

5. Findings: Themes and Structures in the Blockbusters

Watching and analyzing the selected movies led to the identification of 22 nationalistic themes. As so, 22 thematic analysis guides had to be developed. They are listed in

Table 2. The thematic analysis of each movie that comes after is followed by the

discussion about themes' occurrence among movies and thematic structures. The study

starts with a descriptive approach and moves on to a more explanatory one, trying to

look for the reasons of occurrence of the most common nationalistic structures and

superstructures.

Table 2. Nationalistic Themes Found in Selected Movies

Label and definition	Inclusions	Exclusions
<i>Beauty of China:</i> Showing and/or talking about the exceptional physical landscape of China, topography and natural resources.	Visually appealing scenes of Chinese natural attractions. Landforms such as mountains, valleys, canyons and deserts in China. Praises pertaining to the beauty of nature in China.	Visually appealing scenes of Chinese cultural monuments and urban settings. Praises pertaining to the beauty of the city landscape and cultural monuments in China.
<i>Greatness of China:</i> Showing and/or talking about the greatness of China in terms of size and degree of strength.	Showing and/or talking about the power of the Chinese ancient army, police, military and others uniformed forces. Showing and/or talking about the greatness of the Chinese people in terms of population size (there is	Projection of images of natural beauty in China as defined in the theme, <i>Beauty of China</i> . Manifestations of heroism by Chinese people as defined in the theme, <i>Heroism of Chinese</i> .

Label and definition	Inclusions	Exclusions
	<p>power in numbers).</p> <p>Showing and/or talking about the greatness of Chinese people in terms of their possessed power showing and/or praising the Chinese cultural monuments that are symbols of the Chinese empire.</p> <p>Showing and/or talking about the vastness of lands in China.</p>	
<p><i>Respect to the Chinese Political/State Authority:</i> Obedience or loyalty and submission to Chinese authority (king; emperor; government; Party; chairman).</p>	<p>Seeking permission.</p> <p>Paying respect (kneeling down; gesture; physical distance; nodding).</p> <p>Verbal expressions of loyalty and agreement.</p>	<p>Any manifestation that is taken out of the political context of loyalty.</p> <p>Loyalty among equals.</p>
<p><i>Emphasis on the Preservation of Chinese Culture:</i> An act or a statement defending an existing Chinese cultural heritage, tradition or practice.</p>	<p>Verbal expressions or footage defending the culture.</p> <p>Saving Chinese artifacts.</p> <p>Passing Chinese folk tales, legends, songs, mythologies from one generation to another.</p>	<p>Instances or ideologies that are related to the state or have political meanings.</p> <p>Verbal expressions or images such as flags, anthems, state uniforms and the like that are connected to political affiliations and fall under the theme Reference to communitis China ideology and state symbols.</p>
<p><i>Reference to Chinese Cultural Icons:</i> The use of Chinese</p>	<p>Instances depicting religious ideologies or philosophy (Confucianism, Buddhism, etc.).</p>	<p>Acts in defense of the culture.</p> <p>Acts in defense of the state.</p>

Label and definition	Inclusions	Exclusions
<p>cultural icons or symbols in terms of intellectual property, skills or social customs as analogies to make a point, or argue.</p>	<p>Chinese social customs such as loyalty among equals, obedience to the authority, nobility, paying tribute to the dead, fulfilling final wishes of loved ones, etc.</p> <p>Chinese cultural heritage such as Beijing opera, puppetry, calligraphy, martial arts, qi gong, mahjong, Chinese chess, musical instruments, etc.</p>	<p>Any depiction of the political state or affiliation to the state or government.</p>
<p><i>Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols:</i> The use of Chinese communist icons or symbols in terms of intellectual property, special skills or social customs as metaphors or as analogies to make a point, inspire or argue.</p>	<p>Footage of discussions about Mao's thoughts or ideals of other leftist thinkers.</p> <p>Footage of Chinese state symbols such as flags, coinage, uniforms, etc.</p> <p>Footage of people waving Chinese flags, wearing state uniforms, Chinese national symbols or singing, chanting or listening to Chinese national anthem.</p> <p>People talking about their affiliation to communist ideals.</p>	<p>People talking about their affiliation to Chinese culture.</p> <p>Any statements or scenes that are taken out of the Chinese political context.</p>
<p><i>Defense of Homeland:</i> An act or statement of Chinese state, empire or kingdom or a citizen of Chinese state, empire or kingdom of protection of a homeland.</p>	<p>China defending against foreign enemies.</p> <p>Chinese kingdoms defending against the invasion of other kingdoms.</p>	<p>Expressed need for preservation of a culture as defined in the theme <i>Emphasis on the Preservation of Chinese culture</i>.</p>

Label and definition	Inclusions	Exclusions
<p><i>Chinese Heroism:</i> A selfless act, principle and/or statement of Chinese wherein one is willing to give up himself and/or something valuable to him to achieve the greater good when showing no fear amidst the presence of immediate threats.</p>	<p>Voluntary actions for the greater good or for the benefit of others such as dying for the country in a war, withstanding more suffering than others, giving up education to work for the country and giving up love with the enemy of a nation or country.</p> <p>One man facing an army without fear.</p> <p>The readiness to die and willingly confronts the challenge or threat.</p>	<p>Self-sacrifice such as suicide in a state of sadness or depression without a greater purpose.</p>
<p><i>Wisdom of Chinese Political Authority:</i> The ability of Chinese authority to know what is true or right as expressed by sensible judgments and actions.</p>	<p>Footage of Chinese authority following and trying to spread the old truth and higher positive ideals such as peace, harmony and rejection of anger and hatred.</p> <p>Scenes or lines showing Chinese political authorities' well-thought plans or decisions in dealing with problems or giving wise advices when helping people.</p>	<p>Praising the wisdom of Chinese culture in general, and Chinese cultural icons in particular.</p>
<p><i>Evil Enemy:</i> Morally bad and cruel one who is hostile to, or who intends injury to, or opposes the interests of Chinese state, kingdom, empire, society, culture or political authority and it's servants.</p>	<p>Footage of foreign nationals, members of non-Chinese culture or Chinese working for foreign government cruelly killing people or cruelly behaving towards people.</p> <p>Footage of foreign nationals, members of non-Chinese culture or Chinese working for foreign government cruelly trying to conquest Chinese territory or inthrall Chinese people or culture.</p> <p>Verbal expressions denominating</p>	<p>Enemy taken from the political or cultural context (enemy focusing on individuals having no greater purpose of insulting Chinese state, government, culture, people, etc.).</p>

