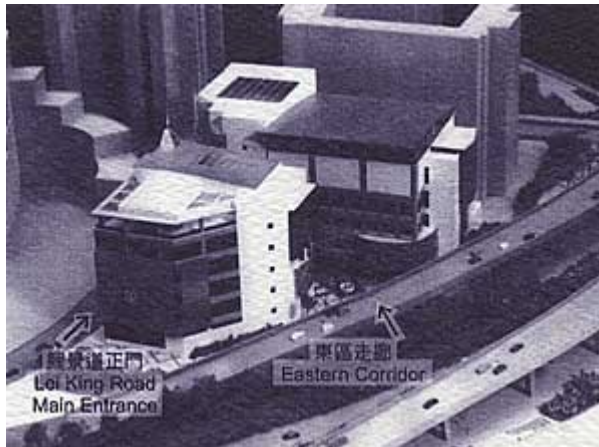


The Birth of a Treasure Cove

The establishment of a film archive in Hong Kong has long been discussed. To have got to where we are now, with a planning office first established in 1993, was not an easy process. Now that we are well on our way towards building a permanent archive, we should be jumping for joy.

New Face of the Film Archive

The fundamentals are all set for the five-storeyed building that will house the permanent archive, expected to be completed in 1999. The site is to occupy 2,500 square metres of land and the front entrance will be at Lei King Road in Sai Wan Ho. Standing between the Eastern Corridor and the Korean International School, the building's architectural design will go in harmony with the Urban Council's Leisure Centre which is situated next door. Metalclad covering on the outside wall of the film vaults will give the building a silver-grey look, counterpointed by white tiles with intermittent dark green and pink tile alignments (Picture 1).



Picture 1

Film Storehouse - The Eye of the Treasure Cove

To any film archive, the most important task has to be the collection and preservation of motion picture. Hence, the film storehouse in any archive should be considered the eye of the treasure cove. Its design should conform to international standards which specify a cool and dry storage condition of 4 degrees Celsius and a constant level of relative humidity of 35% for colour films - not an easy task in hot and very humid Hong Kong. In order to regulate the temperature, the permanent archive is so designed that the whole building is divided into two sections. Each floor has allocated half a section devoted to the

storage of films (Picture 2), and each floor has its independent air control system including compressor, coolant, water-cooling condensation system, etc. The building is also equipped with a back-up (cooling) system as a contingency measure for power breakdown. The dehumidification system will be operated with gas. Our film conservation unit will employ modern management techniques to ensure the highest international standards.



Picture 2

A Multi-Media Customised Database

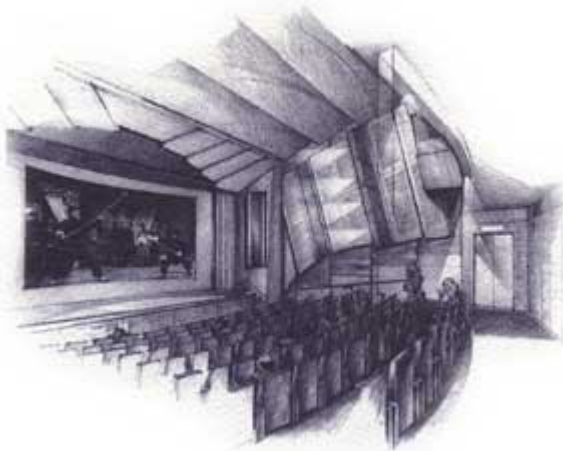
The collection and preservation of film heritage is an important part of recognising our own history. However, no matter how successful our efforts and how well our preservation of this heritage are, all will be in vain if the outside world has no way of retrieving the materials for research and study. Accordingly, the Archive has made great efforts to design a customised and state-of-the-art computerised multi-media system of information retrieval. Those who wish to gain access to archival materials in future will be able to do so at the computer terminals installed in the library. Both textual and visual data can be retrieved efficiently. This system will be one of the best that facilitates bilingual and multi-media data access. Unlike other commonly used database software, the new system will have two specialised functions: a Standard Library Protocol (Z39.50)

which allows users to link up directly with local and overseas libraries and convert their databases into local display format, and a Machine-Readable Controlling (MARC) format that enables sharing information among libraries, both locally and in overseas.

