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Study on Cultural Discount of Documentary Between China and Western Countries
- Taking “The Forbidden City” and “Inside the Forbidden City” as examples



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1. Introduction

When we talk about documentaries, the first thought is perhaps Grierson's definition - "creative treatment of actuality" (Chapan, 2009, p. 9). However, in China, as a unique type of movie, documentary not only shows its artistic charm in "creative treatment of actuality", but also takes the responsibility of culture export and communication. Meanwhile, the process of the intercultural communication of documentary is always under the constraint that audiences from import markets feel it is difficult to understand or identify with the exotic culture in the documentary, including style, values, beliefs, history, mythology, social system, environment and pattern of behavior, and the resultant loss of cultural value of the documentary is known as "cultural discount".

Compared with Chinese documentary, western documentary usually ranks on top of the international documentary market. Documentaries made by BBC, Discovery or National Geographic rarely have cultural discount in overseas markets, but China's high-quality local documentaries often meet with the predicament that they have to be shortened or re-edited before broadcasted. Cultural discount is one of the most important factors which causes the imbalance in the international documentary market.

What is Cultural Discount? How is it reflected in documentaries of different cultures? what elements does the filmmaker want to show in these documentaries? How does Cultural Discount occur and manifest itself in Chinese documentaries during its cross-culture spreading? How to minimize Cultural Discount in order to fill in the understanding gap between different cultures?

My paper relies on the research about Cultural Discount, using narratology as a theoretical perspective to analyze and elaborate its impacts and solutions. It discusses narrative strategies, narrative perspectives and narrative methods by comparing two versions of documentaries. Both of them were edited from the same materials but by different groups ("The Forbidden City" edited by China Central Television - CCTV and "Inside the Forbidden City" edited by National Geographic Channel - NGC). The comparison helps to find the cultural diversity behind the editing and narrative, which shows how Chinese documentaries spreads all over the world.

The two important materials used in this article are from two resources: One is the interviews of the general director of “The Forbidden City”, Zhou Bing by CCTV; the other is Zhou’s articles in his blog which recorded the camera process of this documentary.

1) Reasons for Research

As an important part of the cultural industry in China, documentary has become a medium for cultural exchange to promote various cultures, lifestyles and values, and at the same time, to accelerate national cultural soft power. (Li, 2015, p. 53) Also, Documentary is a product that can be easily accepted by audience from other regions or countries. Facing the expansion of the current diversified spreading patterns and internationally imbalanced discourse power, Chinese documentary filmmaking has been adhering to the concept of promoting and exchanging Chinese culture and values and making an effort to conquer cultural barriers in terms of subject matters, language patterns, values, communication channels and so on. In the eyes of some Chinese media workers, Chinese documentary even is a powerful weapon to shape the image of the country. It has also become a National Image Ambassador to help other regions and countries have good insight in to Chinese people, history, beliefs, humanity and welfare. (Wang, 2011, p. 39)

However, the Chinese documentary has encountered difficulties when entering the international market due to its unique nationalism, humanity and history. The difficulties are mainly manifested in the following two points: First, the local high-quality documentaries are compressed into short versions for sale. Some of the domestic award-winning works or works with good reputations are not well recognized overseas. For example, “The Forbidden City” which, in China, is considered as a good documentary according to international standards, has attracted large audiences and its ratings have exceeded the ones of general TV series. (Wang, 2005) However, in order to be recognized by overseas audiences, NGC (National Geographic Channel) re-edited the 12 episodes (50 minutes each episode) into two parts (60 minutes each part as the specially edited international version) and renamed it “Inside the Forbidden City”. Second, the local high-quality documentaries are sold as raw materials to international

market. Michael Stedman, general manager of Natural History Productions in New Zealand (NHPNZ, a branch of The United States News Corporation), mentioned that a film and television production organization in China had invested a lot of manpower and material resource to shoot around 200 hours of raw materials in the Wolong Giant Panda Sanctuary. However, this organization did not know how to edit and publish it. (Liu, 2011, p. 63) Finally, NHPNZ adapted the 200-hour materials into a very successful documentary film – “Life of Giant Panda”. It is an interesting story about Chinese experts helping a giant panda mother accustomed to feeding her first child only, learn to support her second baby (that is against the panda’s nature). This model of overseas directors editing Chinese materials, has gradually become the main method to promote Chinese documentaries all over the world. These problems have drawn Chinese filmmakers’ great attention and they have started to re-consider the factors resulting in the current trading difficulties. Cultural discount is undoubtedly one of the important reasons.

In this thesis, the selected study sample is “The Forbidden City” which is a film based on cooperation between China and the US and to be published by CCTV. After it has been re-edited by National Geographic Channel, the international version is “Inside the Forbidden City” which is based on Chinese film material. The CCTV version – “The Forbidden City”, contains basic Chinese cultural elements, history, architecture, science, feng shui and other Chinese characteristics. It is a typical Chinese documentary. In NGC’s 90-minute condensed version, the NGC team re-edited the materials, rearranged the music and rewrote the comments.

Data from the “CSM Media Research of the 30 cities nationwide TV program audience ratings ranking from Oct. 2005 to Sep. 2006” shows that the premiere of “The Forbidden City” in Beijing area gets a high viewership ratings (up to 9.8%, television viewing rating refers to the percentage of the audience watching one TV channel out of the total audience in a certain period of time).(Viewership Rate, 2011)(Zheng, 2007, 18.06) In other famous movie rating sites in China, such as Douban and Mtime, it has received a higher rating which is 9.1(4.5 stars)(The Forbidden City, 2005a) and 8.7 (4.5 stars).(The Forbidden City, 2005b)

As for “Inside the Forbidden City”, some Chinese audiences think that its narrative technique is too dramatic, and it weakens the charm of Chinese traditional culture. It just receives a rating 6.9 (Inside the Forbidden City, 2007) In contrast, in the IMBD site, “Inside the Forbidden City” has a rating of 3 stars, but the CCTV version has never even been introduced. (Inside the Forbidden City, 2009)

Even the same material on the same subject, through being edited in different countries, presents itself in two different films. Thus it is a good example for analysis of cultural differences and cultural discount arising in the documentary production process.

2) Previous Studies

In general, the previous studies of cultural discount are mainly focussing on cross-cultural communications area, but there is not much in-depth research on this concept and there is no specialized study of cultural discount for documentary films in the cross-cultural communication from China to West.

The notion of cultural discount is first used by Seelmann-Eggebert, when referring to minority linguistic and cultural territories that have to invest relatively more in efforts to protect their cultural specificity. (Nikoltchev, 2003a)

In 1988, industry economists Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus first used the concept of “cultural discount” for the study of film and television program trade. (Nikoltchev, 2003b)

Some film and television industry studies on cross-cultural communications between Chinese and Western documentaries have mentioned the concept of cultural discount that is originally raised by Hoskins theory. For example, Harold L. Vogel, in his book, “Entertainment Industry Economics: A Guide for Financial Analysis”, quotes Hoskins’ study on cultural discount when he analyses trade factors affecting the macro-economic changes in the film. From the perspective of an Economist, the essential may include the public consumption nature of Television Programs, enough large domestic market and wide use of English. English is the second most popular language besides Mandarin, and it is mainly used in most of the wealthy countries, which means that

when American programs are sold to other English-speaking countries, they will encounter relatively less cultural discount - the loss of value due to different styles, cultural references and preferences, and various correlations. (Vogel, 2010, p. 94)

Sora Park's article, "China's Consumption of Korean Television Dramas", points out that during cultural consumption, cultural discount occurs. The more similar the cultural backgrounds are, the less cultural discount occurs. She says:

"Cultural goods are unique in that, all conditions being equal people prefer cultural codes and contents produced in their own language. Given two similar programs produced in different countries, a program made in one's own language and containing familiar cultural messages will be more highly valued. Thus the import of cultural products diminishes their value. This diminishment is known as the 'cultural discount' found in the economic literature addressing the trade in cultural goods." (Park, 2004, p. 267)

She gets conclusion from recent increases in regional trade, and mentions that cultural proximity may have a strong impact on the trade of media products, as people may more enjoy those programs that come from cultures similar to their own.

2. Theoretical Foundation

The contents of any cultural products are derived from a certain culture. Especially for documentary, it has a strong appeal to the audiences who are familiar with the ethnic, humanity, and history. However, to the audience in the international market who have different life-styles and values, it is difficult to find a sense of identity. In the cross-cultural transactions, the uniqueness of cultural products results in a greatly reduced attraction. Therefore, we can see that many excellent national documentaries in China have difficulties entering the international market. Even if they adopt some of the international filmmaking expressions, it is still difficult to achieve the desired results. The cultural discount is an obstacle that cannot be avoided.

1) Cultural Dimensions

I will use the concept of Individualism versus Collectivism in the Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory of cross-cultural communication. In Hofstede's point of view, this index explores the "degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups." Individualism can be defined as a preference for a loosely-knit social framework. In this framework, everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. Its opposite, in a collectivist culture, an individual believes that the desire and goals of their group are more important than anyone else's individual ideas. Individualist emphasizes the "I" and collectivist emphasizes the "we." Individualism tends to prevail in developed and Western countries such as USA, while collectivism prevails in less developed and Eastern countries such as China. Different cultural dimensions lead to different narrative focus of the two documentaries, which will be elaborated later. (Hofstede, 1991, p. 5)

2) Definition of Cross-Cultural Documentary

Culture can be defined in numerous ways. In the words of anthropologist E.B. Tylor, it is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."(Tylor, 1974, p. 1) Geert Hofstede has defined "culture" as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of

people from others”.(Hofstede, 1991, p. 5) Or in a contemporary variant, “Culture is defined as a social domain that emphasizes the practices, discourses and material expressions, which, over time, express the continuities and discontinuities of social meaning of a life held in common.”(James, Magee, Scerri & Steger 2015, p. 53)

Cross-Cultural Analysis was developed by early cultural evolutionists - E. B. Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan and was later greatly advanced by George Peter Murdock, who developed the Cross Cultural Survey in the 1930s-1940s, which is now known as the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). (Heath & Judith, 2017, 10.05)

In this article, the cross-cultural documentary refers to a documentary whose main character(s) or environment(s) has (have) cultural difference from the targeted audience selected by the producer(s). For more intuitive understanding, I divide Cross-cultural documentaries into three main forms:

- a. A documentary film produced by a local filmmaker that introduces his/her characters, events and local customs to a foreign audience. Governments in the world would utilize this kind of documentary to promote their national images on the international stage. A good example is China’s national image documentary shown in New York Times Square in the beginning of 2011. Although the purpose of “The Forbidden City” is not to introduce Chinese culture to the West, when it comes to cross-cultural communication, we can classify it into this type of documentary.
- b. A documentary film is made by local filmmakers that introduces foreigners, events, foreign customs and the target audiences are local citizens. Contrary to the previous genre, producers are familiar with the target culture in the creation of such programs, so the taste of the audience needs to be taken into account during the filming. But the documentary creator has to overcome his/her own cultural background constraints, and needs to exclude first-impression prejudices and ideological influence. “Nanook of the North” (Frances H. Flaherty, 1922) and “Chung Kuo (China)” (M. Antonioni, 1972) belong to this documentary group. So does the selected research sample “Inside the Forbidden City”.