Label and definition	Inclusions	Exclusions
	enemy as murderer, bandit, robber, drug dealer, or criminal in general.	
<p><i>Irrational Enemy:</i> Someone lacking usual mental clarity or coherence or someone going beyond widely accepted norms of behavior without any reason, who is hostile to, or who intends injury to, or opposes the interests of Chinese state, kingdom, empire, society, culture or political authority and its servants.</p>	<p>Footage of foreign nationals, members of non-Chinese culture or Chinese working for foreign government killing own people without obvious reason.</p> <p>Footage of foreign nationals, members of non-Chinese culture or Chinese working for foreign government sacrificing own lives without any reason or purpose knowing that success can not be achieved.</p> <p>Footage of foreign nationals, members of non-Chinese culture or Chinese working for foreign government showing the enemy as stupid, confused or lost in his deeds.</p>	<p>Footage of foreign nationals, members of non-Chinese culture or Chinese working for foreign government sacrificing own lives with reason or purpose.</p> <p>Footage of foreign nationals, members of non-Chinese culture or Chinese working for foreign government acting irrationally after shocks such as lost of relatives or close friends, or after serious injury.</p>
<p><i>Misconducting Enemy:</i> One, who is hostile to, or who intends injury to, or opposes the interest of Chinese state, kingdom, empire, society, culture or political authority and it's servants and who perform rude attitude or who creates the atmosphere of fear.</p>	Threats, questioning, interrogation, doggerly and expressed aggression.	Anything falling under categories <i>Evil Enemy</i> , <i>Irrational Enemy</i> and <i>Enemy as a liar</i> .
<p><i>Enemy as a liar:</i> One, who is hostile to, or who intends</p>	Footage of enemy refusing to admit killing, torturing, raping or hurting Chinese people when at	Footage of enemy refusing to admit killing, torturing, raping or hurting Chinese people

Label and definition	Inclusions	Exclusions
injury to, or opposes the interests of Chinese state, kingdom, empire, society, culture or political authority and it’s servants and who rejects to admit his crimes towards or mistreatment of Chinese even when being convicted of not telling the truth.	<p>the same time exist a proof of his guilt.</p> <p>Footage of enemy refusing to admit planning of killing, torturing, raping or hurting Chinese people when at the same time exist a proof of his criminal intentions.</p>	<p>when there is no proof of his guilt.</p> <p>Footage of enemy admitting killing, torturing, raping or hurting Chinese people.</p>
<i>Pride of Chinese:</i> Self-respect; self-esteem of Chinese people. Opinion held by Chinese of their own dignity, importance.	<p>Verbal expressions of Chinese referring to his or her refusal to be humiliated.</p> <p>Footage showing Chinese refusal to be humiliated.</p> <p>Verbal expressions of Chinese referring to his or her dignity or importance.</p> <p>Footage stressing dignity or importance of Chinese.</p>	<p>Verbal expressions of Chinese referring to his or her moral, cultural, intellectual or economic superiority.</p> <p>Footage showing Chinese moral, cultural, intellectual or economic superiority.</p>
<p><i>Superiority of Chinese</i></p> <p><i>1. Moral</i></p> <p>Chinese conformed to standards of what is right, concerned with the judgement of goodness or badness in human behavior when others are not</p> <p><i>2. Efficiency/ Performance</i></p> <p>Chinese surpassing</p>	<p>Footage showing Chinese as generous, tolerant, forgiving, refusing to harm other people of any nationality, gender or age (physically or their feelings) when others are not</p> <p>Footage showing Chinese as acting correctly in any situations when others are not</p> <p>Footage showing Chinese as working harder, longer and/or better than other nationals.</p>	<p>Verbal expressions of Chinese referring to his or her cultural, intellectual or economical superiority.</p> <p>Footage showing Chinese cultural, intellectual or economical superiority.</p> <p>Verbal expressions or footage related to pride of Chinese as defined in the theme <i>Pride of Chinese</i>.</p>

Label and definition	Inclusions	Exclusions
other nationals in work efficiency, physical or mental abilities.		
<i>Injustice/Arrogance towards China:</i> Mistreatment of China or Chinese by foreigners such as degradation of power status, capabilities, etc. or accusing Chinese nationals of crimes or improper acts they didn't commit.	<p>Unwillingness of foreign nationals to grant China the power status or rights she deserves.</p> <p>Unwillingness of foreign nationals to recognize China's economic success, political importance or overall development.</p> <p>Accusing China of shameful actions that she obviously didn't commit.</p> <p>Groundless anger towards China.</p>	<p>Unwillingness of foreign nationals to grant China the power status she claims when she doesn't have right to.</p> <p>Unwillingness of foreign nationals to recognize China's exaggerated economic success, political importance or overall development she claims to have.</p> <p>Accusing China of shameful actions that she committed.</p> <p>Anger towards China based on her actions.</p>
<i>Suffering of Chinese:</i> Hardship of Chinese people caused by the aggression of foreign nationals.	Verbal expressions or footage emphasizing suffering such as losing relatives, starving, working in labour camps, physical disability, torturing and raping of Chinese citizens caused by foreign nationals. (Emphasis is being put on the suffering of Chinese, not on the act done by "evil enemy" as in the theme <i>Evil Enemy</i>).	<p>Verbal expressions of footage emphasizing the behavior of enemy towards Chinese people, describing them as evil, as defined in the category "evil enemy".</p> <p>Suffering of Chinese not caused by foreign enemy.</p>
<i>Suffering of Chinese from Disunited China or from Civil Wars and Rebellions against Government:</i> Hardship of Chinese people caused by the aggression or wars	Verbal expressions or footage emphasizing suffering such as losing relatives, starving, physical disability or depression caused by wars among Chinese.	Suffering of Chinese caused by foreign enemy – fall under category <i>Suffering of Chinese</i> .

