Conflict and Negotiation Among State Power, Media Power, and Audience Power (1978-2012)

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Abstract

This paper provides a historical review of the star system in Mainland China's music industry from 1978 to 2012. It suggests that from 1978 to 1989, party stars and semi-commercialized stars appeared in China's music industry; while commercialized stars blossomed from 1990 to 1999. From 2000 to 2012, the decline of party stars and commercialized stars contributed to the rise of talent show stars. This paper also argues that talent show stars first entered the music industry's star system as party stars and commercialized stars around 2005. Notably, it analyzes the power relationship that shapes the current star system and the meaning of stardom in Chinese popular culture. Party stars are largely a manifestation of state power that must occasionally negotiate with media power. Commercialized stars, as representatives of popular culture, primarily rely on media power but, to a certain degree, must also conform to state power. Talent show stars, however, after 2007 gradually stopped representing audience power alone and instead became results of negotiation and rebalancing of state power, media power, and audience power.

Keywords

Star system, China's music industry, media power

In China, the three most popular singing styles are *bel canto* (*meisheng changfa*), Chinese folk (*minzu changfa*), and pop (*tongsu changfa*) (Groenewegen 2010; Baranovitch 2003). *Bel canto* is a European operatic style, and its European origin inhibits its appreciation and consumption in China. Unsurprisingly, this music style does not generate as large of an audience as Chinese folk and pop do. However, party stars excel at *bel canto* and Chinese folk. The influences and implications of these party stars for the Chinese star system, cultural production, consumption and popular culture should not be ignored. Therefore, the stars described in this study are not limited to those who perform pop music (*tongsu yinyue*). Stars such as Song Zuying¹, who

specializes in Chinese folk, are also considered.

The earliest Chinese stars emerged in the 1930s in Shanghai, where Chinese popular culture, including popular music, had been developing for many years (Chen 2011). Dyer (1998) stated that, strictly speaking, stars only exist in modern societies that have metropolises, mass media, and market economies. In these contexts, stars can be consumed and promoted, and a popular culture can be established that is highly

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commercialized and characterized by the audience's freedom to select and consume cultural products. These conditions were present in Shanghai in the 1930s. Most of the earliest Chinese stars were film stars, because the Shanghai film industry copied Hollywood's studio model, including its platform for star creation. A number of these earlier stars also performed as musicians or singers (Yu 2011), becoming the first generation of music stars in China.

However, this situation changed after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 (Yu 2011). After 1949, popular culture and music vanished from China because the party-state united cultural production and consumption with communist ideology (Jones 1994). Hence, audiences could only listen to revolutionary songs and watch model plays (Baranovitch 2003; Jones 1994). Within the Chinese cultural administration system, nearly all professional singers and vocalists were employees of state-run performance groups—song and dance troupes (*gewutuan*) or cultural and art troupes (*wengongtuan*). These artists focused on performances directed and assigned by the state and rarely exhibited individuality (Groenewegen 2010), personal power, or economic success, even though they appeared on posters and were promoted by the party-state through political signage (Wang 2010). Furthermore, during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, any form of personal admiration directed toward persons other than Mao could be viewed as an act of resistance to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Given this situation, as representative products of popular culture, stars could not exist in Mainland China from 1949 to 1978.

THE APPEARANCE OF PARTY STARS AND SEMI-COMMERCIALIZED STARS (1978-1989)

The introduction of Deng's economic reforms and open-door policy in 1978 allowed for the transmission of celebrities and popular music from Hong Kong and

