culture: The Construction of Chinese
Nationalism in Anti-Japanese War Dramas**

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Abstract

Nation State Meets Popular Culture: The Construction of Chinese Nationalism in Anti-Japanese War Drama

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This thesis explores how Anti-Japanese War Drama in Chinese TV becomes a field of negotiation in which the forces of dominant state ideology, liberal market and alternative discourses meet. Focusing how the notion of Chinese nationalism has been constructed in the negotiation, this work examines TV dramas as a homogenizing national project in which market forces and state intervention are no longer at odd with each other. By critically reading representations and narratives of bandits and women in two dramas *To Advance towards the Fire* and *Auntie Duohe*, the study points out how dominant nationalist discourses attempt to incorporate the marginalized or disadvantaged group as a consistent part of the nation. However, the anti-Japanese war dramas still allow a space for the alternative discourse to emerge which disturbs the perceived coherence of the nation.

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Introduction

In September 2012, Japanese government announced the decision to purchase the long disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Island with 2.05 billion JPY (about 200 million USD) regardless the strong remonstrance of Chinese government (News Wires, 2012). Looking at fierce discussion on about Japan and Japanese on Tianya BBS, the largest BBS in Mainland China with more than 60 million registered users, I notice how the online space becomes outlet for the expression of anti-Japanese resentment. Discussions frequently address past history of the two countries, especially the anti-Japanese war from 1937 to 1945, to justify their rage. What strikes me is how this specific period of history informs strong stereotype of Japanese people in the imagination of Chinese people. These stereotypes dominate the discussion in varied topics such Japanese foreign policy, transnational marriage and diasporic experience. For people who have never involved in the war, where do these stereotypes come from? Why these images are still persistent almost 70 years after the war? My curiosity on the origin of stereotypes makes me think about how I gain my knowledge about anti-Japanese war through watching films and TV dramas while growing up in urban China. I realize that, these traditional media give me a framework to construct my knowledge about not only Japan, but also China.

With the encouragement of state policy, the number of TV dramas that base on anti-Japanese war history started to increase in 2005. With the support of state policy, the rise of this particular TV genre appeared to be more sustaining than the patriotic discourses in BBS. The discussion in BBS quieted down at the end of 2012, as the progress of territory dispute reached an impasse. However, anti-Japanese war drama still occupied a great portion of TV screens in China.

CHINESE NATIONALISM: PAST AND NOW

The concept of nationalism arrived in China as a new spirit against expansionism, which took over the sovereignty of parts of Chinese territories for hundreds of years (Cui, 2012, p.204). It is therefore a complex construction in which pride and glory of the past empire meets the humiliation imposed by imperialist invasion in the last two centuries. Zhao (2005, p. 132) further delved into the construction and noticed that Chinese nationalism, which derives from the ‘victim narrative’, is a ‘pragmatic nationalism’ utilized by the CCP to maintain people’s faith in the political system in times of political and economic transitions into a post- Communist society. The globalization process, which China cannot resist to be part of since early 1980s, constantly impacts the notion of Chineseness by bringing forth cultural pluralism (Song, 2012, pp. 406). It is necessary for China to build up a strong national identity in the globalization process, and the desire to restore pride from past collective experience becomes an essential component of Chinese nationalism (Cui, 2012, p.204). In the word of a former Chinese senior official, the external threat from outside the nation will strengthen national solidarity and further legitimize the role of CCP as the political leader (Zhao, 2005: 135).

As Anderson (1983: 8) argued, nationalism is not a concrete ideology, whereas it should be treated as an ‘analytical expression’ such as kinship and religion. Therefore it is the formation of relation in the expression of nationalism that should be analyzed. In the flow of history, nationalism is not immune to change. It requires us to examine the reactive and pragmatic Chinese nationalism not only by paying attention to what the counterpart of nation is, but also by situating the relation formed in the expression of nationalism to contemporary condition to examine its meaning. In this sense, the representation of anti-Japanese war in the TV dramas in China should not only be treated as a way to convey political agenda at that time, but it would give us a window through

which we could uncover its pragmatic function embedded in the expression of nationalism.

ANTI-JAPANESE SENTIMENT IN CHINESE NATIONALISM

The history of China did not move forward smoothly in last two centuries when the historical timeline was marked by the wars and occupations of imperialist powers (China-a Chronology of Events, n.d.). For China, Japan stands out as a special case among the former imperialist enemies for several reasons. The most significant factor that influences the current bi-lateral relations is probably the anti-Japanese war that lasted for 8 years from 1937 to 1945. In this historical record, Japanese army killed nearly 20 million Chinese people, and conducted notorious deeds of Japanese army brought enormous trauma on China. For example, they used Chinese civilians as the test subject for bio-chemical weapon research, raped 20 thousand women during Nanking Massacre, and forced Chinese women to serve as military prostitutes (Johnson, 2003 and Wu, 2005).

Though the Chinese government decided not to let historical issue impede the economic relationship between China and Japan, suppressing growing popular nationalism posed to be an impossible task, given the fact that the Chinese attitudes towards Japan actually became more polarized and negative because of history issue during the first decade of 21th century (Reilly, 2010). It should be also attributed to a number of history related incidences that keep enforcing Chinese's anti-Japan sentiment. For example, the newly revised Japanese textbook in 2005 portrayed its outrage in Asian countries as only a minor incidence during the process of 'liberating Asian people from Western colonization'; in 2003 abandoned war-time Japanese chemical weapons buried in remote area in China injured villagers who found them (Wu, 2005). Of course, the

recent Senkaku/ Diaoyu Island escalated the anti-Japan sentiment in China again (News Wire, 2012).

When notorious Japanese war-time images are still circulation through the mass media and history books in China today, mainstream Chinese news media covered Japanese Minister's visiting to war criminal's tomb. China interpreted this event as a signal suggesting that the Japanese government does not plan to give any official apology for its outrage in China (Cui, 2012 and Marquand, 2005). It seems the unrepentant attitude of Japan justifies why China still need to hold what happened in anti-Japanese war. However, Berger (2012 suggest Japan has actually been more repentant than it is credited by it neighboring countries. Berger points out the fact that Japanese prime ministers have orally apologized for the misdeeds of the country many times in diplomatic occasions, while China does not count them as official without any written document. From Berger's observation on China's diplomatic strategy with Japan, China does not give Japan opportunities to provide written apology. In other word, China might not really want to reconcile with Japan, because the government needs Japan to raise the tone of nationalism in order to suppress internal skepticism about CCP's legitimacy (Berger, 2012).

POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CULTURE OF CHINESE TV DRAMA

Scholars (Schneider, 2012; Zhu, Kean & Bai, 2008) urge more to be academically explored about Chinese TV dramas, for is a prevalent component of culture to Chinese people's everyday life. More importantly, this form of traditional media should be understood within 'the parameters of political economy', and it also plays a role in upholding Chinese TV as a 'cultural institution' (Zhu, Keane & Bai, 2008, p.2). According to Song (2012, p.411), although the ideologies Chinese TV dramas convey are

often “tight and close” to official discourses, they still offer open access for alternative ideological or political standpoints. Drawing in on the discussion of culture types put forward by Heite Wang, Song (2012, p.412) has suggested thinking of Chinese TV drama as a product within which the “official guiding culture”, “elite culture” and “popular culture” interwove. In the following three chapters, I will analyze anti-Japanese war drama as a space in which these three cultures negotiate and cooperate with each other.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The first chapter, *Nationalism and Its Commercialized Revelry: The Rise of Anti-Japanese War Drama on Chinese TV in 2005-2013*, provides a general picture to understand the political-economic conditions which bring up the development of anti-Japanese war drama. By brief textual analysis and interpreting second hand data, this chapter argues that the rise of anti-Japanese war drama shows the dynamic of negotiation between liberal market ideology and CCP’s monopoly of power. Besides, interventions from propaganda department of the government show the intention of the state to maintain an appropriate nationalist discourse. Unfortunately, these interventions impair the capability of market to perform efficient self-adjustment.

The second chapter, *Marginal Group, Central Narrative: Analyzing the Representation and Narrative of Bandits in Contemporary Anti-Japanese War Drama*, analyses the how the drama *To Advance Towards the Fire* articulates the relation between bandits and CCP in the war. This chapter employs theories from subaltern studies to deconstruct the nation as a homogenizing project, which attempts to replace its internal struggle with discourse of dominant power. The drama represents bandits and communist soldiers with different types of masculinities, which in turn rationalizes the

incorporation of bandits into Communist army. The chapter regards the incorporation of bandits as an indicator of ongoing project of colonialism within the nation.

The third chapter, *Within and Beyond the Nation: Analyzing Female Experience in Auntie Duohe*, focuses on the experience of female in the war and patriarchal family. By close reading the drama Auntie Duohe, the chapter addresses nation and family as gendered institutions, which express their needs and aspiration in a masculine way. The drama reveals the discrepancies between female experience and masculine discourse of nationalism, and offers the possibility for women to give their voices under the pressure dominant patriarchal order. The drama brings up a alternative peace-making discourse through the construction of East Asian femininity, while the alternative discourse is suppressed by the dominant nationalist discourse under state censorship.

Chapter 1: *Nationalism and Its Commercialized Revelry: The Rise of Anti-Japanese War Drama on Chinese TV in 2005-2013*

INTRODUCTION

In order to celebrate the 60th anniversary of winning the anti-Japanese war in 1945, the State General Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) of China loosened the censorship since 2005 on media production, which drew material from the anti-Japanese resistance during WWII (China Insights, 2013a). The significant increase in the number of anti-Japanese war dramas on the TV screens has been noticed by news media, scholarly discussion and critical circles in the following years, although most industrial statistics regarding precise number of production each year is not available to general public. According to a list of TV drama serials for each major genre (Drama List, n.d.), at least 41 anti-Japanese war dramas were aired for the first time in multiple TV channels in Mainland China in the year 2012. Like most Chinese TV dramas, each anti-Japanese war drama is only produced for a short period of airing, instead of producing series that continue for more than one season in other countries like the US (Schneider, 2012, p. 114). Each anti-Japanese war drama has 30 to 40 episodes, and all episodes are shot prior to the time of airing. Usually two episodes of the drama will be aired per night on one channel in prime time, and the drama runs four to five days in a week until all the episodes have been aired.

Some commentaries online pointed out that, Chinese TV screens have been occupied by these dramas as new battlefields for anti-Japanese war (China Insights, 2013a). The dramas blended elements of comedy, romantic affairs and kungfu into the plot and used stardom to attract audiences of different age groups. Critical circles commonly believe that among all anti-Japanese war dramas produced in these years, good ones and bad ones are intermingled. Although a number of them received harsh

critiques for poor production quality and over-dramatic plot designs, the overall viewing rates of anti-Japanese war drama remained high and more production was thus encouraged.

Schneider (2012) argued, since the beginning of Chinese economic reform in late 1970s, the force of free market has been unleashed upon the previously state-owned media. The role of TV in the CCP agenda also started to shift from the central mouthpiece that straightforwardly delivered CCP's propaganda to an institution that lives by both 'political constraints and commercial incentives' (Schneider, 2012). It is nevertheless too hasty to regard TV industry's double binding role on state propaganda and economic interest as a space for negotiation of two completely contradictory forces. Regulations from several regulatory regimes showed how the state expects TV industry to be an ideological state apparatus and a prosperous economic sector at the same time. According to the 3rd article of Broadcast Regulation (The State Council of PRC [SCPRC], 1997), broadcast system including radio and TV should persist in serving people, carrying out socialist ideology and correctly leading popular opinion (General Principle section). Following that, the 4th article (SCPRC, 1997) demands local governments to bring in the development of broadcasting system into the planning of national economy, and increase government financial expense on the development of broadcast network when needed. As the most consumed one of 15 TV programming categories, TV drama industry was required by TV Drama Censoring Regulation (State Administration of Radio, Film and Television [SARFT], 2004) to also cater to the need of market by making TV dramas what 'the mass enjoy watching'.