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- c. A documentary that involves two or more cultures while the members from these cultures are the targeted audience. This type of documentary crosses national boundaries and its object culture is the same. Either the main characters or the audience can have both the same culture and different cultures. These cross-cultural documentaries have been developed and become a new form of creation because of the more frequent global population movements, and the increasing number of immigrants and immigration issues. “Another Me in The World” (Yang Fan, 2015) and “Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School” (BBC TWO Production, 2015) belong to this documentary group.

3) Cultural Discount

The notion of cultural discount is first used by Seelmann-Eggebert, when referring to minority linguistic and cultural territories that have to invest relatively more in efforts to protect their cultural specificity. The concept has its genesis in the realm of “conventional” economics, where it signifies the factor of cultural difference that must be added when determining the economic value of entertainment transactions. (Nikoltchev, 2003a) In fact, the term “discount” is derived from the economic jargon. In Cambridge Dictionary, it means “a reduction in the usual price”. In short, it is the loss of value.

In 1988, industry economists Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus first used the concept of “cultural discount” for the study of film and television program trade, which they clearly defined:

“A particular program rooted in one culture, and thus attractive in that environment, will have a diminished appeal elsewhere as viewers find it difficult to identify with the style, values, beliefs, institutions and behavioural patterns of the material in question. Included in the cultural discount are reductions in appreciation due to dubbing or subtitling...The cultural discount explains why trade is predominantly in entertainment, primarily drama, programming where the size of this discount is minimized. Informative programming is much more culture

specific and hence, particularly for news and public affairs programming, subject to such a large discount that little trade takes place. Informative programming does vary in this regard, however; for example, some nature and wildlife programming may be universal in appeal.” (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988, p. 500-501).

Therefore, the root cause of cultural discount is the difference in cultural structures, which is presented through specific cultural elements and cultural symbols. Thus, Hoskins and Mirus (1988) consider the value reduction in foreign television programs or movies as cultural discount. Cultural discount for a TV program or film can be calculated using the following formula: (Vogel, 2010, p. 106)

(Value of domestic equivalent- value of import) / (value of domestic equivalent)

This formula can be easily understood. Let us say that a film’s cultural value in the local country is 100, after the export to other countries, the cultural value go down to 80, therefore, the film’s cultural discount is 20%.

Documentary is becoming an important means to build Chinese national image, show the soft power of Chinese culture and promote cultural exchanges between China and the West. In the creation of a documentary, the perspective the key to guide or help the creator to select characters and narrative method; it will also inspire the creator to deeper comprehend the subject and to deploy related camera language; and at last it will affect the narrative structure of the work itself. The view normally displays as a custom, a historical or cultural “convention”, and a subconscious domination. It is this “convention rule” that leads to the documentary in cross-cultural communication, results in information decoding obstacles, and cultural discount.

3. Research Methods

In this paper, I focus on the communication theories and research methods in the study of the phenomenon of cultural discount in the cross-cultural communication. The focused theories and methods include:

Film analysis: This article uses several key points from the book written by Jacques Aumont and Michel Marie - "L'analyse des films", like: there is no general method of film analysis and the film analysis is endless. It is because there are always new things in the movie that can be analyzed; and it is necessary for someone to have knowledge about film history in order to perform a film analysis. (Aumont & Marie, 2005, p. 105)

There are some approaches which introduced in their book: text-based film analysis with structural approach, topic-based analysis with narrative approach, picture and sound approach, psychoanalytical approach and historical approach. In this paper, I use the sociological and historical perspective to analyse the topic, structure, narrative perspective, style of the two films.

Text analysis: This article also uses the text analysis method introduced in the Aumont and Marie's book. This thesis will make detailed text analysis of "The Forbidden City" and "Inside the Forbidden City" in cross-cultural context, in order to examine the aspect of cultural discount in these two documentaries. I analyse the differences and similarities of these two documentaries. The selection criteria in this article also follows what Jacques and Michel suggest in their book: relatively complete, structurally coherent, representative. (Aumont & Marie, 2005, p. 105)

This paper compares two documentaries on philosophy and culture from the idea of narrative, narrative perspectives and the narrative structure, while considering the desire/mood settings and camera language at the operational level. Through text analysis we can more clearly understand what are these two documentaries' cultural connotations, how the text features influence cultural discount, what causes the occurrence of cultural discount, and changes in cultural discount.

Frequency analysis: Frequency analysis is the study of letters or groups of letters contained in a cipher text in an attempt to partially reveal the message.

(Frequency analysis, 2017) In this paper, I use frequency analysis method to analyse the frequency, duration and percentage of two films about the similar objects, characters, events to support my point of view. In order to analyse the differences between the two films in the theme and content, this paper makes and uses the following 4 charts/forms.

4. A Comparative Study of the Narrative Method of “The Forbidden City” and “Inside the Forbidden City”

Narrative is an act, a process of presenting the story to the audience. When the narrator shows a narrative world to the audience, he/she cannot copy the external objective world. Instead, he/she must use narrative norms and narrative strategies. There are various ways to express the theme of the documentary. There are many kinds of materials to choose from. When the documentary filmmakers have taken a lot of materials, they need to choose the theme according to the needs of the audience, and present it to them. Under the different cultural backgrounds of China and the West, the filmmakers with different culture may possess different views of the subject. Even facing the same materials, they will edit and arrange them according to their own culture, and the narrative art is quite different from each other.

1) Narrative Idea: Culture Dominant vs Free Will

Every documentary creator has his/her cultural background, and the points of documentary depend on his/her way of thinking about the documentary under his/her cultural background. “Cultural materialism” which is coined by Raymond Williams, views culture as a “productive process”, part of the means of production. (Milner, 2005, p. 49) Culture is not merely a reflection of material world, but also an inseparable part of material world. The politics, economy and culture in the world are changing rapidly, and there are many, many different cultures throughout the world. The cultural concepts have multiple forms such as: Dominant Culture, Elite Culture, High Culture, Popular Culture, Subculture, Counterculture or Multiculturalism and so on. (Little, 2012)

Dominant culture refers to social practices and representations that affirm the central values, interests, and concerns of the social class in control of the material and symbolic wealth of society. (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003, p. 75)

Due to the Chinese special social system and the role played by documentary in social life, it is determined that the mainstream cultural occupies a predominant position in the group of Chinese historical and cultural documentaries. “Dominant culture may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns

of behavior, or by monopolizing the media of communication.” (Scott & Marshall, 2009) Starting from the 21st century, CCTV has produced several great historical and cultural documentaries such as “The Forbidden City (2005)”, “The Rise of the Great Powers (2006)”, “The Art of Dunhuang (2010)”. These documentaries have magnificent themes, large-budget production and grand narrative, it is not difficult to say, the filmmakers want to show the new national image of China in this new century, and at the same time, consolidate and strengthen a sense of national pride.

The chief director of “The Forbidden City”, Bing Zhou, wrote in his blog: “After a number of program seminars and communications, the chief producer, Zhao Wei, made three creative goals – firstly, the Forbidden City is great, it is a sign of architectural history, art history and social history. Secondly, the Forbidden City is vital as the core and epitome of great China since this small, complete, living society has survived, operated for hundreds of years. Thirdly, the Forbidden City is a carrier, because every building, every cultural relic and every story about it has rich historical and cultural connotations behind. These three comments represent the content of the Forbidden City. What we need do is to show the content with an appropriate method, a crafty creation perspective and a novel approach. ...I entitle myself as the aristocrat among documentary directors. The production budget of my film is about 1 million RMB (160 thousand dollars) per minute, however, when we sell the copyrights, the price drops to a few hundred RMB per minute.” (Zhou, 2006a, translated by the author)

From Zhou’s blog we can easily tell that documentary producers do not need to worry about the market price and cost when producing this type of state sponsored documentaries. They only need accurately express their ideas. They do not need to please the audience in the market.

The documentaries of dominant culture attract numerous audience and cause strong repercussions among them, which is indeed the “gospel” in documentary development history. But when it comes to culture exchange in the international market, foreign audiences cannot accept the values of these made-in-China documentaries that

do not have proper packaging. This foreign non-acceptance is unavoidable and greatly reduced the cultural output efficiency.

The Popular Culture concept occupies an important position in the narrative of Western documentaries. As Fedorak describes in her book, “Popular culture is the sum of performance, expression, and symbolism that both influences and reflects human culture.” (Fedorak, 2009, p. 3) It is heavily influenced by mass media. In this cultural environment, documentary creators pay more attention to “free will”. The filmmakers do not recognize any external spiritual authority, but rely on their own scientific, rational, independent thinking. They treat their own cultural activities as an independent, free career. It has advanced thinking, and more rational and spiritual consciousness compared with other two cultural discourses.

