

Cinematic Practice of Historical Materialism: The TeXing System and the Construction of Authenticity in Chinese Screen Narratives

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Abstract: This article examines the TeXing system, a distinctive Chinese approach to biographical screen representation, repositioning it as an institutionalized practice of state-level historical narrative that challenges Western-centric biopic theories. Unlike the market-driven Hollywood star system, the TeXing system fosters a unique institutional authenticity through rigorous selection processes and lifelong dedication to specific historical personas. Drawing upon the framework of Marxist historical materialism, this study analyses how TeXing performers transcend traditional acting to achieve a state of “living like” the historical figures, thereby transforming individual performance into a vehicle for collective memory. The research argues that the TeXing system serves not only as an artistic methodology but also as a critical mechanism for the construction of public culture and the cultivation of historical consciousness within contemporary screen culture. By anchoring historical consensus through authoritative portrayals of national leaders, the system offers a unique Chinese paradigm for understanding the intersection of performance, power, and historical truth.

Keywords: TeXing System; Chinese Screen Culture; Bio-Adaptations; Performative Authenticity; Historical Representation; Cross-Media Performance

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1. Introduction

In 1998, Chinese actor Tang Guoqiang debuted as Mao Zedong in *The Long March (Chang Zheng)* (Zhai Junjie, 1996), earning him multiple prestigious awards in China. Twenty years later, British actor Gary Oldman achieved similar recognition for his portrayal of Winston Churchill in *Darkest Hour* (Joe Wright, 2017), winning him an Academy Award and other significant accolades. Two decades apart, both actors brought iconic historical figures to life, but their careers present two different approaches to screen bio-adaptation. Oldman’s widely praised portrayal of Churchill represents one unique achievement within his diverse acting career. As many scholars like Dennis Bingham, Ellen Cheshire, and Deborah Cartmell have noted, playing real people has become an effective way for some actors to win awards or reputations for themselves, so their careers can jump to the next level. In contrast, Tang’s performance as Mao in 1996 marked the beginning of a phenomenal artistic journey, which would continue to make him one of the significant actors of the revolutionary leader across Chinese screens, in both film and television, for most of his career for the next quarter century. As of 2024, he has

played Mao in almost forty TV series and nineteen films. This phenomenon suggests that the TeXing system is far more than a professional casting choice; it represents a nation-level institutionalization of historical memory. While Oldman's portrayal is a transient artistic feat within a market-oriented industry, Tang's lifelong dedication to a single revolutionary leader reflects a structured ideological project that contributes to the continuity and authority of national icons across decades of shifting media landscapes.

The TeXing system, which differs significantly from the traditional understanding of biographical performance or acting career. Originating in the Soviet Union, the approach was adopted and institutionalized in China in 1977, with a specific performer selection guide focused on those who would portray prominent revolutionary leaders and key political figures in Chinese history.^[1] The TeXing system functions as a mechanism of the construction of public culture. By moving beyond the episodic nature of commercial biopics, this system anchors the "political body" of the leader within a specific, reliable performer. In the realm of social science theory, this can be understood as an application of Marxist historical materialism to the screen: it prioritizes the historical necessity and collective significance embodied by the leader over the fragmented, individualized interpretations typical of Western celebrity culture. Consequently, the TeXing performer becomes a living archive, ensuring that the state's historical narrative remains consistent and resistant to the erosive effects of commercial dramatization. This unique system raises a key question about how different screen cultures construct biographical authenticity.

With global cinema experiencing an unprecedented boom in biographical adaptations, the relationship between biographical performance and authenticity has become a significant research topic in biopic studies.^[2] It is worth noting that while the TeXing system presents a unique approach to the casting and performance of bio-adaptations on screen, much of the scholarship on bio-adaptation has focused on biopics of Western cinema, particularly Hollywood.^[3,4] As such, this focus has shaped how authenticity is understood in screen bio-adaptation. Belén Vidal^[5] suggested that "the actor is the cornerstone" of biopics, conveying authenticity through themselves. However, academic understanding of actors and their portrayal of biographical characters has been mainly shaped by Western film cases, especially Hollywood examples.^[3,4,6] In his pioneering work *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History*,^[3] George Custen notes that the actor's star persona can influence the historical figure's representation. Building on Custen's analysis of how star performance affects historical authenticity, Bingham^[4] explores how this tension has been transformed within contemporary cinema. He argues that modern biopics encourage the "urge to dramatize actuality," in which the dramatic interpretation is more demanded than strict historical fidelity. This transformation is particularly evident in Bingham's (2010)^[4] case study of *I'm Not There* (Todd Haynes, 2007), a film in which six actors play American singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, showing the dramatic complex in the biographical portrayal of a historical figure. Given this limitation and demand from the industry, actors usually consider this portrayal as a one-time role in their acting career. It appears that this Western-centered, or more specifically Hollywood-centered, approach to understanding biographical authenticity is valuable. However, this Western-centered framework often overlooks how non-Western political entities employ screen performance to construct ideological legitimacy. The TeXing system challenges the Hollywood-centric "dramatic authenticity" by proposing an "institutional authenticity." This research argues that in the Chinese context, the authenticity of a biographical portrayal is not merely a matter of aesthetic verisimilitude but a crucial component of political identity and collective education, where the screen becomes a site for reinforcing the foundational narratives of the party and the state.