Havens, Lotz and Tinic (2009, p. 236) pointed out that it is off the mark to reduce popular culture to an ideological commodity that only reflects the interest of capitalist force while neglects the effect of cultural force. They proposed 'critical media industry

study' as a research approach to combine the different emphasis of political-economy approach and cultural study approach. In the combined approach, they consider culture anthropologically as 'how knowledge about texts, audiences and industry form, circulate and change, and how they influence textual and industrial practices', and aesthetically as 'how media texts arise from and reshape industrial practices' (Havens, Lotz and Tinic, 2009, p. 237). The approach of critical media industry study can find resonance in Stuart Hall's (1998) understanding of popular culture. As Hall (1998) argued, popular culture should be situated into its relation with the institute of dominant cultural productions in order to see the tension between these two.

This chapter attempts to use the framework informed by these two scholarly works mentioned above to understand the mechanism behind the recent boom of anti-Japanese war drama. The chapter also hopes to reveal the opportunities and limits that the Chinese TV drama industry currently faces. The chapter will be based on brief overall textual analysis of several popular anti-Japanese war dramas, and interpretation of second hand data including commentaries, interviews with producers and administrative policies to address following questions. How to understand anti-Japanese war drama as sub-genre evolving from other major genres in the development history of TV drama in China? How does state policy and market capitalism work together to rejuvenate a Chinese nationalist sentiment through the representation of anti-Japanese war? The chapter argues that the rise of anti-Japanese war drama allowed us to see the dynamic of negotiation between liberal market ideology and CCP's monopoly of power that were used to be at odds with each other. The phenomenon reflected a flaw in the Chinese TV drama industry that overly frequent state interventions have taken over the function of market to adjust itself.

INTERMINGLED STATE CENSORSHIP AND MARKET FORCE IN GENRE EVOLUTION

Although the globally spread capitalist ideology pushed commercialized broadcasting systems to cater to the need of market, the role of nation-state in TV industry remains prominent as the whole industry largely relies on the nation to support it in terms of institutional construction, such as content quota, license fee and media infrastructures (Straubhaar, 2007). In terms of products, the TV industry is still considered a national project, which constructs national identity and national culture by producing cultural products that informs common national imagination among its citizens (Straubhaar, 2007; Robertson, 1990). Taking Chinese media as an example, broadcasting system operating according to Communist ideology is expected to fulfill certain roles to serve the government by promoting certain behaviors while discouraging others (Siebert et al. 1963, as cited in Browne, 1989, p. 14-15). Therefore programs of communist broadcasting system often have specific requirement on program content and tend to tackle related themes like “working for common good, participating in political process, supporting the cause of working class”.

As Curtin (2007, p.2) has argued, although the control by the state remained as “ideological and infrastructural limitations”, film and TV industry of mainland China still became part of the globalizing capital market which takes in commercial competitors especially after the political and economic changing taking place across different regions of the world at the end of 1980s. Nowadays, the negotiation between market ideology and state control is constant displayed by Chinese TV industry. To and Yep (2008, p.168) proposed a theoretical framework to understand the contradictory ideologies Chinese leadership seek to reconcile since the 1990s when economic reforms were re-launched. According to To and Yep (2008, p.168), the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on one

hand would hold on to the vision of creating 'socialist men' by imbuing party ideologies into media in order to solidify its political impact; on the other hand, the wave of commercialization brought by globally spread capitalism has complicated the traditional political oriented model of media operation in China.

According to Zhu, Keane and Bai (2008), TV drama narratives during 1980s that depicted the social change and conflict in the process of economic reform were regarded as 'realistic dramas', as opposed to 'historical dramas', which drew materials from epic themes. As the term 'main melody' was used in official discourse as an analogy of CCP's ideology and agenda in times of economic reform, those 'realistic dramas' that stood in the same ideological line with the 'main melody' were also referred to as 'main melody dramas' which often won the favor of propaganda and cultural departments. In the late 1970s, building a legal system that acts in concert with the reform plan was one focus of CCP's agenda (Zhu, Keane & Bai, 2008). TV drama since 1980s started to feature stories about policemen pursuing criminals or uncovering crime plots as a way to construct the image of strong legal system among audiences. The fever of crime drama lasted till 2000s when the inclination of representing bloody and violent crime scenes caught attention of SARFT. As a result, SARFT took all crime dramas off the prime-time screen since 2004, accusing these dramas for containing "violent, sex, gore and horror" (Zhu, 2008, p.8).

According to the classification of CSM, the media market research company whose researches cover TV programs in both mainland China and Hongkong, 'military revolution' is one of the 8 genres that belong to the category of 'modern drama' (Zhu, Keane & Bai, 2008, p.11). At the beginning of 2000s, several military themed dramas started to incorporate entertainment into the plots by portraying the family life of military officers as one of the story lines besides spectacles of war. The shifted focus to the everyday life and interpersonal relations of heroes were proved to be successful market

strategies to attract wider audiences. One of the dramas, *Unsheathing the Swords* (aired in 2005), attained high average audience share at 10.3%. This chapter argues that anti-Japanese drama can be regarded as a sub-genre of ‘military revolution’. Similarly, anti-Japanese war dramas since 2005 also absorb elements of personal life such as romantic affairs into the plot to soften the masculine narrative of the war-drama. Following section will provide more detailed analysis of how these elements were kept in anti-Japanese war dramas to attain a larger market reach.

The genre development of Chinese TV drama shed light on how to understand anti-Japanese war drama. The attempt here is not to rule out the effect of state censorship over genre evolution, a purely market driven phenomenon, or to claim anti-Japanese war drama as a distinct genre that is completely imposed by state propaganda. Instead, the chapter urges to treat the boom of anti-Japanese war drama as a phenomenon that happened at a specific historical moment, while still displays continuity of genre development over time and the regular role of state in it. As previous studies showed, TV drama industries in China have a keen sensation to detect the official emphasis on the republic’s development at different stages. The TV dramas often accurately grasp the ideological inclination and timely reflected it in productions.

The year 2005 was China’s 60th anniversary of winning anti-Japanese war. On Aug 12th 2005, Chanchun Li, the member of CCP Central Committee of the Political Bureau, and Yunshan Liu, the head of Propaganda Department of CCP Central Committee, visited Chinese National Museum for the exhibit on the history of Nanjing Massacre (Chinese News, 2005). Li pointed out that Chinese people’s revolutionary anti-Japanese war played an important role in the world’s anti-Fascism resistance, and the victory was a testimony to the Communist Party’s efficient leadership among different ethnic groups. The history also showed that China stood firmly in safeguarding the peace of the world.

Therefore Chinese people, especially young generation, should be educated about the history (Chinese News, 2005). This visit was covered in the news titled Changchun Li: Keep the history in mind, work with passion, and bring about a great rejuvenation for China (Li Changchun: Laoji lishi fafentuqiang shixian minzu weida fuxing) by Xinhua News Agency which carries the mission of propaganda for CCP since 1930s (Introduction of Xinhua News Agency, n.d.).

On Aug 30th 2005, Shi Zhao, the vice chief of SARFT gave a speech on a symposium held by SARFT to address how Chinese mass media should respond to CCP's instruction (Leaders' Speeches, 2005). His speech titled "Keep the history in mind, work with passion, and contribute power for the great rejuvenation for China" was clearly an official respond on behalf of the SARFT to Changchun Li's instruction. Shi raised three requirements for conducting broadcasting systems in the new era, emphasizing that the role of the Chinese broadcasting system to lead public opinion, to satisfy spiritual and cultural demands of the people and to meet the needs of market oriented economy should be enhanced. These three requirements evidenced an open space in the official discourse for the negotiation between state sponsored ideology control and market leading free competition. Together with broadcasting news, film and compilation documentary, TV drama is one component of SARFT's plan to coordinate with the propaganda of central CCP committee. As Shi summarized, from July to September of 2005, 16 anti-Japanese war dramas with 360 episodes in total had been aired in provincial TV channels. From Aug 13th to Sep 5th, prime time periods in all provincial TV channels had been occupied by anti-Japanese war dramas in order to create the atmosphere of anniversary in the national reach.

The purposeful promotion of anti-Japanese war drama by SARFT inspired the TV industry to pick up the historical subject matter as the base of drama creation. The

enthusiastic of industry was further encouraged by SARFT's loosening censorship. In the year of 2005, more than 20 anti-Japanese war dramas passed the initial proposal review, and the number rocketed to more than 70 in the year 2012 (Japanese Channel, 2013). The quantity was a huge leap comparing to past years, when 3 anti-Japanese war themed TV dramas and films were produced annually on average from 1949 to 2004 (Drama List, n.d.).

The loosening of censorship on the anti-Japanese theme however was only one factor of intervention that contributed to the growing of anti-Japanese war drama. This particular sub-genre of military drama played a role of safe option when the state placed limitation on subject matters that did not reflect CCP's ideology properly. For example, behaviors like crimes, religious activities, and tendencies to trust noncommunist governments were discouraged (Browne, 1989, p. 14-15). In the word of Zhangke Jia (2013), who is regarded as the representative of the 6th generation Chinese film director, the prosperity of anti-Japanese war drama was a reflection of the limits placed on the creation of genre dramas.

This is the reality that genre production has been repressed in China. Shooting stories about police is difficult, because it touched upon the image of public security organ. Shooting crime drama is prohibited, because it revealed social reality. Gangster dramas are forbidden, because they say gangsters should not even exist in China. We also cannot shoot horror dramas, because China holds atheism. At last, the anti-Japanese theme makes a figure. They hold the amulet for being politically correct and hence can rampage across the market (Jia's Weibo post, 2013, Mar 23th, 16:20).

NATIONALISM SUPPORTED BY LIBERAL MARKET IDEOLOGY

As Mankekar (1998, p.36) argues, national media are prompted by two forces. The first is the ideological intention to consolidate national hegemony and repress dissidence, and the second is the economic interest that can be realized by having a

sizable national market to attract advertising. This is not to assert that there is a pan-national culture ready to be put on the screen, neither to say that a national market is naturally available to be reached. However, the argument of Mankekar points to the possibility of a media product to construct a 'nation' and interpellate its audiences as the national body to fulfill the vision of a national market. In the eyes of TV drama producers, anti-Japanese war dramas seems to be more qualified than other genres for the purpose of national market. According to the TV professional Ming Hua who was responsible for the funding allocation to support choicest cultural products in the province of Guangzhou, the high viewing rate anti-Japanese war drama is associated with audiences' shared opinion on the importance of the war in modern Chinese history:

Viewing rate is still the most important criteria for TV stations to decide what to air. (For TV dramas) viewing rates means guaranteed audiences, advertising investment and broadcasting channels at the same time. For example, if a drama talks about the invasion of Japanese pirates in Ming dynasty, it will obviously have lower viewing rates than our current anti-Japanese war dramas... because audiences are not familiar with that part of Chinese history. (China Insights, 2013b)

In this sense, the popularity of anti-Japanese war drama is not only due to the nationalist sentiment against Japan as an invader, at the same time the audiences' pre-existing knowledge about anti-Japanese war requires them no extra effort to digest the drama within its historical background. Chinese audiences can familiarize themselves with the history anti-Japanese war through multiple ways. As one of the must-haves of Chinese history textbooks, majority of Chinese students in primary schools and middle schools are expected to know about it. Besides, it is reasonable to conjure that Chinese audiences will get increasingly familiar with the history by seeing anti-Japanese war dramas that have been produced numerously in recent years.

As the safest option of TV drama production that serves the CCP's promotion of nationalism, the task of anti-Japanese war drama is to seek ways to capitalize the nationalist expression to the greatest extent. In order to do so, it must make sure audiences' fundamental idea of the war is not radically challenge; and applying diversified elements to 'decorate' the history is also important to keep audiences interested.