The Western documentaries have diverse themes, but its main point mostly focuses on “human”. What is the existing purpose of the documentary? The purpose is to care about human. This is the eternal topic of documentary creation. The form of the documentary is important and the subject matter is also important, but what impresses us the most is the content which often shocks us. This shock comes from understanding the depth of the theme, and from revealing the depth of human nature. (Song & Liu, 1996, p. 8) In the “Inside the Forbidden City”, the NGC production team pay more attention to “human”. The film describes in details about the process of choosing the empress and concubines by Emperor Guangxu under Cixi’s command. The standard of selection is neither Guangxu’s personal preferences, nor the appearance and characters of the ladies, but the power behind them; In the second episode, they take the Chinese last emperor, Pu Yi’s whole life as a clue to narrate the entire history between the late Qing Dynasty and early days of new China.

At the same time, the “Inside the Forbidden City” production team is from the National Geographic Channel. The commercialization of the American television industry requires that the documentary section should care about the audience rating. The spread of television media is intuitive and the television programs are real-time and irreversible. The program plays scene by scene, and the audience cannot repeat it like the paper media does. If the content is too esoteric, the audience may not fully

understand. Since American documentaries require merchandise attributes, documentary filmmakers have to take profits, entertainment and knowledge into consideration for their films.

2) Satisfy the Different Desire of Audience: The Timeline of History and Culture vs the Story of The Mysterious Royal Family

What is object of desire? According to Yin Hong, “Object of desire is an object that the audiences care, expect and stare at, and it is an object that audiences love or hate, sympathize or admire.” (Zhan, 2011, p.3) When we come to understand stories from other individuals, we will have a desire to care about these individuals or their stories.

Object of desire set in a documentary is something that the audiences want to focus on the most. Object of desire can be a character, such as a character’s biography and what the audiences want to know is the destiny of the character; Object of desire can also be an event, for example, it may be a relatively complete story. There is a great difference between these two filmmaking groups, one for “The Forbidden City” and the other for “Inside the Forbidden City”, in regards to selecting materials from the same source. This is because not only these two groups have different attitudes and different familiarity levels to this ancient Chinese city, but also they face different audiences having different cultural backgrounds. “The Forbidden City” considers the Forbidden City as a carrier and put focus on this small piece of land to demonstrate the greatest cultural treasures of Chinese civilization in the form of picture scroll chronologically. Whereas “Inside the Forbidden City” emphasizes the stories inside of this ancient city to satisfy the audiences’ desire of peeping into the mysterious royal family life.

The chief director Zhou Bing writes in his blog:

There are four parts in “The Forbidden City”. The first part is about how the Forbidden City was built up and reconstructed; the second part is about the functions of this ancient city. Take its Function of handling government affairs as an example. It was the highest ruling centre in Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty. The whole country was managed based on this centre. This part explained how

this “heart” function worked, how the Emperors’ daily life looked like and how they selected their favourite imperial concubines. The third part is about those art treasures in the Forbidden City. We introduced Tibetan porcelain ware, Tibetan Jade, Tibetan paintings and occidental ware. The fourth part is about the actual milestones of founding the Palace Museum. It depicted the changes from the Forbidden City to the Palace Museum. (Zhou, 2006, translated by the author)

In my point of view, the four parts divided by Zhou cannot contain all the contents of the film, therefore, I divide the documentary into 5 groups. Since the Episode 11 is talking about those national treasures lost during the havoc, I put it into “The Art Treasures” group. The Episode 12 is mainly describing the renovation of the Forbidden City, so it is put into “The development of Palace Museum” group. The only unclassified episode is Episode 9 – The Occidental Vogue in Palace. They are: The Construction of the Forbidden City, The Functions of the Forbidden City, The Art Treasures of The Forbidden City, The Occidental Vogue in Palace and The Development of The Palace Museum. (as chart 1).

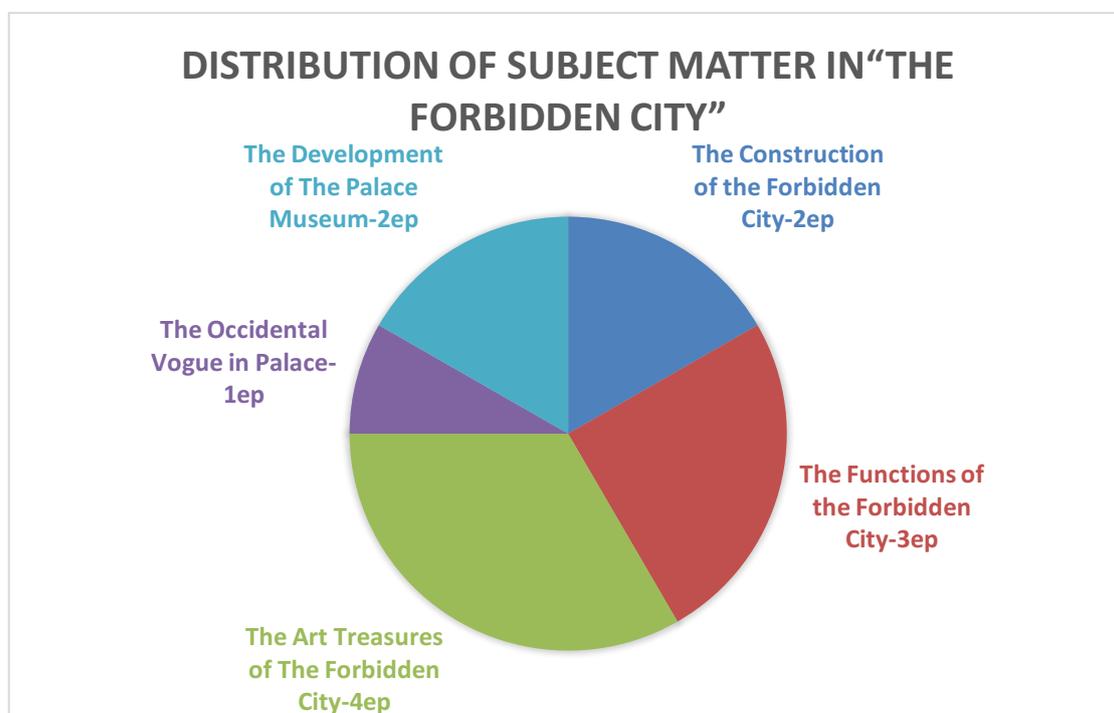


Chart 1

“Inside the Forbidden City” is the shortened version of “The Forbidden City”. It has two volumes. Total length of Volume I (Secrets) and Volume II (Survival) is about 90 minutes. This documentary mainly describes the construction of the Forbidden City, the architecture of the Forbidden City, Important people in the Forbidden City (Emperors, Eunuchs, the Champion scholar), Anecdotes inside of the Palace (Including Empress Dowager Cixi Coming into power, Emperors selecting concubines, Emperor Puyi’s grand wedding). Emperors’ passion to occidental treasures, the history of the Forbidden City and the decline of the Forbidden City. There are seven parts altogether. Each part lasts 10 to 20 minutes. Detailed time distribution see chart 2.

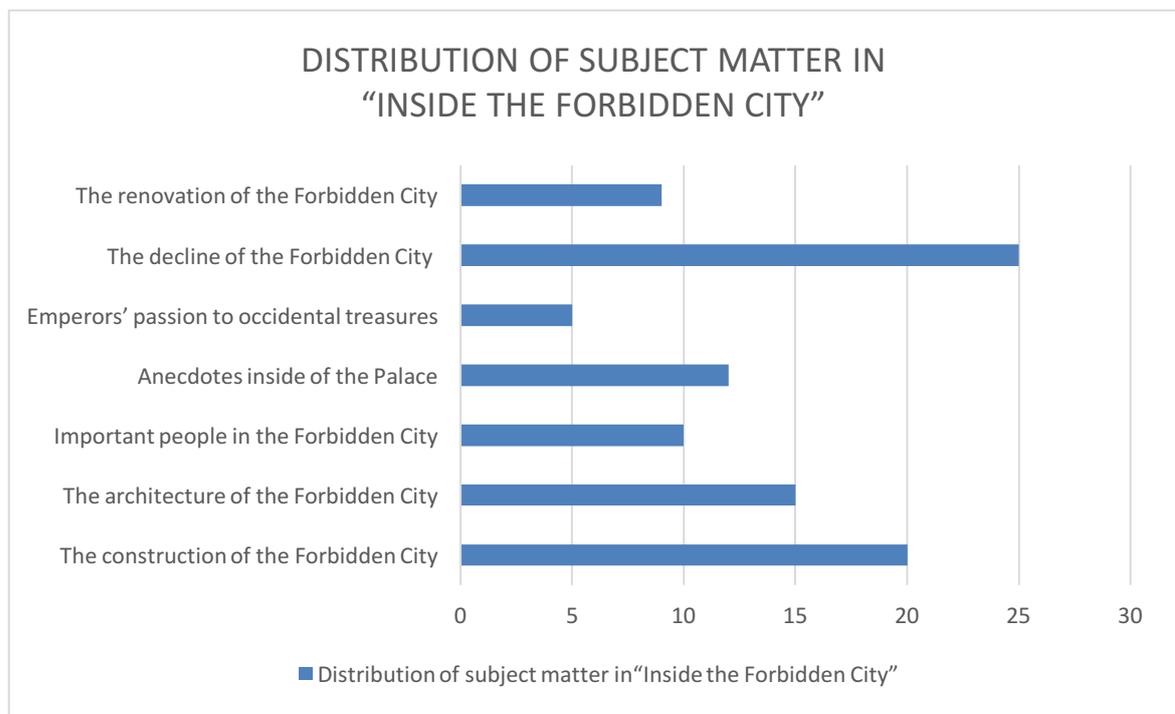


Chart 2

When we compare the proportion of the selected materials from these two documentaries (chart 3), we can clearly find out that some of the selected materials are identical but the directors chose completely different narrative ways.

