

# 1. Introduction

With the Chinese economic success and achievements in other fields, the whole world has started to watch China. Businessmen focused their plans on Chinese market, the number of visitors to China has dramatically increased and more and more people have started to learn the Chinese language. Together with her increasing economic importance, China's political influence has also been on the rise. This can be manifested by China's role as a mediator not only in the Six-Party talks on North Korean nuclear issues but also in dealing with Iran.

Furthermore, Beijing hosting the 2008 Summer Olympic Games can be regarded as evidence of the rising importance and credibility of China. Critics of the Olympic Committee's decision to grant the Olympic games to Beijing are often silenced by the argument that the Olympics offer a good opportunity to push China in the desired direction (democratization, further opening up, etc.) and expose her further to massive foreign influence. However, at the same time authors agree that China will use the Olympic games to show off. As Xu (2006) pointed out: "PRC is determined to turn this sporting mega-event into the celebration of a Chinese renaissance" (p. 1). With the successful conclusion of the Olympics, China seems to have done just that.

Xu also reminded that the 2008 Beijing Olympiad is coming to China at a critical

juncture of grand socioeconomic transformation. All these developments have contributed to the decision to focus this thesis on China. The author of this thesis wants to do a study about this country which many people are fascinated with but few really understand what is going on there. The purpose is to get to know more about the society and culture in the country. As an international student in Taiwan, the author has also noticed how much the development in mainland influences the life here.

Chinese domestic box-office hits or, in other words, Chinese movies that were most popular with the Chinese audience and at the same time were approved by Chinese censors for the release in cinemas were studied. Despite not being a major in cinematography or film theories, the author has been interested in movies for a long time. Chinese films are especially fascinating because they represent art in a totalitarian country, where artists can not rely on the freedom of expression - a situation that was true in the former communist Czechoslovakia where the author of this thesis was born. However, the situation in China is even more complicated and absurd, because to the totalitarian communist artistic schema, represented by the two poles: party's art and underground art comes the third entertainment art caused by the introduction of a new strong player – market. As a result, filmmakers are dealing with the situation where they must decide which way to go or how to combine them.

While Chinese films are the artifact of the study, nationalism is the focus.

Chinese nationalism is a very specific and complicated problem, which is primarily based on the idea of “Chineseness“ than on political nationalism bound in state borders. However, this concept will be introduced later. Now I just want to explain why I have decided to deal with this issue and how the research was done.

As has been already mentioned, many authors argue that the Olympic games bring China the opportunity to show her strength, beauty and achievements to the whole world. At the same time, they predicted that the Olympic games will be an opportunity for the manifestation of Chinese nationalism. For sure, Olympic games are one of the aspects that can make Chinese people feel proud of their country. There have been also other aspects in the 21st century: Chinese space achievements and entry to WTO, for examples.

In recent years, many books about new Chinese nationalism have emerged. They have been talking about the increase of nationalist tendencies among Chinese population that can be observed from the anti-American and anti-Japanese demonstrations, from the success of books such as *China Can Say No* (and *China Can Still Say No*) or from films such as the 1997 *Opium War* where China is depicted as a woman raped by Western villains.

This thesis looks at nationalism in Chinese pop-culture, that some authors have studied in general way, systematically. It explores nationalistic themes in Chinese

box-office hits. First, it will delve into the historical background of Chinese films. Then it will introduce the concepts of nationalism in general and Chinese nationalism in particular. This will be followed by a discussion on nationalism and film studies. Some previous studies will be reviewed. After the methodology part, research based on a thematic analysis of Chinese box-office hits from years 2000 – 2007 will form the core of the thesis. The thesis wants to find out how film nationalism is expressed amidst the pulls from the demands of the Party and the market.

To understand the situation of Chinese cinema nowadays, it is important to look back to its history because the development of Chinese cinema is determined not only by Chinese cultural tradition but also by the development of social, economic and political climate. Even the term “Chinese cinema“ is often used to refer to the industry in greater China – mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, the following pages will focus on the first one. However, because of the growing trend of co-productions between these three regions and the phenomenon of Chinese “cultural nationalism“, to be explained later, attention will be paid also to this current development and to the reasons of this newly emerged cooperation. A section focused on the state's control over the media and film industry is also included.

