

MULTICULTURALISM'S PITFALLS ON NEW ZEALAND TELEVISION: THE RISE AND FALL OF TOUCH CHINA TV

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Identity and Displacement in Diasporic Media

This essay considers the role of TV broadcasting and its problematic representation of Chineseness in New Zealand.² In particular, I focus on a case study—the rise and fall of Touch China TV (TCTV)—which illustrates both the divisions within the Chinese communities in New Zealand and the obstacles to multiculturalism in national media.³ I argue that the collapse of TCTV was foreshadowed by its inability to address both these issues adequately. The station failed to establish a nationally recognised public space which could fill the gap between transnational media—that only offer programmes from the homelands and are available through pay TV—and national media—that only include a very limited representation of the Chinese diaspora. TCTV established itself as a purely commercial enterprise (establishing contact with TV3 instead of the national channels, TV1 and

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² On definitions of Chineseness in the context of diaspora, see Ma and Cartier; on Asianness and diaspora, see Goh and Wong; on Asian democracy and the Internet, see Banerjee.

³ My larger research project looks at how Chineseness is evoked and negotiated in the media that are read, watched, and listened to by the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand.

TV2) and failed to engage with the political institutions which could have helped its establishment and long-term survival. Furthermore, I examine other problematic issues which could also have contributed to TCTV's fall, such as the short history of Chinese electronic media as well the heterogeneous nature of the Chinese community in New Zealand.

I use the term 'Chineseness' aware of its contested definitions and in fact because of its multiple meanings, which are complicated even further by its media representations. From both national and transnational perspectives, political and cultural developments involving China, Taiwan, Greater China, and/or the Chinese diaspora have transformed and hybridised Chinese identity. However, being Chinese remains a strong identifier for immigrants of Chinese descent.

On the one hand, most ethnic Chinese feel a strong link with China. Ien Ang describes her first journey to China as part of a group of tourists (all western/white people but herself) as an inevitable necessity: 'I didn't have the courage to go on my own since I don't speak Chinese, not even one of the dialects. But I had to go, I had no choice. It was (like) an imposed pilgrimage' (Ang 21). On the other hand, most countries' social/political/cultural practices often view Chineseness as a quintessential trait even of long-time (even many generations) residents of Chinese descent. For instance, in the New Zealand census questionnaire,

[i]n all European groups, it is common practice for all the younger people (especially the local-born ones) to identify themselves as 'New Zealand/Pakeha', leaving only their older (usually immigrant) parents or grandparents claiming to be 'Poles', 'Irish' or 'Dutch.' With the Chinese, even the fifth generation Chinese New Zealanders will tick themselves as 'Chinese' since there is no alternative box marked 'Chinese New Zealanders.' In this case, their Chineseness is reinforced by government official categorization. (Ip, 'Chinese Immigrants' 355)

Whether self-imposed or reinforced by external forces, Chinese identity is a tangible albeit multifaceted image for overseas Chinese and Chinese overseas.⁴

Chinese identity and all its complex ties with the motherland and the hosting country have therefore been among the main foci of scholarly work done on diasporic Chinese communities.⁵ In particular, two works have

⁴ I follow Tan Chee-Beng's distinction between 'Chinese Overseas' and 'Overseas Chinese'. The former describes non-China citizens of different nationalities; the latter refers to *huaqiao*, citizens of China residing overseas (Tan 1-2).

⁵ Most of the work done in this area comes from a North American perspective (among the most recent studies, see Hsu; V. Louie; A. Louie; Wong, *Chinatown and Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship*; Zhao; Zinzius), but issues of Chineseness have increasingly been

inspired me; both have Australia as the Chinese migrants' location. The first is 'Chinese Cosmopolitanism and Media Use' (Sinclair et al.), one of the essays included in *Floating Lives: The Media and the Asian Diaspora* (Cunningham and Sinclair). The essay is authored by a team of scholars from different ethnic and academic backgrounds and includes both media analysis (mostly of the narrowcast institutions SBS and New World) and sociological and ethnographic work on audience profile and response (carried out through surveys and interviews).

The second work is Wanning Sun's book-length study on the relationship between media and migration in the context of Chinese diaspora, *Leaving China*. Her work also takes a multidisciplinary approach, combining media theory and analysis with ethnographic research. Taking a step further from the on-location approach of 'Chinese Cosmopolitanism and Media Use', *Leaving China* shows how media discourse on migration is only partially created by the migrants themselves. In fact, media images of the Chinese diaspora often originate within China and are very much linked to the PRC's political agenda and cultural debates. In the past twenty years, feature films, TV dramas, and other news/documentary programmes have filled Chinese households with images of the West and of the Chinese who have moved there. Chinese migrants' 'real' experiences are often incorporated, elaborated, and re-imagined in their media counterparts; as a result, Chinese migrants who watch Chinese TV abroad receive and reinterpret media images not only of the homeland, but also of their own diasporic experience.