Taiwan, whose audiences had similar cultural backgrounds as the mainland Chinese population. Unlike in Mainland China, pop music and its highly commercialized stars had already emerged in these places. Thus, for the first time, mainland Chinese audiences were exposed to celebrity figures (Baranovitch 2003; Zhao 1998). Teresa Teng, for example, was perhaps the first star to enter Mainland China and was extremely popular in the late 1970s and 1980s (Baranovitch 2003; Tsai 2007; Jones 1992). Due to the absence of stars in Mainland China at that time, Hong Kong and Taiwanese stars gained immense popularity. More importantly, these stars introduced models of highly commercialized stars and popular music into the music industry in Mainland China. The music styles imported from Hong Kong and Taiwan, including those of Teresa Teng, were criticized as vulgar and obscene (*mimi zhiyin*) by the official media because this music described personal emotions instead of collective emotions toward a party or country (Baranovitch 2003; Zhao 1998). However, in the 1980s, numerous singers working in state-run song and dance troupes or cultural and art troupes, such as Mao A'min, Weiwei, and Tianzhen², began to copy the new singing styles, including the style of Teresa Teng (Yang and Zhang 1990). To mitigate the influence of these new music trends, the government began developing state-run popular music in the mid-1980s, resulting in the mainstreaming of popular music in China (Jones 1994). With the development of state-run popular music, local pop celebrities, such as Mao A'min, Weiwei, and Liu Huan³, became the first mainland Chinese pop stars to appear after 1978 (Chen 2011; Baranovitch 2003). Growing sales of home television sets and the increasing influence of television media on audiences in the 1980s contributed to these stars' fame (Yu and Sears 1996). China Central Television (CCTV)'s Spring Festival Eve Television Gala and the popularity of television drama theme songs also furthered this trend (Peng 2005).

To limit the influence of Taiwanese stars, the party-state promoted stars as propaganda tools. In the mid-1980s, the party-state began to discontinue its use of revolutionary songs that directly propagandized party ideology and began to sponsor and promote patriotic songs that linked the individual to the state (Zhao 1998). It also began promoting patriotic singers on CCTV (Baranovitch 2003). Several of these patriotic singers became well-known stars. Dong Wenhua, for example, became famous for her renditions of “*The Full Moon*” (*Shiwu de yueliang*) and “*The Bright Color of Blood*” (*Xueran de fengcai*)⁴.

Dong Wenhua’s success marked the emergence of a new type of star in China: the party star. The term “party star” is used in this paper to refer to those celebrities who act as conduits of party ideology while attaining personal fame and economic success⁵. Through her participation in television programming and state-sponsored television galas, Dong Wenhua was perhaps the first party star whose personal image entered mainstream circulation. She exemplified several of the typical features of party stars: She was employed by military song and dance troupes and given political status, and she performed patriotic and state-sanctioned songs. However, Dong Wenhua’s case is unique because in the 1980s, she had not yet obtained substantial commercial returns from her star image and performance, as she and other party stars began to do in the 1990s. This situation can be attributed to the poor state of the domestic economy and restrictions on state-run song and dance troupes in the 1980s. Unlike local and foreign pop stars, Dong Wenhua and other patriotic singers relied on state support, which provided high media exposure and awards (Fung 2009).

In the 1980s, stars in Mainland China, including pop stars such as Mao A’mín and party stars such as Dong Wenhua, faced obstacles. Due to limitations on the market economy at the time, pop stars in the 1980s were semi-commercialized rather than fully commercialized (Baranovitch 2003; Jones 1992).

These performers were employed by state-run song and dance troupes and were therefore required to accept assigned performances; they could only perform commercial shows (*zouxue*) in their spare time (Baranovitch 2003; Jones 1992) and without the assistance of agents or professional promotion. Although their incomes were above average, it was difficult for these stars to collect returns from album sales and from their personal image (Jones 1992). Song and dance troupes that employed these artists exerted many ideological restrictions on their singing, their creativity, and even their daily lives (Jones 1992). Party stars experienced similar problems, often to an even greater degree.

In response to the restrictions placed by song and dance troupes and professional groups, entrepreneur singers (*geti geshou*)⁶ who did not belong to song and dance troupes but were self-employed emerged in the late 1980s. These professionals managed their careers independently and enjoyed the freedom to schedule their own performances and keep the profits. However, they were less competitive than pop stars and party stars because they lacked support from the state and professional groups (Jones 1992). Meanwhile, the star system that had been established during the 1980s, which was composed of semi-commercialized stars and party stars, began to transform in the early 1990s.

