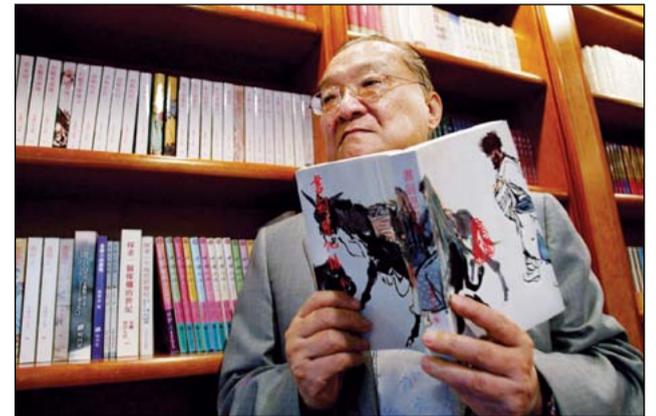




Cha (second left) poses with cast members of the film *The Story of the Great Heroes* in 1960. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping meets with Cha and his family in Beijing in 1983. LYU XIANGYOU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Cha displays his novel *Book and Sword, Gratitude and Revenge* at his office in Hong Kong in 2002. BOBBY YIP / FILE PHOTO / REUTERS

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early years, Cha wrote many of its front-page stories and editorials.

The paper flirted with bankruptcy but was kept afloat by its must-read fiction supplement, which serialized other writers' novels as well as Cha's.

A *Ming Pao* statement said: "Thanks to Cha's contribution during the initial stages of *Ming Pao*, the newspaper survived and has kept serving readers for 59 years. His passing away is definitely a great loss for *Ming Pao*, Hong Kong's journalism industry and the Chinese literary world."

Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor said on Oct 30: "Professor Cha is also highly regarded in the newspaper industry with decades of experience in it. He founded *Ming Pao* in his early years and also wrote editorials with constructive comments on society, earn-

ing the respect of the sector."

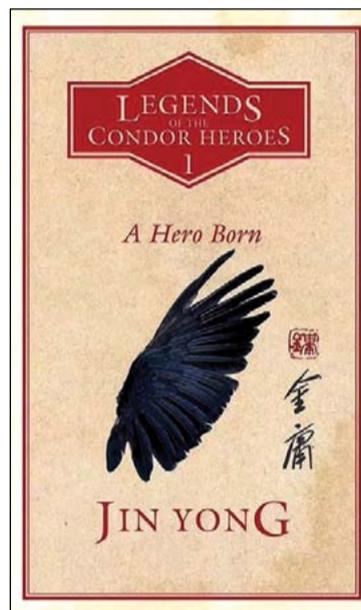
Lam said Cha also served in public office in Hong Kong, being a member of the Basic Law Drafting Committee before the city returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Hui Kei, a Hong Kong columnist who worked at *Ming Pao* several years ago, said, "Despite relatively low salaries, *Ming Pao* is still a popular choice for youngsters looking for a job".

Apart from its professionalism, he said another reason is that the newspaper is willing to recruit diversified talent, including Hui himself, who had never studied journalism before.

Tam Yiu-chung, a Hong Kong deputy to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, worked with Cha on the Basic Law Drafting Committee in the 1980s.

Tam said the proposal Cha put



The English-language edition of *Legends of the Condor Heroes*.

forward back then with fellow committee member, Hong Kong industrialist Cha Chi-ming, on electoral arrangements for the city's chief executive and legislators had contributed to the stable development of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's political system.

Tam said Cha was familiar with the political affairs of the day, was quick-witted and put forward many suggestions to the committee.

Death is a topic that features often in Cha's novels. In one scene in *Heavenly Sword Dragon Slaying Sabre* the heroes are cornered and chant: "What is the happiness of life and what is the bitterness of death? We have done good and uprooted evil. All the luck, joy, sadness and suffering are going to ashes. People are pathetic as they worry too much."

At the end of almost every novel, Cha would set a scene where the

hero left the rivers and lakes.

In *The Return of The Condor Heroes*, he wrote: "Suddenly Yang Guo (the hero) stood up and said to the crowd: 'We have had a good drink, and it is time to say goodbye.' He waved the sleeve of his robe, took the hand of his lover and they went down the mountain shoulder to shoulder in the company of the condor.