It is our plan to make our data available on the "information highway" but at the initial stage, only textual and pictorial data can be accessed on the Internet.

The Mini-Theatre, Small But Complete

On the first floor of the permanent archive, one cannot miss our mini-theatre which seats about 120 people. However, its size is not to be scoffed at. The screen size of the theatre can be adjusted to screen any aspect ratio of films shot in Super 8, 16mm, 35mm, and so on. The theatre is equipped with projectors which allows films to be screened at different projection standards as well as different speeds. This means that the theatre can project films from the earliest period to our modern times (See Picture 3).



Picture 3

The Exhibition Hall

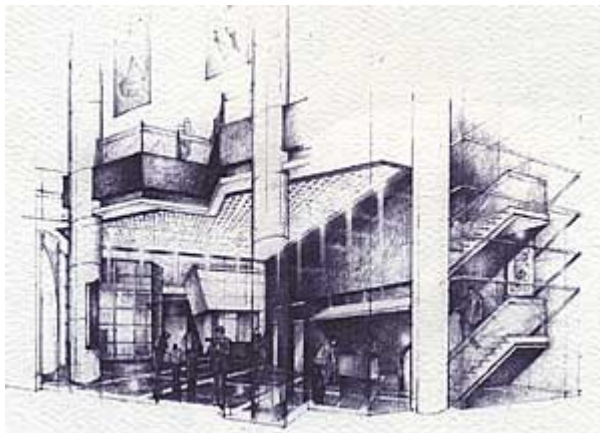
One of the special features of our permanent archive not always shared by other archives around the world is the Exhibition Hall, located on the ground floor. The hall would be seen on immediate entrance to the front door, occupying 150 square metres. Equipped with movable exhibitions panels and spot lights, it is expected to hold a great many exhibitions which will be sourced from our collections. Thus, the public will be given many opportunities to see what lie behind our walls - the rare and precious items of our treasure cove.

Administration Offices

Our last issue introduced to readers the Archive's administrative structure and conservation laboratories. Once the permanent archive is built, these units will be re-located to the new building, occupying the fourth floor. The library, study rooms, and the cataloguing team will occupy the third floor.

Conclusion

The Hong Kong Film Archive is constantly engaging in a battle with time. Not only do we explore the past in order to retrieve whatever small details of our cinematic legacy that remain, we must also look forward and keep up with time so that we may have the best technology to preserve our film heritage. This is the greatest challenge for all colleagues in the Archive!



Architect's impression of the archive's lobby.

Collection Campaign

Seeing images of the great beauty Li Lihua flickering on the screen, will anyone be aware that each frame of the film they are viewing is more than forty years old? The magic of cinema was brought to the limelight as audiences flocked to see the movie, *What Price Beauty?* (1954, directed by Zhang Shankun and Yi Wen, starring Li Lihua and Luo Wei), the Hong Kong Film Archive's latest discovery to add to their collection of rare classics. The film was long thought of as a lost film, but was recently discovered by the Archive staff in Japan.

Shown at the Space Museum on October 15, the screening of *What Price Beauty?* Launched the Archive's Collection Campaign. The campaign's objective is a quest for rare and lost films and all other materials and artefacts connected to the movies. A reception was held after the screening, attended by the famous actress Li Lihua herself and other glittering guest. Present at the reception and receiving souvenirs from the Archive were David Quan, Albert Lee (of Golden Harvest), Chua Lam, Ng See-yuen (of Seasonal Film Corporation), Ma Fung-kwok (of the Media Asia Group), Poon Cho-fai (of Hua Wen Film Co), Chu Yan-yan, Freddie Wong, Lawrence Ah Mon, Peter Fung (of Variety Entertainment), Chow Tak-ming, Chow Fai (representative of ICAC), Dickson Lau (of Southern Film Corporation), Adrian Lee and Yu Mo-wan. The chairman of the Culture Select Committee of the Provisional Urban Council, Mr Pao Ping-wing, and vice-chairman Ms Ada Wong, were on hand to present the souvenirs to the donors and depositors. In his speech, Mr Pao called on all sectors to support the Campaign and come forth with donations. A systematic collection of film classics will lay the foundation for a full study of Hong Kong cinema. Vice-chairman Ms Ada Wong believes that as the policy of localisation gather pace, film history will receive more attention since it is intimately related to Hong Kong culture.