Sun's findings, like those of 'Chinese Cosmopolitanism', point to the existence of a heterogeneous Chineseness that is created through cultural negotiations beyond those with the host country. The diasporic communities' Chineseness is also constructed via the homeland's national imaginary (as it has been formed and transformed in reformed China), pre-existent images of the West, and expectations about the migrants themselves. All these images are mostly (although not exclusively) created and/or reproduced by media, and media—like people—can travel and be displaced. In both Sun's book and 'Chinese Cosmopolitanism', the notion of displacement is a key issue in defining the media of the Chinese diaspora living in Australia, vis-à-vis mainstream media. In the same way, in order to interpret the media of the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand, one needs to look at the displacement of

explored also in relation to Chinese diasporic communities in Europe, Asia, and the South Pacific (Ma and Cartier; Pieke et al.; Wang and Wah; Widodo; Wickberg; Zheng), including the southern hemisphere (Ip, *Re-examining Chinese Transnationalism*; Ryan; Wang and Wah). In the area of media representations, a growing number of scholars have looked at Chinese transnational media representations (Carsten; Marchetti; Szeto) as well as Chinese diasporic media (Sun, *Media and the Chinese Diaspora*; Zhang). In Australia and New Zealand, academic interest in the relationship between media and Chinese diasporic identity has also grown considerably in the past few years.

the Chinese living in New Zealand and how this particular community and its media have relocated themselves in the host country from a diasporic studies perspective.⁶

Studies on diasporic groups and their integration and/or resistance to their host culture have adopted a post-modern and post-colonial perspective in which concepts such as marginality and displacement have been redefined beyond the dichotomous opposition between dominant and subaltern culture. Concepts such as hegemony and cultural and media imperialism have been revisited and rethought in terms of cultural dependency (Browne). The subaltern's position is no longer viewed as a direct result of migration, but increasingly also defined by a multiplicity of other issues. For instance, despite the rhetoric of ethnic and cultural background as the crucial common denominator in the definition of diasporic communities, the cosmopolitan migrants who float between the elite and middle classes clearly separate themselves from the lower class migrants even when they share the same geographical origins. Similarly, migrant women have traditionally occupied spaces which often differ greatly from those occupied by men. Furthermore, not only is diaspora complicated by issues of class and gender, but it also needs to be geopolitically historicized. The early- and mid-1900s fluxes of migrants were moving around countries still mostly defined by the nation; the late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century migrants travel in a world increasingly defined by the global.

As a result of this complex approach to the analysis of diaspora, scholarly work has developed in many different directions (e.g., global capital, post-colonial realities, and transnational cultures). However, most of the research literature in this field agrees that migrant consciousness is to be understood in terms of agency (Hall). Although still associated with the notion of exile (Gandhi), diaspora is no longer viewed as simply victimized and oppressed by the host culture; instead, migrants are seen as having the ability not only to resist but also to assert themselves. At the same time, cultural identities are interpreted no longer as fixed conditions defined by hierarchical oppositions, but rather as fluid processes originated by continual negotiations between and among cultures. As a result, the diasporic experience is conducive not only to cultural translations but also to active resistance and cultural creation (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*). Bhabha's theorisation of a new cultural hybrid identity that emerges from the spaces in between the coloniser and the colonised and challenges any essentialist

⁶ At the time of this research (conducted in 2005), no study (specifically focusing on Chinese-language media) had been published in New Zealand. Since then, there has been a noticeable increase in post-graduate research (see, for instance, Sally Liu's study on Chinese-language media representation of Māori and Eric Sui Ting Cheung's study on media consumption patterns of Taiwanese women living in New Zealand).

cultural identity has also been usefully applied to the dynamics at play between host and diasporic communities.⁷

In particular, emphasis on the concept of *hybridity* as the foundation of cultural pluralism recognises the permanence of strong dominant paradigms against which the subaltern fights to survive but does not necessarily view all diasporas as victims of either global capitalism or mainstream culture. On the one hand, some diasporic communities, far from being one of the many fatalities of globalisation, have actually gained economic power and profited from their participation in global markets (Karim). On the other hand, '(d)iasporic communities have been increasingly defining and shaping mainstream culture' (Gabriel 3). The case of the Asian communities in New Zealand well exemplifies the rising cultural influences of the new diasporas. For instance, events like the Diwali Festival of Lights, the Chinese New Year, and the Chinese Lantern Festival are becoming part of Kiwi popular culture at large.⁸

As diasporas have been redefined beyond the powerless migrants struggling to survive and/or assimilate, so has the relationship between diasporic communities and media evolved and expanded outside the lore of cultural imperialism, which views all minorities as mostly silent observers in a scenario dominated by media conglomerations run by rich white/western men. Minorities (including but not exclusively diasporic ones) have become more visible, taking advantage of the disappearance of national borders to launch a transnational attack on media that were previously dominated by 'white privilege'. John Gabriel has noted how

[a] new politics of representations has emerged in which cultural producers (film-makers, artists, journalists, etc.), entrepreneurs and community organisations of hitherto marginal or excluded ethnicities have begun to promote complex and diverse (diasporic) forms of cultural expression whilst simultaneously challenging dominant, monocultural world views. (Gabriel 3)

However, Gabriel also points out that the challenge has led to a revival of dominant representations of whiteness in which *white* is constructed and

⁷ 'Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other "denied" knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rule of recognition' (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 114).

⁸ The New Zealand Chinese Lantern Festival has become very popular in Auckland: in 2004, 130,000 people participated in the event (<<http://www.asia2000.org.nz/events/lantern.php>>). Wellington, Christchurch, and Palmerston North also host Chinese New Year and Lantern Festivals. The Diwali Festival of Lights has taken place in Wellington and Auckland since 2002 (<<http://www.asia2000.org.nz/events/diwali.php>>).

promoted as a racialised identity that is 'fighting back' against both local and global attacks. In media as elsewhere, diaspora have reshaped and interacted with—rather than eliminated—old patterns of dominance.