This study examines the TeXing system as a theoretical paradigm of historical representation within the framework of socialist cultural production. It argues that this system functions as a strategic mechanism of the construction of public culture, reconciling the tension between artistic adaptation and historical truth. By comparing it with Western star-driven models, this research explores how the TeXing system, rooted in Marxist historical materialism, constructs a unique form of institutional authenticity. This approach challenges market-centric biopic theories and proposes a new model for understanding the intersection of screen performance, national identity, and collective memory.

2. Tracing the TeXing System

Although the system is now almost uniquely associated with Chinese screen culture, its origins can be traced to Soviet

cinema, especially from the 1930s to the 1950s. Two of the most influential actors from this period were Boris Shchukin and Mikheil Gelovani, who, under the influence of Stanislavski's system, became famous for their portrayals of Lenin and Stalin, respectively. They also received support at a national level for portraying such significant national historical figures. In respect of Gelovani's performances as Stalin, Andre Bazin^[7] described him as "incarnated" Stalin, thereby suggesting a degree of historical authenticity from his portrayal that went beyond traditional acting. Indeed, after being assigned the role of Stalin, Gelovani was not allowed to play any other roles in his subsequent acting career.^[8] This national support suggests that the Soviet prototype of the TeXing system was never merely an aesthetic choice but a strategic deployment of artistic resources to consolidate revolutionary legitimacy. By creating a simulated environment for Shchukin, the Soviet state practiced a form of total representation, where the boundary between the historical leader and the artistic performer was intentionally blurred to produce an unshakeable image of authority. In this sense, Gelovani's incarnation of Stalin functioned as a visual anchor for state ideology, transforming the screen into a site of political education.

The formal establishment of the TeXing system in China emerged from the specific historical circumstances of the late 1970s. By the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), historical political figures had rarely been portrayed in Chinese films and television. However, with the deaths of several of the Chinese leaders in the 1970s, the need to represent those figures on screen became increasingly important. After the notice of selecting TeXing actors was issued in 1977, by the Ministry of Culture and the General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army, this systematic approach to the biographical portrayal of historical figures was established. The original selection process entailed setting up special teams that travelled nationwide to find potential candidates who looked like those historical figures, such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Zhu De. Usually, these potential TeXing actors would first obtain recognition from the families of historical figures, then begin their specialized training.^[9] Instead of solely focusing on professional acting training, they had to pay more attention to comprehensive research in historical archives and field studies.^[9] This process institutionalized a form of political intimacy between the audience and the state founders.

Subsequently, this system has evolved with the development of the production of related screen works like films and TV series. While early performances in the 1970s emphasized physical resemblance and external behaviors, by the 1980s and 1990s, the approach had evolved from surface-level resemblance to emphasizing psychological depth and emotional complexity. As Chen and Liu^[10] note, this shift marked a transition from focusing solely on physical likeness, or "looking like" (Xing Si), to achieving a deeper authenticity that captured the historical figures' inner character or "being like" (Shen Si). This evolution from looking like to being like reflects the deepening of Marxist historical materialism in Chinese cinematic aesthetics. It signifies a transition from static iconicity to a dynamic understanding of historical agency, where leaders are depicted not as abstract symbols but as individuals embedded in complex social relations. Furthermore, while the 21st-century star-driven model (as seen in *Beginning of the Great Revival*) reflects the pressures of marketization, the resilience of the TeXing system underscores its irreplaceable role in safeguarding the seriousness of national history against the fragmentation of celebrity culture. It remains a crucial tool for the construction of public culture, ensuring that the Grand Narrative of the nation is not diluted by commercial sensationalism.