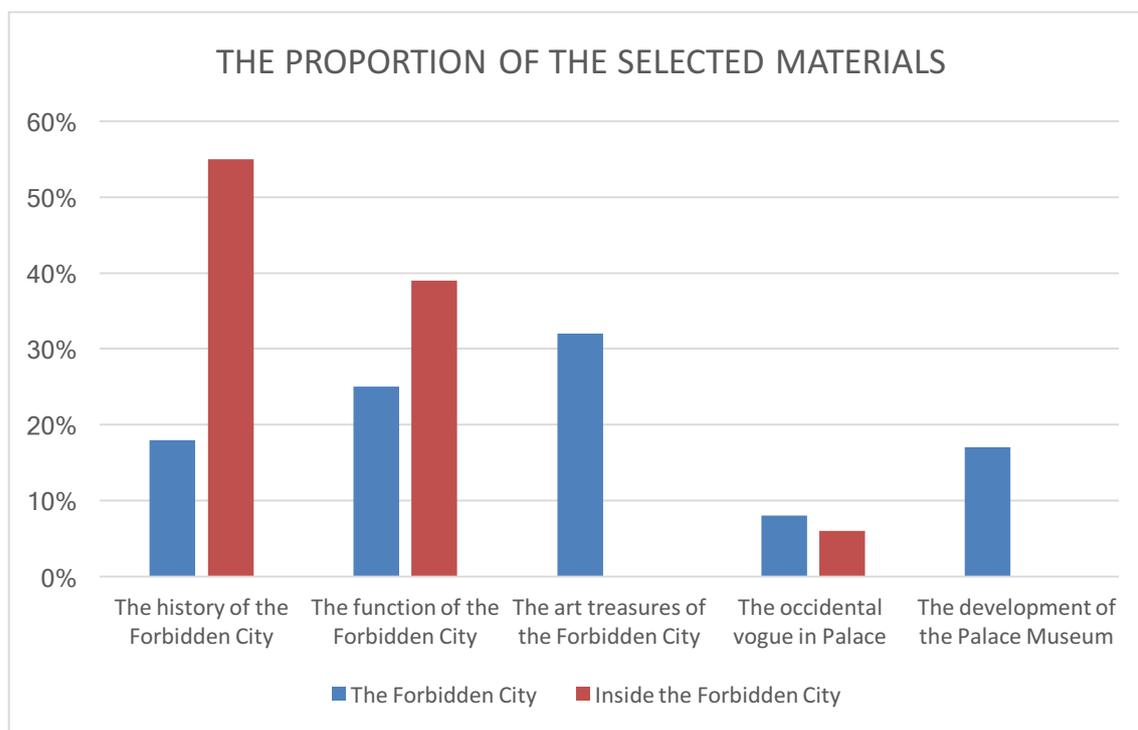


Chart 3

When representing the same event or person, the directors of these two documentaries usually chose different narrative perspectives and methods as well. According to the deleted and emphasized fragments in “Inside of the Forbidden City”, I chose some typical tasks to do my comparative study.

“The Forbidden City” describing the royal ritual activities, the purpose of the filmmaking team is to establish Chinese traditional culture. Royal rites are one of its focuses. “Royal Rites under Heaven” was produced as an independent episode. It started with Emperor Jiajing would rather abandon his throne than entering the Palace through Dong Hua Gate that disobeys the traditional customs. The documentary takes this example to demonstrate the important position of royal rites in Chinese history. After that, the documentary reappears the spectacular view of the grand ceremony when Kangxi was enthroned. The film also introduces three important royal rites each year that are Spring Festival, The Emperor’s Birthday and Winter Solstice. It goes through the process of the final imperial examination held in Palace once in details. Emperors paid special attention to some important sacrifice activities such as offering a sacrifice to Heaven, to Earth, to a particular day or month. Various sacrifice activities were

frequently organized. There were special costumes designed for sacrifice activities. Qian Qing Palace was transformed into a place in Qing Dynasty for worshipping gods. The film shares the detailed information of officials' levee time, levee procedure and related rite. When talking about Emperor Marriage, the film focuses on the process of how to select empress and concubines for Emperor Guangxu.

“Inside the Forbidden City” selects three Chinese royal rites among those mentioned above to be its focus. They are: the final imperial examination held in Palace, the concubine selection for Emperor and Official Levee activities. When it talks about the imperial examination, it depicts the nervousness and anxiety of waiting for the result from the Champion Scholar's own words. The concubine selection focused on introducing the grand wedding ceremony when Emperor Puyi married Concubine Wanrong. The documentary changes the narrative tone and adds a part of Emperor Puyi's talk on the wedding day. During Official Levee activities, the film mainly talks about a story of an official who was mentally exhausted and died in Palace after waiting for Emperor to meet him in the agenda hall for the whole day.

“Inside the Forbidden City” spends much time on the anecdotes happened in Palace, Especially in Volume I – Secret. It spends more time on this than the introduction of Palace history. The film introduces the composition of the harem and hierarchy. It also mentions Emperor Guangxu could not make his own decision when choosing his empress and concubine due to the invisible complicated power struggles.

When the film describes how the selected concubine served Emperor in his resting palace, “Inside the Forbidden City” shares some interesting information in a humorous way which never appears in “The Forbidden City”. It is said that all the concubine names were written on bamboo pieces with green colour dyed on top. Emperor, if he did not have his favourite one to choose, randomly selected one piece from them. The selected concubine would shower and clean herself, then, get herself wrapped up nakedly by quilt. One eunuch would take the whole lot to the resting palace. After the romance, he would take her back to her place.

“The Forbidden City” also cares about the narrative methodology when dealing with anecdotes in Palace to uncover the mystery, but its narrative focus is not the same

as the other. “The forbidden City” reveals Emperor’s warm image as a family leader in harem by depicting the picture scroll in which Emperor appeared in New Year Morning Assembly, at the same time, it also introduces several Emperors’ leisure life and hobbies in Ming and Qing Dynasty. In addition, it tells the story that the top-ranking but barren concubine Wan dominated the harem and ordered to kill all the baby boys while Emperor Chenghua was surprisingly blessed with a baby boy. The conflicting story manifests the life-and-death struggles among concubines in the harem.

There are obvious differences in characterizing the Palace figures. About Emperor’s image building, the producer of “The Forbidden City” mention all the Emperors in Ming and Qing Dynasty but they could not cover everyone in details. He mainly focuses on below Emperors as his narrative objects. They are Emperor Zhuli in Ming Dynasty, Emperor Kangxi, Yongzheng, Qianlong and Puyi in Qing Dynasty. He puts more strength in depicting these Emperors’ own traits, such as Zhuxi’s moving Capital to Beijing and building up the Forbidden City, Kangxi’s craving occident culture, Yongzheng’s further strengthening the central authority, Qianlong’s loving Chinese painting and calligraphy and so on.

“Inside the Forbidden City” only mentions four Emperors. They are Zhuli who ordered to build the Forbidden City, Kangxi who had the most concubines in the harem, Guangxu who had the least concubines on the contrary and Puyi, the last Emperor. There are two Emperors is not mentioned by names in this film. They are Emperor Qianlong who had ruled the country for sixty years and Emperor Yongzheng who constructed secret tunnels and strengthened the central authority. What deserves to be mentioned is the different narrative attitudes to Emperor Puyi in both documentaries. “The Forbidden City” adopts a detailed but humorous way to tell the story of Emperor Puyi’s stealing treasures with his younger brother. Emperor Puyi is described as a close-to-villain character. However, in Volume I (Existence) of “Inside the Forbidden City”, Puyi’s story is taken as the narrative thread and connects the stories both in the late Qing Dynasty and in the initial stage of the Republic of China. The narrative attitude clearly shows sympathy to Puyi’s life experience. The film believes that his life in the

Forbidden City was like a bird in a gold-plated cage whose radiance tarnished after his giving up the throne.

These two films also talk about another important group in the Palace – Eunuchs. The two documentaries chose different narrative perspectives for them. When “The Forbidden City” produced by CCTV was telling the stories of eunuchs, it mainly threads them into other stories. It talks about the eunuch organizations in Ming Dynasty such as Si-Li-Jian (a department responsible for royal rites), Dong-Chang (an espionage agency), Jin-Yi-Wei (imperial guards that eventually became a sort of SS troops) and so on. “The Forbidden City” specially points out two famous eunuchs who are Liu Jin during Emperor Zhengde’s time and Wei Zhongxian during Emperor Tianqi’s time. It defines them as sycophantic officials harming their country. When the film introduces the famous painting Qingming Shanghe Tu (Along the River During the Qingming Festival), it also shares the story of Fengbao’s stealing this famous painting. In addition, it talks about the anecdote of Cixi’s hounding Concubine Zhen to death. Cixi said the key person around Concubine Zhen was Cuiyugui who must have to die too. In general, “The Forbidden City” does not change the negative evaluation to eunuch group in the traditional sense. “Inside the Forbidden City” spends almost 5 minutes in introducing eunuchs during the 90-minute documentary. It explains that eunuchs played an indispensable role in the Palace. They were responsible for almost everything in the Palace, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, heavy-item carrying, concubine protecting and so on. It also changes the narrative tone and quotes a voluntary eunuch’s remark to introduce the eunuch group. They are not natural eunuchs. They had to take operation to cut off testis. Some of the eunuchs were from war prisoners and some of them made this choice due to tough life.

There is one thing worth study that is the unique way deployed by these two documentaries when handling certain details due to the audiences’ different backgrounds. Chinese Culture is sensitive to figures. “The Forbidden City” fully expresses the figure function in Chinese culture. To understand the importance of a particular architecture, we only need to check the number of deity animals on the cornice. On the cornice of the Qianqing Palace, there are nine deity animals that are

Immortal being, Dragon, Phoenix, Lion, Kylin, Penesas, Xiezi (a legendary beast in ancient times), Xiayu (a divine animal in the sea according to the legend, it is responsible for rainfall, fire extinguish and ill fortune removal), Douniu (a divine animal who can create cloud and mist when meeting rain spell) which were arranged in order.

Among four gates to the Palace, Dong Hua Gate is a unique one. Only people with very special attention could find out that it has only eight-row doornails. This is very different from other gates. Just this minor difference caused a severe political storm shocking the whole land. Because of this minor difference, Emperor Jiajing almost abandoned the throne. This can well explain the important position and function of figures in China. “Inside the Forbidden City” rarely mentions figures. The only figure it mentions is there are 9999 rooms in the Forbidden City. But they do not explain why it has such a lot of rooms. Actually, in Chinese fairy tales, it is believed that Chinese Emperor was a son of god in people’s mind. They believe this god had 10,000 rooms in heaven. Therefore, Emperor as the son of heaven should have 9999 rooms on earth. The special meaning of this number is not explained in the film as the number is derived from the rooms in heaven during comparison between the god and the son of god. Most of the time, the producer of NGC likes to use analogy between the Forbidden City and something well known by western audiences, for instance, the Forbidden City is 437 times bigger than White House; after the Forbidden City was divided into two parts, Emperor Puyi was forced to work in his personal palace in the harem. The land managed by him once was bigger than the United States, but now the size was reduced to an area as big as part of the Central Park in New York.