Label and definition	Inclusions	Exclusions
among Chinese.		
<i>China's Modernity:</i> China's economic success, modernization and openness to the world.	Footage of Chinese modern buildings, business centers, hi-tech products, space or industrial achievements. Conversation stressing development of China and her successes.	Expressions of pride as defined in the theme <i>Pride of Chinese</i> . Footage focusing on the greatness of China as defined in so-called theme.
<i>The Knot among All People of Chinese Culture (the Idea of Chineseness):</i> Promotion of the idea of "Chineseness" as a cultural phenomenon giving the people the feeling of common belonging.	Footage stressing the common origin, practice, feelings or customs of people from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and overseas Chinese. Footage stressing belonging of Taiwan and Hong Kong to the "motherland".	Expressions of Chinese pride without stressing the common features among Chinese from different places. Reference to Chinese cultural icons as defined in another theme (without making a point of commonness).
<i>Loyalty among the People of the Same Origins:</i> The same origins as the strongest bond between people.	Footage stressing the common origin as being the reason for love, friendship or help among people.	Footage emphasizing common origins of Chinese as defined in the theme <i>The Knot Among all People of Chinese Culture</i> .
<i>Communist China as a Liberator:</i> Communist China bringing happiness, development, peace or freedom to non-Chinese people.	Footage of PRC's peaceful annexation of new territory with people welcoming her. Footage of PRC's military intervention in foreign or newly annexed territory with people welcoming troops. Talking about PRC's liberatory intentions or deeds.	Claim of ownership over new territory that is not welcomed.

5.1 Thematic Analysis

In the next part, the analysis of selected movies is provided. The movies follow the chronological order as listed in Table 1.

Purple Sunset (Ziri), 2001

Director: Feng Xiaoning

Writer: Feng Xiaoning

Cast: Fu Dalong, Chie Maeda, Anna Dzenilalova, Wang Xuewei

Production company: Beijing Forbidden City Film Co. (China), Shanghai Paradise Film and Television Group (China)

Running Time: 103 min.

China's Awards:

Golden Rooster Awards: Best Cinematography

Synopsis: When World War II was coming to an end, a Soviet tank broke the Japanese defense line in Daxing'anling area and rescued the only survivor from a concentration camp. The film tells a touching story of a Japanese, Russian and a Chinese. The three spoke different languages and were hostile towards one another. Source: *IMDb*

The “hostility“ mentioned in a plot is not so mutual as one would think. The reason is the moral superiority of Chinese farmer who is able to be generous and forgiving even after being hurt and humiliated. *Moral Superiority of Chinese* is one of the main themes of the movie. The last piece of Feng's trilogy on *Peace and War* (following *A Tale of the Sacred Mountain* (1999), a story about the solidarity between

Chinese and Tibetans in a fight against British invaders, and *Lover's Grief over the Yellow River* (1999), a story of an American pilot during the Second World War who learns about the noble spirit of the Chinese people who rescued him after an emergency landing near the Great Wall), was praised by Chinese officials and was selected to represent Chinese cinematography in Hollywood Chinese Film Festival in 2005 supported by SARFT. From what Chinese embassy in USA called „ten best movies in Chinese history“ chosen for the festival, Feng Xiaoning directed three – all of them (including *Purple Sunset*) were on “Chinese resistance war against Japanese aggressors“ (“Chinese Films Shine in Hollywood“, 2005).

The movie title, *Purple Sunset*, symbolizes the decline of imperial Japan. The following themes were found: *Moral Superiority of Chinese, Pride of Chinese, Evil Enemy*, and *Irrational Enemy*. The first two themes are related to the behavior of the main character – Chinese farmer Yang, who became protector of the Japanese girl Akiyoko, despite all atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers in China and despite several betrayals by Akiyoko, who is loyal to imperial Japan until the emperor declares Japanese surrender. Yang acts as a man with big heart, ready to forgive brainwashed young girl and to wish her happy and peaceful life back in Japan. In the climax of the movie Akiyoko admits her misbehavior and grants Yang with the status of her big brother and teacher. (“Thank you very much. I learned a lot in past few days. I will tell

Oomishi and others that you are good people“).

The other theme recurring around Yang's personality is pride or in other words refusal to give up, to be humiliated, and to lose his dignity. This attitude was most strongly expressed in the following sentence: “I am a man, a Chinese man, I won't surrender.“

The other two themes, *Evil Enemy* and *Irrational Enemy*, are emerging when it comes to the portrayal of Japanese. They act in the movie not just like evils killing cruelly Chinese civilians and enjoying their suffering, they are also portrayed as people often lacking mental clarity and showing no kindness even when it comes to treating each other. This is especially evident in the end of the movie in the scene in which members from the last group of Japanese in Chinese territory are killing themselves and each other. In this scene the Japanese officer kills old woman and is ready to kill a small child.

Purple Sunset scored as no. 3 box office hit in 2001, however, mandatory viewing from schools definitely helped this movie to get to this position. After all, it was Feng's intention to educate Chinese youngsters. As he said in an interview for *Guangming*

Daily:

As far as I am concerned, everyone has the responsibility to tell their offspring the historic truth. As the Chinese and Korean people were

both branded as colonial slaves in history, why does such a strong voice with passion and hatred only come from the Koreans, but not from Chinese? Today's children know little about our past, and that kind of national feeling that would otherwise be cherished in their heart is lost, which make us feel painful and worried. Lu Xun, a very reputed master author in China, quit his profession as a doctor and became a professional writer after seeing a movie in which, when a Chinese farmer was killed cruelly by Japanese soldiers, many of the Chinese audience laughed. Deeply hurt by people's numbness and indifference, Lu Xun began to use his pen to wake up those Chinese people who were lacking in basic national feelings. ("Children Should know the Facts: Feng Xiaoning", 2002).