In sum, the notion of diaspora has helped deconstruct the notion of media imperialism and explore the implication of local adaptations. A diasporic perspective has been used to describe media production and consumption which still presupposes a non-dominant position, but actively explores new strategies to overcome marginality, often exploiting cutting-edge technologies like the Internet, CD-ROM, and digital broadcasting satellite (DBS).⁹ The media of diaspora do not hold ethnicity and displacement as the only defining factors. For instance, the rise of Islamic media targeting a globally rather than locally defined multi-ethnic audience (e.g., TV stations like al-Jazeera, IT resources like CD-ROM products, Internet-based newsgroups, and e-mail discussion lists, etc.) has led to a reinterpretation of Islam in diasporic terms (Mandaville).

The old notion of media mainstream narratives in which minorities' voices were repressed, suffocated, and/or distorted has been replaced by a more dynamic view of transnational mediascapes (Appadurai) in which indigenous and migrant voices have significantly contributed to redefining communities as imagined (Anderson) not only by printed and electronic media, but also, increasingly, virtual spaces (Rheingold, Loader, Jones, Gurstein) at both the global and local levels.

Chinese media in New Zealand fit in the broader context of diasporic media as they are dynamically interacting with the national 'white' media. The Chinese press, radio, and Internet presence in New Zealand have had a visible impact not only in providing the Chinese community with spaces in which to express ideas, find entertainment, and promote cultural events, but also in contributing at least partially to enhancing Kiwis' perception of New Zealand as a multicultural nation.

From the perspective of the present study, one needs to note that the notion of *hybridity* does not only involve interaction with the host culture but it also refers to cultural dynamics within the Chinese community itself. The Chinese diaspora, far from being a homogenous entity defined by common ethnicity, is a conglomeration of many communities defined by different national origins, diverse cultural and economic backgrounds, and divergent religious beliefs. Another important variable is constituted by the marginality of the New Zealand Chinese. Unlike their American, European, or Australian counterparts, the New Zealand Chinese have only recently become the object of academic scrutiny, mostly thanks to the pioneering work of Manying Ip (*Home away from Home*) and James Ng (*Windows on the Chinese Past* and

⁹ There is a broad variety of recent case studies on the topic of media and diaspora (Karim [2003]; King and Wood [2001]).

Chinese Settlement in New Zealand). The New Zealand Chinese have long been perceived as living peacefully integrated, untouched by the social conflicts and cultural struggles which have been exposed in other areas of Chinese diaspora studies.

In fact, Chinese immigrants did not peacefully and smoothly integrate with New Zealand society (Yee). The history of the Chinese diaspora has been one of social discrimination and cultural isolation. Only recently, Chinese have progressively become more noticeable participants in New Zealand society. Their number has more than doubled in the last ten years and in the 2001 census, Chinese comprised 2.9% of New Zealand's total population (they were 1.3% in 1991).¹⁰ They form a relatively young community with a preponderance of new immigrants; overseas-born constitute 72% of the total Chinese population in New Zealand, with only 28% being local-born Chinese (Ip, 'New Zealand' 291). Unlike the miners, market gardeners, and laundrymen of the first waves of immigration, since the 1990s, Chinese have come to live in New Zealand's larger cities (in 2001 63% of them were living in Auckland) and look for professional jobs (Ip, 'New Zealand' 291).

Chinese have also become politically active, both in national and local government. In 1995, Pansy Wong became the first Chinese Member of Parliament (for the National Party) and, on November 30, 2004, Kenneth Xiaoxuan Wang became the second (for the ACT NZ Party). At the local level, the first Chinese mayor was George Gee (who was elected mayor of Petone in 1968). He was followed by Meng Foon (mayor of Gisborne since 2001) and Peter Chin, who became mayor of Dunedin in 2004 and was re-elected in 2007.¹¹ Beyond political activism, civic involvement (such as

¹⁰ 'The Asian population is a diverse population. In the 2001 Census, the number identifying with various Asian ethnic groups was: Chinese 105,057, Indian 62,187, Korean 19,026, Filipino 11,091, Japanese 10,026, Sri Lankan 7,014, Cambodian 5,268, Thai 4,554, Vietnamese 3,462, Indonesian 2,073, Malay 2,052 and other Asian groups 9,765. There were 4,605 people who identified with more than one Asian ethnicity (e.g. Chinese and Indian)' (From 'National Asian Population Projections [2001(base)-2021]—Hot Off The Press').

¹¹ Both Chinese MPs position themselves to the right of the political spectrum. While Pansy Wong has a business-oriented approach to politics, Kenneth Xiaoxuan Wang's libertarian approach to the free market is combined with a strong commitment to nature conservation (he is a trustee of the Chinese Conservation Education Trust). Biographical information on Pansy Wong and Kenneth Wang can be found at <<http://www.ps.parliament.govt.nz/>>.

In terms of where Chinese stand in the context of the bicultural opposition between Pakeha and Māori, while Pansy Wong's National Party has traditionally shown an antagonistic attitude towards Māori (whom the National party believes to have obtained unfair privileges in New Zealand society), Meng Foon, who speaks fluent Māori, represents the possibility of an encounter and alliance between Chinese and Māori.

community councils, school boards, voluntary organisations, etc.) has noticeably increased (Beal 13).¹²

The Chinese community's improved visibility is reflected in the media, which are the focus of my research project. Images of China and the Chinese have become more frequent, although by no means customary and still quite stereotypical in mainstream media. There has also been an increase in Chinese-language media, both coming from the homelands (i.e., China and Taiwan) and locally produced.¹³ These media images of Chineseness differ not only in terms of content or type of medium, but also in their origin, agency, structure, and distribution.¹⁴

Chinese mediascapes can be framed into two main categories: transnational, i.e., mainly consisting of imported media produced in the home country; and diasporic, i.e., produced in the host country by migrants (Nacify 51–52).¹⁵ In particular, while radio, the press, and Internet all combine transnational and diasporic elements, TV programmes are almost exclusively transnational.

