Introduction

You, O king, live beyond the confines of many seas; nevertheless, impelled by your humble desire to partake of the benefits of our civilisation, you have despatched a mission respectfully bearing your memorial...To show your devotion, you have also sent offerings of your country's produce. I have read your memorial; the earnest terms in which it is cast reveal a respectful humility on your part which is highly praiseworthy.

Swaying the wide world, I have but one aim, namely, to maintain perfect governance and fulfil the duties of the state. Strange and ingenious objects do not interest me. I have no use for your country's manufactures. It behoves you, O king, to respect my sentiments and display even greater devotion and loyalty in future, so that by perpetual submission to our throne, you may secure peace and prosperity for your country. Tremblingly obey and show no negligence. (Qianlong, quoted in *The Economist*, December 31st 1999, Millennium Special Edition, p. 76)

In 1792, the British King George III sent a trade mission to China. The Emperor Qianlong apparently was not impressed by the visit and the gifts. He gave King George's envoy the message quoted above to take back. For Qianlong, and many other Chinese people at that time, China was at the centre of the world. All foreigners were peripheral and barbarian. The Chinese had no interest in knowing or understanding foreign people and cultures.

About one hundred years later, the British returned, brining other 'strange and ingenious objects'- warships and cannons. This time, they came from the new world empire, and along with other Western empires, had no intention of submitting to the old Oriental emperor's throne. Instead, they intended to conquer and exploit the vast Chinese Empire by means of their overwhelming modern military and technological forces. Modern imperialisms almost destroyed the old Empire. Since then, the Chinese people embarked on a long journey of national revival and modernisation with Chinese characteristics, a journey that at the same time has been profoundly influenced by Western styles of modernity.

This journey is not over yet. The civil war of 1949 divided the country into two separate political entities, one located on the mainland and the other on Taiwan Island.

The exile Nationalist (KMT) government in Taiwan survived by accepting military and economic support from the world's new post-War empire, the US. Although the US 'betrayed' Taiwan eventually and normalised its relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC), established by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the ever-present connections between the island and the world capitalist system together with its dependent relationship on the US have been firmed up and deepened. On the mainland, the CCP chose its own path to modernisation, which proceeded, after the break with Moscow, in isolation from other major powers, but it was not successful. Since the late 1970s however, the country has reopened its doors and re-entered a world system where Western capitalism has become increasingly dominant. As a consequence, current encounters in politics and economy seem more intense, while at the same time, Chinese culture, one of the major cultural formations in the world, has been unavoidably in transition.

Chinese Film Cultures in Transition

The recent consolidation of Western communications conglomerates and the erosion of national borders by satellite system and computer networks, has been widely seen as a central infrastructure support for a contemporary globalisation processes in relation to which national governments are powerless to intervene. Much general debate around this issue however fails to take proper account of recent power shifts within states while much cultural and communications analysis ignores changes in the nature and scope of state intervention in the cultural sphere.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the accelerating transnational distribution of cultural products has had a significant impact on the structure and content of national cultural production, on the maintenance and protection of local cultures, and on the redefinition and reassessment of what constitutes 'national culture'. These cultural dynamics are increasingly becoming central issues in debates around globalisation. Some commentators assert that what we are witnessing now is the latest episode in the familiar narrative of cultural imperialism and cultural homogenisation. Others argue to the contrary, that globalisation has brought much more diversity, variety, and cultural choice. However, whatever its political attractions for both critics and celebrants of market dynamics, free floating speculations is no substitute for

detailed investigation of what exactly the consequences of increasing encounters between global and local cultures are in particular concrete situations.

Since the early 1980s, both mainland China and Taiwan have experienced major shifts in both their internal political and economic organisation and in their relations to the global economic and cultural system. Taking the film industry as a particular focus, the research aims to shed new light on current economic and cultural transitions in the two locations by developing detailed comparative analyses of:

(1) the impact of multinational enterprise on the organisations of one of the region's major cultural industries;

(2) the development, rationale and implementation of national film policies;

(3) shifts in the construction of national identity as indexed by themes and representations in a sample of recent locally produced films.

The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis begins with a critical review of the general debates around 'globalisation', focussing especially on the cultural dimension and on the crucial role of multinational cultural corporations in global transformation processes. By critically examining different theorists of the core dynamics addressed in the thesis, I aim to establish a workable analytical framework for empirical research. In Chapter 2 I then focus the theoretical inquiry on the controversial issues of the changing role of the nation-state in the globalisation process. The accompanying debates around the redefinition and reassessment of national culture and national identity are also examined in this chapter. Based on this inquiry into the question of national culture and national identity in the global age, in Chapter 3, I deal with the topic of national cinema. The conceptual reassessment of the notion of national cinema is illustrated by examples taken from a variety of contemporary national cinemas. In Chapter 4, I analyse the different ways in which states intervene in cultural and media systems, looking particularly at the case of cinema. By investigating examples of the contrasting film policies pursued in different countries, I aim to build a general typology of forms of state intervention in cinema. I also attempt to identify the basic trends in national film policies in the current conditions of globalisation. These discussions provide an essential context for the later, detailed discussion of film policies in China and Taiwan.

Before analysing the film industries and film cultures of China and Taiwan, however I provide, in Chapter 5, general descriptions of the key political, economic and cultural transformations in these two locations in the global era (particularly since 1980). This material functions as a bridge between the general theoretical inquiries that begin the thesis and the detailed case study research that follows.

In Chapter 6 I begin the analysis of the two case study situations by tracing the history and the contemporary dynamics relating to the distribution and consumption of foreign movies (mainly Hollywood movies) and the patterns and practices of the major transnational film corporations in China and Taiwan.

In Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10, I deal with the three main dimensions to national responses to global trends in the film industry and film culture. Chapter 7 focuses on national film policies and state intervention in cinema. The organisations of the two local film industries and relevant recent changes are addressed in Chapter 8. While in Chapter 9 and 10, I explore continuities and shifts in representations of national identity by examining the thematic organisation and key images of key recent films produced in China and Taiwan. The aim of these four core empirical chapters is to analyse the impact of globalisation on local cultural productions and to explore how societies respond to these dynamics in three inter-linked domains — the political, economic and ideological.

In the light of the empirical findings, the conclusion returns to the general issues raised by: (1) encounters between global and local cultures, (2) the changing role of the nation-state, and (3) transformations in the articulation of national identity in popular cultural products.