Many examples representing Chinese traditional culture is not paid close attention to by “Inside the Forbidden City”. A great deal of the Chinese famous eight diagrams and Feng Shui knowledge is introduced in “the Forbidden City” but in “Inside the Forbidden City”, it is simply concluded as the harmony of Yin and Yang. However, “Inside the Forbidden City” does focus on the difference between oriental Dragon and occidental Dragon. In westerners’ eyes, Dragon is a ferocious, brutal and evil monster

breathing fire, baring fangs and brandishing claws, whereas in China, Dragon is respected as rainfall emissary who has a playful and benevolent nature.

These two films also have obvious difference in how to present the influence of Chinese culture and western culture. Both films mention the influence of occidental vogue to Chinese society. A separate episode (the Occidental Vogue in Palace) in “The Forbidden City” describes this influence in details. The other film also manifests influence by sharing the stories that the mechanical striking clock successfully aroused people’s interest in Palace, some Emperor loved the western music and Emperor Puyi insisted on installing a telephone. However, only “The Forbidden City” mentions the influence of oriental vogue to western society - “During the whole Eighth century, the strong and vivid Chinese art influenced every aspect of western art. The western enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire in France and Leibniz in Germany found spiritual weapons in Chinese traditional culture to fight with the middle-age theological thoughts. Leibniz also found the principles of the modern computer's invention from the Chinese ancient mysterious book Yi-Jing (The Book of Changes). At that time, In European aristocracy circle, it was very popular to decorate their manors in Chinese style and draw Chinese people’s scenes of life on the walls.” (the commentary in “The Forbidden City”, translated by the author) However, “Inside the Forbidden City” does not mention these influences at all.

3) Narrative Perspectives: Macro Perspectives vs Micro Perspectives

A narrative perspective refers to “the location from which events in a story are presented to the viewer”. (Peer & Chatman, 2001, p. 5) Narrative perspective can be divided into many opposing aspects such as first-person perspective and third-person perspective, limited perspective and omniscient perspective, macro perspective and micro perspective, outside perspective and inner perspective and so on. The omniscient narrative means that the narrator has more information than any one of the characters in the story, and knows their past and future. With third-person perspective, the narrator tells the story of another person or group of people. The narrator may be far removed from or not involved in the story, only describes characters’ behaviour and dialogue.

Each term refers to a specific mode of narration defined by two things: the distance of the narrator from the story and how much the narrator reveals about the thoughts and feelings of the characters. (Haven, 1999, p. 53)

Historical documentaries have a unique characteristic that is all the events and materials are from the past. Therefore, there is almost no suspense existing. However, about certain history, audiences have limited knowledge compared to the vast information possessed in the film producer's hand. This limitation became an internal motive and attracts the audiences to watch historical documentaries. Obviously, the information from producers is much more than that from the viewers. The third-person narrative gives the producer more freedom to tell the story. So, most of the historical documentaries deploys the third-person omniscient narrative perspective, so do "the Forbidden City" and "Inside the Forbidden City".

A "big picture" narrative skill is frequently deployed in most of the Chinese major historical documentaries, such as "The Forbidden City (2005)", "The Rise of the Great Powers (2006)", "The Art of Dunhuang (2010)" and so on. Big-budget productions, massive investment and tremendous momentum of CCTV's work emphasize on the concept of "greatness" to reflect the theme. When selecting the cut-in perspective, the producers would like to choose macro perspective to support the magnificent meanings behind the themes. In "The Forbidden City", long shots are highly used when handling frames and pictures. While it represents the elegant and vivid pictures, it also manifests its powerful verve. On the contrary, "Inside the Forbidden City" produced by NGC mainly deploys a micro perspective when telling the story. This is because the whole film is composed of a chain of stories and anecdotes. The narrative of "The Forbidden City" starts with the following lines: "Who created the history? Who is in history to create a great civilization?" Whereas, both Volume I and Volume II of "Inside the Forbidden City" use the similar starting lines: "It is the biggest palace complex in the world, almost ten thousand rooms, so big that it is a city onto itself, all built for one man. For 500 years, it was the seat of the most powerful man on earth. He had absolute power over life and death." The difference of the narrative perspectives could be observed at the beginning of these two documentaries.

Nevertheless, it does not mean there is a clear and unchangeable line lying between the narrative perspectives of these two films. In regards to the perspective switching in historical documentary, a Chinese author gives below analysis: When the narrator chooses the macro perspective and describes the history in an objective way, the film often switches its perspective from the contemporary narrator to an ancient civilian. With his/her perception, actions and thoughts, the film may cleverly finish the perspective switching between subjective and objective narratives, and integration of macro and micro narrative perspectives. Through this, the audiences can feel the forwarding flow of the history and the rise and fall of the great men. They may also comprehend the mental and life status of the civilians in the history flow. (Gan, 2005, p. 34) Both films took certain history as their themes; therefore, they both deployed an outsider's view to tell stories. The outsider has no direct connection with the story itself. He/she is outside of the story but only sharing his/her observation. Compared with "The Forbidden City", "Inside the Forbidden City" has more switchovers between outside and inside perspectives. When the narrator introduced a character, the narrative tone changes and the story is told in the first person. For example, when the first volume (Secrets) talks about the final imperial examination in Palace, the film uses the inside narrative to express nervousness and anxiety of the champion scholar – "It was a little cold that day. Just before dawn, I knelt with the other candidates on the ground in front of the hall of Supreme Harmony to wait for the results. The day before, there had been a lot of gossip about who did best and I would lose all hope. When the results were read out, I heard that the top candidate was none other than me. Whenever my name was called, a fanfare was played. I couldn't believe my ears and I didn't dare to step forward, but in the end, a protocol officer dragged me out of the line. The Emperor gave me a prize and I was carried out of the Palace through the Emperor's own gate." The second Volume (Survival) describes the grand ceremony of Puyi's ascended to throne. "I ruined the ceremony with my crying. I found it long and tiresome. When they carried me in and put me on the Enormous throne, I struggled and cried. 'I don't like it here. I want to go home. I don't like it here. I want to go home.'" With this type of switchover, the film could give the audience a very elaborate description by reappearing his/her

remarks, actions and mental process. The upside of this skill can make the reappearance more infectious but the downside is that it can be objective, bias and emotional.

4) Narrative Structure: Linear Narrative Structure Vs Circular Narrative structure

If a filmmaker wants to tell the story in a fictional film, he must consider its structure related to the development of the story, the formation of characters and so on. Normally, for the structure of the fictional film, it is not only necessary to stress the causal relationship, but also have a strong logic. Therefore, there are more restrictions in fictional filmmaking. The documentary, on the contrary, especially the non-event documentary, emphasizes the records of the process and the fragments. Its materials are relatively fragmented and lacking obvious logical chains, so the producer is more arbitrary and free on the documentary structure. However, on the other hand, it also raises a higher demand for the producer's capacity of creating the film's structure. If he/she simply piles up all the materials or directly expresses his/her ideas, it would be difficult to attract audiences.

Most of episodes in "The Forbidden City" talk about its history and introduce the film by the linear structure at time sequence. For example, in the first episode "Build the Forbidden City", the material arrangement and the commentary are in accordance with the time series: "January 14, 1403, the first day of the Chinese New Year on its lunar calendar", "On January 13 of the 1st year of Yongle, Emperor Zhu Di offered sacrifices to heaven and earth by ancestors' system, then returned to the Palace", "Soon in May of that year, he told the ministers in a morning gathering that Beijing was my old vassal state.", "August of 1406 AD, when Zheng He's fleet travelled smoothly in the sea, something took place that made Emperor Zhu Di happy in the Nanjing Palace." Even in some paragraphs that do not describe historical stories, the producers of Chinese documentaries have consciously adopted the chronological linear narrative. Episode 6 (Tibetan Porcelain Ware) starts with a description for porcelain ware: Porcelain once was a unique possession belonged to a nation blessed with aesthetics and creation - China. Through the combination of Chinese people's

intelligence and work, they turned the ordinary soil into the extraordinary beautiful ware with the help of water and fire. It once was the distinguished ware for Empress Wu Zetian to worship Buddha's relics; the elegant decoration in the Palace Garden of Emperor Huizhong of Song Dynasty; the most expensive goods in eastern-western trades in Yuan Dynasty; the precious present given to foreign ambassadors by Emperor Yongle; the artwork personally designed and created by Emperor Yongzheng. It is an indispensable ware in our daily life, it is also the piece of treasure placed everywhere in this biggest Palace in the world. It has come through thousands of years and become the common cultural heritage of mankind in the Palace today. (the commentary in "The Forbidden City", translated by the author) Although the detailed years and dates were not mentioned, the names of all the emperors indicated it followed the time sequence.

In "Inside the Forbidden City", NGC creation team does not limit itself with the time sequence of the narrative. Western documentary more focuses on "dramatic plots", It stresses that the film should throw the contradiction in the first minute to attract the audience. It is "provocative". Fragments of "excitement" should be inserted in the whole film at appropriate intervals. These excitement pieces should be thrilling like a roller coaster, and be able to arouse the emotions and interests of the audience to watch the film. When dealing with more content of the parallel relationship, NGC team selected the circular narrative structure. In mathematics, a circle "is a set of all points in a plane at a fixed distance from a fixed point in the plane." (Bendick, 2003, p. 51) When the producer uses the method of drawing a circle to a documentary, he/she needs to confirm what "centre" and "radius" should be. It is clear that the Palace is the centre of "Inside the Forbidden City", and the radius covers all aspects of the Forbidden City.