Precious artefacts of the late Master Kwan Tak-hing: the sword and the whip

A part of the artefacts donated to the Archive were put on exhibition during the

reception including a double-edged sword and a whip used by Kwan Tak-hing in the movie *The Magic Whip* (1968). These items were donated by Kwan's son, Mr David Quan, who also bequested to the Archive two other items worn by his father in the movie *The True Story of Wong Fei-hung* (1949): a pair of shoes and leg wrappings worn by Master Kwan in a lion dance scene. Mr Quan felt that his late father owed his success to the public and things from his father should be given back to the public. He said that in future if he found any artefacts belonging to his father, he would donate these to the Archive or a related museum.



Chua Boon-hean in his study room

Two documentary exhibits, the scripts of two classics *House of 72 Tenants* (1973, Shaw Brothers) and *The Orphan* (1960, Wah Luen) were on show, donated by Chua Tan, Chua Lam, and Chua Hsuen. The three Chua brothers had donated these on behalf of their late father Chua Boon-hean. Jokingly, Mr Chua said he had offloaded these items onto the Film Archive so that they might burden film fans. Originally, he had intended to offload them to an artist friend, but changed his mind for the benefits of all.

In addition, costumes worn by Jackie Chan in *Thunderbolt* and by the late actress Lucilla You in *Romance of the Forbidden City* (1964) were put on exhibit. These costumes are only a part of the vast wardrobe of the Golden Harvest studio.

Ms Chu Yan-yan, a member of the film advisory panel of the Provisional Urban Council revealed that she intended to donate hand-drafted film scripts to the Archive together with some other materials that would aid the public's understanding of the filmmaking process (such as the paperwork for the planning and logging of location shooting) in those days. The names of individual donors and depositors of the Film Archive are appended on the following page. Will you be a donor taking part in preserving the glory of our film heritage?

Oral History Project

Introduction:

There are many ways to study the history of Hong Kong cinema. However, because the film industry has long lacked a systematic documentation of materials and as our film personalities of the 30s and 40s have either passed away or retired into oblivion, oral history becomes our most pressing task as well as the most direct method of reminiscence. Over the past three years, the Film Archive has interviewed more than 70 personalities of the Hong Kong cinema who have worked both behind and on the screen. These interviews have been preserved on tapes and we plan to publish them at a later stage. For reasons of space, we can only publish edited extracts from our collection of interviews. The full interviews to be published will constitute a valuable source for further researches.



Zhang Che

"... Next to Mr Zhang Dao-fan, the person who most influenced me was Mr Chiang Ching-kuo (the late president of Taiwan and son of Chiang Kai-shek) ... Our friendship started when I went to his house to sing tunes from Chinese operas, sometimes we went on outings ... that's how we started... "

"*The Storm Cloud over Alishan* (1950) was the first film made in Taiwan, that's why it was popular with the audiences ... it attracted long queues at the box-office, but it was really like an experimental film, very rough ... the songs are the only thing worth remembering about that film ... "

"My first contact with Hong Kong cinema was through the screenplays for Lucilla You's picture, like *Tragic Melody* and *Oh, Heaven* ... MP and GI sought me out chiefly as writer for You's pictures, which were all women's dramas. However, I thought at the time that cinemas around the world were dominated by men ... why was it that Chinese pictures had no male leads ... that's why I advocated

male pictures, pictures that projected masculinity ... "

"The problem with Shaw Brothers was its "factory-like" operation, churning out goods like water ... very often, success and failure stem from the same cause. The system at Shaw Brothers has streamlined production and raised standards but the production lacked variety."

"About stars ... you don't need them to be handsome, they need to have something different ... Jackie Chan isn't handsome, Andy Lau too has his flaws, Bruce Lee too ... guys like David Chiang and Alexander Fu Sheng are closer to handsome, but they are different from Jackie Chan. Once, I went to a friend's house and his son asked me why my main actors were all so bad-looking. Adults won't say it, but children ... "

Zhang Che, born in 1923, entered the film industry in Shanghai in 1947 and was active in both the Taiwan and the Hong Kong film industries since the early sixties. He later joined Shaw Brothers and was instrumental in the resurgence of the Mandarin martial arts genre.