3. From Physical Resemblance to Embodied Authenticity

In analyzing biographical performance, Lucy Fife Donaldson^[11] emphasizes that authenticity contains the static element of physical resemblance and the dynamic aspect of performative embodiment. One of the most distinctive traits of the TeXing system is its casting process, in which physical resemblance has primacy over the professional acting background. The term TeXing, literally meaning specially modelled, reflects the focus on physical resemblance to historical figures. Undeniably, physical resemblance has long been highly valued in biographical performances. The efforts that actors have made to achieve this, as Donaldson^[11] notes, have become "the stock-in-trade of the contemporary biopic performer" and "central to popular coverage and appreciation of biopic performance." However, what distinguishes the TeXing system is its institutionalization of this requirement and its pursuit of the natural, unenhanced physical resemblance over the technologically achieved likeness. Therefore, unlike Hollywood biopics, where actors are often cast for their star power or acting ability, the TeXing system initially established physical resemblance as a fundamental institutional criterion in the selection process. In short, the

first step in this system is casting people, not actors.

While standard biographical adaptations in the West, such as Hollywood's *Darkest Hour*, rely on temporary technological interventions, prosthetics and digital makeup, to bridge the physical gap between actor and subject, this approach treats historical authenticity as a consumable spectacle. In contrast, the TeXing system rejects this technological facade in favor of an ontological resemblance. By institutionalizing natural likeness, the system shifts the focus from how an actor mimics a leader to how a leader's image is preserved through a living representation. This is not merely an aesthetic preference but a socio-political strategy to help sustain a coherent national narrative, keeping it untainted by the artificiality of commercial entertainment. The social efficacy of this natural resemblance is best exemplified by the interaction between the TeXing performer and the public sphere. This phenomenon suggests that the TeXing actor serves as a mobile monument of the state. Within the framework of the construction of public culture, such lived authenticity reinforces the audience's political trust, as the performer's physical body becomes a tangible extension of the state's historical legitimacy, effectively anchoring collective memory in a way that purely digital or prosthetic portrayals cannot achieve.

Furthermore, the TeXing system aims to create intuitive visual and acoustic authenticity that bonds with the audience's perception of historical knowledge. For example, in his significant work, *The Birth of New China* (Kai Guo Da Dian)(Li Qiankuan, 1989), Gu Yue had his voice dubbed by another TeXing actor, Zhang Keyao. The practice of utilizing different TeXing experts for visual and acoustic representation illustrates a collectivist mode of cultural production. In this model, the individual actor's creative ego is subordinated to the precision of the historical icon. By decoupling the voice and body to achieve an idealized historical fidelity, the TeXing system prioritizes the integrity of the national icon over the individual artistry of the performer. This standardized sensory experience ensures that the leader's image remains a stable ideological signifier, protecting the national historical narrative from the fluctuations of individual interpretation or commercial star-branding.

4. Long-Term and Cross-Media Engagement

Beyond physical resemblance, the TeXing actor has a long and intensive, all-encompassing learning process. This focuses not on the method of acting but on all the details of the historical figure that the actor will play. For example, Wang Tiecheng, one of the most recognized TeXing actors in Chinese cinema, was famous for portraying Zhou Enlai, the inaugural Premier of the People's Republic of China. He once emphasized that TeXing actors must not only study their role's written works but also understand their life's context to embody their entire persona and habits^[9]. Similarly, Liu Jin's long journey portrayal of Zhou Enlai required both his physical appearance and capturing his demeanor, speech patterns, and ideological beliefs over the decades; this was achieved through his continual research into Zhou's speeches, writings, and personal history.^[12] Although in-depth research and preparation are common in biographical performances, the TeXing system's long-term, continuous nature of this research and preparation process makes it different. This is because their deep exploration allows TeXing performers to develop a broader understanding of the historical figures they portray from different periods and contexts. Furthermore, TeXing actors often spend years or even decades establishing their understanding of a historical figure through repeated performance. Different from other actors who typically approach historical characters as individual projects, TeXing performers become long-term carriers of historical knowledge. This long-term engagement allows them to progressively deepen their representation of the original figure through acting, moving beyond initial physical imitation to achieve what Chen and Liu^[10] describe as a transition from "looking like" to "being like."