The narrative of the film started as: It is the biggest palace complex in the world, almost ten thousand rooms, so big that it is a city onto itself, all built for one man. For 500 years, it was the seat of the most powerful man on earth. He had absolute power over life and death. This start may easily trigger the curiosity and interests of the audiences, it then talks about the construction of the Forbidden City, the architecture of the Forbidden City, important people in the Forbidden City (Emperors, Eunuchs, the Champion scholar), anecdotes inside of the Palace (Including Empress Dowager Cixi

Coming into power, Emperors selecting concubines, Emperor Puyi's grand wedding), Emperors' passion to occidental treasures, The history of the Forbidden City and the decline of the Forbidden City. There are seven parts altogether. Each part lasts 10 to 20 minutes. If the audiences feel weary about the content of certain part, the producer would use the absorbing Palace landscapes and novel stories to regain their attention, like how eunuchs entered the Palace; what meaning the Chinese dragon stands for; how Emperor selected concubines. All these excitements attracted audiences to continue to watch. Although these stories are independent, they keep a close connection with the centre – the Palace.

5) Camera Language: Stable Shot Vs Moving Shot

As Jacqueline B. Frost writes in his book "Cinematography for Directors": "The lens is not only a technical tool to capture the image but also an aesthetic one, and understanding how to use depth of field and focal length to tell your story is an essential tool of visual storytelling. The lens is the eye of the camera." (Frost, 2009, p. 39) The composition, perspective and lighting of every shot and every frame has its meaning. Like any art form, filmmakers make most effort to tell the audience the story in the most persuasive way. (Eugene, 2016, 10.05)

With the gradual increase in people's art appreciation level, the producers are more specialized in the documentary video technology and lens grasp. In the exploration of creation, the producers found that different lens languages would cause different psychological expectations and viewing experience for the audiences. For example, a fixed lens will give the audience a psychological expectation that the camera can include the whole picture of the event. When the height of the camera has almost the same level as ordinary people's line of sight, it will be like a personal experience for the audiences. While the long shot makes the story seem to have not been falsified or reorganized by the filmmaker but still maintains the integrity and authenticity of the story. The process of focusing will make the viewer feel that the film has not been pre-arranged and post-processing. Camera movement, especially with slightly shaky hand-held footage, is just like the camera perspective is the viewer's perspective. (Bowen &

Thompson, 2013, p. 8-21) (Lindblom, 2015) Thus, it is easy to see the important role of the lens language for the construction of documentary discourse mode.

“Inside the Forbidden City” is the shorten version of “The Forbidden City”, so all of the lens, including documentary lens, reenactment and 2D animation effects are taken from “The Forbidden City”. Although the details of two documentaries are almost the same. The focus of camera language is different. In order to show the differences of two documentaries in the camera language, I compare them from the macro aspects, as shown in form 1:

**COMPARISON OF CAMERA LANGUAGE BETWEEN OF “THE FORBIDDEN CITY”
AND “INSIDE THE FORBIDDEN CITY”**

	The Forbidden City	Inside the Forbidden City
Landscape Shot	More establishing shot and long shot	More moving shot
Reenactment of the History	A view of actors' back or blurred the actors	Most full shot, some close-up
Interview	Use frequently	Just 2 times

Form 1

The shooting time for “The Forbidden City” was from October 2003 to September 2005. During the two years of shooting, the high-definition digital cameras HDW-750P and HDW-F900 were used from beginning to the end. (Zhou, 2006b) By then, these cameras were the top ones of the high-definition digital cameras. Just because of the use of this advanced equipment, time-lapse photography could be achieved. Time-lapse photography is a technique of film short starts from a fixed position at fixed time intervals, so that action is very rapid when the film is played back at normal speed. (Higgins, 2016) Therefore, we notice there are a large number of Time-lapse photography appear in “The Forbidden City”. Since the long-range view has a deep, wide and broad feature, it well presents the magnificent and spectacular architectures in the Forbidden City, while the light and shadow changes on the buildings in the Forbidden City help to demonstrate an even more beautiful view for the audiences.

Although such Time-lapse photography also appear in “Inside the Forbidden City”, we can see that NGC producers consciously select most of the moving lens to show the construction and landscape of the Forbidden City when carefully choosing shots from the raw materials of “The Forbidden City”.

When asked about the main difference in these two documentaries, Director Zhou Bing frankly said: “I have been focusing on the storytelling very much when producing ‘the Forbidden City’, but compare with ‘the Forbidden City’, ‘Inside the Forbidden City’ goes even further. It was just storytelling. Generally, the cultural background and information should be placed in front but ‘Inside the Forbidden City’, they place them behind the storytelling. Moving lens is also a sign of storytelling narrative. The film, like ‘America: The Story of Us’ used moving lens to add rhythm and the sense of movement in motion.” (Shi, 2011, 20.09) As the moving lens has a strong feature of leading the audiences, it is a lot more subjective. In addition, the moving lens can make the static objects and scenes move and change their locations, which produces a relative sense of movement.

Although about the “Reenactment of the History”, an approach of creation using certain fictional means, there are still different voices in the theory, in the field of practice, “Reenactment of the History” approach has been widely accepted by documentary producers and viewers. There are still differences in the degree of usage for both teams. The lens of “Reenactment of the History” in “The Forbidden City” mostly focuses on a certain object, and blurred the actors. The film generally uses the long-range perspective when the scene plays appeared. The lens of scene reenactment in “Inside the Forbidden City” was from “The Forbidden City”, but the film has no concerns about choosing actors for the real reproduction. For example, the lens about the emperor’s passion for western music is full shot and medium shot, A close-up lens appeared in the emperor playing the piano.

In the treatment of the interview lens, “The Forbidden City”, influenced by the traditional Chinese documentary production, is still willing to adopt the method of interview to reappear the history orally told by the event-related people. Interviews appear in one episode two or three times at least and more than a dozen times the most.

“Inside the Forbidden City” only used interview lens in the Puyi’s telephone installation and national treasures lost during the havoc.

Conclusion

From the above two different versions of the documentary about the Forbidden City, it is not difficult to see the influence of different cultural backgrounds for the producers to choose the materials and narrative methods. Through a detailed analysis of text and camera language, we can clearly see the positions and attitudes of the two production teams.

The CCTV production team of “The Forbidden City” has adhered to the grand narrative concept for Chinese historical and cultural documentaries and tried to shape the Forbidden City into a traditional Chinese culture carrier. Through the history and the former splendor of the Forbidden City, the film depicts that China is the founder of the splendid civilization. Through the decline of the Forbidden City, the film shows that China is a victim of Western aggression. While through the reconstruction and repair of the Forbidden City symbolizes the transformation of China into a great revival of economy and culture.

NGC’s “Inside the Forbidden City” focuses on another position that reveals the mystery of the ancient oriental kingdom of China. It intends to show, in the feudal era of China, the hierarchical system, freedom and the lack of human rights. Through the two parts - “The Occidental Vogue in Palace” and the “Renovation of the Forbidden City”, it shows the Western culture have a positive role in helping China both in the past and now.

5. Reasons for The Cultural Discount

Since the new century, China has produced a number of documentaries with great Chinese cultural connotations represented by “The Forbidden City”. Some of the mainstream documentaries play on television, win the praises from the domestic industry and the audiences. However, in the international documentary market, their spreading situation compared to western documentaries is still at the edge of the market. Chinese producers seek foreign cooperation on exporting segment to handle this situation. A new model appeared – Chinese shooting and foreign production. Although this model, to some extent, helps spread Chinese mainstream culture overseas, people may have to question a couple of matters – After edited and produced by someone else, would the films still reflect the essence of Chinese culture? Could the Chinese creators guarantee that the Chinese positive image and core values can be kept after exporting?

This essay, taking “The Forbidden City”, “Inside the Forbidden City” as examples, compares and analyses the narrative art, and narrative patterns of them in Chapter 3. It also deeply discusses the influence of different cultures of the two production teams as well as the “cultural discount” during the cross-cultural communication. Based on “The Forbidden City” and “Inside the Forbidden City”, this Chapter will elaborate the general reasons caused documentary “cultural discount” during cross-cultural communication from the three aspects: the Chinese and western culture, documentary itself and the audiences.

1) The Culture Difference Between China and West

a. Cultural Value Difference Between China and West

Chinese and Western cultures have been developed for a long time. Due to geographical environment, historical background and other factors, both cultures have their own characteristics. In the process of cross-cultural communication, the cultural surface structure is relatively easy to change with the conflict itself. However, the cultural deep structure will not easily change in the conflict. The most difficult structure to resolve is the deep structure of “psychological accumulation”. Psychological accumulation is the deepest level in the cultural structure. It is not only the

psychological habits personally formed in a long time, but also mainly the several-generation's accumulation in one nation. It forms in people's hearts certain stereotypes of concepts, mentality, standard price, which is difficult to change. (Sun, 2008, p. 278)

Firstly, in regards to the basic form of culture, the Chinese culture has one dimension, while the Western culture have multi-dimensions. Chinese people have had the concept of "Unification" or "Great Unity". Western countries demonstrate diversity or multi-dimensions on their cultures. This is more visible in countries that have highly developed in the material civilization. John D. Rockefeller, in his book "The second American Revolution", has repeatedly stressed that in the American culture and society, diversity has always been a very strong and prominent feature. (Rockefeller, 1973) "The Forbidden City" and "Inside the Forbidden City" reflected this difference. In the film "The Forbidden City", the construction and upgrade of the Forbidden City were completed in the background of "Unification". The historical background of "The Forbidden City" was also in accordance with the dynasty change and nation unity. "Inside the Forbidden City" interpreted the Forbidden City from the perspectives of history, human nature, rights and other aspects and from-point-to-area multi-dimensional perspective of view.

Secondly, the collectivism advocated by China and individualism advocated by Western countries are also one of the significant differences in Chinese and Western cultures. Under the influence of ancient Chinese traditional idea - Unification, most Chinese people advocated the idea of interdependence and harmonious development of all things. Whereas in the West, the spirit of individualism has existed for a long time, most Westerners have a strong self-centered concept. Most of them think that everyone should rely on their own rather than rely on others; everyone should be responsible for their own, not for others; they are more emphasizing on individual independence and personality exposure. "The Forbidden City" focuses on many grand events in the Ming and Qing dynasties and in the film, the shots of reenactment are solemn and powerful. The material pictures also show people were well-organized to participate these events. "Inside the Forbidden City" does not select many materials for those events that "The Forbidden City" focuses on, but has an extremely slight touch on them and uses first-

person tone to express someone's personal experience in the events. All these can help us understand the differences between the values of Chinese "collectivism" and Western "individualism".