The most significant common strategy of anti-Japanese war dramas is to create a clear division between 'righteous Chinese people' and 'evil Japanese soldiers'. There is an intention to reduce the image of Japanese soldier to a symbol. The director and script writer of the drama *Shahukou* (aired in 2009) Jizhou Xu received 80 suggestions for revision from the censoring department (China Insights, 2013b). One of the suggestions asked him not to emphasize the high military quality of the Japanese army, but only make the cruelty of Japanese soldiers prominent. Xu said with frustration that the current artistic creation environment only wanted to show audiences a version of Japanese army which is not much smarter than idiots, so that his effort of portraying a realistic image of Japanese soldiers will be put to vain. Learning from the previous experience, when Xu worked on his second anti-Japanese war drama *Everlasting Designation* (Yongbu Momie de Fanhao) in 2010, he just borrowed the Japanese character Saito Ichi from famous cartoon *Rurouni Kenshin* instead of creating an original one.

Actors also realized that producers of the drama only wanted to see simplified images of Japanese soldiers. A Chinese figurant summarized several basic tips of playing a Japanese soldier. Since the crews always picked figurants who look a bit ugly and ferocious to play Japanese soldiers, he just shrank his back, narrowed the eyes and try to make himself look wretched (Feng, 2013). Several Japanese actors who live in China, such as Ichida Koji, Miura Kenichi and Tsukagoshi Hirotaka, were often asked to play

Japanese military officers in Chinese TV dramas. They expressed their doubt about the way Japanese were represented, because these characters “were not like Japanese people, sometimes not even human beings” (Net Ease Entertainment, n.d.). Once in shooting, the director asked Hirotaka to jump off the horse and rape a Chinese woman he saw in the snow. Hirotaka told the director that the plot is too unrealistic as no one would want to do this in a freezing weather, while the director insisted, “this is how Japanese people were at that time”. According to the experiences of Japanese actors, Chinese TV drama directors cooperated with have a stereotypical image of Japanese in the mind and also try to reinforce the image in the TV drama. Japanese actors were often told to reduce the representation of internal conflict when the characters were about to kill civilians, and only play “devils without humanity” (Net Ease Entertainment, n.d.).

The weak fighting ability of anti-Japanese war dramas is another denounced feature of anti-Japanese war dramas. Chinese often killed the Japanese soldiers easily in illogical and unexpected ways. In *To Advance towards the Fire* (*Xiangzhe Paohuo Qianjin*, aired in 2012), an armed Japanese unit was wiped out by a small group of Chinese soldiers using rocks. In *Leave no Japanese Devil* (*Yige Guizi dou bu liu*, aired in 2013), the Chinese butcher killed all the Japanese soldiers invading in his village with his broadsword, although the soldiers were equipped with guns and swords. The most quirk scene appeared in *Legendary Knights* (*Kangzhan Qixia*, aired in 2010) in which a Chinese man threw a Japanese soldier into the air and tore him into two halves. This bloody scene incurred intense discussion online, and most people rebuke the over dramatic exaggeration as a disrespectful representation of history.

There is a popular joke online about the overflow of anti-Japanese war drama: A descendant of a Japanese soldier came to China to morn his ancestor who was killed in the war, so he asked the taxi driver to take him to the site of old battle field where

Japanese army suffered the most disastrous loss. The taxi driver thought for a while and then took him to Hengdian World Studio (Popular Culture, 2013). Hengdian World Studio is the largest studio for film and TV shooting in the world. It sits within the economically most developed part of China and has the fame of ‘Chinese Hollywood’ (Hengdian World Studio, n.d.). In 2004, Hengdian World Studio was approved by SARFT as the only national development base of Film and TV industry. In 2012, the studio received 150 crews to shoot TV drama or films, and among them 48 were dealing with anti-Japanese theme (China News Weekly, 2013). In the same year, the Hengdian Studio Actors Association used figurants for 300 thousand person-times, and about 60% of figurants had played Japanese soldiers at least once (Feng, 2013). As a figurant actor Shi said, he played Japanese soldiers for 200 times in more than 30 dramas in 2012. ‘Dying’ in these dramas as Japanese soldier took a big proportion of his acting and his record was ‘dying’ 8 times in a day. The joke about Hengdian World Studio actually reflected the true market need of mass formulaic production in which the ‘death’ of Japanese soldiers is treated as a norm.

As SARFT required, TV dramas should “use varied methods to portray vivid and touching artistic characters; apply realistic emotion, positive life attitudes and high aesthetic standard to promote central socialist value”, the theme responds well to the call (Announcements, 2009). Regardless whether anti-Japanese war dramas exaggerated ‘realistic emotion’ in order to manifest dramatic conflict, the dramas showed an active attempt to be innovative in “portraying vivid and touching artistic characters”. One of the strategies is the incorporation of Chinese kungfu and to emphasize its constructive role in prompting the progress of the warfare. For example, in *Arrow on the String (Jian zai xianshang, aired in 2013)*, the heroine used her bow and arrow to fight against Japanese soldiers who were equipped with guns throughout the whole drama. In another drama, the

hero avoided all bullets from more than ten Japanese soldiers while jumping off a cliff, and meanwhile he threw out his darts to the enemies and killed all of them. The inclusion of Chinese kungfu or martial arts indicates a vicissitude of genre, as they previously only appear in pre-modern dramas as an essential element for legendary tales (Zhu, Keane & Bai, 2008, p.10).

In China the TV drama audiences' main age group is older than 45, the viewing time increases as the audience group's average age goes up (Schneider, 2012, p.138). As a result, using stardom is another widely accepted strategy to maintain the popularity of anti-Japanese war dramas among young audiences. In TV drama industries of Mainland China, Hongkong and Taiwan, there is a term 'idol drama' used for TV dramas that predominantly feature stories of young people which usually include romantic affairs in the plot. 'Idol drama' cannot be classified as a genre, as they do not have a presumed conventional theme or subject as other genres do. The most significant feature of 'idol drama' is its use of stardom or the attempt to create new stars through the drama. Due to the fact that idol dramas tend to attract young audiences especially young female audiences, in some cases it is whether the actors or actresses are good looking instead of how well they can act that decides the popularity of idol drama. Some anti-Japanese dramas also adopted the same logic of using popular idols. In *The Northwestern Wolf* (*Zhanhuo Xibeilang*, aired in 2012), the leading actor Hawick Lau was originally a contract artist of TVB from Hongkong. Lau gained popularity among mainland audiences in late 2000s. Yuanbo Wu, the scriptwriter of *The Northwest Wolf* claimed that war dramas and idol dramas can be combined in an organic way. He juxtaposed the features of both type of dramas to point out they are not contradictory to one another:

Idol dramas are for the enjoyment of eyes. I use idol dramas to present war dramas, and audiences like the aesthetic effect. When the beauty (of idol drama)

is torn apart by tragedies (of war), the show then attains its dramatic punch. (Sun, 2012)

NATIONALISM OUT OF CONTROL AND THE SYSTEM FLAW BEHIND THE SCENE

The prosperity of anti-Japanese war drama reflected the lingering of market adjustment. As some professional commentaries claimed, Chinese TV industry lacked an overall planning to predict the performance of the market (Duan, 2013). The high quantity but low quality of anti-Japanese war dramas revealed a fact that an effective selection mechanism is missing. After promoting anti-Japanese war drama for years, although it seems market has not been acting like saturated yet, SARFT has already detected the illness of the genre and attempted to intervene the market operation. In May 2009, SARFT announced its evaluation and suggestion of recent anti-Japanese war dramas (Announcements, 2009). The announcement criticized that “some anti-Japanese war drama lack innovative contents, and the industry should pay attention to the tendency.” The announcement also required broadcasting production institutions to put more energy on improving the quality of ideology conveyed by TV dramas. In terms of content creation, artists should have the courage to bring forth new ideas and avoid following market trends blindly.

In 2013, SARFT raised more specific requirement to regulate anti-Japanese war dramas. Satellite television channels were required to modify or take off those dramas with excessive amount of entertainment elements before airing, even though these dramas have already passed the end-product censorship (Entertainment News, 2013). Famous actor and the member of CPPCC National Committee Daoming Chen argued that some of the recent anti-Japanese war dramas are distorting the history by applying elements that do not match the true history (Yu, 2013). Chen’s perspective expressed a mainstream concern over the genre which claims that using elements of entertainment to

commercialize anti-Japanese history is regarded as a misleading practice which will shape false conception of Chinese modern history. Chen also insisted that, because anti-Japanese resistance is a part of Chinese modern history which is a condensation of China's suffering and humiliation, the mediated representation should not be allowed with too much space for artistic processing.

When online controversy pushed anti-Japanese war drama to the focus of public opinion, SARFT clarified that the purpose of restriction is only to eliminate those with inappropriate entertaining elements. As the vice director of SARFT's TV division said, "the anti-Japanese history is the great song of praise to memorize China's resistance against the foreign invasion, hence the representation of the history is the obligation and mission of all artists...Only those neglected historical facts should be corrected." (Entertainment News, 2013) As a result, a number of channels re-examined those dramas, which have already passed censorship earlier to meet the requirement of SARFT (Duan, 2013).

Theoretically, the meddling of SARFT should effectively improve the quality of anti-Japanese war dramas by altering the content and limiting the number. It seems the role of SARFT successfully make up the deficiency of the market in self-adjusting. However, the irony is that the frequent proposals of prohibitions from SARFT have intervened the free operation of TV market and impaired its ability to satisfy the need of audiences. In recent years, SARFT imposed varied and specified restrictions on popular TV dramas, especially on prime time dramas. For example, dramas with themes of crime, royal family conflict, and time-travel cannot be aired at prime time (Net Ease Entertainment, 2011). These genres were among the most popular genres among TV dramas. As Hong (2002, as cited in Schneider, 2012, p.9) argued, the growth in broadcasting capability goes hand in hand with an increased demand for popular TV

entertainment formats. Hong's argument confirmed the entertaining function of TV dramas is important in satisfying the market. However, the prohibitions of SARFT largely narrowed down the range of options for producers in terms of subject matters, and attempted to restrict the function of TV drama as entertainment. The attempt basically goes against the nature of a free market. Family drama and anti-Japanese war drama are the safest types of dramas that are still popular among audience (Duan, 2013). The narrow range of themes pushed producers to navigate a new path within the range to catch eyeballs. Therefore the motivation of being distinct prompted the genre to mingle with entertainment elements such as the using of stardom and kungfu. Unfortunately, entertaining the audiences was not the goal of SARFT at the first place, and they saw the excessive entertaining elements as a threat to the authenticity of the nationalist discourse they wanted to construct through TV dramas.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITS

This chapter analyzed the boom of anti-Japanese war dramas from 2005 to 2013, and argued that the popularity of the particular genre could be partly attributed to the purposeful encouragement of state policies that aim at preserving nationalist discourse in the media space. The policy encouragement soon opened a window for the increasing number of dramas to influx into the market. When the drama reached to certain number, the abuse of entertainment brings the dramas a bad name for distorting history. However, the frequent state intervention policies have limited the capability of the market to encourage producers to explore new genres. Finally, SARFT used its capability to interfere the operation of market in order to keep a healthy circulation of 'appropriate' nationalism discourse. This phenomenon showed how the reconciliation between global spread ideology of capitalist free market and nationalism happens when state policy and

market work together. The phenomenon also evidenced that global spread capitalism is not necessarily producing a global cultural hegemony, while discourses like nationalism that is specific to certain groups can be promoted as well.

The argument of this chapter is largely based on the analysis of media text, policies and the industry; therefore it helps to understand the booming of anti-Japanese war dramas from the perspective of production. This information can help to speculate a general reaction of audiences. However, this chapter has not addressed the reception of the dramas in order to deconstruct the phenomenon from a different angle. As the online criticism indicated, audiences hold negative attitudes towards these dramas. While the high viewing rates and continuously emerging new dramas prove that a considerable number of audiences are still watching them. Besides, the constituent of audience population is still unknown. What makes people watch these dramas despite their poor quality of content and production could also be explored in greater detail by other methodologies like interview which pays attention to individual subjectivities in media consumption.