Li Lihua

"When I was fifteen, I went for dinner in my brother-in-law's house and there I met the boss of the Yihua studio, Mr Yan Chuntang. He took a look at me and said I wasn't bad looking, I should be in the movies ... so they granted me a screen test and afterward they said I should start on a movie immediately ... "

"In Shanghai, I had good luck because I met good directors who were then starting out to make their first films, like Huang Zuolin ... I was shopping on the streets and saw Mr Huang. He said I should come and make a movie ... and I followed him, making his first feature The Barber Takes a Wife ... quite a few first-time directors used me in their debuts, perhaps it's because I listened to them ... "

Li Lihua was born in 1925 in Shanghai and practised Chinese opera at a young age. She was actress at

Yihua, Huaying and Shaw Brothers' studio, among others, and has appeared in more than 150 movies. She retired from the screen in 1973.



Raymond Chow

(Loving movies as a child) "At age 13 when I was studying in Shanghai in a boarding school, I used to be watching three movies on Sundays. I had already felt at that time the influence of cinema on the society."

(Reforms at Shaw's Studio) "Run Run Shaw was talking about reforming his studio, and one of these reforms was to overturn the practice of shooting at night. We shot our pictures at night time and slept during the day but office work was done during the daytime, therefore the communication was broken down ... another reform, which may be criticised today, was the decision not to use synchronous sound recording. Shaw Brothers had ten production studios, when one was in the process of shooting, the bell would be rung and this would stop activities elsewhere, wasting a lot of time ... I felt that Hong Kong actors should speak in Cantonese and that Cantonese should be the main dialogue in cinema ... "

(Entering the international market) "*The Big Boss and First of Fury* were the pictures that cracked open the international market ... after the success of these two pictures, Warner Brothers was willing to co-operate with us to make *Enter the Dragon* which was distributed by us in our traditional markets but by Warner Brothers elsewhere ... The Japanese market was cracked open by Bruce Lee. After him, there were Michael Hui and Jackie Chan and they laid down the success of Chinese films in that market with the genre of action comedy ... "

"The world trend is towards a movie city complex, without that, the film industry will be greatly affected ... business is the main consideration and the objective is to win back the audience ... losing your audience is one of the most frightening things ... only when you have one very good movie will your audience start going back to the cinema"

Raymond Chow, born in Hong Kong in 1927, was employed by Shaw Brothers between 1957 and 1970,

working in publicity and later as executive producer. He founded Golden Harvest in 1970, bringing out stars like Bruce Lee, Michael Hui and Jackie Chan.



Wei Wei

"The most famous stage actresses in Shanghai at the time had names like Xia Xia, Lan Lan, Ying Ying. When I was accepted into the theatre, I too wanted a reduplicated name hoping that I could be as famous as they were ... when I started out, I wasn't given leading parts; so I used to stay backstage to look at the others and I learned a great many things ... Shanghai papers at the time dubbed me the 'Queen of Replacement' ... "

(On Spring in a Small City) "I wasn't given a script, only an outline and I was worried about not getting into the part. But director Fei Mu said, so long as you play Zhou Yuwen and not Wei Wei, it'll be all right. He already had every frame of the picture worked out in his mind. He knew we were stage actors, so he wanted us to rehearse scene by scene ... Later, the Communist Party said the film was a 'problem picture', so it sank into oblivion ... but to those mainland film scholars, they liked the film ... "

Wei Wei was born in 1922. A star in the thirties and forties, she came from the stage. She has worked with many famous directors including Fei Mu, Huang Zuolin and Wu Xingcai. Her most famous role was in Fei Mu's Spring in a Small City.



Sek Kin

(Days as a dubbing talent) "It was the time of the Japanese surrender, everything was in ruins and Ngai Pang-fei was looking for people to dub Mandarin pictures. The most lengthy dialogue I dubbed was in a Zhu Shilin picture, the least dialogue was in a Dan Duyu picture ... at the time, there were no taxis or buses, I had to walk from Hung Hom to Pak Tai Street ... "

(Entry into the film world) "Hu Chunbing and other cultural workers came to Hong Kong to organise the first Drama Troupe and I was involved mainly in looking after the costumes ... I was a part-timer in the film industry, you could say ... later Lee Ying-wu formally asked me to make movies on a monthly salary ... I had a lot of hair and an unsettled life then, now I've lost all my hair but my life is settled ... "