"The moon was clear in the sky and the breeze swept the leaves in the tree. Crows on the tree top were making a noise. Guo Xiang (his admirer) could not hold her tears anymore and cried"

He Shusi and Li Bingcun in Hong Kong, Zou Shuyue in London, Xu Fan and Mei Jia in Beijing contributed to this story.

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Screen adaptations make novels more accessible

Cha's masterpieces turned into 120 feature-length movies and TV dramas since the late 1950s

By XU FAN

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Louis Cha's literary masterpieces are easily accessible, even to those who have never read a word of them, thanks to a number of screen adaptations made over half a century.

According to mtime.com, a popular website that specializes in film news, the writer's martial arts novels have been adapted for about 120 feature-length movies and TV dramas since the late 1950s.

Cha began to write martial arts novels in 1955, and three years later his work *Legends of the Condor Heroes* was adapted for a two-part Cantonese movie, *Story of the Vulture Conqueror*.

With his knowledge of Chinese history, a distinctive narrative style and in-depth examination of humanity, Cha interwove fictional roles with historical events set in various dynasties to create literary epics.

From the late 1960s until the early 80s, Shaw Brothers Studio — one of Hong Kong largest and best-known for its martial arts blockbusters — shot nearly 20 films adapted from

or loosely inspired by Cha's novels.

Renowned directors who helmed movies adapted from Cha's works include Chang Cheh and Chor Yuen, two leading figures who pioneered Hong Kong *wuxia*, or martial arts, films — a significant genre that took Chinese stories to the West.

With the rise of emerging talent and technical progress amid Hong Kong's New Wave movement in Chinese-language cinema, movie adaptations of Cha's novels opened a new chapter in the 1990s.

Directors Tsui Hark and Wong Kar-wai used strong personal styles to adapt Cha's stories.

In Tsui's 1990s hit *The Legend of Swordsman*, inspired by Cha's namesake novel, the film boldly used actress Brigitte Lin to play Dongfang Bubai, a male genius who castrates himself for practicing the most powerful martial arts skills.

Wong's award-winning 1994 film *Ashes of Time*, loosely inspired by *Legends of the Condor Heroes*, gathered superstars such as Leslie Cheung, Tony Leung Ka-fai and Maggie Cheung to tell complex, emotional romantic stories.



A scene from the 1983 TV series *Legends of the Condor Heroes*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In an earlier interview with Chinese media, Wong said that in *Ashes of Time* he blended the nostalgia of his adolescent years and the influences of John Wayne's western movies.

Tan Fei, a Beijing filmmaker and

critic, said: "Cha had a huge impact in reshaping Hong Kong cinema. A lot of the film and TV industry insiders in the city were fans of his *wuxia* tales."

However, as most of Cha's classics are long novels featuring many characters and plot twists, the normal length of a film — about two hours — is a little too short for faithful adaptations.

Compared with films, TV dramas made on the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore over the past three decades have played a more influential role in etching Cha's novels in the minds of generations of readers.

One of the highest-rated TV series is 1983's *Legends of the Condor Heroes*, starring Felix Wong Yat-wa and Barbara Yung.

Aside from the millions of Chinese fans spanning several generations, the writer's popularity also extended to the English-speaking world.

Indian superstar Aamir Khan said that during his trip to Beijing in October that one of his favorite books is *The Deer and The Cauldron*, Cha's last masterpiece, which tells

the story of a boy growing up in a brothel who rises to become the favorite official of Emperor Kangxi in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Khan wrote on Sina Weibo: "I'm very saddened to hear the sad news that Louis Cha has died. His book *The Deer and The Cauldron* gave me a lot of joy. I read it just a few months ago. I wish I could have met him. He has given so much joy to so many generations. I am a big fan of his."

Last year, Tsui announced a remake of *The Return of the Condor Heroes* as a trilogy. The director is selecting a cast from around the world and plans to shoot it next year and in 2020.

In 2014, veteran Hong Kong director Gordon Chan said he would remake *Legends of the Condor Heroes*, but further details have yet to be released.

Jiang Yong, a Beijing critic, said: "Cinema has a bigger impact than TV dramas. As only a few of Cha's novels have been translated into English, his overseas popularity will probably grow if more cinematic remakes can be released in foreign markets."