Chapter 2: *Marginal Group, Central Narrative: Analyzing the representation and narrative of bandits in anti-Japanese war drama*

Anti-Japanese resistance in China has been interpreted dominantly as a collective national action in the official discourse (Sang, 2011). When the rise of anti-Japanese war dramas became a phenomenon since 2005, the dramas attempted to address the participation of the whole population. A great number of dramas do not only feature soldiers and intellectuals as the participant of war on the Chinese side, while there was a conscious emphasis on the contribution made by ordinary people or marginalized group. In the narratives of those TV dramas, the inventory of protagonists has been expanded to mining workers (*Jiézhènguó Chuánqí*, aired in 2011), handicrafts men (*Shénqiāng*, aired in 2012), students (*Lièbiàn*, aired in 2013), hunters (*Xiàngzhe Shènglì Qiánjìn*, aired in 2013) and so forth. Notably, bandits appear as main heroes in several popular anti-Japanese war dramas. Famous ones such as *Snow Wolf Valley* (*Xuělánggǔ* 2012), *Snow Leopard* (*Xuěbào* 2010), *Brave Journey to the Northeast* (*Chuǎng Guāndōng* 2008), and *To Advance towards the Fire* (*Xiàngzhe Pàohuǒ Qiánjìn*, aired in 2012). These dramas have the average first-time airing viewing rate from 3.5% to 6% in major cities of China (Sohu Video, 2010; Wang, 2008). In these dramas, bandits either cooperate with the Communist army in the warfare or get incorporated by it and become part of the legitimate armed force in the revolutionary movement.

To Advance Towards The Fire (*Xiàngzhe Pàohuǒ Qiánjìn*, 2012) is one of the shows that articulate the role of bandits as part of the anti-Japanese armed force during WWII. Its producer Hairun Movies & TV is the largest private media production company in mainland China and has produced more than 2500 episodes since its founding in 2000 (Hairunmedia, n.d.). The show was first aired in 2012 by eight provincial and municipal TV channels in Mainland China. Its first week airing in Jiangsu

Satellite Television (JSTV) achieved the highest viewing rate during among all the prime time shows across the nation, and the viewing rate of the last episode came back to the top of ranking list (Entertainment, 2012). The outstanding viewing rate could partly be attributed to the stardom of the Taiwanese actor Wu Qilong who entered the entertainment industry in 1988 as a pop singer. In recent years, Wu's fame in Mainland China has amounted to another peak because of his remarkable performance in a number of popular TV dramas. In *To Advance Towards The Fire*, Wu played the main character Lei, who is the head of a bandit gang. After the carefree life of bandits was destroyed by the war, Lei and his fellow bandits joined the anti-Japanese resistance and finally became a regimental commander of the Communist army.

The post-colonial studies of nationalism pointed out the relation within the nation is often rendered as "kinship" because of the un-selectable attribute of nationality, while the naturalized nationalism should not mask its internal frictions which pertain to all types of "manipulation, conspiracies and the pursuit of private interest" within the nation (Anderson, 1983, p. 8; Chatterjee, 1993, p.3). The construction of nation is a normalizing project that aims at managing its internal fragments and differences as unthreatening part of a hegemonic culture. These fragments are not natural "microcosms" of a bigger history, while the way we treat them matters in terms of how history is constructed (Rodriguiz, 2011; Pandey, 2000, p.281).

Pandey (2000) believes that, the study of "fragments" should pay attention to the "voice from the edge" and look at the history from a marginalized perspective that might disturb the coherence of its perceived totality. Guha (1998a, p. 35) refers to these "fragments" as "subaltern", which means the "inferior rank" which occupies the lower end of social hierarchy "in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any." Based on his observation of the historiography of Indian nationalism, Guha (1998a; 1998b)

argues that modern nation and nationalism were attributed to the achievement of the bourgeois nationalist elitism and colonial elitism in the narrative of official history. The elitist discourse reduces nationalism to a simplified stimuli-response model, which has a prejudice to deny the independent contribution of the subaltern to the national project (Guha, 1998a & 1998b).

As this chapter will discuss in greater detail later, the rise of bandits indicates social crisis, and their activities challenge existing social structure (Billingsley, 1988). In this sense, the way discourses of bandits appear in popular culture, especially the representation of how they take part in a national project of war, will show resistance, incorporation, and negotiation taking place between marginalized group and dominant political power.

This chapter will closely read one serial TV drama *To Advance towards the Fire* to examine the narrative of history and the representation of bandits through textual and discursive analysis to examine the media text at “the very intersection of colonialism and historiography”, as a way to understand the power behind the narrative (Guha, 1994, p.51). The main questions to be addressed in this chapter are as follows. How does the drama acknowledge bandits as a fragment of the nation that has distinct interest and independent contribution in the war? How does the drama relate the representation of bandits, especially bandit’s masculinity, with the formation of political power of CCP? How does the transformation of bandits serve the hegemonic discourse of the party/nation? Borrowing Spivak’s words (1988, p. 281), my work is not going to claim authenticity for any version of history, whereas the emphasis is on how “an explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one”.

THE HISTORY OF BANDITS IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

A number of historical studies have been devoted to understand the mechanism behind the emergence and development of bandit gangs in China (Billingsley, 1998; Zhou and Shi, 2004; Chen and Xie, 2012, etc.). As Billingsley (1988, p.3) notes, the choice of joining a bandit gang is usually a rational reaction to a specific social environment which left marginalized group or individuals with limited options to survive, although official document would describe it as an irrational and desperate anti-social behavior. Throughout Chinese history for over one thousand years, poverty, famine and political instability which lead to economic insecure for civilians can all cause growth of bandits (Zhou & Shi, 2004, p.39). Historically, the invasion of Japanese army in the northeast part of mainland China caused a new wave of bandit resurrection, and the number of bandits reached to at least 20 millions in late 1930s (Billingsley, 1988, p.1). At beginning of Japanese invasion, the rapid increase of bandits was caused by the disturbed agriculture production. The tendency was intensified by the migrating of Nationalist government, which resulted in large number of fugitive soldiers who wanted to sustain living by selling weapons. Given these characteristics of Chinese bandits, they became an object for strategic contest of Nationalist government, Communist Party and Japanese army during the anti-Japanese resistance (Billingsley, 1988).

Although bandits have the potential to become part of armed force, their realistic material pursuit still limited the possibility of keeping any long-term political loyalty, especially in times when multiple military or political powers play seesawing games (Billingsley, 1988). Therefore, to channelize the accumulated rancor of bandits, and to prevent them from being a social threat become the vital task for any regime that attempted to rule China. In WWII, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) realized that their power is the weakest among three contesting political powers in Mainland China,

therefore how to utilize the great number of bandits creatively to gain support from the public became one of the main tasks (Chen & Xie, 2012). The special political condition at that time explains why Communist Party has the tradition to not reject bandits, but to imbue them with socialist philosophy in order to transform them ideologically. In the year 1930, Mao pointed out that the Red Army and local party organs should actively implement “educational training” among members of bandit gangs to precipitate their acceptance of socialist revolutionary ideology (Chen & Xie, 2012).

However, ideological transformation was only one component of the incorporation process, and it was mainly directed to bandit gangs, which initiatively asked to be incorporated (Zhou & Shi, 2004). In practice, who to incorporate and how to deal with those who are not willing to be incorporated often times reflected the intention of CCP to enlarge and reinforce its own orbit (Billingsley, 1988). Billingsley (1998), Zhou and Shi (2004) all point out that CCP used different strategies to address bandit issues according to the varied power dynamic of bandit groups in different regions. In areas that have been dominated by Communist military power, suppressing bandit activity was an effective strategy to gain public support for the Communist party. In areas where bandits have established their network or have cooperated with either Nationalist government or Japanese, Communist Party tried to persuade them to accept incorporation or at least stay neutral among three political forces (Billingsley, 1988). In some other cases, the Communist Army publicly executed the head bandit of the gang as a way to deter other bandits.

To sum up, the history of bandits in China indicates a relation between the marginalized group and unstable social system. Since their activities can be regarded as a resistance against existing social orders, political powers usually seek ways to keep their

activities under control. Consequently, the way bandits and dominant political powers interact with each other demonstrates how nation is being formed ideologically.

BANDIT AS INDEPENDENT CONTRIBUTOR IN ANTI-JAPANESE RESISTANCE

The opening scene of *To Advance Towards the Fire* starts with a footage of reality documentary. Besides the battle planes shooting across the sky and the bombing barrage rising on the horizon, the image quality resembles old films in order to enhance the feeling of the factuality of war. The voice-over set forth the historical background of the show for the audiences that China is experiencing the final stage of anti-Japanese war when Japanese army has already been defeated in the battles on Pacific Ocean. Lei and his bandit gang appear in the second scene in which they are playing with some advanced firearms including a canon, which was given to them by a Communist army. Contrast with the first scene that depicted the fierce battle, the second scene has a delightful atmosphere made prominent by the light-hearted background music. One subordinate of Lei jokes that the Communist army is a miser, and its attempt to incorporate the bandit gang with such small 'bribe' is naïve. The third scene switched over to battle field again, while this time it creates a sense of presence by showing a small residual of Communist army leading by their commander Jiangong fighting with the Japanese army which has a larger number of soldiers and firearms. The first three scenes form a contradiction between standpoints of the bandits and the Communist army in the war: one fought actively regardless the sacrifice, and the other one cared only about their own pleasure and interest while being indifferent to the national crisis. Later in the episode, Jiangong talks about his interaction with Lei, "I tried to pull him [Lei] into our [Communist] army, but he turned me down every single time, otherwise our army would have been much stronger. He didn't fight against the Japanese much, but he isn't a bully to villagers

either, seems those rich landlords are his main targets.” In another conversation, when asked to join the Communist army, Lei answered, “Can we not talk about this? With our firearms and gold, we can just enjoy our carefree life.” (Episode 1)

The first battle between the bandit gang and the Japanese took place soon when the bandits witnessed Communist army and Japanese army fighting in a valley. However, they took action because Lei saw a female Communist soldier Yufei was in danger, and she coincidentally resembled his dead fiancée. After Lei and Yufei had opportunities to know each other, Lei started to accept Yufei’s suggestion and joined battles in times of crisis as a way to please her. Although it seems Yufei succeeded to integrate the bandits as part of the anti-Japanese resistance, Lei only cooperated for his personal interest to impress Yufei as a woman he has interest in. In the beginning part of the drama, the refusal to join Communist party appears several times as an expression of bandits’ independent interest. As they value money and easy life instead of political appeal, the desires of bandits formed a resistance to the Communist party’s attempt of incorporation. The refusal also signals the failure of nationalism and communism to explain the motivation behind the deeds of bandits. It can be argued that, in the beginning of the drama, bandits appear as an independent anti-Japanese power with their distinct interest.

THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTING BANDIT

In order to understand how the autonomy of bandits was positioned and valued in the grand narrative of the drama, a comprehensive scrutiny of bandit representation is needed. The chapter wants to emphasize how these representations serve to articulate a power relation between CCP and the bandits.

This drama often displays Lei’s participation in anti-Japanese battle as an expression of personal heroism that manifests his masculine power. In a number of

battles, Lei appears at a critical time when Japanese army has almost killed everyone, and his advent could easily turn the table around. Sometimes, Lei has one on one fight between him and a Japanese enemy. Although the rival was extraordinary in battling, Lei still wins the battle every time because of his bravery and promptness. The exhibition of masculinity is conducted under a female gaze, as in most cases Yufei stays close to watch Lei fighting, worrying about his safety at the same time. The presence of woman in the battlefield turns fighting into a performance of Lei's personal masculine charm. The cinematography of the drama also helps to display the bandit's masculinity for audiences. Lei's fightings are usually captured by long shots that concentrate on every movement and facial expression of the actor.

The construction of hyper-masculinity of bandits in the drama conforms to the need of audiences in the post-communist era. As Song (2010) argues, since China has opened up its market to the globe, the traditional Maoist types of masculinity has started to experience a crisis under various flows of cultural impact. Because the Maoist ideology privileges class struggle in its official discourse, heroes in the revolutionary time are often portrayed as "selfless and asexual", while these monotonous images fail to attract audiences today. The representation of bandits or bandits-like figures in TV drama can be regarded as an embodiment of re-masculinizing Chinese culture in the post-Mao era (Song, 2010, p. 406).