THE RISE OF COMMERCIALIZED STARS (1990-1999)

With the introduction of marketization reforms and the weakening of ideological control over cultural production and consumption in 1989 (Baranovitch 2003; Saich 1994; Jones 1994), non-state capital began to be invested in music production and circulation, spurring the emergence of market-oriented recording companies and the maturing of the Chinese commercial entertainment industry (Jin 2002). Several market-oriented recording companies imported commercial methods of stars production from Hong

Kong and promoted their own pop stars (Jin 2002). The earliest successful examples gained fame in Guangdong, a Chinese province close to Hong Kong, in the mid-1990s. In the early 1990s, the Guangdong New Times Recording Company (*Guangdong xinshidai yingxianggongsi*) was the first company to offer agency contracts to singers in Mainland China and to promote singers using a commercial approach (Huang 2009; Jin 2002). For example, the company decided to establish its most famous stars, Yang Yuying and Mao Ning, as a singing couple. The company invited songwriters and composers to write songs tailored to these artists' particular vocal qualities and personal styles (Wu 2003) and promoted them in multiple venues (Huang 2009). These stars attained incredible popularity, and their tapes were sold remarkably well (Baranovitch 2003; Wu 2003).

This approach was copied by other recording companies in the mid-1990s (Jin 2002). The success of Mao Ning and Yang Yuying marked the appearance of truly commercialized stars in Mainland China's music industry. In the mid-1990s, the commercial production and promotion of stars and the appearance of real popular music in Mainland China (Baranovitch 2003) allowed additional pop stars, such as Yang Yuying, Mao Ning, Lin Yilun, and Gan Ping, to gain popularity in Mainland China (Jin 2002). These fully commercialized stars gradually replaced the semi-commercialized stars who preceded them and became the lifeblood of the Chinese star system.

Meanwhile, the party-state continued to foster party stars to propagandize party ideology and to counter the influence of foreign pop music and stars, such as Song Zuying and Peng Liyuan⁷. A number of rock stars, such as Cui Jian⁸, also belonged to this star system (Jones 1994; Baranovitch 2003). In the mid-1990s, the Chinese star system, which was primarily composed of commercialized stars and party stars, stabilized and reached a peak.

However, Mainland China's commercialized stars and pop music never became as popular as the music

and stars produced by Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1990s (Gao 2008; Baranovitch 2003). Although the domestic star system peaked, foreign pop stars from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States, such as Michael Jackson, considerably influenced the mainland Chinese music industry in the 1990s. Although commercialized stars were market-oriented and therefore were neither employed by state-run performance groups nor required to propagandize party ideology, the party-state still used market tools, such as the opportunity to appear on CCTV and in concerts, to persuade stars to conform to the party ideology. Hence, a symbiotic relationship between stars and the party-state was maintained (Baranovitch 2003: 191).

THE DECLINE OF COMMERCIALIZED STARS AND PARTY STARS AND THE RISE OF TALENT SHOW STARS (2000-2012)

In the late 1990s and early twenty-first century, the star system primarily included commercialized stars and party stars began to shrink, because the way of star creation was not as effective as before. The disorganized nature of copyright law in Mainland China resulted in the production of illegal copies of popular songs and albums. This situation as well as illegal downloading through the internet decreased recording companies' profits and limited their ability to promote new talent, especially as the cost of making stars increased under the commercial management model (Jin 2002). This decline in recording companies' profits led to an increase in contract disputes between stars and recording companies (Jin 2002). After 1995, numerous commercialized stars, including Yang Yuying, Mao Ning, and Gao Linsheng, ended their contracts with their original agencies (Jin 2002). In addition, beginning in the late 1990s, Chinese pop music in Mainland China declined, partly due to the reproduction of low-quality songs that were often

copied from pop songs produced in Hong Kong and Taiwan and that were typically illegal.