At the time of Touch China TV's rise, Golden Raindrop TV (*Xinxilan jinshuidi dianshitai* 新西兰金水滴电视台), which started its broadcasts in 2000, was the only source of free Chinese programmes and it was—and still remains—available only to Auckland residents. Golden Raindrop TV offers Chinese news from CCTV4 for one hour daily and some entertainment programmes during weekends through Triangle TV in Auckland.¹⁶ Chinese-

¹² Tim Beal has analysed the significance of Chinese political and civil activism and its implication for the Asian community at large and the development of a multicultural Asian/South Pacific-oriented New Zealand. James Ng has collected long lists of successful Chinese New Zealanders (musicians, athletes, writers, artists, and professionals) and notes that '[a]s to the younger children of the Chinese newcomers growing or grown up in this country, an increasing number have already become school duxes, won university scholarships and entered university specialist schools' (Ng 2001).

¹³ The use of the term 'homelands' suggests the existence of more than one China as cultural references for Chineseness (PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and possibly other non-Chinese countries with a long tradition of Chinese overseas community).

¹⁴ For a historical overview of Chinese media in New Zealand, see Ip, 'Chinese Media'.

¹⁵ Hamid Nacify's definitions are applied to narrowcast television categories. He also includes 'ethnic' television, which 'refers to television programmes primarily produced in the host country by long-established indigenous minorities' (51).

¹⁶ At the time of TCTV's appearance, Golden Raindrop TV was broadcasting CCTV4 news (Mon-Fri 1–2 pm) and occasionally documentaries and feature programmes from China (Sat 8–10 pm). Wang Lili, an investor from Sweden, set up the station. She has real estate and other businesses to support the daily operational cost of the station. Triangle TV is 'New Zealand's first non-commercial, regional TV station and has been broadcasting to the Auckland region since August 1, 1998 on UHF channel 41, and since 23 March, 2004 in Remuera on UHF channel 52, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The channel broadcasts on a Government-owned channel and as a public broadcaster, combines access, public service

speaking communities could also access Chinese-language news and entertainment produced in Mainland China or Taiwan through satellite dishes. In 2003 World TV Ltd. (WTV, *Zhonghua dianshi wang* 中华电视网) in association with Sky TV was broadcasting five Chinese channels as well as one Korean and one Japanese channel throughout New Zealand.¹⁷

Touch China TV

In such a context and with a growing Chinese population, Touch China TV 新西兰中文电视台 (TCTV) was born with the best omens. In 2003, TCTV reached an agreement with TV3 and began broadcasting Chinese-language programming (from mainland China) daily from 1 pm to 3 pm through Channel Four (C4). Rebecca Yu 于艳青, chairperson of TCTV, had seventeen years of TV media production experience in China. After visiting New Zealand for the first time in 2001, she became convinced that free-to-air TV was a good potential market and began negotiations with TV3 CEO, Rick Friesen. She reached an agreement in May of 2003 and secured for TCTV the right to purchase airtime from TV3.

Programming included quiz shows, music concerts, and, most of all, TV dramas, which were the highlights of the station broadcast schedule.¹⁸ TCTV had an agreement with Hunan Cable TV Station to air some of their programmes, such as *Zhenqing* 真情 (True Feeling, an interview programme), *Yinyue buduan* 音乐不断 (Fan's Club, a music show), and *Kuaile dabenyong* 快乐大本营 (Happy Camp, an entertainment programme). The station also broadcast a bilingual series of documentaries on Chinese cities.¹⁹

and ethnic television programming into a novel and exciting format' (<http://www.tritv.co.nz/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=2>).

¹⁷ WTV has programme suppliers coming from mainstream media in China, Japan, and Korea. According to WTV's website, over 10,000 households subscribe to WTV, with the total number of viewers reaching 50,000. When directly asked about the proportion of Chinese households that subscribe, WTV declined to supply the figure. In 2004, the Chinese channels became seven and on 13 August 2007, three years after the demise of TCTV, WTV launched CTV8, the first 24-hour free-to-air Chinese TV.

¹⁸ Among the TV dramas broadcast by TCTV during its first ten months of broadcasting were *Tianxia Diyilou* 天下第一楼 (Number One Restaurant under the Sky), *Hei dong* 黑洞 (Black Hole), *Yimi yangguang* 一米阳光 (A Thread of Sunshine), *Zhengfu* 征服 (Conquer), *Zou xiang gonghe* 走向共和 (Toward a Republic), *Modai huangfei* 末代皇妃 (The Last Imperial Concubine), *Wo fei yingxiong* 我非英雄 (I'm not a Hero), and *Zheng yi wu xian* 正义无限 (Boundless Justice).

¹⁹ Some documentaries were provided by the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China (phone interview with Tina Lin, 23 November 2004).

According to the TV station's public relations representative, Tina Lin, programmes were selected on the basis of both audience ratings in China and the purchase cost.²⁰ Some programmes were provided to the station free of charge. For instance, the Chinese embassy in New Zealand offered the documentary *The Secret Archives of the Qing Palace* to introduce Chinese culture to the local Kiwi audience.

During its first ten months—from November 2003 to September 2004—TCTV's average total cumulative audience went from 14,000 to 166,000 viewers.²¹ Data referring to its first months of broadcast shows that 'although the Chinese sample is small, the Chinese audience is over-represented for TCTV when compared to the total population'.²² However, TCTV suddenly stopped its broadcasting on 27 November 2004, due to disagreements with TV3.