After Lei's fortress was bombed away by the Japanese army, the bandits settle down in a village. They meet Jiangong, the former commander of a Communist regiment, who was injured in a battle in which he also lost all his soldiers. As Jiangong and Lei both like Yufei, the two men regard each other as rival. The conflict is soon escalated to the contestation over leadership. As both of them wanted to organize a local resisting

force and take the leadership. As a result, they decided to recruit their own team in ten days, and whoever recruited more followers will be the leader of the region.

The bandit gang tried to organize a revolutionary force in the way they organize themselves. Therefore they believe material wealth is the right incentive to buy the villagers to their side. The bandits did not see how a resistant army should be different from a bandit group, and their following actions proved that they still operate with their bandit logic. Therefore they promised villagers, whoever joined their team will be given a gun and some money. Instead of using material inception, Jiangong's team focused on ideological reforming which was the tradition of the Communist party. They went to villagers and promoted their Communist army as a team, which unites ordinary people and represents their interests. They started to teach villagers to sing the March of the Volunteer that became the national anthem after the 1949. The passionate lyrics 'arise, ye who refuse to be slaves. Let us amount our flesh and blood toward our new Great Wall' largely inspired the villagers. The villagers were all attracted by the Jiangong's depiction of a utopian communist regime with 'no oppression and dictatorship', which will allow each ordinary people to 'have their own house and receive education.' The following words said by Yufei spoke to the mobilizing role of communist party in the anti-Japanese resistance:

My good people, yes our army is not strong enough now, but as long as we unite together, then the 4 billion people in our country will become our army. If no one of us fights against the Japanese, then we're allowing them to do whatever they want in China. (Episode 9)

Although the representation of bandits reflected the "projection of post-communist values onto the communist past", the representation of CCP members in the drama still largely followed the routine conventional masculine image in Maoist time (Huang, as cited in Song, p. 421). As Berry (2004) argued, literature of Mainland China

has the tradition to emphasize on the traits of characters. In the Mao era, literatures tend to have simple didactic paradigms of characters in order to draw a clear line between good and evil, hero and villains. Traditionally, individual features that might threaten the coherence of individual identity are also regarded as a threat towards the collective identity of the nation (Bhabha, 1990, as cited in Berry, 2004, p. 80). Hence Chinese literature and media products in the early post-war era would consciously rule out the unharmonious element. Even in the post-Mao era, whether literatures should be allowed to portray more complex but realistic characters, especially heroes, was still the focus of debate within the circle of artists. In *To Advance Towards the Fire*, Jiangong and Yufei's images obviously represented the image of Communist Party. Their representations as soldiers who are 'morally and politically pure and certain in their visions' can be regarded as a revival of literature tradition of Mao's era in the contemporary TV drama (Berry, 2004, p.111). The masculinity Jiangong embodies also reflects a regression back to Maoist asexual communist soldier. Although he likes Yufei, he does not explicitly express his affection, while keeps their relationship as pure comradeship. In the drama, different types of masculinity embodied by bandits and communist soldiers compensate each other.

The different approaches of recruiting not only embody the ideological difference of bandits and communist army. More importantly, the contradiction predicted a relation between the bandits and the communist in the anti-Japanese resistance. The bandits are represented as simple, violent and unsophisticated; on the other hand, the Communist Party appears to be a persistent team that has clear political appeal even in its low tide period. Contradiction also appeared in Yufei's judgment on both Jiangong and Lei. She talks about Jiangong with a tone of admiring. He was a teacher with great knowledge, and also an idol who attracts young female students including hers. Yufei describes

Jiangong as ‘a fire in cold night, a lamp in the darkness’ that illuminated her and guided her. However, when asked whether she likes Lei, Yufei answers jokingly, ‘I just feel he’s not grown up yet.’ The child like image of Lei serves as a metaphor, which implicitly suggested bandits are an immature force in the revolutionary movement. Even though both teams aim at protecting the nation and casting out the enemy, the distinct difference implicitly pointed out that Communist Party has the attributes of a political leader, while the bandits need to be led by the Party to become a true efficient revolutionary force.

When one examines the ‘representation’ of bandits, it is important to think about it from two aspects, ‘speaking about’ and also ‘speaking for’. On one side, the drama speaks about bandits in a certain way in which they are regarded as an independent nationalist revolutionary force. They are righteous and patriotic Chinese people who defend the nation against foreign invaders, while their minds are simple without political vision. They are also physically capable but mentally immature soldiers who fight on their passion rather than strategy. This chapter argues that, to fix static image of the bandits is not the ultimate purpose of the drama. Because the bandits are not a visible component of contemporary Chinese society, their stereotype constructed in the drama does not serve a direct political purpose as stereotypes of other social groups might do today. Then we should focus more on understanding the bandit’s stereotype as part of an official narrative, which speaks for them, and defines their position in the normative history. In other word, the construction of significantly opposite representation of bandits and CCP members will help to rationalize the narrative that emphasizes the role of CCP in transforming bandits.

THE ERASURE OF DIFFERENCE

Hershatter (1993) raises critique about Guha's notion of subaltern, which posited the subaltern as the opposite of the elite. Hershatter argued that, the subaltern-elite dichotomy considered the social position of subaltern fixed regardless of its conscious action. For instance, the experience of 20th century China provides evidences to complicate the clearly cut edge between the subaltern and the elite (Hershatter, 1993). According to Johnson (1962), the most significant disturbing force in the contemporary history of China came from the rise of CCP itself since 1921. CCP presented its growing as a nationalist revolutionary movement which liberated peasants and workers from the oppression of imperialist power and native landlords. During WWII, the common national crisis was utilized by CCP as a tool of social mobilization. What has been blurred in the war is the relation between the elite and the subaltern. CCP consciously aligns itself with the interest of civilians, in order to mobilize them to join in the armed resistance against Japanese invasion that was the most direct foreign threat at that time (Johnson, 1992).

The war-time popularity legitimated the post-war authority of CCP in governing; hence the pre-PRC mass alignment with the ordinary people has evolved to the identification in the form of state with its people. As Hershatter (1993, p.107) notes, the centering of people in the dominant historiography has in fact continuously kept its presence since the establishment of PRC in 1949. Great emphasis has been placed on encouraging the subaltern to 'speak' by collecting and publishing oral histories which reflected the experiences of peasants and workers about how they resisted against feudal and imperialist authorities (Hershatter, 1993). Therefore, in the history of China in the 20th century, it is overly simplistic to articulate the relation of subaltern and elite as completely opposite to each other. The blurred elite-subaltern distinction is important,

because it could help one to understand the way subaltern groups appear in Chinese literature.

Gladney (2004) suggests, minority and rural regions are often chosen by Chinese artists as an optical angle from which they deconstruct Chinese society. Gladney also believes that these marginal can offer a safe while critical space for artists to question the center in the stringent political environment. On the other hand, the marginal space was given significant political connotations in earlier Chinese literature from 1940s-70s (Zhang, 2010). Chinese literature portray these spaces not only as the seedbed of which cultivated 'authentic' Chinese culture, but also as the womb which gestate revolutionary power that liberate the nation from the hand of imperialism and feudalism. Given its central role of marginal space in Mao's revolutionary movement, rural areas in China are both the margin in geographical sense and the center in political sense (Zhang, 2010). The ideological connotation of rural area in China set forth the theoretical foundation for understanding the activities of marginal groups like peasant and bandits which often take place in those spaces.

In this ideological context, the bandits enjoyed some positive political connotation in Chinese literature of 20th century. Chen (2012) argues that, Chinese literature in 1910s largely picture bandits as "righteous people who defied the authority and helped the poor". These literatures have been influenced by radical revolutionary ideology rising with the 'May 4th movement' in 1919, and usually praise bandits as heroes who insist on their vision to resist social inequality. The discourse of bandits and the discourse of socialist revolutionaries are mingled together in the poem written by Moruo Guo who extolled leftist thinkers and political leaders from Marx to Lenin as the 'bandits' of social revolution. Determined by the ideological trend of the society, there is no clear cut between political leaders and bandits in the revolutionary period (Chen, 2012). The vague

segregation provided ideological foundation for the bandits to appear in later literature as anti-Japanese heroes.

The 1930s witnessed the prosperity of novels based on the history of anti-Japanese war, and bandits started to appear in these novels as main characters who participated in the resistance (Shao, 2007). The discourse of bandits as nomads of the society rules is dissolved by the discourse of revolutionary movements (Cai, 2010). In this period, literatures mainly used two means to handle the representation of bandits, including ‘combination model’ and ‘growth model’ (Shao, 2007). In the combination model, the notorious deeds of bandits like robbing and bullying co-exist with their brave participation in the anti-Japanese resistance. The war created the possibility for the bandit to be villain and hero at the same time. However, the ‘growth model’ emphasizes the erasure of bandit’s negative attribution. The ‘growth model’ is widely applied in the novels of writers from Northeast part of China, which suffered the most severe ravage from the Japanese invasion (Yan, 2002). After the Culture Revolution ended, Chinese media products started to feature more mature Party figures who lead the immature Party members or non-Party members to develop stronger trust in Communist faith (Berry, 2004). In the narrative of “growth model”, war becomes a milestone which transformed bandits from ‘Robinhood’ to ‘heroes of the history’. In the ‘growth model’, the lead of Communist Party plays the key role in guiding the bandits. Only through gradually attaining the consciousness of class revolution, can the bandits become eligible soldiers who identify with the proletarian and national interest (Shao, 2007).

The scholarly discussion mentioned before grounded the possibility for the transformation of bandits to happen in the drama. The construction of apparently opposite representation of bandits and Communist Party helps to rationalize the narrative which emphasizes the leading role CCP in transforming the marginal group. The second half of

the drama addresses the process of transformation that turns subalterns into elites. The transformation supports Herschatter's (1993) critique about Guha's elite-subaltern dichotomy, that the opposite relation can be disturbed in social evolution. At the same time, it also speaks to Spivak's argument that once subaltern speaks independently, it is no longer remained in the subaltern position (1988).

Because of some irruptive events, the competition between Jiangong and Lei ended up with nothing conclusive. Experiencing war together, both of them started to know more about the other side and developed some sort of connection. Lei finally agreed to join the Communist army and served as a unit captain; then his bandit fellows automatically all become Communist soldiers.

In the drama, death of bandits signifies the transformation and the response to a collective call greater than the interests of individual or sub-groups. With the aggravation of warfare, several important supporting roles die in battles, including the ones who previously were bandits and those who were Communist soldiers from beginning. In the funeral, they are all commemorated as martyrs. The funeral can be regarded as the ritual through which the contribution of bandits were recognized and recorded in the official history. The title 'martyr' addressed their new role, while their past as an outsider has been strategically neglected. After the gang was incorporated, one of Lei's favorite subordinate was executed for raping a woman. He stepped on the execution field unflinchingly to show his compliance to communist military discipline. Here the obedience of bandits to the CCP resembled the obedience of a son to father or a younger brother to an elder one. The original masculinity of the bandits characterized by their physical capability and lack political vision or discipline is transformed into new type masculinity, which is maintained within the control of patriarchal familiar order.

Jiangong also died in the final battle when he tried to save Lei. His sacrifice was based on a construction of a selfless national brotherhood that attempts to transcend the division of class. The transcendence is achieved exactly through the military corporation and ideological exchange in the project of anti-Japanese resistance. After Jiangong's death, a long shot was used to focus on Lei who dashed ahead into the gunfire regardless of his own safety. The sound from the battlefield suddenly weakens to a vague background noise, while Lei's voice coming from his mind arose as a voice over.