Feng Xiaoning's film fall under the Gries' category of the stories told about China as a raped woman. However, in *Purple Sunset*, this woman suffering from the cruelty of "Japanese devils" maintains her pride and self-respect and instead of turning crazy continues to behave in line with her moral ideals.

Table 3. Nationalistic Themes in *Purple Sunset*

Label	Examples
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Label	Examples
<i>Moral Superiority of Chinese</i>	<p>Yang decides not to kill Akiyoko even when she betrayed him and attempted to kill him.</p> <p>Yang saves life of the Japanese girl when she fell into the marsh , calling back at the same time how Japanese soldiers put on fire a living Chinese prisoner.</p> <p>Yang's care of Japanese girl (giving her clothes or helping her to get on the other side of the river) follows her second betrayal leading the group to the Japanese military camp.</p> <p>Akiyoko to Yang: "I am sorry. I didn't kill anyone."</p> <p>Yang: "But you tried to kill us. You took us to the mine field, you led us to Japanese military camp and you were almost going to fire at us few minutes ago."</p> <p>Akiyoko to Yang: "Swindlers, my people are all swindlers."</p> <p>Yang to Akiyoko: "Go back to Japan and live happily and peacefully."</p> <p>Akiyoko to Yang: "Thank you very much. I learned a lot in past few days. I will tell Oomishi and others, that you are good people."</p>
<i>Pride of Chinese</i>	<p>Yang stands up with pride, without fear and full of anger in front of the execution wall as the last one from the line of prisoners waiting for death.</p> <p>Yang to Russian Lieutenant Najia: "You are going to kill me? Go ahead. Don't try to scare me with a lousy gun. I have nothing to fear. I am a man."</p> <p>Akiyoko to Yang: "I just wanted you to surrender."</p> <p>Yang: "I am a man, a Chinese man, I won't surrender."</p>
<i>Evil Enemy</i>	<p>Sequences from military prisoners camp, where skinny, dirty Chinese prisoners including women and children are killed standing in line in front of the wall</p> <p>Yang and his mother tied to the log by Japanese soldiers: "What do you want from us? We haven't done anything, we are innocent civilians. Damned it, you devils."</p> <p>Yang's mother to Japanese soldier pointing a bayonet to her body:</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>„Bastards.“ Japanese soldier killing Yang's old mother with bayonet, stabbing her several times.</p> <p>Footage from the military prisoners camp, where Chinese prisoners are wrapping bodies of Chinese prisoners, throwing them later to the sea.</p> <p>„Help me, I am not dead,“ whispers one to Yang. Japanese soldier approach him and wrap him alive into the sack. Other soldiers start to laugh and to kick the him, then they put him on fire and with attached grenade throw to the sea.</p> <p>Yang to Akiyoko: “Japanese came to China and killed innocent people for no reasons, for no reasons. Why? Why did they come here to kill innocent people?”</p>
<i>Irrational Enemy</i>	<p>Japanese soldiers jump with grenades under Russian tanks.</p> <p>Officer frantically shouting to frightened youngsters: “Who can protect Japan? You. You are the last hope of Yamatos. All girls over 17 must join the troops, and all boys over 15 should join army. Long live Japan.”</p> <p>Akiyoko's boyfriend dying without reason after Japanese surrender in last sacrifice order. (Officer to “boy pilots“: “Just aim and crash directly into the battleships“).</p> <p>Scene in which people from the last group of Japanese in Chinese territory are killing themselves and each other. Military officer to Japanese civilians: “It is a shameful moment for our country, we must sacrifice our lives.“ Japanese officer thereafter kills the old lady and is ready to kill a small boy. Akiyoko runs to them and shouts: “There is no need to die. The war is over.“ Officer shoots her. Thereafter he runs against the tank just with a sword</p>

Red Turn (Zou chu xi bo po), 2001

Director: Li Xiepu, Shan Liang

Writers: Ren Zhonglun, Wang Tianyan, Kang Liwen, Li Pingfu

Cast: Chen Dawei, Sun Haiyung, Gu Yue, Liu Wenzhi

Production: Shanghai Film Studios

Running time: 136 minutes

Synopsis: Set in 1940s, during the fight between communists and KMT over China.

Communists took over Tianjin and were planning to recover not just the city, but whole country.

66-year-old director Li Xiepu came up in 2001 with a new picture of his favourite genre – revolutionary movie. After introducing the life of coal miners in 1920s in the film *Da ze long she* from 1981 and describing the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 in the film *Opening up the Heaven and Earth* from 1991, in *Red Turn* he brought a story about rebuilding of China by the Communists. Mao Zedong, a supporting role in the movie, however, is portrayed as a possessor of ultimate wisdom with great plans for a nation. Gu Yue, former PLA soldier and China's best known chairman Mao look-alike who starred as Mao Zedong in more than 80 movies and series, took the role again in *Red Turn*. As a classical propaganda movie, *Red Turn* didn't gain attention abroad. The movie became no. 5 box office hit in China in 2001, however the remarkable attendance was ensured by mandatory viewing from schools and free tickets from work units. The movie was launched in a year of 25th anniversary of Mao's death.

Five nationalistic themes were found in the movie: *Respect to Chinese Political/State Authority, Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols,*

Wisdom of Chinese Political Authority, Communist China as a Liberator, and Enemy as a Liar. Respect to Chinese political authority is expressed when it comes to dealing with Mao, who is portrayed as a hardworking, kind leader. He is not just respected, he is loved by people. Mao has also another characteristic – he is wise and concerned about country's future. He wants to give the best to the nation and to bring good life to everyone. Wisdom is also possessed by the political officer who was assigned to recover Tianjin city. However, his wisdom comes just from the fact, that Mao Zedong is his idol.

The movie tells a story of Chinese communists recovering Tianjin and as so the reference to communist ideology and symbols is strong. Moreover, the title of the movie refers to the Bopo village, where the Communists were hiding from the Nationalists and which became a miraculously safe place never discovered by KMT.

Communists in *Red Turn* are liberators of the people – especially workers and women. They want to build new, better China, replace the old world presented by evil capitalist who usurpate minors and their only concern is their own wealth. The movie is offering a structure of *China's regeneration* because, as a propaganda movie sponsored by government, is trying to persuade people that years under communism have been the golden age.