Thirdly, there is different views of the two production teams to their own film – either direct or indirect. Most Westerners are good at straight hitting the point, straight expressing their feelings. Generally, they do not deliberately disguise the true feelings of their hearts to meet others' views or save others' face. They do not deliberately avoid any contradictions; on the contrary, they often intend to take these contradictions out to d publicly verify and discuss them. Although this action sometimes makes the other side of the conversation feel embarrassed. Chinese people are very good at the speaking art and good at implicitly expressing their own ideas. They often do not start from the front, but take the roundabout tactics and reveal their ideas from the side or the opposite. In the documentary filming, the Chinese documentary also inherits this typically oriental cultural characteristic. Normally, the theme and the essential meanings in Chinese documentaries are not clearly articulated but documentaries leave audiences to understand their hidden meanings and implication. "The Forbidden City" often keeps a certain lens fixed for a long time to create a reverie space, or give some thoughtful commentary like "Who created the history? Who is in history to create a great civilization?" for people to ponder. "Inside the Forbidden City" deploys a very immediate way to manifest the rise and decline of the royal family that was mysterious at one time in the Forbidden City.

b. Aesthetic Difference Between China and West

The spirit of Chinese art and the spirit of Western classical art have their own essences and roots, but there are differences in the essences. In China, the traditional artistic spirit comes from the philosophy of the Taoism, the Confucianism and the Buddhism. this philosophy is deeply humble and all-embracing. While the Western aesthetics is based on the ancient Greek philosophy as its guiding aesthetic ideology. Plato believed that the beauty sentimentally reveals the ideas and concepts. The beauty exists in the process of appreciation. It pursues the freedom in the individual spirit.

The traditional Chinese culture psychologically has the tendency to melt the individual into the collective and into nature. When Chinese audiences watch such art works, they can experience this kind of tender sense of melting. “The Forbidden City” during its shooting focuses very much on its visual thickness, and uses a variety of digital technologies to add infinite penetration power to its images, creates a magnificently beautiful view of the Palace buildings. The photography in “The Forbidden City” pays more attention to the harmonious arrangement of the buildings and the surrounding landscape. Therefore, we see many natural plants taken as the foreground lens and the rapid moving clouds as the background lens. The film also uses the time-lapse photography technique to allow the audience to watch the wall colour of the Palace changes from the red and gold to silver and white. In addition, the tender and honest spirit of Chinese culture often implies a moral evaluation, which is the inherited spirit of Chinese art since more than two thousand years ago. This attitude could be observed everywhere in Chinese art. It also appears in “The Forbidden City”. A good example is the episode of “Royal Rites under Heaven”. China has been well promoting the moral values of etiquette for the people. The other episode talking about jade also illustrates this point. The evaluation of all things in nature by Chinese people applies to jade too - Jade is the most cherished stone that symbolizes the pure and noble.

Although “Inside the Forbidden City” has a strong storytelling style, the NGC team do not use a complete entertaining attitude to talk about the history of the Forbidden City. Instead, they take a relatively rigorous and objective attitude. Although we may notice the sense of superiority from the western society imposed by the producers, they still maintain some reverence for China, a country more mysterious than advanced in their eyes. In regards to the two typical images of Puyi and eunuchs, the producers also show sympathy and compassion for their losing freedom. Certainly, this is inseparable from the differences between the Chinese and Western view on freedom. Generally, when the Chinese integrate themselves into nature and into social relations, they will feel the freedom. While the Western people believe that only setting free an individual spirit is the real freedom. (Feng, 2010, p. 100)

c. The Different Level of Acceptance between Chinese and Westerners

David Morley, a well-known British media scholar, argues that although we focus on specific text, the other discourses - cultural discourse, educational discourse, institutional discourse - are always inseparable. These discourses set a number of conditions that affect the audience's interpretation and evaluation of a particular text. (Morley, 2005, p. 78) Indeed, in studying the causes of cultural discount, we cannot just focus on the cultural differences between specific audiences and specific texts. We must also study other conditions that affect the text in hand.

In the 17th century, people used the term "climate of opinion" to express a preconceived prejudice or a cognitive attitude toward the world or the word model persistently held by people's instinct. (Anchor, 1969, p. 2) The French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu in his cultural sociology research introduces that different capital occupies a different position in the cultural competition. In the social space, the unequal distribution of capital determines the hierarchical structure of space, and the dominator of economic and political rights is at the highest position in the field. (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 734) In my point of view, during the Chinese documentary exporting process, the important reason for the dilemma of the external exchange of Chinese documentaries is the differences of political and economic capital distribution between the China and West. Therefore, when exploring the cultural discount between the specific text and the audiences, it is necessary to understand the power relations in the cultural fields.

After the industrial revolution, western development has progressed rapidly and gone far beyond China. In the past two centuries, western countries have occupied the dominant positions in both economies and cultures of the world, even though China has been trying hard to catch up in the recent few decades. If we put China and West in one field, under the political and economic situation in today's world, the Western developed countries occupy a dominant position. Correspondingly, the position of Western modern culture is superior to the oriental traditional culture. That leads Chinese and westerners have different level of acceptance when understanding each other's culture. Chinese people generally accept the American film and television works

carrying the western civilization. They also consider the works as an important carrier to understand the western contemporary civilization and their life styles. For the cultural differences in American film and television works, the Chinese audience do not exclude, but cognize and think. Sometimes they may even give up part of traditional Chinese culture to accept the western culture that they think is reasonable. Both “The Forbidden City” and “Inside the Forbidden City” have the same story of the emperor of the Qing Dynasty respecting and promoting the western science and technology, such as Emperor Kangxi who trusted the missionaries and was keen on western goods; Emperor Puyi who pursued the telephone, bicycle and exotic goods and so on. Compared to “The Forbidden City”, “Inside the Forbidden City” is more like to show a “savior” attitude from the west to the east.

During the interview, Zhou Bing said: “If Chinese documentary is expected to have influence on its process of globalization, we cannot ignore the matter of the speaking right of culture. The real cause of this matter is that Chinese culture and history have less international attention and impact to the world. People overseas may pay more attention to Chinese politics and economy.” (Shi, 2011, 20.09) After 359 American audience with the average age of 21.36 were surveyed on “How are the Chinese film and television works in the United States”, it is found that they wanted to watch Hollywood movies much more than Chinese movies. There are 38.7% of Hollywood fans watching Hollywood movies at least once a month, whereas 95.5% of Chinese-movie lovers watch the Chinese films once a year. The US film publisher said, Americans generally do not like to read subtitles, foreign language films are usually shown in a small number of art theatres only. (Hong & He, 2006, p. 52) In general, under the influence of differences in international political and economic status between China and America, Chinese audiences and Western audiences have shown different degrees of interest and cultural acceptance to each other. Chinese audiences are more interested in the West and more willing to learn and understand American culture. Therefore, they are ready to accept American movies. On the contrary, Western audiences have a relatively low interest in understanding Chinese and Chinese culture, so the desire to accept Chinese films is not strong.

2) The Inherent Insufficiency of Documentary Text Translation

a. The Complexity of Cross - cultural Interpretation of Documentary

John Fiske mentioned in his book “Introduction to Communication Studies”:

“Semiotics prefers the term ‘reader’ (even of photograph of a painting) to ‘receiver’ because it implies both a greater degree of activity and also that reading is something we learn to do; it is thus determined by the cultural experience of the reader. The reader helps to create the meaning of the text by bringing to it his or her experience, attitudes, and emotions.” (Fiske, 2010, p. 38)

Using which kind of symbol to perform the reality matter is due to the different cultural background and convention. Unlike the language, the film and television symbols are composed of pictures and sounds, and the picture occupies a dominant position. The more we communicate with the same codes, the more we use the same symbolic systems, the closer our two “meanings” of message are close to each other. (Fiske, 2010, p. 37-38)

Using what symbols to represent the reality is decided by different nations based on their customs and common practice of different culture background. Unlike the language, the symbols of film and television are composed of pictures and sounds, of which the screen occupies a dominant position. The lens is an image symbol, and its signifier and reference follow the “similarity” principle. When there is a rose on the screen, the Chinese audience think the word “玫瑰”(Meigui), while the English-speaking audience think of “rose”. In different culture and language environment, the audience face the same picture, but accept and understand different amount of information.

For example, “The Forbidden City” is very sensitive to numbers. From the eyes of Chinese and western audiences, they may have great difference in interpreting this sensitivity. The episode of “Royal Rites under Heaven” mentions that “Donghua” Gate has only eight rows of doornails, which is different from other nine-row doors. Therefore, Emperor Jiajing refused to enter the Palace through “Donghua” Gate. Eight-row and nine-row doornails are the signifiers, and they essentially refer to the extended meaning of number 9 in Chinese traditional culture. There is a common term in Chinese,

literally translated as “Nine Five respect”. According to ancient Chinese beliefs, the number nine ranks as the highest number and the number five is a “middle” or “central” number. Thus, number nine and number five together represent the supreme combination that symbolized the emperor, his supreme power and status. Chinese audience is very easy to understand the information behind, but the Western audience here will be confused, which is the source of cultural discount.

At the same time, the simpler a language to define something, the greater a recipient understands. On the contrary, a single lens can barely give the audience any room for imagination, but the image grouping - montage can convey various meanings. Montage is a technique in film editing in which a series of short shots are edited into a sequence to condense space, time, and information. Montage was “discovered” by filmmakers (Griffith, Eisenstein, Pudovkin) to cut the sequence shots already filmed into bits of film that, once placed end to end, would give the film its final shape. (Pavis, 1998, p. 220) Montage to create reality on a movie language level in the film, the more the splicing of the lens, the stronger it expresses, the more ambiguous the meaning refers, however.