Meanwhile, new talent did not appear rapidly enough. The platforms used to promote stars, such as the CCTV Spring Festival Eve Television Gala and the Young Singer Competition, became less effective. The party-state continued to emphasize collectivity over individuality, which reduced opportunities for new talent (Baranovitch 2003). For example, 63 singers performed at the 2005 Spring Festival Eve Television Gala, and most of these performers sang with three or more other performers, with the exception of well-known party stars such as Song Zuying and stars from Hong Kong such as Andy Lau (Xiao 2005). These performances had the effect of distracting the audience from the new talent (Chen 2004). CCTV's Young Singer Competition gradually stopped focusing on selecting singers and instead transformed into a vocal technique competition (Cheng 2002). Thus, although the Spring Festival Eve Television Gala and Young Singer Competition claimed to promote new talent, these programs disappointed audiences, particularly younger audiences. Both would-be commercialized stars and would-be party stars were affected by the reduced opportunities from CCTV galas and competitions. However, the situation of would-be party stars was even worse because they relied on the CCTV Spring Festival Eve Television Gala and the Young Singer Competition more than the commercialized stars did. Furthermore, commercialized stars and party stars lacked access to channels other than CCTV television galas, competitions, and commercial advertising to attract media and audience attention.

This temporary lack of new faces in the star system created opportunities for the establishment of a new model of star production: the talent show. In 2005, a mainland Chinese pop idol-type talent show called *Super Girls' Voice* (*Chaoji nvsheng*)⁹, aired by the Hunan Satellite Television Station (HNTV), invited ordinary girls to perform songs on stage and

permitted audiences to vote for their favorite participants during the final round of the competition (Cui and Lee 2010). The show was one of the most popular shows in China in 2005, and top participants such as Li Yuchun, Zhang Liangying, and Zhou Bichang attracted media attention and large audiences. The contest winner, Li Yuchun, received numerous music awards from various institutions. She was deemed "the most popular woman singer in the mainland" from 2006 to 2009 and was the top earner among female mainland singers in 2010 (China News 2009)¹⁰.

Super Girls' Voice changed the traditional approach to star development by making public the process by which stars are produced. In addition, *Super Girls' Voice's* use of text-message voting and the breaking down of boundaries between the media and ordinary people inspired audience participation and investment in the contestants (Cui and Lee 2010), which increased the contestants' fame. Li Yuchun and other contestants of *Super Girls' Voice* therefore represented a new type of celebrity: the talent show star. Although these performers became famous by appearing on talent shows that relied on audience voting, this model of celebrity development is subversive because of its manipulation of media institutions and its use of market-oriented approaches.

After the initial success of *Super Girls' Voice* in 2005, several television stations, including CCTV, either copied or upgraded their talent shows to promote new talent, especially vocal talent, to Chinese audiences. The resulting programs included *China's Got Talent* (*Zhongguo dare xiu*)¹¹ and *Star Avenue* (*Xingguang dadao*)¹². However, the administrative branch of media, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT)¹³, issued restrictions on the timing, content, and judging choices of talent shows in September 2007 and, importantly, prohibited the use of audience voting (*Xinhua Net* 2007). Hence, audience involvement in the production of stars became prohibited by the party-state. Nevertheless,

talent shows continued to air in Mainland China from 2007 to 2012, and several of these talent shows were successful and launched the careers of pop stars [e.g., MoMo Wu¹⁴ from *The Voice of China* (*Zhongguo haoshengyin*)]¹⁵. Thus, talent show stars, in addition to party stars and commercialized stars, became significant members of the music star system in Mainland China. However, the talent show stars introduced after September 2007 did not receive audience votes, which made them different from the stars who rose to fame in talent shows through voting before September 2007.

THE CO-EXISTENCE OF DIVERSE TYPES OF STARS AND UNDERLYING POWER RELATIONSHIPS

Currently, various types of stars constitute the star system of Mainland China. Within this system, party stars, commercialized stars, and talent show stars participate in mainstream celebrity culture¹⁶. Although these three star types may not encompass all forms of stardom present in the mainland Chinese music industry, they are representatives of the main groups in this system.