Jiangong, finish your words, I promise not to talk back this time...You're so silly that never plan for yourself. You carry all kinds of "-isms", things like democracy and universal welfare in your heart...Your heart is really big, even bigger than sky...But my heart is small, so small that it only has space for my mom, those buddies I brought out from the fortress...and Yufei, and you...You're always my brother. From the day I met you, you've been my good brother. (Episode 40)

These words from Lei's mind are thought provoking. Lei said he did not understand communism or nationalism that Jiangong always mentioned as his political viewpoint. However, his incapability to digest the Communist ideology did not impede Lei from joining the war and serve the nation. More importantly, the neglect of Communism in this circumstance does not pose a meaningful resistance to the ideology itself. In Lei's words, what Communism claims is mingled with nationalist expression, which appears in a formulation of family and kinship. Hence, just as nationalism, Communism is also naturalized. Communism is represented not as a hard-core theory, which ordinary people cannot digest, while as something residing in human nature and everyday practices. When Communism appears as a 'transparent' membrane that does not distort the neutrality of history, it is made easier to accept the narrative from the angle of Communist Party.

In the last scene, Lei leads his regiment to salute to the oriflamme for the first time in his military uniform. He became a Communist soldier without understanding

Communism. Before that, even after he joined the anti-Japanese resistance, his outward appearance always marked him as an outsider of the army. Critical circles criticize his leather jacket, overalls, sunglasses and fashionable hairstyle as ‘unrealistic’. More importantly, these outfits marked his difference with other Communist soldiers, and emphasized his past as a bandit. It symbolized the past of Lei as a bandit, which was embedded into the attributes of the character and refused to diminish. The change of clothes signified Lei’s transformation from a head of bandit to a leader of communist army. The differences between bandit gang and communist army were eventually erased, not through any kind of mutual concession, but through a willing submission from one side.

Applying Stuart Hall’s (1973) theory on “encoding and decoding”, this chapter argues that the discourse around CCP as the only legitimate and effective political power in the liberation movement is message media products attempt to convey. In the national project, marginalized groups like bandits must submit the lead of CCP and transform themselves in order to make valuable contribution. It is a dominant-hegemonic position that dominant institution hopes audiences to identify with while deconstructing the meaning of text. However, this chapter wants to take the negotiated position to decipher the text in order to open up new possibilities to challenge the validity of dominant-hegemonic code. From the fact that Lei becomes a leader of communist army without understanding communism, we know that the submission is not complete in terms of ideological transformation, even though bandits can all dress like communist soldiers.

In the light of post-colonial theories on nation and nationalism, the drama *To Advance Towards the Fire* provides a case of analysis in which the bandits took a leading role in the whole narrative. However, we must note that with the application of ‘growth model’ which emphasizes bandits’ identification with communist ideology as a sign of

getting politically maturing, Communist Party is still constructed as the ‘taken-for-granted master’ of history (Shao, 2007). It does not allow other social groups to speak for their own history outside the Communist scope (Berry, 2004).

CONCLUSION

As Pandey (2000) argued, subaltern ‘fragments’ in the narrative of history are a powerful resistance from the below when they are not merely treated as one part of historical ‘totality’. By preserving an ‘oppressed narrative and perspective’, the fragments have the potential to point to the illusive image of nation as natural entity, and also expose its internal struggle which never cease to exist. The way Chinese bandits were related to power center and speak through it in the media space revealed the construction of modern nationhood as an ‘ongoing project of internal colonialism’ (Gladney, 2004).

The drama *To Advance Towards The Fire* shows two layers of ‘internal colonialism’, which support and validate each other. The first layer of ‘internal colonialism’ lies in the incorporation of bandits in modern China. Just as what imperialist colonial power did in foreign countries, the ‘internal colonialism’ implemented by Chinese Communist Party on bandits was similarly marked by violent deeds and ideological transformation. However, the drama chose to represent the process in a natural way. The second layer of ‘internal colonialism’ refers to the legitimating and promoting of a certain version of historical narrative through media production.

In the drama *To Advance Towards The Fire*, the bandits are constructed as an immature power of anti-Japanese resistance whose motivation combines nationalist sentiment and personal interest. The simple representation of Communist Party as mature political leaders who can genuinely speak for the people, the Party’s legitimacy of leading the anti-imperialist resistance is constantly confirmed. The opposite

representations of bandits and Communist Party serve the goal of a normative narrative which privileges the leading role of the latter one in social revolution. The drama represents the process in which the bandits 'grow' under the guidance of Communist Party and finally become one part of it. As a result, the bandits are allowed to speak and preserve their experience in the official history, while they can only speak through the voice of Communist Party.

Chapter 3 Within and Beyond the Nation: Analyzing Female Experiences in *Auntie Duohe*

From late 2009 to early 2010, the 34-episode TV series drama *Auntie Duohe* (Xiaoyi Duohe) was aired in 18 terrestrial TV stations in China. During the airing days, its popularity was approved by high viewing rates and market share (Baidutieba, 2009). For example, the show attained the average viewing rate of 8.5% and 18.24% of the market share when it was aired by Jinan News TV Channels (JNTV); the broadcast by Zhejiang TV Channel 4 (ZTV4) achieved highest single episode viewing rate of 9.2% (Special Topic: TV drama *Auntie Duohe*, 2009a). The drama was adapted from the novel *Little Aunt Tatsuru* (Duohe is the Chinese translation of Japanese name Tatsuru) written by famous female Chinese-American writer Geling Yan. Besides the solid original work, media commentary stated that the success of *Auntie Duohe* should be contributed to its strong production team including famous script writer, director and actors (Special Topic: TV drama *Auntie Duohe*, 2009b).

The story of *Auntie Duohe* took place in a rural village in north eastern China at the end of anti-Japanese war. The male protagonist, Jian, was the only left son of old Chinese couple whose other son was killed by Japanese in the war. Jian's wife, Xiaohuan, lost her fetus in an accident caused by Japanese soldiers and became infertile since that. In the market, Jian's parents saved a 19 year-old Japanese girl Duohe whose whole family died in China during or after the war. Despite voices of opposition from the rest of the family, Jian's mother insisted to keep Duohe at home and treated her like a daughter. Jian's parents also planned to let Duohe bear a son for Jian after she recovered. After learning the harm Japanese army did to the Chinese family, Duohe wanted to pay back the grace of the family and therefore agreed with the proposal of Jian's parents. Later she gave birth to one daughter and two sons. Duohe kept her real identity as a

secret, and she lived in the family for more than twenty years as the ‘aunt’ of her three children.

Unlike most anti-Japanese war drama emerging around the same time, *Auntie Duohe* did not focus on how men and women fight on the battlefield to redeem the endangered national honor. It gave narrative priority to how the war caused suffering to ordinary Chinese and Japanese people, especially women, and how these women strive to cope with the accidental change in their personal lives. As Goodman (2002: 15) argued, the way women understand the war can highlight the discontinuity between private and official history. Therefore, the examination of unique perspective in the drama has significant meaning, because it will reveal how women are placed into both nationalist and peace-making discourses, and also show us the dynamics between the two. The main questions I will address in this paper are as follows. How does the drama use suffering of women in the war to resist the discourse of masculine nationalist honor and the normative patriarchal order of the family? How does the drama de-emphasize national differences in its narrative in order to envision a harmonious Eastern Asia based upon the shared characteristics of femininity? What could be the critique about the association between female and peace-making discourse? The drama was finally approved for airing through satellite TV in 2012, while it had to alter the ending in order to meet the national censorship requirement. In the last section, I will also talk about how the nationalist discourse was brought back by the altered ending, which is a compromise to make for larger market reach.

MASCULINE HONOR AND INCONSISTENT FEMALE EXPERIENCE IN WAR

Verdery (1994: 227) referred to nation as an important cultural relation that negotiates the connection between the state and the subjects of the state. While dealing

with Japan, the drama constructed the relation between the state and its subjects as a distant one, in which the state and the national body did not politically align. The power relation between the state and its national body has been revealed at the opening scene of the drama, as the voice-over stated:

...August 15th, Japanese government declared surrender at discretion. At the same time, the Japanese ultra-rightist who wished to carry on militarism instigated innumerable innocent Japanese civilians to suicide in order to 'die for the glory' before the dawning of peace. (Episode 1, 2:55)

The involvement of the state in war was often associated with its control over the national subjects' physical bodies or territory in a gendered relation (Verdery, 1994: 227). In the opening scene, the state of Japan was represented by 'Japanese government' and 'Japanese ultra-rightists' which threatened the lives of 'innocent Japanese people'. The gender that usually identifies with war is male, because the framework of war brings the feature of traditional masculinity, which is to be stronger than femininity, in to play (Ivekovic, 1993: 115). The preference of being stronger is not limited to physical power, but can also be applied to social, political, historical or military power (ibid). As McClintock (1993, 62) pointed out, the need of the nation-state is resulted from the 'frustration and aspiration of men'. In this scenario, the control of the state over its citizen's physical bodies is a manifestation of masculine state power. In the nationalist discourse, nation in war is normally incarnated into women to remain in a position of victim. Therefore the victim/aggressor dichotomy is also a gendered construction to represent international relation in the war (Ivekovic, 1993: 124). If the scope focuses on the inner domain of the nation, the victim/aggressor dichotomy can be transformed into a gendered victim/fighter dichotomy that describes the relation between the state and the national subject (Yuval-Davis, 1997:28). When the nation-state need its people to suicide

in order to protect the masculine national dignity from being stained by other nation, the national subject has been victimized as ‘women’ who are expected to be submissive to the patriarchal order and also be protected by the male fighters.

In the drama, the representation of innocent Japanese civilians is crystallized into the portrait of Duohe. Her whole family was sent to China by the Japanese government with the Manchuria Exploit Group before the war started. Later her father and brother both joined the army and died in the battle. When Japanese army was defeated, the government commanded the whole village of Japanese civilians to commit suicide in group in order to maintain the national glory. Duohe’s description of her experience revealed the discrepancy between her personal feeling and the promoted national honor. After more than ten years of living in China, she shared her experience at the end of the war with a Chinese man she fell in love with,

I remembered clearly about that autumn. I was at my grandpa’s house, and suddenly the village was in chaos. All the villagers were driven to a forest close by. There was a huge hole. I saw one person shooting to everyone with a machine gun and the crowd fell down. My grandparents didn’t want me to die, so they told me to run. I was lucky enough that I hid in the grass and fled away. The whole village, more than five hundred of people, committed suicide together. My grandparents were among the five hundred, but I couldn’t find them. It frightened me out of my senses...I told Japanese people in other villages, no one wanted to die, so they fled away altogether. Someone died out of starvation, someone died because of sickness. It’s a nightmare. (Episode 19, 33:20)

Duohe still used the word ‘suicide’ to describe what happened to Japanese villagers, while the fear of Duohe, her grandparents’ attempt to save her and the decision of other Japanese people indicated that these people did not fully identify with the national honor and were not willing to end their lives for its failure. When the individual voices were not fully incorporated into the nationalist discourse, the gendered fighter/victim relation within the nation was also disturbed (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 24).

Instead of being a fighter that protects the right of its own people, the nation-state of Japan appeared as a ‘murderer’.

Xiaohua’s experience also showed how the experience of Chinese women in the war can be read as a defense of male national honor. When she was in the seventh month of her pregnancy, she and other women encountered Japanese soldiers on a hill. They tried to run, but several women were still caught, raped and killed. Two Japanese soldiers chased after Xiaohuan so that she was forced to the edge of a cliff then fell off. She lost her fetus and was infertile ever since. Jian’s family thought, Xiaohuan would also be raped and killed if she did not fall off the cliff, so what happened to Xiaohuan was a fortune in her misery. Rape is often defined as ‘a crime against honor’ instead of a mode of torture (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 110). The focus has been placed on the impaired dignity of men and the community, rather than women themselves who are directly harmed physically and psychologically (ibid). In this logic, Xiaohuan preserved the male honor when she fell off the cliff, when her ‘other sisters all got trampled by Japanese soldiers’ (episode 5, 22:05). It resulted in the de-emphasis on her physical and psychological harm at the individual level.