The depth of this long-term engagement then evolves into a deeper emotional and cultural connection with the historical figures they portray. The TeXing system takes a very different approach to pursuing performance authenticity from traditional performance systems. The former emphasizes historical fidelity and long-term consistency, while the latter generally pays more attention to an actor's personal interpretation. Usually, biopics emphasize targeted preparation for single productions, focusing on specific, dramatized aspects of historical figures. For example, Oldman took several months to prepare for the role of Churchill, including mimicking Churchill's voice and movements, especially for the famous speech, *We Shall Fight on the Beaches* (1940). As Brooke Allen^[13] highlights, Oldman and his vocal coach treated this specific speech as musical scores to ensure that his acting of Churchill's famous speech was historically accurate in the specific scenes. Similarly, Daniel Day-

Lewis prepared targeted details about Lincoln and the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution for the film *Lincoln* (Steven Spielberg, 2012).^[14] When preparing for *The King's Speech* (Tom Hooper, 2010), Colin Firth focused on the specific aspects of King George VI's landmark radio broadcast in 1939, announcing Britain's entry into war with Germany.^[15] This targeted approach to preparation is enough for an actor to achieve a deep interpretation of a historical figure in a limited number of scenes in one film or one TV series.

However, unlike these targeted preparations for specific events, TeXing actors' main task is to maintain consistency in their portrayals of historical figures across different productions so that they cannot rely solely on targeted but temporary techniques to transform themselves. The TeXing system fosters a long-term carrier of historical knowledge. Those performers' long-term portrayals of historical figures across several decades and multiple productions lead them to develop a deep connection with their characters. This transformation from acting a role to embodying a historical subject suggests that the TeXing performer is not merely a freelancer in a commercial market, but a custodian of national legacy. Their multi-decade commitment functions as a biological archive, ensuring a diachronic consistency in the nation's historical self-representation that transcends the episodic nature of Western cinema. Meanwhile, this unique connection between actor and role leads to distinctive performing approaches, which could be a form of self-sacrificial performance.

The great effort TeXing performers put into playing historical figures also allows them to become the best choice for more than one medium. The TeXing system can reduce the barrier between different media platforms, in which its actors regularly portray their assigned figures across multiple platforms, including films, TV series, theatrical plays, and even docudramas with real footage. These features distinguish the TeXing system from traditional biopics production, where actors generally play historical figures in single productions and single media formats, as this is one of their acting jobs. However, for TeXing performers, their job is to embody the historical figures so that the media form's difference is not a barrier to their portrayal. For example, starting his career at the China National Theatre for Children, Wang Tiecheng later expanded into films and television following his triumphant portrayal of Zhou Enlai in two stage plays. Another young man, Jin Jingcheng, accidentally began his career when he was cast as the young Zhou Enlai in a docudrama, solely for his impressive physical likeness to the Premier. Although it was a non-speaking role, performed only through visual presence with voice-over narration, this casting earned him further opportunities to portray young Zhou Enlai in films and TV series. Furthermore, a notable TeXing actress, Huang Wei, has portrayed Deng Yingchao, a pioneering figure in the Chinese women's movement and wife of Zhou Enlai, in more than twenty television series and nearly ten films. These examples show how TeXing actors have worked beyond medium boundaries to create a relatively more comprehensive approach to bio-adaptation on screen, which has been based on the aim of faithfully establishing the historical figures. This creates a seamless environment, where the state's foundational narrative is reinforced through a unified, recognizable symbol, effectively minimizing the risk of historical re-interpretation that often occurs in market-driven media landscapes.

While recent scholarship has broadly discussed acting and authenticity in biographical adaptations, these discussions have mainly focused on performances within a single platform of media, particularly film, as "the film provides access to details of performance."^[11] Although TV series play an important role in constructing the "national culture of public memory,"^[16] scholarship focusing on the biographical series or even biographical performance on television is still limited, as Bignell^[17] pointed out there is no "identifiable television biopic genre." However, the TeXing system challenges this scholarly limitation by fluidly integrating its actors across film, television, and even theatre and docudrama. This genre is called Themes of Significant Revolutions and Historical Events (*Zhongda Geming He Zhongda Lishi Ticai*) and was identified by the National Radio and Television Administration in 2006.^[12] Themes of Significant Revolutions primarily construct national historical narratives around the modern revolutionary struggles against imperialism and feudalism. Furthermore, Themes of Significant Historical Events focus on the life achievements and work experiences of the Chinese Communist Party and national leaders, or show significant historical events involving the Communist Party, the People's Republic of China, and the People's Liberation Army, addressing how conflicts between different classes, social strata, and ideologies have influenced the historical development of the nation and state. This classification then covers one of the common sub-genres of bio-adaptations on both big and small screens. Perhaps, inevitably, TeXing has become the main cast for this genre.