Modern Chinese culture is produced through the negotiation of multiple forces (Baranovitch 2003). It is evident that these three types of stars have been formed through negotiations of multiple powers. Each star group has access to specific resources and unique advantages because of the power on which it relies. At the same time, each star group has limitations as a result of negotiations and conflicts among these powers. Party stars who emerged in the 1980s, such as Dong Wenhua and Song Zuying, rely on the state's power in the realm of cultural production and consumption. Their popularity was the product of negotiations between media power and state power in the context of a heavily state-controlled media system.

As conduits of party ideology in the star system, party stars primarily sing patriotic or state-sanctioned

songs that promote government messages. For example, one of Song Zuying's famous works is "Love My China" (*Aiwozhonghua*)¹⁷, and Dong Wenhua became well-known for her rendition of "The Full Moon" (*Shiwu de yueliang*). These figures are similar to what Baranovitch (2003) called "state singers" (Baranovitch 2003: 205), but they tend to be more famous than state singers. Unlike singers and actors who rose to fame as political figures between 1949 and 1976 (Wang 2010), these singers can perform other works in diverse musical styles and could attain economic returns from commercial performances, sales of their own albums and personal concerts, although the majority of their work is consistent with the party ideology. The fame these performers have achieved with the support of the party-state allows them, in turn, to promote party ideologies in their performances. As representatives of the party ideology and as employees of the state, these performers must attend galas to improve troop morale in the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) and participate in television galas for national celebrations, such as the gala celebrating the anniversary of the establishment of the CCP.

The party-state rewards party stars by designating these individuals special state staff with political status. Virtually all party stars' employers are military song and dance troupes, and party stars typically enjoy a higher level of political status than do other stars, sometimes serving as representatives in the National People's Congress (NPC) or the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Song Zuying, for example, is currently employed as Associate Head of the China's Navy Political Department Song and Dance Troupe (*zhongguo renmin jiefangjun haijun zhengzhibu gewutuan*) and holds the military rank of general.

The party-state also supports party stars by providing media exposure, particularly in CCTV, and giving them music awards (Baranovitch 2003; Fung 2009). Since media production in Mainland China is

still managed by the Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, and all electronic media are administered by the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television (Yu and Sears 1996). Hence, state-run concerts, television galas, and singing competitions allocate prime time to party star performances of patriotic, state-sanctioned songs (Baranovitch 2003). Media exposure and music awards enhance party stars' fame and increase the economic rewards enjoyed by these performers. These activities represent processes of negotiation between state power and media power.

However, this negotiation process in the case of party stars is not without conflict. The marketization of media after 1989 increased media sources' financial ambitions, and CCTV can no longer ignore rating trends and the fact that younger audiences are not interested in the party ideology (Zhao 1998). The younger generation has been raised under commercial market conditions that promote individualism and consumerism over party ideologies (Fung 2009). The effects of this upbringing are compounded by competition between local media and CCTV (Zhong 2007). In addition, because of the homogeneity of ideological cultural products, the musical styles and performances of party stars tend to lack creativity (Baranovitch 2003). Their performances, including their physical position, tone, facial expressions, and clothes, are based on a single model and tend to remain the same. All of these factors have forced the organizers of the Spring Festival Eve Television Gala and other state-sponsored galas and concerts to limit the proportion of party stars who perform on stage and to maintain a balance between the screen time dedicated to these figures and the time reserved for commercialized stars (Dahebao 2002).

Commercialized stars are successful products of popular culture who primarily rely on the manipulation of media power for success. For pop stars, their image and everyday lives are as important as their musical production (Groenewegen 2010).

These stars' careers are bolstered when they are promoted by strong media platforms, such as the Spring Festival Eve Television Gala (*Shenzhen shangbao* 2005). However, they have fewer opportunities in this area than party stars do.