In order to understand what went wrong with TCTV, one can focus on two main lines of enquiry. The first has to do with the politics of New Zealand television broadcasting. Disagreements between TV3 and its Chinese counterpart were mentioned as the main reason for the closure of TCTV, and its inability to generate sufficient advertising revenue seemed to be at the core of the problem. Officially, TV3 had simply made a business decision to invest in other more profitable programming. While more detective work might uncover other contractual factors that contributed to such disagreements, I propose that for the purpose of this research a second line of enquiry might be more valuable.²³

This second line of enquiry moves beyond the station's business failure and involves a closer examination of the programming as well as audience response. I frame TCTV's short-lived broadcast in the broader context of New Zealand media structure in relation to both bicultural and multicultural issues. I seek to understand what kind of cultural project TCTV actually was and to what extent it 'promote[d] complex and diverse (diasporic) forms of cultural expression whilst simultaneously challenging dominant, monocultural world views' (Gabriel 3).

²⁰ Tina Lin noted that Rebecca Yu maintains a very good relationship with some of the major TV Stations in China (CCTV, Hunan, Shangdong, Jilin, etc.) (phone interview with Tina Lin, 23 November 2004).

²¹ The latest figure (September 2004) on TCTV's audience rating was 166,100 (phone interview with Tina Lin, 23 November 2004). TCTV audience ratings are based on data provided by Nielsen Media Research to TV3. The term *cumulative audience* 'relates to the total number of different people within the selected demographic who tuned in during the selected time period for 8 minutes or more (i.e., reached at least once by a specific schedule or advertisement)' (Media Definitions, file downloaded from TCTV website).

²² 'TCTV Audience Report' is a Power Point file downloaded from TCTV's website.

²³ I was not able to gather more information from TV3 regarding the details of the end of the TCTV broadcast. Similarly, the TCTV website, its phone contacts, and e-mail addresses were all quickly deactivated, preventing any further communication.

An essential part of my research project is to verify whether the station and, in particular, its transnational programming that mostly relied on imported TV dramas responded to the local community's expectations. From October to December 2004, I conducted a survey in which I included general enquiries on programming preferences and/or access to visual media in Chinese as well as specific questions on TCTV. The questionnaire was offered in both simplified and traditional characters; an English version was available to those who could not read Chinese, such as younger respondents or second/third-generation Chinese. The 97 respondents (50 female and 47 male) were selected by approaching church goers, Chinese schools, and Asian grocery store customers. The sample, although small, turned out to be a representative section of the New Zealand Chinese population as it is described by the 2001 census. The survey's content and methodology is described in more detail in 'From Middle Kingdom to Middle Earth', where I survey and analyse Chinese-language media (press, radio, and Internet) in New Zealand.²⁴ I here focus on the data more directly concerning TCTV.

Confirming the Nielsen audience reports on TCTV, the survey shows that TCTV did respond to—although it might not have fully satisfied—the need for Chinese-language TV stations in New Zealand. In fact, 70% of the survey respondents indicated that they have watched TCTV to different degrees of regularity, and only 11% declared that they had never heard of it.²⁵ Furthermore, TCTV was the second top choice for Chinese-language entertainment for 36% of the respondents.²⁶ I have also collected additional evidence of TCTV's recognition through informal conversations with friends and acquaintances. For instance, some of its occasional viewers mentioned that they would have watched it more regularly if the broadcast time (early afternoon) had been different. A Chinese colleague, whose wife was a loyal

²⁴ 'It included a large majority of first generation Chinese (90 percent) who mostly came from the PRC and in smaller number from Taiwan and Malaysia. The survey's age groups also reflected the national trend, with 56 percent of the respondents below 41 years old (74 percent below 46) and only 9 percent over 60 years old. As for occupation, self-employed (owners of private businesses) were 16 percent, while employed by a private and/or state owned enterprise were 8 percent, 5 percent worked in the IT area, professionals and academics made up 15 percent of the total, 24 percent were students, 14 percent unemployed (all of these were women and almost all but two stated that they were housekeepers) and 9 percent retired' (Voci 174–75). For more detailed information about the survey, see Voci.

²⁵ More specifically, 37% watched TCTV regularly (i.e., either daily or a couple of times a week) and 33% had only watched it a few times in the past or very seldom (once or twice a month).

²⁶ One should note that home videos and DVDs coming from friends and relatives became the preferred option when combining first and second choices (45% of the respondents). In addition, very few people (only seven respondents) rent videos and/or DVDs from the local Chinese stores, even less than those who download material from the web.

viewer of TCTV, expressed disappointment over TCTV's sudden disappearance. Another respondent remarked that although he was not happy about the quality of the programming, he believed that the very existence of a Chinese-language broadcast was very encouraging.²⁷ In sum, despite its shortcomings, TCTV was a significant landmark in the relatively short history of Chinese televised media in New Zealand.²⁸

Some data, however, are harder to interpret. For instance, on the one hand, the survey could suggest that TCTV made the right choices by focusing on TV dramas as its main shows. In fact, in terms of content, TV dramas (with a total of 45 selections) are confirmed as very popular programmes; they are second only to news (which totals 52 selections) as the most favoured programmes; films come third with 34 selections.²⁹ Additionally, when asked to name a few of their favourite Chinese-language films or TV dramas, most respondents opted for the second with only a few mentioning film titles and none of these were international blockbuster and arguably Orientalist productions like *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* or *Hero*, but rather they were domestic successes set in contemporary China like *Cellphone*.