Table 4. Nationalistic Themes in *Red Turn*

Label	Examples
<p><i>Respect to Chinese Political/State Authority</i></p>	<p>Soldiers guarding Mao's house: "They (Mao and his companions) were discussing whole night. Don't wake him (Mao) up, he is too tired."</p> <p>Political officer seeking permission from Mao to lend money to businessmen in Tianjin.</p> <p>Political officer seeking permission from Mao to save life of PLA soldier who stole money from the Party.</p> <p>Mao presenting his ideas to the board of officers who are carefully listening and nodding.</p>
<p><i>Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols</i></p>	<p>Opening: PLA soldiers running over hills with red communist flags.</p> <p>Mao's role as a great, kind and hardworking leader.</p> <p>PLA uniforms.</p> <p>Mao's portrait in the office of political officer appointed to recover Tianjin after communist took over the city.</p> <p>Communist slogans such as "Hard work for rebuilding China" on the wall of factory in Tianjin.</p>
<p><i>Wisdom of Chinese Political Authority</i></p>	<p>Mao and political officer on the hill with a view over the landscape. Mao talking about his plans to bring prosperity to China.</p> <p>Mao to cadres: "We need to have a plan for new China. Everyone must have a job."</p> <p>Political officer to PLA soldier: "You want to fight for better future, but you want to destroy the city at the same time. If you use heavy weapons then electrical wires in the city will be affected and creating better future will become more difficult."</p> <p>Mao on the hill with a view over the landscape (during winter). Footage accompanied with victorious music (Mao apparently thinking about country's future).</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>Mao approving officer's suggestion to lend money to Tianjin's businessmen, so the people can start to work and economy can recover.</p> <p>Mao to cadres: "To build a new nation is a very difficult task. We must be very carefull and modest. Our goal is not just to wipe out the old world, our goal is to build a new one."</p> <p>Mao with a political officer on the hill with a view over the landscape, apparently thinking about his plans for country's future. Political officer wants to tell him about the case of a soldier who stole the money from the Party and is going to be executed. Political officer wants Mao to pardon the soldier, however when he listens to Mao's deep thoughts about the country's future, he changes his mind. Mao tells him: "I heard you have something very important to tell me." Political officer to Mao: "No, nothing."</p>
<p><i>Communist China as a Liberator</i></p>	<p>PLA discussing the liberation over the map of battles with KMT.</p> <p>Tanks with red stars entering Tianjin, people cheerfully welcoming them.</p> <p>Political officer to Tianjin businessmen: "During the reign of KMT the situation was very bad, now we need to move on and speed up the production."</p> <p>PLA soldier promising the factory workers new conditions, rights and pay for their work.</p> <p>Wife of Tianjin businessmen talking to PLA soldier about her misery being just a second wife. (PLA viewed as liberator of women).</p>
<p><i>Enemy as a liar</i></p>	<p>Businessmen refusing to pay factory workers their wage.</p> <p>Businessmen's wife and brother betraying PLA soldier who gave them money to buy coal. The couple take money but don't deliver the coal, then trying to escape.</p>

Hero (Ying Xiong), 2002

Director: Zhang Yimou

Writer: Li Feng, Wang Bin, Zhang Yimou

Cast: Jet Li, Tony Leung, Maggie Cheung, Zhang Ziyi, Chen Daoming

Production company: Beijing New Picture Film Co. (China), Elite Group Enterprises (Hong Kong)

Running Time: 99 min.

China's Awards:

Golden Rooster Awards: Best Director, Best Art Directory, Best Sound, Best Co-Production

Hundred Flowers Film Awards: Best Picture

Synopsis: The story is set 2,000 years ago, during the time of the Warring States, when seven kindgoms were battling for dominance, and one leader- the king of Qin -was determined to end up victorious and unite all of China as one nation. The king is forced to live trapped alone in his palace as a remarkable trio of villains are out to kill him.

Source: *YesAsia.com*

Zhang Yimou's *wuxia* flick that released shortly after the worldwide success of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* had sparked controversy in the West. While praised at home, some critics abroad interpreted *Hero* as a justification of China's claims for re-unification and cruelty of first emperor in the name of needed unification of China that in his belief would bring security and stability. Critics also referred to the warm approval of the movie by the Chinese government. As has been already mentioned, some scholars referred to this movie as to the turning point that signified the conversion of Zhang Yimou towards more benevolent stance towards the government. The film was premiered in the Great Hall of People and received four Golden Rooster Awards (including Best Director award and award for the best

co-production picture) that are decided by a special committee and given by China Film Association. It also got positive reviews in China and in 2002 became the no. 1 box office hit in China and Hong Kong. However, *Hero* became a box office hit also abroad. In USA, it became one of the most successful foreign language movies in US box office history. However, critics in the West (unlike those in China) were divided into two camps, one praising the cinematography and the other focusing on the “reactionary“ content.

In a protest against the criticism from the West Zhang Yimou withdrew *Hero* from the 1999 Cannes Film Festival. He also declared for various magazines that he had no political motives for making *Hero*. However, the thematic analysis shows that the picture is rich in nationalistic themes. The following were found: *Landscape/Beauty of China, Greatness of China, Respect to the Chinese political/state authority, Emphasis on the preservation of Chinese culture, Reference to Chinese cultural icons, Chinese heroism, and Wisdom of Chinese political authority*. The first theme (*Landscape/Beauty of China*) is constituted by the repeated footage stressing the beauty of China – long shots of canyons and mountains, fighting scenes in the colorful forest during autumn or the lake surrounded by virgin forests, shots showing waterfalls, and famous Guilin Hills in South of China. Beauty of Chinese land is emphasized during the movie and creates a setting of beautiful mythic fairyland, where noble heroes were

living and fulfilling their fearless deeds. Zhang put a great emphasis on creating this fairyland and as so the movie was shot in various places in China – Dunhuang in Gansu province, Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and in Sichuan province.