(As a villain) "Gu Wenzong was at Shaw Brothers making the Fong Sai-yuk series. Sek Yin-dzi starred as Fong Sai-yuk and I was the White Brow monk. The first movie was a success but as the series continued, I felt a bit bored, so I told Gu Wenzong that since we were making fiction why not create another character ... hence, they created Fong Sai-yuk's master ... My roles were all villains like evil masters and landlords who got involved in squabbles through misunderstandings ... in the end, I was always defeated ... "

"In my time, we were using second-hand recording machines and the results were bad ... some could only record if you spoke loudly, so actors and actresses doing an intimate love scene had to speak several decibels above normal ... and on some others where the scene called for expression of fury and rage, they were forced to lower and soften their voices ... "

Sek Kin, born in Hong Kong in 1913, practised martial arts as a child. Since entering the film industry. Sek Kin has built up a career as a character actor and an outstanding villain, an all-time opponent of Kwan Tak-hing in the Wong Fei-hung film series.

A Walk Through Memory Lane

Donna Chu

Each time I have a talk with my mum about the stars and directors I have interviewed, I am especially fond of catching the complex feelings that flashed across her face: surprise, admiration, recollection. The Oral History Project (what a heavy-sounding name!) thus accidentally becomes an intimate topic of discussion between my mother and me.

Such an accident doesn't lessen the difficulty that one anticipates. When the light falls, there is no guarantee you won't get stage fright. It is crucial to do one's homework before an interview in order to prevent ignorance of offending your interviewee. However, information about individual filmmakers isn't prolific. Though it may be found in the entertainment media, to source it in the manner of historical research is quite rare. Without the efforts of dedicated scholars (such as Mr Yu Mo-wan) and others at the Hong Kong International Film Festival, the situation would otherwise be dire indeed. Those who work in front of the camera would at least have many interesting anecdotes to tell, thus enriching the interviews but those who work behind the camera remain relatively unsung. Thus their information regarding these individuals is all the more precious. If we put these people in the context of time and history, the task is even broader.

My role can't really be classified as an interviewer, instead I am there to facilitate the participants of history to personally bear witness to their events through their own personal recollections. The results naturally depend on the personal characters of these witnesses. Ultimately, a distinct individual style of each film personality will emerge on the screen.

Director Zhang Che is a clear-cut person. He could grasp the main points on any subject he might fall on. Lau Kar-leong was a tireless speaker, leaving on details out when he spoke of his career. Raymond Chow was unexpectedly meticulous. Had he not mentioned it himself, we would never know he was one of the first batch students of St Stephen's College. Director Hu Xiaofeng came from the stage and spoke with all the animation of a stage actor. Chin Tsi-ang, Sammo Hung's grandmother, was so lively that one couldn't believe she is in her nineties. So exuberant was she when touching on a light-hearted moment that she practically jumped up with joy, startling our cameraman who was wearing headphones to monitor the sound. Chin surely lives up to her old mettle as an old veteran of the martial arts.

Many filmmakers have forgotten the details of their experiences in making films, perhaps because of the distance of time or perhaps they have made too many films. Not all filmmakers are forthcoming in interviews, avoiding answering personal questions in the gaze of the video camera (only to talk freely once the camera is switched off). Thus, there are inherent limitations to the oral method of recording history, but what perfect method exists?

As time progresses, the veterans of the Hong Kong film industry will become fewer, it is vital that we catch up with them to record their interviews. One such veteran, in his nineties, was reputed to be in good health last year. This year, we approached him for a filmed interview. As he talked, he seemed incoherent. We felt that something was wrong and asked him how he was passing his days. This long retired filmmaker replied that he was preparing a script for his next film...

Memories do know how to play tricks on people, I was really stunned at that moment. In retrospect, I learned to appreciate how fortunate that old man was to be steeped in his sweet memories.

Donna Chu is a freelance writer. She worked previously as research assistant at the Hong Kong Film Archive and has interviewed over 40 film personalities since 1996 as part of the Archive's Oral History Project..