Therefore, commercialized stars in Mainland China must still conform to state-imposed restrictions. Given their potential resistance to mainstream cultural values and party ideologies (Fung 2009; Baranovitch 2003), party-state attitudes toward these stars are complex (Fung 2009). The party-state has learned to use media and other market resources to persuade commercial stars to comply with the party ideology (Baranovitch 2003). Most stars negotiate with state power through their partial cooperation with the party-state in return for media resources, such as airtime at state-sponsored galas (Baranovitch 2003). However, these individuals are not specifically employed to promote a party ideology.

Unlike commercialized stars and party stars, talent show stars can be divided into those who emerged prior to the voting procedure change in September 2007 and those who emerged after this policy change. The major difference between talent show stars who emerged before 2007, such as Li Yuchun, and party stars or commercialized stars lies in the audience's participation in the star's production (Cui and Lee 2010). In addition, studies have shown that talent show stars are products of media power and rely on media power to an even greater extent than do commercialized stars (Turner 2006). Thus, talent show stars (before 2007) who were selected by general audiences are products of both media power and audience power.

Talent show stars introduced after September 2007 differ from their earlier counterparts. In 2007, audience power was excluded from star production by the party-state through the prohibition of audience voting. Although these talent shows produce new stars (some of whom, such as Momo Wu, have been successful), talent show stars selected after 2007 are

the products of media power that conforms to state power.

Meanwhile, state power has also negotiated with media power and audience power in this process, although this negotiation has been limited. After 2005, CCTV expanded the scope of its talent shows through the upgrading of *Star Avenue* and produced original talent shows to promote new talent in a way of foreign talent shows [e.g., *China's Good Song (Zhongguo haogeku)*]¹⁸. CCTV also permitted several stars from talent shows aired by provincial television stations, such as HNTV, to compete to perform in the Spring Festival Eve Television Gala and allowed some to attend the gala, such as the winner of the 2013 *Happy Boy's Voice (Kuaile nansheng)*¹⁹. In addition, some 2005 *Super Girls' Voice* celebrities were accepted as military song and dance troupes staff (NetEase 2014). These concessions were made partly because state power is not stable and united at all times. The financial aspirations of media sources, including CCTV, and a focus on young audiences also contributed to this limited degree of negotiation. Hence, from 2007 to 2012, the Chinese music industry's star system reflects the negotiation and rebalancing of state power and media power. Although audience power was excluded from this process of negotiation, the demands of younger audiences have been considered to a certain degree.

CONCLUSIONS

Currently, there are three major groups that constitute the Chinese star system: party stars, commercialized stars, and talent show stars. Each is subject to different advantages and limitations resulting from underlying power relationships. Party stars are largely a manifestation of state power that must occasionally negotiate with media power. Commercialized stars, as representatives of popular culture, primarily rely on media power but, to a certain degree, must also conform to state power. Conflicts between state power

and media power, particularly with the recent increase in the latter and the temporary decline of the star system as a result of historical factors, have created opportunities for talent show stars to become a major component of the star system. Talent show stars are products of media power and audience power (if they appeared as contestants in talent shows that aired before 2007). Whether this audience power can resist media power or even state power requires further exploration.

Although audience power has been excluded from star production by the party-state since 2007, its possible resistance to media power and even state power warrants attention. First, the stars produced by talent shows, including those following the idol format, have not been as popular in other regions of East Asia as they have been in Mainland China (Keane, Fung, and Moran 2007). For example, winners of idol-format shows in Hong Kong did not attain success in their career development (Keane et al. 2007). This situation may be attributable to the current monopoly of entertainment corporations (Leung 2007; Aoyagi 1999), which Leung (2007) contended limits the diversity of star production and ensures the success of stars with minimal musical or acting skill by relying on promotion and advertising (2007). Similarly, in Japan, the center of Asian popular music, the discovery of new talent is still controlled by recording companies, and media institutions rarely participate in star creation (Aoyagi 1999). However, the strong demand for individualism in Mainland China may also contribute to this situation (Keane et al. 2007); therefore, audience power may still be a force there. This potential force is confirmed by the restrictions placed on talent shows by the party-state and by the negotiation between state power and media power and young audiences. Talent show celebrities introduced after 2007 do not represent audience power and are instead products of the negotiation and rebalancing of state power, media power, and audience power. However, the state restrictions placed

on talent show voting procedures demonstrate that state power is threatened by the potential resistance of audience power.