Correspondingly, this close relationship between the TeXing system and this special genre further reinforces the importance of the TeXing system within Chinese screen culture. Within this framework, the TeXing performer serves as the primary instrument for mapping the ideological figure of the country. The TeXing system brings bio-adaptation on screen into a form of historiographical practice, reinforcing the legitimacy of the national path through a consistent, authoritative visual presence.

5. Historical Authenticity through the TeXing System

Historical authenticity in biographical screen works reflects deeper differences in how historical figures are understood and represented on screen. Hollywood biopics, the most researched bio-adaptation screen works by scholars, are generally effective in balancing historical truth and cinematic entertainment, in addition to dramatizing historical figures' lives. As Custen^[5] suggests, Hollywood biopics do not simply reflect history but actively construct a particular version of "public history" through their stories of "selected individual lives." This process often adapts stories about historical figures to fit the producers' values and experiences, aiming to satisfy audiences' tastes rather than keep its fidelity to historical accuracy.

Furthermore, contemporary scholarship has explored how biopics negotiate the relationship between historical truth and cinematic needs. Contemporary scholarship often explores how biopics negotiate emotional truth^[18] and market demands.^[19] These arguments highlight how the film industry shapes historical narratives and historical figures in response to market demands and cultural trends. While contemporary Hollywood biopics, such as *Napoleon* (Ridley Scott, 2023), combine emotional authenticity with entertainment needs, they often treat history as a pliable raw material for consumerist entertainment. From a socio-theoretical perspective, this represents a de-historicization of the subject, where historical figures are stripped of their socio-political contexts to fit modern liberal individualist frameworks. This Hollywood-centered approach is fundamentally different from the TeXing system. While Hollywood biopics have widely explored the balance between historical authenticity and entertainment, academic works on the TeXing system often limit its scope to Chinese cinema and political contexts. The TeXing system functions as a corrective to this fragmentation, insisting on a representation that is structurally bound to the objective laws of historical development rather than the subjective whims of producers or market trends. Western scholarship's tendency to dismiss TeXing-driven works as mere propaganda reveals a methodological limitation in understanding non-Western cultural governance. This study argues that the TeXing system transcends the art-versus-propaganda binary. Instead, it should be theorized as a sovereign historiographical practice. Through maintaining a high degree of fidelity to historical details and the principle of collective leadership, this system constructs an alternative framework that stands in contrast to the Western star system. It thereby establishes the assertion that the visual depiction of national leaders is a significant cultural practice aimed at preserving ideology and implementing cultural edification. Its value requires a different evaluative framework of artistic freedom as understood in a free-market context.

Rooted in Marxist historical materialism, the TeXing system fundamentally redefines the hero on screen. Unlike the Hollywood Great Man biopic, which attributes historic shifts to individual genius, the TeXing system situates leaders within the collective agency of the masses and the party. This is why TeXing performers often appear in clusters—portraying the bond of "Mao-Zhou-Zhu" rather than a solitary protagonist. Theoretically, this shifts the cinematic focus from biographical psychology to socio-historical logic, presenting the leader not as an autonomous hero, but as a crystallization of collective will. This approach transforms the screen into a materialist site of memory, where the legitimacy of the revolutionary path is visualized through the consistent, disciplined presence of multiple historical icons.

The collective perspective of the bio-adaptation screen works directly challenges the traditional narrative model of individual heroism in biographical films, or in Bingham's^[4] words, "the great man biopic." From the historical authenticity perspective, even though this approach could create award-winning works, their story can simplify history by ignoring the collective efforts and social context that may also have contributed to such historical events. In contrast, the TeXing system emphasizes historical fidelity to establish a shared memory and maintain cultural heritage. As the Chinese government typically supports this kind of biographical production, authentic representations of historical figures and events that correspond with national narratives in high demand. TeXing performers focus on representing history as faithfully as possible, including minor details, such as costumes, settings, and character interactions. This reflects a direction for biographical production that educates

audiences and reinforces a shared understanding of history, particularly within the Chinese cultural context based on Karl Marx's historical materialism.