Orality in the Context of Hong Kong Film History

Linda Lai

"Orality" has always been the special property of ethnology in knowledge production. While history, by tradition and in practice, is biased towards the written word, ethnology is especially interested in what is not written. Structuralist anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss echoes such distinction, adding that history organizes its data in relation to conscious expression, whereas ethnology does so to the unconscious conditions of social life.ⁱ

The question then comes as to how we are to make sense of the Film Archive's series of interviews with directors and film personalities in the here-and-now context, and how we may situate these "oral documents" in the production of historical knowledge. Firstly, we must affirm the worth of these interviews for they fill in a major gap in our understanding of the local film industry. More importantly, concerted effort to produce serious scholarship on the local history of Hong Kong has been rare until the past decade or so. ⁱⁱ When it comes to local film history, the struggle remains at the stage of searching for and identifying relevant literature and artefacts. Much of what we call historical truths about the

cinema are at best tentative readings that warrant debate and verification. When written documents are still too disparate to form a wholesome discourse, the Film Archive's oral documentation becomes a necessary fill-up.

Having said that, one must guard against over accrediting the authority of such materials. For we are now talking about orality in a manuscript culture, an image culture, and a milieu in which visuality proliferates with technology. Looking now in hindsight, the leap from "orality" to "oral history" is very much a product unique to oral cultures whereby the scantiness of written records necessarily endows with orality's unique historiographic value - something that must not be recklessly transplanted to oral records of our time without reckoning the spatial-temporal and cultural differences. Oral history is after all a special category.

To put into perspective the Film Archive's endeavour, we must also review several key moments in the development of historiography in the past century in the West:

1) What accounts for a historical document? What constitutes the historical value of a thing? These questions are central to 19th-century historiography. According to English historian E.H.Carr, 19th-century is the age of fetishism of "facts" and "documents."ⁱⁱⁱ French philosopher Paul Ricoeur views this as a sign of the constraints of positivism, a position that upholds objectivity by which the researcher does not involve himself or herself with the object of study. Not only was Ricoeur skeptical about this view, but also other positivist beliefs in history: their reducing historical studies to the collection and verification of documents; the empiricist stance that ready-made history already exists in documents; and the deterministic view that imposes relation among random events, thus confining interpretive activities to such imposition. ^{iv}

2) The above views were repudiated as early as the late 19th century by two philosophers, the German Wilhelm Dilthey and the Italian Benedetto Croce. They were among the first to give voice to the idea that all history is "contemporary history"; that history essentially sees the past through the eyes of the present and in the light of its problems. This largely establishes the foundation of the modernist and postmodernist historiographic vision.

Dilthey and Croce's idea was picked up by Collingwood in 1945 in his famous work *The Idea of History*. Collingwood asserts that the facts of history never come to us "pure", and therefore historians are required of imaginative understanding for the past. History cannot be written unless the historian can achieve some kind of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing.

3) While the philosophy of history was basically rejected by 19th-century historians of the West, it was fully embraced in the 20th century, and has since then generated a few crucial questions that has transformed the landscape of historical studies. As a result, methodological issues in historiography and discourses on the nature of historical knowledge are brought to the forefront. Philosophers of history draw distinctions between historical events and natural events, historical facts and social facts, variations in cause / effect and patterns.

4) Ever since the 1970s, with the gradual but disquieting emergence of cultural studies, "orality" returns but with a different twist. Partly a result of its interdisciplinary vision, members of the cultural studies camp finally turn to issues of history. "New cultural history," as they call it, pertains to one kind of revisionist history-writing. It advocates a bottom-up perspective that insists on uncovering the long suppressed realities of the ordinary everyday individual from the oppression of official historical discourses. It believes in the local: local people, local history and local knowledge. As a result, orality becomes an important tool to give voice to the formerly unspeakable, but now complemented by the written record. Ethnology now becomes ethnography. New cultural history also acknowledges the effects of the narrative process, that is to say, oral narration and recording in words are necessary variables in the course of the production of historical knowledge. 'A precedent of this thesis was put forth much earlier in the century by Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan, and further developed by his student Walter J. Ong, scholar of American cultural history. Both pointed out the decisive function of individual medium in organising our cognitive world. ^{vi}

With the above thoughts, we can no longer celebrate ingenuously the by value of "facts" of the Film Archive's "Oral History Project". We must bear in mind the following issues:

1) Oral document does not equate with oral history.