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Notes

1. Song Zuying is a well-known Chinese folk music singer who currently works as the associate head of China's Navy Political Department Song and Dance Troupe (*zhongguo renmin jiefangjun haijun zhengzhibu gewutuan*). Her most popular songs include “Love My China” (*Aiwo zhonghua*) and “Spicy Girls” (*La meizi*).
2. Mao A'min, Weiwei, and Tianzhen were well-known pop singers in Mainland China during the 1980s and early 1990s.
3. Liu Huan was a well-known pop star in Mainland China. He performed at the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.
4. “The Full Moon” (*Shiwu de yueliang*) describes the experiences of a soldier's wife who misses her husband but who fully supports him in his duty. “The Bright Color of Blood” (*Xueran de fengcai*) praises the sacrifices made by soldiers for the country. When Dong sang these songs (1984), China was at war with Vietnam (the third period of the war with Vietnam). Hence, Dong and her songs became immensely popular in China during this period.
5. The term “party star” was inspired by the terms used in studies of Chinese media under the control of the party-state (Lee, He, and Huang 2006; Lee, He, and Huang 2007; Tong and Sparks 2009).
6. Singers were not employed by a performance group and did not manage their careers themselves. In the 1980s, most Chinese artists belonged to institution (*danwei*), including singers.
7. Peng Liyuan is a well-known folk singer who served as the dean of the Song and Dance Troupe of the General Political Department of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (*zongzheng gewutuan*). She is also the wife of Xi Jinping, the current Chairman of China.
8. Cui Jian was a well-known rock star in the 1980s and early 1990s. His most popular songs include “I Have Nothing” (*Yiwu suoyou*) and “A Piece of Red Cloth” (*Yikuai hongbu*). Because his music influenced the young college students of the Tiananmen Movement, he was banned from performing

- publicly. However, he donated some of his earnings to the 1990 Asian Games and held personal concerts that year (Baranovitch 2003). Rock music has always been rejected by the Chinese party-state (Baranovitch 2003; Jones 1994).
9. This was a pop idol-style talent show launched by HNTV in 2004. The show attained great popularity in 2005 and was one of the most successful television entertainment programs in China that year. Its audience figures were estimated at 200 million (Cai and Xie 2006).
 10. According to data published by Forbes (China), Li Yuchun was the top earner among mainland female singers in 2006, 2007, and 2010. See details at <http://www.forbeschina.com/list/358>.
 11. An America's Got Talent-type talent show that was first launched by Dongfang Satellite Television Station in Shanghai in 2010.
 12. An original entertainment talent show first aired by CCTV in 2004.
 13. In 2013, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television became the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television.
 14. A runner-up on the talent show—*Voice of China* (*Zhongguo haoshengyin*), she is now a pop star and was endorsed by Pepsi-Cola in 2013.
 15. This legal talent show based on the *Voice of Holland* first aired in 2012 and was produced by Zhejiang Satellite Television Station and the Pal Edward culture and communication company, controlled by Star TV.
 16. These categories, of course, are not strictly defined, and the complexities of stardom make it impossible to elaborate on every type of star included in this system. A number of marginalized stars, such as rock stars and those who cannot be easily categorized, such as Liu Huan, are also included in the star system. However, for research purposes, these three terms are used to refer to the comparatively dominant celebrity types.
 17. “Love My China” (*Aiwozhonghua*) conveys the message that all ethnic groups in China are united as a loving family dedicated to China's development.
 18. This show is an original talent show designed to promote Chinese pop music that began to air on CCTV in 2014 and that is produced by CCTV and the Pal Edward culture and communication company.
 19. *Happy Boy's Voice* (*Kuaile nansheng*) is the upgraded version of *Super Girls' Voice* (*Chaoji nvsheng*) produced by HNTV, which first aired in 2007. Participants of this talent show must be boys over 18 years old.

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