SILENCED WOMAN IN PATRIARCHAL FAMILY

As Chinese authors from the wartime believed that the liberation of nation is a fore-condition of individual liberation, they have the tradition to include female characters as participants of anti-Japanese resistance in order to contain experience of women as part of nationalist discourse (Liu, 2004). A number of contemporary anti-Japanese war dramas (e.g. Meili Wusheng aired in 2008, Langduhua aired in 2007) also inherited this tradition that female characters would step out of the home to fight in the war together with men. Hence, like other discourses of Chinese revolutionary movement,

anti-Japanese war has its own liberating function that provided an opportunity for women to break down the boundaries between traditional gender roles and participate in public affairs. As a result, the differences between gender roles in the war project were constantly neglected in the construction of female characters in order to maintain them in the anti-Japanese discourse (Liu, 2004: 8). Contrarily, the drama *Auntie Duohe* chose to write about the experience of most Chinese women who were still the second-gender in their everyday life. Their stories cannot be dissolved by revolutionary nationalist discourse. The instability they experienced in war did not break down the gendered constraints for them, while the burden of maintaining a home required them to carry out their normal duties of women, including reproduction and care taking even in disturbances (Liu, 2004: 9).

According to Collins (1998: 62), traditional family ideal is based upon the legitimacy of heterosexual marriage and their children born through the marriage. The significance of the marriage tie and blood tie within the family explains why women's capability of reproduction is in the center of ideal family model. When women are expected to not transcend the gendered space division and stay at home, they are also expected to behave in accordance with their gender identity carry out their role of wives, mothers and caretakers in the family (McClintock, 1993:67). Therefore, the aspiration for a family to carry on its lineage can place direct pressure on women's (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 22). In the drama, Jian's father blamed Xiaohuan for not being considerate, as she should allow her husband to sleep with other woman for the sake of bearing children. Xiaohuan also internalized the pressure from the family, and having no child gave her a sense of insecure. Xiaohuan constantly felt her status in the family threatened by Duohe, as she said, 'A woman with no children is like grass on top of a roof. She could not grow on the man's heart, and even the earth that she rooted in is too thin (Episode 12, 32:40).' To

Xiaohuan, women depend on family just as grasses depend on the earth, so women would become lifeless without family as the main source of their identity. It also implicated the central role of connection children play to legitimate the status of women within the family. Xiaohuan often referred to herself as a 'hen which lays no egg' (Episode 2, 22: 10), indicating that an infertile woman is useless to the family. Duohe's fate was reflected the family's value on women's reproduction capability. At the beginning, keeping Duohe to bear children for the family was an important reason why Jian's parents saved Duohe, and the family even planned to send her away after she gave birth to a son.

Yuval-Davis (1997: 28) pointed out that the supporting voices of vitro fertilization and surrogate motherhood attempt to reduce women from lower economic and ethnic positions to their 'wombs'. The word of Jian's father implicated the same 'women as wombs' logic that how women think, feel and change in the process of conceiving is not taken into consideration by patriarchal interest. It is also torturing for Jian and Xiaohuan to accept Duohe as a surrogate mother, because they love each other deeply and would not allow a third person to threaten their marriage in any way. However, they were not able to neglect the strong desire of Jian's parents to have a grandchild, especially a grandson. As a result, Jian promised Xiaohuan that he and Duohe would only have sex relation for the purpose of bearing child, he would not develop personal feeling towards her, and Xiaohuan would always be the only eligible mother of the child.

In the two year period, Duohe gave birth to a daughter and two twin sons. After Jian's parents passed away, the whole family moved to a city. Xiaohuan told Duohe to hide her true identity so that the children and anyone outside the family should only know her as Xiaohuan's younger sister. According to Xiaohuan's instruction, Duohe learnt to walk like a Chinese people instead of using quick short steps as a Japanese woman. She

also had to pretend that she was mute whenever she spoke to someone outside the family in order to hide her Japanese accent.

Duohe was not only physically mute to the outside; her right to speak for herself in the family was also suppressed by the patriarchal order within the family. No matter what Xiaohuan asked her to do, she always accepted without raising any dissenting opinion. The consequence of war forced her to give up all her identities and gave her a twisted one in a Chinese family in which she was denied the right to be a Japanese woman, a mother and a wife. Duohe took in her new identity quickly and submissively. She would only nod quietly every time Xiaohuan nitpicked about her Japanese behavior or scorned her because of jealousy. She understood that her muteness to outsiders was a way to protect the family honor, so she chose to not say anything even when people talked about her unfairly. Chen (2012: 200) argued that Duohe's flexible identity embodied the docile femininity which allows women to deal with traumas and absorb the injustice without directly confronting them.

The metaphor of muteness can also be applied to analyze Xiaohuan's sacrifice to maintain a normative family image based on the regulation of patriarchal order. When Duohe was pregnant with the first child, Xiaohuan stuffed a pillow under her cloth and walked on the street so that people would notice her 'pregnancy'. She also had to explain to acquaintance that her infertility was cured, even though it did not happen. Seeing Jian's family taking special care of Duohe during pregnancy was difficult for her, while she must pretend to be happy in front of other people. Many years later, she also had to live with grievance because Jian had special feeling for Duohe. However, she was not able to talk about the pain inside her heart to people including her families.

While Rajan (1993: 19) was discussing women's position in the ritual of sati, he pointed out that the privacy and incommunicability of pain can constitute the identity of

human subject. In the drama, protagonists did not speak out their sufferings openly, neither did the expressions of personal suffering always form a direct resistance against patriarchal order, while these expressions are often subtle and only appeared in several fragments of narrative. Duohe, Jian and Xiaohuan finally decided to follow the plan of the elders in the family. However, their consent did not mean they completely submitted to the patriarchal authority. The incomplete submission is manifested by self-ambivalent reaction of main characters. In one night, Xiaohuan urged Jian to sleep with Duohe so she could have a child soon. After Jian was gone, Xiaohuan covered her head under a quilt but cried so loud that all other families in different rooms could hear her. The next morning, Xiaohuan asked Jian if he had sex with Duohe, Jian said ‘you were crying so loudly, how can I do that?’ Xiaohuan pretended to blame Jian for not acting manly, ‘you just cannot get anything done!’ At the same time, a subtle but happy smile appeared on her face. The contradictions in Xiaohuan’s behavior demonstrated her unwilling obedience to the authority in the family. Although she was not able to speak out her true desire, her action still formed a strong question to the powerful patriarchal order by presenting her pain, struggle and sacrifices in front of it.

In the drama, there was a wilderness in the city where protagonists chose to go whenever they wanted to do things that social normality would not accept. When Xiaohuan finally compromised with other families to let Duohe bear a child for Jian, she ran into the wilderness and cried there. When Duohe and Jian fell in love with each other after living for years in the same family, they went to the wilderness every day for secret dating. After Xiaohuan found out the relation between her husband and Duohe, she drank pesticide in order to kill herself, and she entered the wilderness in the midnight waiting for the end of her life. The wilderness was also the place where Duohe told her Chinese fiancé Xiaoshi about all her experience including her true relation with Jian’s family.

Geling Yan, the author of the original novel *Little Aunt Tatsuru*, was born in China, while she lived a diasporic life in the US for long time with American citizenship. Although this paper does not attempt to assume a relation between the author's diasporic identity and her writing style, it is interesting to see how traditions of Chinese literature and American literature both informed her writing of wilderness in the novel. Chinese literature exhibits 'wilderness' as a sign of regression. In the history of Chinese literature, the subject-object dichotomy between humankind and the nature appeared after 220BC (Wang, 2009, p.110). It is when Chinese literature started to represent nature as an aesthetic object, while before that nature and human beings were regarded as an integrated entity. Therefore the progress of human civilization, which set human apart from nature, implies a loss of connection between human beings and their originality. In Chinese ancient poeties, city always appeared as the center of political dispute and the target of war, while wilderness remained outside of artificial constructions as a spiritual homeland (Wang, 2011, p.86). In the tradition of Chinese literature, entering the wilderness signifies the seeking of a true spirit of 'self' and the encountering of the most basic human needs (Ye, 2006, p. 25). Therefore, when Duohe revealed her true identity in the wilderness, she reunited with her lost 'self'. She and Jian could finally face their emotional and physical attachment as part of human nature instead of social immorality.

In American literature, the imagination of wilderness pertains to the experience of European colonizer in the new continent where the absence of church and aristocracy bestowed a sense of hope and freedom on the space (Yang, 2000, p. 59). For the experience of women, entering wilderness is idealized as a process of liberation (I do not mean to validate colonialism which takes the discourse of 'liberation' as an excuse to perform exploitation in its masculine nature). Thinking metaphorically in feminist critics, the wilderness is an untamed zone outside the territory of the dominant, a ground for

female resistance, for patriarchal constraints have no place in it (Showalter, 1981). Can it really be considered as a 'resistance', if the oppressive agent is not even there? Perhaps having a separated wilderness outside the domestic space can be regarded as a gesture of non-challenge that legitimates the power of normative patriarchal order. I would argue, however, that through the setting of wilderness, the drama acknowledged the existence of a different voice of women that could not be raised with the constraint of traditional gendered role in patriarchal family. More importantly, it suggested a possibility for us as audiences to detect and listen to the voice.

THE CONSTRUCT OF HARMONIOUS EAST ASIA THROUGH SHARED FEMININITY

The famous contemporary Chinese writer Meng Wang wrote a commentary about the novel *Little Aunt Tatsuru*, it said,

In the lively and gentle narration, it utters cries of anguish facing human being's bitterest sorrows in the separation between life and death. Frantic history, rapped the natural and the ordinary. How were we and you abducted, humiliated and trampled? When is the time to wake up? Is it a novel or a life that is so outrageous and absurd? It doesn't have to be like this (Wang, as quoted in Zhang, 2008: 97).

Apparently, the 'we' refers to Chinese, and the 'you' means Japanese. The juxtaposing of the historically hostile 'we' and 'you' in the same position of a discourse rarely appeared in contemporary anti-Japanese war dramas in China. Aunt Duohe offered a particular case of TV drama that uses a Japanese figure as its main protagonist. As a product of mass communication, the drama must find an ideological access for the Chinese audiences to identify with the Japanese woman Duohe. The narrative of the drama purposefully played down the national boundary between ordinary Chinese and Japanese people by letting them share the perspective of war victim.

In episode 2, Duohe and Xiaohuan each had a dream about their past traumas in the war. Xiaohuan dreamt about how she lost her fetus in extreme terror. In Duohe's dream, seeing her loved families dying in front of her made her frightened and panic. The scenes in the dream were in black-and-white, and they were placed together successively. Several fragments depicting the two women sleep-talking with pained expression were also inserted into the two scenes.

The editing strategy discussed above embodied the establishment of a shared victim position of the Chinese woman with the Japanese woman. It indicated the possibility of connection which was developed through their common suffering in the war as the weaker and dominated gender of the nation. This connection can be extended to a broader level and apply to the shared ground of Chinese people and Japanese civilians. In the drama, the tragic experience of Duohe caused Chinese people to reflect on their own experiences and rethink the role of Japanese civilians in the war. It is a crucial step to take in order to accept Duohe as part of the family. When Xiaohuan's father heard about the plan of Jian's parents to let Duohe bear children for Jian, he was outraged and told Jian he must 'get rid of the Japanese woman' by killing her secretly. After Xiaohuan's father knew about what happened to Duohe's family, he lamented that he never expected Japanese people were also victims, not natural killers. Later he agreed with the plan of Jian's parents to let Duohe replace his own daughter to carry children for Jian's family.

As Yan, the author of original novel said, she did not aim to record any version of history, while her interest lied in discovering some aspects of human nature that might be buried when the environment was not extreme (Chen, 2012: 199). Yan believed that the exploration and understanding of human nature exist across national boundaries (ibid). Yan's writings have the tradition to place female characters in extreme historical

environment, and the tendency indicated the author's attempt to construct a close connection between female and human nature (Song, 2013: 146)

As women are often perceived as the embodiment of human nature, the narrative of drama was able to present a sisterly connection between Xiaohuan and Duohe. They were supposed to be rivals competing for the role of wife and mother, but the shared marginalized position of women in the family and national project made it possible for them to develop a bond that transcends hostilities and cultural differences. Both of them understood that they were in the current situation because their options were limited by the patriarchal order. Xiaohuan once cried in front of Duohe to express her complicated emotion which she was not able to tell any other one.