On the other hand, TCTV's emphasis on TV dramas might in fact have failed to recognise the diasporic community's need to be closely in touch with their current reality. News, not entertainment, was the top reason (52%) for turning to Chinese-language media. Furthermore, while TV drama itself enjoys great popularity, TCTV's selection of TV dramas left many disappointed as the station did not manage to broadcast major (and expensive) shows. Most importantly, within the TV drama genre, the survey points out that everyday life stories involving family, love, work, and social issues are by far the most preferred content (49% chose it as their first choice), followed by police/detective stories (20%) and martial arts (11%). Likewise,

²⁷ The same friend lamented that the quality of programmes was not very good; it is my personal opinion that programmes of higher quality (and/or higher popularity in mainland China) could not be purchased due to their high costs.

²⁸ TCTV also hosted a website with a community section that included *Zhuanlan tiandi* 專欄天地 (World Column) and *Guanggao Zazhi* 廣告雜誌 (Ads Magazine). Under World Column, one could find links to *Yimin anju wanquan shou* 移民安居完全手 (the Immigrants Settlement Handbook, provided by the New Zealand Immigration Service), *Yuedu xinqing* 悅讀心情 (Good Reading—articles by loan consultant Lily Ho on banking services, house loans, business loans, and investment funds), *Lan Yi qinggang zhuan* 藍藝情感專欄 (Lan Yi's Love Column), and Sailor's Cooking Club—recipes for people away from China. Under the Ads Magazine, twelve items (including finance, study, entertainment, travel, housing, immigration, etc.) were listed, but only four ads appeared.

²⁹ My survey indicated that news in Chinese about China is mostly accessed through the Internet and hard-copy newspapers.

contemporary settings are considerably preferred over historical ones and dramas over comedies.

Diasporic communities therefore are more attracted to images of the (t)here and now, rather than representations that evoke China's glorious past (costume dramas) or recent history. Further indirect confirmation of the strong connection with the contemporary is that the most important reason for watching Chinese-language films and/or TV dramas is that they deal with familiar themes and places (a total of 62 selections).³⁰ All these data seem to indicate that the definition of Chinese identity, even in relation to the distant motherland, is very much rooted in the present. If one also looks at the audience's preferences for other media (press, radio, Internet), one finds that Chinese-language media are sought in order to connect with what is going on in China and between China and New Zealand, and only to a lesser extent to keep in touch with a more historically and culturally defined Chineseness.

Such a strong connection with current events and contemporary issues can be interpreted as reflecting a diasporic community that neither looks back nostalgically nor seeks fantasy (only 11% chose martial arts as their favourite genre), but is rather engaged with its present reality. TCTV did not offer news, investigative reports, or talk shows on either Chinese or local issues, but one can speculate that this type of programming would have well matched the Chinese community's view of Chinese-language media as mostly engaging with everyday life, social, and familial issues, rather than only providing entertainment.

One should also note that the considerable attention paid to contemporary China does not necessarily mean there is no interest in Chinese history, cultural values, and traditions, rather it reflects the immigrants' very recent displacement from the homeland and therefore explains why the loss of language and culture is not perceived (yet) as a crucial concern. In fact, among the few long-term residents (second- or third-generation) who took the questionnaire, almost all (seven out of eight respondents) chose the exposure to language and culture (not familiarity with places and events) as the most important reason for watching Chinese TV dramas or films.

As the majority of Chinese residents in New Zealand left the homeland very recently, the distance from China is felt mostly at a spatial/psychological, rather than temporal, level. Furthermore, unlike the earlier migrants, many Chinese residents often reconnect with the homeland, both physically (travelling) and virtually (through the Internet). They do not just remember

³⁰ Familiarity with themes and places was chosen by 42 respondents as their first choice and another 20 respondents as their second choice. The other choices were 'because they are in Chinese language' (selected as their first choice by 29 respondents and as their second choice by 11, with a total of 40 selections) and 'because they teach me about my own culture' (selected by 16 respondents as their first choice and by 22 as their second choice, with a total of 38 selections).

China nostalgically as a place that becomes increasingly remote with the passing of time, but they continue to experience it as they remain in touch with its present, fast-paced changes.

From this overview of the content and audience response, one can see that TCTV's programming might have partially contributed to 'promot[ing] complex and diverse (diasporic) forms of cultural expression' (Gabriel 3). However, it did not challenge the dominant monocultural or bicultural views of New Zealand's mainstream media because it did not actively and critically engage with the displacement of its targeted audience. More specifically, it did not (1) adequately respond to the need for news and commentaries on current issues and (2) address the complexity of the Chinese community, especially the different needs of the recent immigrants as opposed to the long-time residents and New Zealand citizens of Chinese descent.

Nonetheless, viewing rates and the overall positive audience response documented in my survey both seem to indicate that TCTV had been relatively well-received and had at least the potential to grow as a truly diasporic enterprise, if more time had been allowed for the station to develop its in-house programming and to enlarge its viewership. I propose that the station could have bought itself more time, if its alliances had also been outside TV3's business partnership. More specifically, TCTV had not gained enough governmental support and failed to establish its legitimacy within the broader support of multiculturalism within New Zealand society. Furthermore, because Rebecca Yu was herself a first-generation immigrant and the station did not sufficiently reach out to the third- or fourth-generation English-speaking Chinese, TCTV did not fight the long and complex consensus-seeking battles that might have provided a broader community support for this enterprise.