Greatness of China is represented in the movie by the repeated sequences of the Qin army with thousands of soldiers, shots of the Qin palace with great halls, wide stairs, and hundreds of court officials, shot showing the Chinese Great Wall or quotations such “Your majesty's army is invincible. It is brave and has a powerful archery.” (Jet Li as Nameless talking to emperor Qin). *Respect to the Chinese Political/State authority* can be found not just in the behavior of the members of the court (kneeling down, asking for permission from the Emperor to execute Nameless) but also in the behavior of the main character Nameless towards the Emperor based on physical distance, kneeling and other gestures showing his respect. Another theme recurring in the movie is *Emphasis on the preservation of Chinese culture* that is related to the setting of the movie in the library, to the scene where assassins are defending the calligraphy school or to the memorable quote of the calligraphy teacher (“They can defeat us but they can never obliterate our culture”). This theme is stressing the importance of defending and/or preserving an existing Chinese cultural heritage, however even more present is another one – *Reference to Chinese cultural icons*. This

includes repeated comparisons between calligraphy and swordplay, several scenes showing practice of calligraphy and other traditional Chinese cultural heritage such as playing Chinese chess or traditional Chinese instrument. This enstrenghens the image of China as a mythic fairyland where old practices are performed. *Beauty* and *Greatness of China* themes together with the theme referring to Chinese cultural icons create a structure of a mythic Chinese fairyland that has a power to awaken among Chinese people the nostalgia for and pride of “our old, good China“. *Chinese heroism, Wisdom of Chinese political authority* and *Suffering of Chinese from Disunited China* constitutes the main structure of the movie. When we look back on Smith's myths of the nation, *Hero* clearly falls into the category of “Regeneration“ when it tells a story about what was needed to be done for the ascent of China. *Hero* tells the audience that unification gave the rise to China and for the unification heroism and wisdom of the emperor was needed. The emperor was wise because he knew the best what people suffering for a long time from disunited China really need – unification and peace. Examples of these themes from the movie are given in table 5.

Here, closer look at the *heroism* theme is needed. *Heroism* in *Hero* is strongly present throughout the movie and is primarily characterized by courage and self-sacrifice for the greater purpose. This essence of heroism promoted in the movie is performed not just by main character Nameless, but in the end of the movie culminates

by the heroic behavior of the emperor who is ready to give up his life when he got to know that his worst enemy started to understand his good intentions. Later on, Nameless abandons his plan to kill the emperor, finding in him “the highest ideals of ultimate swordmanship“. Therefore, the emperor whose intentions “no one understood“ and whom “even court see as tyrant“, as he told Nameless, becomes the real hero of the movie.

Table 5. Nationalistic Themes in *Hero*

Label	Examples
<i>Chinese Heroism</i>	<p>The Emperor to Nameless: “They sacrificed themselves so you can be within 10 paces of me. All three gave their lives to you. The best of friends could not give more. All of you are willing to die for a cause.“</p> <p>Emperor Qin gave Nameless his sword so he was giving up his life: “Having found a true confidante in Broken Sword, if I die, I am content with my life.“ (Emperor ready to die when he got to know that the assassin began to understand his deeds).</p> <p>Nameless to Qin: “Remember those who gave their lives for the highest ideal: PEACE.“</p> <p>Nameless: “The decision not to kill the king meant for him death, and as such, self-sacrifice for the unification of China.“</p> <p>Broken Sword in a fight with Flying Snow didn't defend himself to make her believe about his sincerity in a goal to unify China.</p>
<i>Wisdom of Chinese Political/State Authority</i>	<p>Qin to Nameless: “I can't imagine such great warriors allowing their emotions to be a liability. Your story sounds logical but you underestimated someone.“</p> <p>Nameless: “Who?“</p> <p>Qin: “Me.“</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>Nameless to Qin: “You uncovered our plan.”</p> <p>Nameless to Qin: “Your Majesty is perceptive.”</p> <p>Qin to Nameless: “No one understands my intentions. Even my court see me as tyrant. I have never expected that my most feared enemy would appreciate my real motives.”</p> <p>Nameless to Qin: “Majesty, your visions convinced me that you are committed to the highest ideal of ultimate swordsmanship.”</p>
<p><i>Suffering of People from Disunited China</i></p>	<p>Nameless to emperor Qin: “All people have suffered for a long time. Only King of Qin can stop the chaos by uniting all under heaven.”</p> <p>Broken Sword to Nameless: “One's suffering is nothing compared to the suffering of many.”</p>

Charging Out Amazon (Chong chu ya ma xun), 2002

Director: Song Yeming

Cast: Hou Yong, Mu Lixin, Tom Butler

Production company: Eight One Film Studio, CCTV

Running Time: 97 min.

China's Awards:

Golden Rooster Awards: Best Picture, Best Cinematography, Best Art Direction

Synopsis: From August to November 1999, two young officers from the Chinese

Airborne Special Forces were sent to South America. They were ordered to attend the

“International School of Hunters” training session hosted by an international military

organization managed by the UN. Enduring both physical and psychological ordeals

that reached the human limit, they struggled to stand it all until the end. They became

the best soldiers of the training and, moreover, saved the camp from the attacks of drug

mafia.

Source: *YesAsia.com*

The movie claims to be based on a true story of two young officers from the Chinese Airborne Special Forces who were sent to South America to attend the special training organized by an international military organization under the United Nations command. The movie was directed by Song Yeming of the People's Liberation Army Studio. Song recently finished another military epic – *August the First* about Nanchang Uprising in 1927, which was a landmark in the establishment of the PLA.

Charging out Amazon was also produced by PLA film studio and became a big winner at the 2002 Golden Rooster awards. However, few western media that noticed the movie expressed disappointment with the movie's "bad acting, bad directing and bad action" ("Charging Out Amazon: Review", 2003).

Not surprisingly, the movie bears a strong nationalistic message. It was also launched as a part of a program on patriotic movies to educate the public by China Education TV Station ("Chinese movie makers angry about TV stations showing pirated movies", 2006).