You really didn't fail us. You have these three kids with him, but you're Japanese, you can't be their mother. I am the only one in wedlock with him, so only I can be their mom. You think it's easy to be the mom? Not at all. They weren't born by me, but I'll suffer from pain if they don't call me mom. They were born by you, and it also hurt me that they can't call you mom. You work every day to support the family, and feed the kids without hearing them calling you mom. Your heart is bitter, bitterer than mine, I know it. (Episode 13)

In order to make the commonality of human nature prominent, the drama also played down the conflict of two national cultures. Although Xiaohuan did not want Duohe to act like Japanese in public, she showed tolerance and consent when Duohe kept some Japanese habits to organize their home. For example, Duohe wanted to keep the floor clean as Japanese people would do in their houses. She wiped the floor several times a day and she made Japanese geta for each family member to wear at home. Xiaohuan and Jian both accepted the foreign custom and felt it interesting. There were times when Xiaohuan claimed that Chinese traditions were superior to Japanese traditions. Duohe would always surrender to her so they can avoid arguing. She also learnt to take care of the family in Chinese way, such as cooking Chinese food. Jian was

the most active one to accept Japanese habits. He even told Duohe that Japanese people and Chinese people might be descendants of the same ancestors, because they look the same and the languages have similarities. According to Duara (1996: 49), every cultural practice, like rituals and language, identifies a group and can potentially form a boundary for a community. Duara regarded these cultural practices as soft boundaries if other cultural groups can also share or even adopt these practices, no matter if the other groups are consciously aware of the sharing or not. Comparing to the original novel, the drama deliberately reduced Duohe's cultural identity anxiety caused by diasporic experience (Hu and Chang, 2011). Scholars believed that the softening of cultural boundaries in the drama reflected a reconfiguration of elite culture in order to cater the need of mass communication (Hu and Chang, 2011; Wang, 2010: 262). I want to further probe this argument and discuss how the weakened national distinction serves the discourse of peace-making.

The drama successfully constructed a model of co-existence of Chinese and Japanese in the same family to embody the dissolving of national hostility between the two. The negotiation of cultural boundaries showed the flexibility of women to adapt to extreme environments such as the post-war life. The flexibility can be regarded as a strategy which is associated with the capability of women to endure hardship. These characteristics do not only belong to Chinese women represented by Xiaohuan, while they were also visible on Japanese woman Duohe. Song (2012: 147) argued that, the concentration on the physical and psychological experience of women in disasters was derived from a deep reflection on 'sex' and 'dignity' in East Asian culture. Although these two women were different in terms of cultural identity and personality, they drama focused on their common 'essence' as Eastern Asian women: tolerance, endurance and

persistence (Chen, 2012: 200). In the drama, these attributes made the two women face life challenges together instead of holding onto nationalist sentiment.

After twenty years of living with a fake identity in China, Duohe finally was to marry Xiaoshi, a Chinese man who knew everything about her and still loved her. However, he died out of accident on their wedding day. At the same time, Cultural Revolution started. Jian was thrown into prison wrongly; one of Duohe's sons found out she was Japanese and turned her in; the daughter was mentally ill; Xiaohuan paralyzed. Duohe devoted all she had without any complaint to sustain the family in extreme difficulties, and at last her selfless effort paid off, the whole family was brought back to the right track. The implication of the plot is that suffering will bring out the strongest female potential as they conform to their 'natural roles' in the family.

In this sense, the transformation of women in suffering is given some positive connotation. The suffering is not only regarded as the consequence of disturbed social normative, but it will also reveal the most innate part of humanity that transcended the limits of nationalist ideology and made peace a foreseeable future. Rajan (1993: 19) pointed out that the representation of women as 'subject-of-pain' is constructed around the absolute gender dichotomy that either mystifies or naturalizes women as the unexplainable 'other' of men. Like discourses of birth laboring or sati in India, the women become 'signifiers of value' after they go through physical or psychological sufferings.

The narrative of the drama consciously hid nationalist discourse under the cover of peace-making discourse (Song, 2012: 148). To understand how the drama used women to express the peace-making appeals, it is important to review how the gender dichotomy works in the discourse of war. Historically, women are automatically associated with peace as opposed to the role of men in war as aggressors. Even feminist activism was

automatically assumed as anti-military peace activism (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 94). Even in the discourse of nationalism, women still appear as a less violent force, which defends the nation in a different way (Ivekovic, 1993: 121). In war time, the expected responsibility of women in maintaining the inner stability of the family reflects women's mythical role in the keeping the 'organic order' that has been disturbed by masculine imperial progress (Goodman, 2002: 27; McClintock, 1993: 66). These roles of women can be extended to the functions to restore, impair and reproduce the social order in the post-war period.

Chen (as cited in Feng, 2009: 14) pointed out that the female characters in the novels of Yan often embodied a power of 'utterly tolerant' which resembles the earth. Just like earth can absorb all kinds of nutrition and pollution, female characters in Yan's novel took in everything the environment gave them including all injustices. Chen called these women 'mother of the earth' who have mysterious power of self-recovery, and can amazingly turn 'filth' into life (ibid). In traditional Chinese culture, the earth is worshiped for its sacred power of reproduction and cleansing. The humble image of the earth also resembles females at the bottom of social hierarchy. In contemporary Chinese literature, they often played roles of victim, comforter and savior (Feng, 2009: 15). In the drama Auntie Duohe, the self-recovery and transforming ability of women are regarded as an essential capability to dissolve hate and generate new hope in the discourse of peace-making.

Hence, if a shared 'East Asian femininity' is the key element in peace-making discourse, the related female characteristics that enable women to go through suffering would also be praised. In another word, it is to praise the compliance of females towards their own disadvantaged status in patriarchal society. By attributing these characteristics to women exclusively, the unequal gender relation will be legitimately re-established (Feng, 2009: 15). Taken the unequal gender relation for granted is even more dangerous

when we use the ‘compliant women’ metaphor as an analogy of weak and marginalized culture. As Chatterjee (1993: 118) argued, a colonial way of sympathizing was able to transform the oppressed female image into ‘a sign of the inherently oppressive and unfree cultural tradition of the country’. In other words, taking the position of weak women will actually justify the invasion and assimilation of colonial power in the international arena (Feng, 2009: 17).

THE COUNTERACT OF NATIONALISM

At the end of the drama, China and Japan re-established diplomatic relation. Japanese embassy informed Duohe that her mother actually survived twenty years ago, and she had been searching for Duohe since that. Finally, they reunited in China, and then went back to Japan. This was the version of ending when Auntie Duohe was aired in local TV stations as soon as the production was finished in 2009, while the drama was not approved to be aired through satellite TV until 2012.

One popular conjuncture for the disapproval was that the story was not politically correct while covering some critical but sensitive topics in contemporary history of China, such as the anti-Japanese war and Cultural Revolution (Netease Entertainment, 2012a). Another guess suggested that the ‘misshaped relations’ between the three protagonists conveyed problematic family ethics to the audiences. In Dec 2008, State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) published a monthly announcement about TV dramas in production (Announcement, 2008). In the announcement, SARFT required provincial administration sections and production companies to advocate ‘correct value and aesthetic standard’ through TV drama, while pointing out that some dramas performed poorly in that aspect. According to mainstream

entertainment news (Peng, 2009), part of the SARFT's criticism alluded to the content of *Auntie Duohe* which centered on the abnormal relations within the family.

Recently, some dramas that portray marriage relations, family ethics and sentimentality tend to have suspicious plots and marginalized character settings... For example...some drama even relishes the 'poignancy' of male protagonist who oscillates between two 'wives'... These contents violate traditional morality... and can cause confused, extreme and even wrong values (Announcement, 2008).

Although the drama script of *Auntie Duohe* passed the initial proposal review by SARFT in 2006, it still went through numerous changes throughout the whole production process till 2008. The producer of the drama, Qiance Ma, pointed out that it is actually normal for any TV drama to go through stricter censorship before being broadcasted by satellite TV, so is any necessary related revision of the content (Zhang, 2012). For example, other popular dramas like *Cliff* (*Xuanya*) and *New Journey to the West* (*Xin Xiyouji*) both cut off several plots with 'inappropriate language and behavior' before landing on satellite TV. Sometimes drama crews would even shoot different endings in order to adjust later according to the censoring result (Netease Entertainment, 2012b).

Anhui Satellite TV (ASTV) finally aired the satellite version of *Auntie Duohe* in February 2012. Unexpectedly, Duohe's identity was changed unexpectedly from Japanese to Chinese at the end. In the final episode, Duohe's mother told Jian and Xiaohuan a secret that Duohe was actually a Chinese orphan who lost her parents in the war. She was found on a road by her Japanese step-mom who came to China as a military nurse with other families. According to an anonymous insider, the censoring agency suggested to change the nationality of Duohe in order to 'match her excellent characters with traditional Chinese virtue' (Entertainment News, 2012a). The crew regarded this change as a 'forced compromise' they had to make in order to enter larger market, because the alternation of national identity made previous plot less logical (Xiao, 2012).

As discussed in previous sections, the discourse of nationalism had been played down in the drama by the construction of peace-making discourse which is established through shared female experience in war. Showing the existence of female voice that cannot be represented by masculine interest in battlefield or domestic space, the media text portrayed nation as an entity of on-going power struggle in which dissonance can only be repressed while not eliminated. However, as a product of mass communication, which was supposed to foreground the nation, TV drama only allowed limited space for the alternative peace-making discourse. In the case of Auntie Duohe, the state seized chance of censoring to re-imbue the dominant nationalist discourse into the drama.

On one hand, nationalism is restored by the rapid shift of national identity. After Duohe's mother said Duohe was a Chinese, Jian quickly replied, 'I never looked at her as Japanese in these years.' Duohe also told Jian and Xiaohuan, 'No matter where I go, my home is always here, you're always my families.' As consequence, Duohe only stayed in Japan for three years to take care of her stepmother, and then she returned to China, her 'motherland'. Duohe whole-heartedly embraced her new identity as a Chinese, whilst all her Japanese-ness has been left behind.

The restoration of nationalism was also manifested by the dilution of peace-making discourse. With the changed nationality of Duohe, the hardship of two female characters can no longer be read as transcendent experience that connects the ordinary people of two nations together. The whole story turned to be about the misfortune of two Chinese women whose fates were distorted due to the Japanese invasion. Considering SARFT's criticism on the problematic representation of 'family ethics', the new ending well responded to the criticism by attributing the disturbed normative order to the war. At the same time, the new ending implied that peace-making between the two countries is only possible if Japan confesses its sinful deeds, just like Duohe's step-mother told Jian

and Xiaohuan that Japanese soldiers killed innocent Chinese villagers. The emphasis of Japan as the enemy in media indicated that China is not ready to re-define the nation without having Japan as its opposition (Berger, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The drama Auntie Duohe has unique value of analysis because it focused on the experience of female in the war and patriarchal family. These experiences are closely related to the gendered construction of nation that usually expresses its need and aspiration in a masculine way. The different role of women in the nation determined that their experiences would not be the same with men. The drama showed the discrepancies between female experiences and masculine discourses of nationalism, which uncovered the suppressed status of women in the nation under the mask of male honor. However, the drama also revealed the continuing power struggle between the dominance and the dominated, in which women never completely lost their voices.

The female experiences in the drama also served the peace-making discourse by attributing the endurance of women in suffering to a common East Asian femininity. By relating women's role in the nation and family to natural process of reproduction, female suffering was glorified as a transforming process. The positive connotation of female suffering can be dangerous, for it further approved and solidified a gender dichotomy that was grounded in unequal power relations.

This paper argues that the alternation of national identity in the drama disclosed the negotiation of nationalism outside the media text. The revising suggestions of SARFT reflected an official concern over the disturbance of dominant discourse, which referred to the patriarchal order within both family and nation in this case. The new ending prioritized nationalism over peace-making discourse by changing Duohe's nationality to

Chinese. This case study provided a window through which we can observe the construction of Chinese modern nationalism, which still relies on Japan as the opposition of China.

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