Conclusion

While TCTV is not likely to be the last diasporic experiment on national TV, one should not be overly optimistic: it may take quite some time before either TCTV or a similar ethnic station can be successfully broadcast nationwide. As of today, the multicultural presence on national TV is still very limited. Media images of Chinese (and for that matter of other Asian migrants/residents) in New Zealand are more frequent than in the past, but still inadequate. Culturally insensitive or, in some cases, blatantly offensive commercials are additional evidence of lingering cultural ignorance and prejudices.³¹ Chineseness remains an image largely rooted outside New

³¹ For instance, in a commercial for '30 SECONDS' (a mould and algae removal spray for outdoor pavements), 'Prof. Yamamoto'—short, quite unattractive, thick glasses, strong

Zealand, defined either by the exotic and partially Orientalist images of films which won multiple awards (for instance, the broadcast of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* on TV2 in December 2004) or by the still very limited and scattered news from mainland China. In such a context, the documentary *New Faces Old Fears*—made for TV1 with funding from NZ on Air and produced by Manying Ip and John Bates—and the episode on the Chinese communities living in New Zealand in the series *Here to Stay*—made for TV1 by the independent film and television production company, Gibson Group—were quite exceptional although not totally isolated events.

On national TV, the only programme specifically on Asian communities remains *Asia Down Under*, which has been broadcast by TV1 since 1994. On its website presentation, the content is advertised as 'topical, informative and entertaining stories that reflect the Asian community within New Zealand, but will also be of interest to all Kiwis' (*Asia Down Under*).³² In fact, the show is often amusing but never superficial, covering non-controversial topics in the fields of arts, sports, music, fashion, and cooking, but also exploring some divisive issues (such as the tensions between long-term residents and newcomers). The Asian communities in New Zealand are represented as diversified, colourful, and creative; they might at times be slightly idealised but are never overtly clichéd. Furthermore, in the last few months the programme has included investigative reports on domestic violence and crime within the Asian communities.

Such a long-running show on New Zealand TV could play a meaningful role at a time when New Zealand's own identity is going through a significant transformation. By informing viewers about a growing Asian community, *Asia Down Under* indirectly argues in favour of a non-Eurocentric image of New Zealand's national identity. While New Zealand's links with Britain and Europe remain strong, the increasingly visible presence of Asian immigrants reminds Kiwis of their 'geopolitical location as an Asian-Pacific nation' (Ip, 'New Zealand' 291). The show in fact has a strong pan-Asian/global dimension. Not only does the programme's format show people of different Asian descent, but the show's hosts and producers themselves are of Chinese, Indian, and Indonesian ethnic backgrounds.

Yet, whether *Asia Down Under* contributes to the formation of a post-colonial hybridity in New Zealand is debatable. According to Bhabha, hybridity should turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. While one can notice that over the years *Asia Down Under* has increased the number of controversial reportages on a variety of social

accent, and ungrammatical English—advertises the product, with an over-the-top excitement.

³² There appears to be no archived list of the various topics covered by *Asia Down Under*. One of the show's producers, Melissa Lee, mentioned that during the 2004 season alone they produced forty programmes which included six items each (source: e-mail exchange).

problems and cultural tensions, the programme is still mostly characterised by a conciliatory and mediating agenda. Even when prejudices, discriminations, or internal divisions are introduced, they are framed as aberrations within mostly safe boundaries. The programme, overall, keeps a ‘play-it-safe tone’ (Kothari, Pearson, and Zuberi 148) which tends to emphasise how Asians find their place in New Zealand, rather than point to their—imposed or self-chosen—displacement.

With just one multicultural show (*Asia Down Under*) currently airing on national TV on a regular basis, it is hard to predict whether New Zealand will develop a narrowcast system like SBS in Australia or whether other ethnic TV stations will attempt to establish themselves. In such a media context, TCTV had the potential to become the first nationwide free Chinese TV channel, which could have provided an alternative voice for a minority community to represent itself, not as a ‘token symbol of inclusion’ (Kothari, Pearson, and Zuberi 149), but via a complex, autonomous, and interconnected cultural space. Yet the station failed to represent, include, and activate the diasporic community it targeted as its main audience and mostly remained a window on to the Chinese mainland in New Zealand. TCTV did not offer in-house produced programming, besides the production of some commercials.³³ The content of its broadcasts, mostly programmes coming from the PRC, reflected its transnational nature and in fact indirectly echoed the towering presence of the Chinese state (Sun, *Leaving China* 7). Furthermore, because TCTV almost exclusively relied on a business strategy rather than a broader cultural and social approach, the station was not able to buy itself more time and thus possibly develop at a later stage in-house produced programming in addition to programmes imported from the mainland.

In this regard, it is useful to compare the history of TCTV with that of Māori TV. Both TV stations began to air at about the same time (Māori TV began broadcasting four months later than TCTV, on 24 March 2004). Far from being a coincidence, their quasi-simultaneous appearance indicates a broader trend towards multiculturalism. TCTV was the first transnational TV station to target the whole country; Māori TV was the first ethnic television station at the national level.³⁴ Both TV stations set out to reach minorities

³³ In a phone interview with Tina Lin just a few days before the interruption of TCTV’s broadcasting, she mentioned that a schedule change was supposed to start on 1 December 2004, when C4 was going to start its regular music programmes at 10 am on Saturday and 12 pm on Sunday, covering the airtime for TCTV programmes during the weekend. TCTV insisted that their existing contract with TV3 was a long-term one and was not happy about the change.

³⁴ It should be noted that while the main aim of Māori television is to promote Māori language and culture, its programming pays special attention to multiculturalism as it includes non-mainstream media shows (often ‘third cinema’ films or documentaries coming from third-world countries).

while keeping an eye on the white majority, which they tried to involve through specific (i.e., either bilingual or in-English) programmes.