As most military movies are, the movie is rich in nationalistic themes. The strongest ones are: *Pride of Chinese, Injustice/Arrogancy towards Chinese and Superiority of Chinese. Chinese Heroism and Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols* are also present. *Pride of Chinese, Superiority of Chinese and Chinese Heroism* are themes being found when it comes to main characters – Chinese

military officers Wang Hui and Hu Xiaolong. Their presence at the training is a first time for China joining such an event. Therefore, they feel a huge responsibility and decide to finish the training whatever it takes because they are doing it “for the country“. Their pride of being Chinese is expressed several times during the movie when they revolt against being called “Chinese liars“, when they emphasize that they will never surrender because they are Chinese or when they feel offended when being called “Japanese“. Their pride also appears when it comes to reference to China state symbols, most importantly in a scene when whole training camp is watching Chinese military parade on Tiananmen. There is no doubt about their strong affiliation to Chinese state. Their superiority over fellow soldiers is proved many times during the movie, it is the superiority not just in combat, but also in their determination and sense of responsibility. This superiority leads them to become the best students of the training program. One of them, Wang Hui, is in the end awarded as a best soldier. During the movie, Wang Hui proves to be not just superior soldier, but also hero when he is willing to give up his life for the good of the training camp when fighting the drug dealers.

The Arrogance towards Chinese is expressed in behavior of fellow soldiers and instructor towards Wang Hui and Hu Xiaolong. During the movie these Westerners are making fun of them (because they are not tall, because China is attending the training for the first time), provoking them and accusing them of being liars, or being useless.

Despite being poked and laughed at, the two brave Chinese soldiers prove to be higher value than the others and finally become best students, heroes and saviors of the camp. As such, the movie tells a story that falls under category *China as a final victor*. The category is based on Gries' category *China as a victor*, however differs from it because includes tough fight for the final victory.

Table 6. Nationalistic Themes in *Charging out Amazon*

Label	Examples
<p><i>Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols</i></p>	<p>Drug warlord looking at the picture with Chinese flag taken in the training camp: “Was this flag there before?” Companion: “No, it is the first time for China.”</p> <p>Repeated footage of Chinese flag in training camp.</p> <p>General Ruth to all soldiers: “Ladies and Gentleman, today is not only Lena's birthday, but also birthday for our two Chinese soldiers. Today is People's Republic of China 50th anniversary. I now on behalf of the Hunter school congratulate you. You both have an outstanding performance, I have a gift for you.” All people thereafter move to the big screen to watch through satellite the military parade on Tiananmen.</p>
<p><i>Chinese Heroism</i></p>	<p>Wang Hui to Xiaolong: “We gave our lives to our country. What is a little injury?”</p> <p>Wang Hui denying to say the name of his boss while being tortured. Other soldiers give up, Wang Hui on the other hand stands up and decides to fight against torturers.</p> <p>Wang Hui fighting drug warlords and saving life of general's daughter.</p>
<p><i>Pride of Chinese</i></p>	<p>Wang Hui persuading Hu Xiaolong to continue in the training: “Xiaolong, do it for our country.” Thereafter they shake their hands in front of Chinese flag.</p> <p>Hui to instructor: “If you accuse Chinese of lying, then I don't want to continue the training anymore.”</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>Kidnappers to Chinese soldiers: “You are Koreans or Japanese?” Xiaolong: “You are Japanese.” (spitting into kidnapper's face) Kidnappers start to beat Xiaolong. Hui reacts: “Stop hitting him. I will tell you...we are Chinese.”</p> <p>Wang Hui to Xiaolong who is going to be tortured: “Xiaolong, remember, whatever happens, we are Chinese.”</p>
<p><i>Injustice/Arrogance towards China or Chinese people</i></p>	<p>Wang Hui and Hu Xiaolong assigned to Group 2 with other few soldiers. The leader of the group complains – doesn't want Hu Xiaolong in the group because he is too small.</p> <p>Hu Xiaolong to Instructor: “I request a small size uniform and boots.” Instructor: “We have trained only Americans and Europeans so far. Eat corn so you can grow up.”</p> <p>American soldier to Xiaolong: “You have never gone to war before, right? Well, you can follow me.” (laugh)</p> <p>Foreign soldier to Xiaolong: “Hey, little man, you may not make it through tomorrow.”</p> <p>Instructor Crocodile to Wang Hui: “Denying your mistake, it's how Chinese people exactly are.”</p> <p>Foreign soldier to Wang Hui: “Chinese are useless, want some more (punch)? I am the greatest.”</p>
<p><i>Superiority of Chinese: Performance</i></p>	<p>Instructor Crocodile to his assistant: “Group 2, Chinese soldiers no. 5 and 7 got top scores.”</p> <p>The group of five soldiers (Wang Hui and Hu Xiaolong among them) is punished by not receiving food. Two soldiers revolt and decide to give up training. Chinese soldiers continue without hesitation.</p> <p>Xiaolong knock down the strongest soldier who was making fun of him. Others applaud.</p> <p>General's daughter watching military parade on Tiananmen: “They are fantastic.” Other soldiers watching the parade nodding and congratulating Wang Hui and Hu Xiaolong.</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>Instructor Crocodile after Wang Hui defeat him: “You have shown me the Chinese kungfu. You are a real soldier.”</p> <p>General Ruth: “We will present the honour medal to the best student. The recipient is a Chinese soldier Wang Hui.”</p>

C.E.O. (Shouxi zhixinguan), 2002

Director: Wu Tianming

Writer: Wu Tianming, Luo Xueying

Cast: Liang Shi, Li Zonghua, Yang Yang, Chang Lixia

Production: Beijing Film Group

Running time: 116 minutes

Synopsis: Ling Min becomes the manager of Haier Factory when the factory is almost bankrupted. His first challenge is from the Chinese workers, technicians, and officers, who have been trained to work under the old system and unable to function sufficiently in the new era of international competition. Once his products become good enough, he has to face severe competition, and, in some cases, humiliations, from well-established foreign companies. He and his company succeed in becoming the first Chinese private company to enter the international market.