2) We must not make a fetish of facts. All oral documents are filtered through the interpretation of the interviewees. In studying an interview, we often discover many factual loopholes and gaps. Recollection is often vague, sketchy and selective, and events meet no precise explanation. Memory and recollection are often coloured by the emotions attached to the very act of retrospection.

Lastly, what oral documents carry is human memory. "Memory of repetition" is carried over from the time of oral culture to the present to be gradually replaced by "memory as a resurrection". ^{vii} Living memory does not only recover the secret wisdom of the past, but resurrects their state of mind, not a different reality but a

lost mentality. Historical memory depends more on reconstruction and interpretation, and less on inherited wisdom. Historical understanding should take possession of memory, and in the process transform its meaning.

Notes:

i Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, 210.

ii Chow Kai-wing, *Introduction: The Establishment and Future Prospects of Historiography in Hong Kong*, (*Dangdai Xianggang shi xue yanjiu [Historical Research in Contemporary Hong Kong]*), eds. Chow Kai-wing & Clara W.C. Ho, Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1994, 8-9.

iii E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, Harmondsworth, New York: Penguin, 1964, 16-21.

iv Paul Ricoeur, *The Contribution of French Historiography to the Theory of History*, Oxford University Press, 1993, 8-13.

v See Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989.

vi See McLuhan's Understanding Media: *The Extension of Man*, (McGraw-Hill, 1964), *The Medium Is the Message* (Bantam Books, 1967) co-authored with Quentin Fiore; Ong's *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982) and *Presence of the Word* (Yale University Press, 1967). Argument of a similar vein is read in Harold A. Innis' *The Bias of Communication* (University of Toronto Press, 1951) with an introduction by Marshall McLuhan.

vii Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, Hanover & London: University of Vermont, 1993, 17-20.

Linda Lai is doctoral candidate in Cinema Studies at the New York University and was Chinese Editor for the 21st HK International Film Festival (1997). She had taught in the Communication Studies Department of HK Baptist University and is now teaching in the Creative Media School of City University.

Digital Restoration of Old Films

Thanks to the invitation of the National Film Centre, Japan, the Film Archive's Head of the Conservation Unit Ms Anna Chan represented the Archive in a seminar on the technology of "digital restoration" held in Tokyo in early November. Participants and experts from various countries shared their experiences in restoring film using the latest computer technology and discuss on issues regarding film preservation.

The key speaker was Michael Friend, director of the Academy Film Archive in the United States. He spoke of his experiences in restoring the 1928 silent film *The Matinee Idol* (directed by Frank Capra), a process which went through a span of seven years. His techniques involve the transfer of film data to computer digital records which were then transferred back to film negatives. Mr Friend has successfully restored 46,000 frames of film in collaboration with SONY Studio in the States.

Apart from participating in the seminar as a guest commentator, Anna also visited the IMAGICA Company's state-of-the-art auditorium and the first rate film vaults of Japan's National Film Centre in Sagamihara.

The Hong Kong Film Archive has previously used the Cineon Digital work station to restore 3,000 frames of King Hu's *The Valiant Ones* (1975). Anna remarked that the conservation of old films had to take into consideration many factors, including the condition of the print, the format and the contents of the images on the negatives.

Film Archives and Institutions in Germany and France

Head of our Acquisition Unit, Ms Angela Tong, has made a trip to Germany and France in October to visit film archives and film organisations in these two countries. One of her key findings was that practices of film preservation and film studies in these two countries varied according to differences in political and economic backgrounds.

France had a rich cultural tradition with ample financial support allocated to culture. Those involved in film preservation work are very enthusiastic even though they are short-handed. Compared with Hong Kong, the French warmly embrace all cultural events and they are not worried about attendance when they organise a film programme.

As for Germany, it might not be as better placed economically when compared with Hong Kong but the country has a rich collection of old films. This was partly a result of Germany's Nazi history with its emphasis on propaganda films. The country has therefore abandon source of old films for preservation, unlike Hong Kong where for reasons due to war, weather, and various commercial practices, many old films have vanished.

Another interesting observation brought back by Angela is that Hong Kong's publications on film are often bilingual (in Chinese and English), which benefits foreigners who want to know more about Hong Kong cinema. Publications in European countries, however, no matter how resourceful and rich their contents are, often lack English translated copies. On this point, Hong Kong can stand out proud.