However, the ongoing broadcasts and the likely long-term continuation of Māori TV sharply contrasts with the sudden interruption of TCTV's broadcasts. Māori TV started out from an advantageous position. Indigenous TV in New Zealand developed in the context of an already established Māori radio service and the government's commitment to the further development of Māori broadcasting. Māori electronic media have a much longer history than Chinese ones, with Māori's first radio broadcast going back to the late 1920s and a subsequent long history of campaigns to erode Pakeha control over broadcasting (Browne 131–63). Chinese electronic media in New Zealand have a very short history, no national network, and, above all, no governmental support.

In fact, the main reason behind the different fates of the two TV stations is that Māori TV is a state-endorsed and supported project and its cultural/political goals override commercial concerns.³⁵ As the case of Māori TV clearly illustrates, government support is crucial to gaining a space on national TV. The question then arises: Why did TCTV not succeed at gaining it?

TCTV was a privately run enterprise which received the official welcome of the New Zealand government but no financial support.³⁶ TCTV was a business-oriented operation, as was clearly stated on TCTV's website:

TCTV is an ideal information platform for upgrading the business image, promoting enterprises' culture, and developing the market. Hope [sic] this platform could appeal to those entrepreneurs in New Zealand who have a long term insight for their products and services. (<<http://www.tctv.co.nz>>)

During TCTV's short-lived tenure, returns came from advertising both Chinese and local Kiwi businesses (e.g., restaurants, car sales, travel agencies, English language schools). It is unclear how commercially successful the operation was, but it is unlikely that it had time to generate high profits.

The appearance and disappearance of TCTV therefore can be read as a failure of the Chinese community to define itself as a minority within both the

³⁵ As the 'Māori Television Service Act 2003' clearly states, 'The principal function of the Service is to promote *te reo Māori me nga tikanga Māori* through the provision of a high quality, cost-effective Māori television service, in both Māori and English, that informs, educates, and entertains a broad viewing audience, and, in so doing, enriches New Zealand's society, culture, and heritage'.

³⁶ Helen Clark wrote a warm letter greeting the beginning of TCTV's broadcasting and the TCTV website proudly displayed pictures of Mrs. Joan Caulfield (Helen Clark's representative) with Chairperson Rebecca Yu.

old and still conflicted bicultural context and the newly introduced, but far from accepted, multicultural model. What TCTV achieved was the result of its founder's entrepreneurial qualities and her dreams, not the result of the Chinese community's efforts. While Rebecca Yu had many years of experience in media production, she was herself an outsider, having arrived in New Zealand only two years before she began negotiations with TV3 to start her TV broadcasts. She managed to get some government officials' sympathy, but did not rely on the support of the broader Chinese community—both the long-term residents and the new migrants—which was only part of the picture as 'targeted audience'.

TCTV failed to gain more official recognition with the New Zealand Broadcasting Commission (New Zealand On Air). New Zealand On Air was created by the Broadcasting Act in 1989 'to reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture' and 'to ensure that a range of programmes is available to provide for the interests of women, children, disabled people and other minorities (*including ethnic minorities*)' (emphasis added, Broadcasting in New Zealand, <<http://www.med.govt.nz/pbt/broadcas/broad.html>>).³⁷

One wonders what the fate of TCTV would have been had the Chinese community found a cohesive strategy to obtain a media space which indeed 'reflect[s] and develop[s] New Zealand identity and culture' by addressing the needs of one of its largest minorities. On the one hand, it is necessary to overcome internal divisions, especially the separation between the first-generation immigrants and those who have resided in New Zealand for many generations and often do not speak Chinese. On the other hand, the Chinese community might need to search for alliances with both Māori and other Asian and South-Pacific minorities in order to negotiate better for multicultural media spaces which would not solely depend on commercial success (the model could be SBS in Australia).

The recent (August 2007) launch of CTV8 by WTV shows that TCTV was not an isolated and unsuccessful business venture and that the need for locally based Chinese television is still very much alive. While still mostly relying on imported programmes, CTV8 does include a small ratio of programmes which specifically address the need for more New Zealand-based news and infotainment. It is too soon to evaluate the success of this new Chinese television enterprise and its long-term impact in promoting multiculturalism in national media, but one should keep in mind that CTV8 is

³⁷ NZ On Air's aim is to 'fund programmes and broadcasts, not otherwise provided in a commercial market, which are widely accessible, reflect New Zealand's diversity and—across the range of programming—are entertaining for all New Zealanders' (NZ On Air, <http://www.nzonair.govt.nz/about_us.php>).

only available in the Auckland area on UHF62 and its local content mainly comes from a live-feed from Chinese Voice Broadcasting AM936.³⁸

If locally and nationally oriented as well as transnationally reaching Chinese TV broadcasting is to develop in New Zealand, I propose that strategies such as those that led to the establishment of Māori Television need to be more seriously explored. For instance, a closer connection with all (old and new) generations of Chinese residents, an alliance with state television (i.e., a partnership with TV1 or TV2, rather than TV3 or WTV), and especially the long-term support of New Zealand On Air might be as crucial as securing business advertisers or pay-TV subscribers. Whatever the case might be, demographic changes and the subsequent cultural and political presence acquired by residents of Chinese descent are bound to produce a visible effect on New Zealand TV broadcasting.

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³⁸ 'Another breakthrough for CTV8 is the daily live-feed (visual and audio) of radio current affairs programmes with Chinese Voice Broadcasting AM936 in selected hours. With this cross-media platform, programme hosts can fully understand the views from local communities through call-ins. Thus empower [sic] CTV8 with the strength of media and serves as the bridge between New Zealand mainstream society and Chinese communities' (CTV8, <http://www.wtv.co.nz/ctv8/e_about.html>). For more on Chinese-language radio, see Voci 171–73.

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