The fidelity to historical authenticity in the TeXing system creates a unique relationship between performers and history. The most important factor for biographical productions with the TeXing system is the truthful representation of history. To achieve this, TeXing performers need to immerse themselves in the historical, social, and cultural contexts of their roles, bridging the gap between performance and historical scholarship. This highlights the difference between TeXing performers and other professional actors, with this difference being created by the diverse demands of biographical screen works within different national contexts. For example, some biopics present historical figures through key moments or dramatic events that can quickly establish emotional depth. However, the TeXing system is highly faithful to historical accuracy, creating a sense of continuity to ensure historical figures are presented consistently with national narratives. Indeed, the TeXing system transmits cultural heritage through both big and small screens, making it an important part of China's historical storytelling tradition. Furthermore, it enables audiences to feel close to the historical figures not just as characters in dramatic moments but as real people who lived through and shaped important periods of history. Therefore, the TeXing system is not just a casting and performance approach but also a way to connect present audiences with history in the most loyal way.

Theoretically, the TeXing system expects performers to restrain their artistic identities to serve the historical authenticity of their roles. This contrasts with traditional approaches of star actors integrating their performances with their own styles and charisma to enhance their marketability. TeXing performers work to minimize their personal acting style to serve the historical authenticity better, but other actors often add their own understanding and creativity to the role. This shows two different ways of approaching authenticity in bio-adaptation on screen. One focuses on the actor's personalized interpretation, and the other seeks to present historical figures faithfully to the audience. The unique role of TeXing performers is not only as actors but also as both historians and cultural messengers. Furthermore, to maintain historical authenticity, the TeXing system casts performers according to the standard of physical authenticity. Based on this, these performers consider fidelity over personal artistic expression for performative authenticity, which also serves to achieve a high level of historical authenticity. This approach differs from the star system's focus on individual reputation as it emphasizes a collective cultural responsibility.

By restraining individual artistic charisma, the TeXing actor enters into a social contract with the audience to preserve the recognizability of the national icon. This restrained mode of performance ensures that the historical figure endures as a stable cultural signifier, even amid today's digital volatility and widespread historical revisionism. Through its disciplined embodied rendition of history, the TeXing system bridges the revolutionary past and the contemporary public, thereby anchoring national identity.

Conclusion: Living Like of TeXing Performers: The Legacy and Future of the TeXing System

This article has examined the TeXing system's unique paradigm of biographical adaptation, providing a theoretical alternative to the market-driven models of Western cinema. While conventional scholarship often marginalizes the TeXing system as a mere vehicle for propaganda or a localized acting style, this study repositions it as a sophisticated institutional practice of the construction of public culture and the cultivation of historical consciousness. By analyzing the progression from looking like and being like to the newly proposed dimension of living like, this article argues that the TeXing system transforms screen bio-adaptation into a rigorous tool for ideological preservation and historical education.

The living like approach signifies a fundamental departure from the project-based acting typical of Hollywood. In the TeXing framework, the performer's individual artistic identity is intentionally subordinated to the stability of the historical icon. This long-term, cross-media immersion does not merely serve the actor's career; rather, it functions as a living representation of the nation. By dedicating decades to the embodiment of a single revolutionary leader, TeXing performers become institutional anchors that bridge the temporal gap between the revolutionary past and the contemporary public. Their bodies act as a consistent, authoritative medium that protects the "Grand Narrative" of the nation from the fragmentation and historical revisionism often found in commercialized media landscapes.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the TeXing system is rooted in the aesthetics of Marxist historical materialism. Unlike the great man biopics of the West that emphasize individual psychological drama, the TeXing system situates leaders within the collective agency of social and political forces. The high fidelity to historical accuracy and the collaborative nature of TeXing performances reflect a commitment to representing history as a collective process. In this sense, the TeXing system is not a relic of the past but a vital sovereign cultural practice. It offers a Chinese approach for maintaining historical subjectivity and ideological integrity in an era of globalized digital consumption.

Ultimately, the TeXing system redefines the relationship between performance and history. From looking like to living like, it transforms the performer into a vessel for national consciousness. Rather than focusing on an actor's personal brand, the system prioritizes the cultivation of shared historical memory. Future research should continue to explore how such institutionalized performance models can challenge the hegemony of global star systems, providing new insights into the intersection of media, power, and the enduring quest for historical truth.

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Conflict of Interests

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