There is a group of lens about a famous Chinese painting named “Envoys from the world worshipping the Emperor” appear in both “The Forbidden City” and “Inside the Forbidden City”. “The Forbidden City” through this group of lens demonstrates, on the New Year’s Day of the lunar calendar, the emperor and princes were both enjoying the atmosphere of the New Year in the Palace just like any civilian. However, “Inside the Forbidden City” wants to show is the privacy of the Forbidden City and the many women of the emperor. The same lens, but different ideals. This also easily causes the phenomenon of cultural discount.

b. The Difference of Narrative Methods

The Chinese documentary has been paid more and more attention to the narrative of the documentary due to the influence of the Western creative ideas. In “The Forbidden City”, we can find that the producers focus on the interesting narrative by adding many small stories in the narrative, “bedding” or “fuel” the story development.

Even so, under the influence of Chinese Pingshu (it means “storytelling”, is one of the entertainment forms in Chinese mass culture), operas and other traditional narrative styles, the Chinese documentary storytelling likes to start from the original source, and then slowly move on. It likes to explain the cause and effect clearly and usually uses single-line narrative method that is easy to make the rhythm sluggish.

On the other hand, in the aspect of image narrative, the traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy also influence the image process of the documentary, emphasizing on artistic conception and the implication. Most of the pictures are quiet lens. In silence, the audience experiences the poetic connotation and philosophy. However, the Chinese documentary lacks flowing beauty. As a result, the Chinese documentary is full of fixed lens, panoramic lens and long lens to go with its silence. Undoubtedly, this will also slow down its rhythm.

Western creators influenced by the traditional drama, prefer to tell the story from its climax. They tell the audience some results of the story, cause the audience's interest, then explain the reason, and finally tell the audience the rest of the results. The drama emphasizes conflict and confrontation, so western creators prefer to use multiple clues going at the same time. Each clue interweaves and inter-conflict with others. “Inside the Forbidden City” uses such a typical way in its narrative. Both volumes raise the audience’s desire of wanting to understand this ancient palace with two mysterious matters mentioned in the beginning: any unauthorized people entering the Palace would face death penalty; the emperor had absolute power over life and death. In the first half of the second Volume, the main story line is the about the decline of the Forbidden City in the late Qing Dynasty. At the same time, it uses Pu Yi’s story as another narrative clue, from his inheritance of the throne to his expulsion from the Forbidden City by Lu Zhonglin after the founding of new China.

c. Simple Selection When Creating Subjects

In recent years, the demand for Chinese documentary is quite high in international market. China is also known as the treasure trove of documentary themes. However, Western audiences live in a completely different cultural context from the

Chinese audience, so there is a big difference between their focuses and excitements. Even facing the same subject matter, like the same materials used by “The Forbidden City” and “Inside the Forbidden City”, the producers have to edit the films select the materials carefully. Since the foreign party has more requirements, the themes of the Chinese documentaries tend to be unitary, and the level of production and the overall planning level cannot reach the internationally recognized level, the Chinese documentaries are not able to satisfy the international demand. As a result, the documentary source looks even more deficient.

According to the “Study Report of The Development of Chinese Documentary in 2016”, in recent years, telling Chinese Stories has become an unprecedentedly active phenomenon in international society. International mainstream media have been intensively broadcasting the documentaries about China. The BBC broadcast “The Story of China”, “Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth” and “Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School”. The Discovery Channel broadcast “How China Works”, and the NGC broadcast “China from Above”. Most of them are mainly to praise China. The most exaggerated expression is KBS (Korean Broadcasting System) broadcasting “Super China” which is magnificent, emotionally agitating and shapes a full rising super-China. This Korean film frequently used the word “hegemony”. (Zhang, 2016, p. 278) Most of these documentaries are about historical, cultural, social and political topics, but there are less themes about nature, animals and plants, environment and ecology.

Thus, it is understandable, on one hand, that the topics of Chinese-production documentary are relatively unitary. Themes of history and culture occupy a large proportion and other themes are relatively few. Foreign markets are interested in ecological themes like nature, and environment, but due to the need of more work force, capital, technology and production cycle, it is difficult for us to produce documentaries with these unusual themes. On the other hand, although there are many documentaries with the themes of history and humanity, there are only few documentaries really mirroring the contemporary Chinese lively situation, vigorous development and true versatile life. Therefore, there are very few documentaries appropriate for broadcasting

overseas. Zhang Hongsen, the deputy director of SARFT (State Administration of Radio, Film and Television), said: “Most Chinese documentaries have an upward view, looking up the great men, the history and major events, but lack of a horizontal view for the life and destiny of civilians and individuals. ‘Big picture’ narrative and explanatory mode occupy the majority of the documentaries. There are very few objective documentaries which are more in line with its nature.” (Zhang, 2008)

d. The Difficulties When Preparing Commentary and Translation

In the cross-cultural exchange of documentaries, it is indispensable to have some necessary explanation in order to bridge the cultural difference. “In the face of a world with a cultural background different from ours, only depending on pictures and actual sound may not achieve the expected effects. Therefore, simple and profound explanation is essential to the documentary. For example, when we talked about ‘Terracotta Warriors’, we will naturally think of the glorious clay sculpture of horses lining up on the Loess Plateau. However, those who know little about Chinese history, will not have this feeling. If we translate ‘Terracotta Warriors’ into ‘the underground army of the Chinese emperor’, it will be easier to understand the hidden meaning.” (Zhang, 1988, p. 63) Language is the carrier of culture, and culture is deeply rooted in language. The cultural spreading and inheritance must rely on language, and through the cultural spreading triggered by language, the cultural recipients can change their traditional cultural and thinking mode. The translated commentary has the important multi-functions of cross-language, cross-culture and interdisciplinary, which is worth studying with more attention.

Zhou Bing believes that the documentary should provide interesting information to the overseas audience. The voice-over narration must be simple, accurate and with large amount of information. Sometimes it needs to be dramatic and passionate. (Shi, 2011, 20.09) At present, the Chinese documentary commentary does not locate itself in the position of people education and information indoctrination any longer. It pays more attention to a narrative that attracts the audience. The commentary of “The Forbidden City” has its unique storytelling narrative, but the translation of the commentary is a

real concern. Some events in “The Forbidden City” adjust the narrative method to set the suspense, such as placing the familiar characters or concepts in the end of the sentence to have a better effect. The Chinese grammar and English grammar are very different, and the long existing marketing channel of self-production and self-selling helps the production “inertia” and laziness grow. These two reasons put us in a comfortable zone of asking Chinese people to do the literal translation and using it as subtitle. Therefore, it is difficult to express the true meaning of the film, which results in the phenomenon of cultural discount.

3) Consideration of Audience Needs

The audience is the other side of the communication, and the key to realize the value of the film and television works. The audience, as the social realistic entity, is in a complicated environment composed of politics, economy, culture and history. By the influence of the culture and a person’s own experience, each individual forms his/her own apriori knowledge that will greatly affect the audience’s film interpretation. Audiences with the same cultural background shows the overall consistent apriori knowledge and understand the film in a similar way since they have similar environmental factors. During the appreciation of the cross-cultural film and television works, unavoidably, different opinions may come into existence due to the obtrusive cultural difference in various aspects and the inborn uncertain feature of the image language.

When watching a television program from different cultural contexts, the audience straightaway will have a cultural gap and psychological distance. This psychological distance caused by the long-term formed differences of geographical, lingual, cultural and living habits will automatically activate a psychological defence mechanism. Apart from China, the culture of Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia influenced by the tradition of Confucianism and oriental culture has the similar and intimate cultural recognition of human race, languages and geography. On the contrary, in recent years, Western audiences have not formed the preference to Chinese culture and its artistic works due to the cultural strangeness and estrangement. This

unacceptance and estrangement above are mainly ascribable to the weak position of Chinese culture on the international cultural stage during communication and spreading.

Cultural difference is the nature of cross-cultural documentaries, which brings forth this tough and unescapable question – How to shorten the distance between object and target culture? The interpretation of audience is a new creation of their own. Let us think about it. The documentary creator provides Version I based on his/her understanding of the raw materials; the director and producer provide Version II after editing and selecting the information from the first one and the watchers' interpretation to strange culture creates Version III. How to make this interpretation level of Version III close enough to the original interpretation – Version I, and help the audience have a basic but consistent understanding of the documentary is a long-term task, which is the ultimate direction and destination worth everyone's while to strive for.

6. Conclusion

Since the new century, “An Army Reborn”, “The Old Summer Palace”, “The Forbidden City” and some other breath-taking series of Chinese documentaries have been leveraging the international communication platform to meet the world. However, these more-than-ten-episode documentaries all went through the process of re-editing into the international version and obtained the world-broadcasting permit. On one hand, Chinese great documentaries need to go overseas with the help of some broader communication channels already occupied by a few international media organisations; on the other hand, the majority of the Chinese documentaries are still at the stage of selling resources - that is an advantage. Nevertheless, they are still far away from really entering the international market. The fact is that the Chinese production party received limited profits from international broadcasting; moreover, the core values and the speaking rights of the films fell into others’ hands after re-editing.

From the art of narrative perspective and narrative discourse, this article conducted a detailed comparison between two documentaries, “The Forbidden City” created by CCTV and “Inside the Forbidden City” edited by NGC. Compared to the 20th century Chinese documentaries, “The Forbidden City” has made exciting and admirable progress in both production and innovation. The progress manifests itself in many ways, such as the lens transfer and switchover, the breath-taking aesthetic screens, the flexible and versatile narrative skills and so on. However, why such a high-class documentary flooded by lots of exciting comment within China received incomprehensible neglect and unexpected disfavor in the international film market? This unresolved question needs Chinese film-personnel as well as students like me who received relevant education overseas to deeply explore and ponder.

The cultural discounting phenomenon has seriously hindered the internationalization of Chinese documentaries overseas. At present, Chinese film-personnel need to take immediate action to gradually improve their understanding of the psychological and discourse system of the targeted audience. Only by doing that, can we reduce the cultural discount during the film exporting process, communicate with other nations successfully and play an even more influential role on the world

stage. It is a challenge, and it is an opportunity. With the consistent efforts of generations, I believe that the prosperity of Chinese documentaries will come.

By then, western audience will probably show greater interests in revealing a true and splendid Chinese culture accumulated in the last five thousand years along with its ups and downs, and a true China braving the humiliation and bully written in its modern history but still standing in the East with that humble and peaceful heart unchanged.

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