Source: *IMDb*

Wu Tianming, the member of the China's Fourth Generation of filmmakers whose most famous movie *The King of Masks* won considerable amount of prizes in China and abroad, shot a movie based on the true story of the rise of Haier, the largest consumer

electronics maker of China in 2002. The movie following the ascent of Haier from the brink of bankruptcy to the success of becoming the biggest consumer electronics makers in China and the first Chinese firm to invest abroad, setting up factory in USA is a massive call for Chinese people's pride and acknowledge the leaders (Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin) and their thoughts as architects of Haier's success. It is surprising that this kind of movie comes from Wu Tianming who was due to political differences forced to leave China to the United States in 1989. He came back to China from exile in 1994 and joined the Chinese film and television industry again.

Despite movie's strong nationalistic message, *C.E.O.* didn't get any prize in China maybe due to bad timing. In 2002 not just Zhang Yimou's *Hero*, but also Song Yeming's *Charging Out Amazon* were launched. The latter one won most of the trophies at Hundred Flowers Awards (Best Picture) and Golden Rooster Awards (Best Picture, Best Cinematography, Best Art Direction), two major Chinese film prizes.

C.E.O. became the fifth biggest Chinese box-office hit in the mainland in 2002. While in the West the movie remained unknown, *C.E.O.* also gained popularity in Japan. Perhaps due to establishment of joint venture between Haier and Sanyo that coincided with the launch of the movie.

The nationalistic themes found in this movie are following: *Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols, Pride of Chinese, Injustice/Arrogancy*

towards China, China's Modernity, Wisdom of Chinese Political Authority and Superiority of Chinese in Terms of Efficiency. Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols and Wisdom of Chinese Political Authority are related themes. They appear in a movie to make two major points: to emphasize the Chinese origin of Haier company and its determination to promote Chinese interests, and to show that the success of Haier company was based on ideas of Deng Xiaoping. At the same time the repeated footage of developing coastal Chinese cities creating the theme of *China's Modernity* is showing that it was not just Haier who profited from Deng's economic reforms. *Pride of Chinese, Injustice/Arrogancy towards China* and *Superiority of Chinese in Terms of Efficiency* construct the main structure of the movie. *Pride of Chinese* is a theme accumulated in the vision of Haier's CEO who refuse to be degraded to lower status by foreign businessmen, whose arrogant behavior construct the theme *Injustice/Arrogancy towards China*. His final goal remains to be bringing prosperity and recognition to China. Thanks to his firmness based on his pride and to efficiency of Chinese workers, he finally succeeds and Haier becomes one of the most succesfull companies in the world. The satisfaction is crowned by the recognition of China's rising economy and excellence of Haier's products by foreign businessmen who used to look down on China and her products.

The main characteristics – pride and stubbornness - of the movie's “hero“ are quite

similar to those of Chinese judge Dr. Mei in 2006 movie *Tokyo Trial*. The structure and the main message of the movie is similar, as well. These movies tell stories about bringing recognition of China's level of development (in case of *C.E.O.*) or dignity (in case of *Tokyo Trial*) to the world. They fit into the same category as *Charging out Amazon*, i. e. *China as a final victor*.

Table 7. Nationalistic Themes in *C.E.O.*

Label	Examples
<p><i>Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols</i></p>	<p>Deng Xianping on TV: “Catch the chance to do the quality products and to be efficient.”</p> <p>Red flag in the cadre's office</p> <p>Billboard with Jiang Zemin saying: “Fasten the steps of the revolution. Create bright future of Qindao City.”</p> <p>Red flag in Haier's CEO office.</p>
<p><i>Pride of Chinese</i></p>	<p>Haier CEO to workers: “In China we have very bad thinking. We have three quality levels. The best one we export, the rest stays in China. Does it mean we are worse than foreigners? Does it mean we just suit these products? This thinking just works against our pride, we are degrading ourselves.”</p> <p>Haier CEO: “If we would have association with AE our problems would dissappear, however we would become second-class factory and Chinese label HAIER would not exist anymore.”</p> <p>Haier CEO: “It's almost 21st century, and we can take advantage to speak out. Our ancestors would be dissappointed.”</p> <p>Haier CEO: “We are saying, we are going to the world, but actually the world is coming to us. All the brands like Nike, Coca-cola and others are here. We have opened and we can't close ourselves again. Just develop ourselves can protect us better. We must compete with Japanese, US and German brands.”</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>Haier CEO reacting to the bombing of Chinese embassy in Belgrade (Haier is planning to open a factory in United States that time): “We need to strengthen our country's industry. It's good for our people, for our country.”</p> <p>Haier CEO: “If you don't have your country's own brand in a world market, you can't win. China has to have her own brand. We have to have a lot of our brands, so thereafter who can say 'no' to China?”</p>
<p><i>Injustice/Arrogance towards China</i></p>	<p>German businessman to Haier CEO: “You must understand, we can not provide you low quality equipment, otherwise our reputation would be harmed worldwide. Do you know that in Germany there are about 200 quality guidelines to build a refrigerator? But in China there is not even one?”</p> <p>German businessmen to Haier CEO: “Although Chinese industry lag behind, your fireworks are the best. In about fifty years you will be catching up with us.”</p> <p>AE company boss to Haier CEO: “We give you the money you need, but we want to become a major shareholder of your company. You need USD 1.3 billion, it's nothing for us. All your money worries will be solved and you will have access to the latest technology.”</p> <p>Haier to AE company boss: “We need money, but we want teamwork. We are not begging.”</p> <p>Haier CEO: “In 1985 we imported the first product from Germany. Before signing the agreement German told us, your economy is bad, in 50 years you will catch up with us. I had the feeling my heart was bleeding.”</p> <p>Haier sales manager trying to persuade French businessman to purchase Haier's products: “I am truly disappointed. I know some French people don't believe in the quality of Chinese products. But you don't even bother to look at them.”</p> <p>Second meeting between Haier and American AE. AE is offering to distribute Haier's products in US, however under AE label. AE boss to Haier CEO: “I will pay you in US dollars, it will be handy for your expansion in future.” Haier refuses this deal that is viewed as unfair.</p>
<p><i>China's Modernity</i></p>	<p>Repeated sequences of developing Qindao city</p>
<p><i>Wisdom of Chinese Political Authority</i></p>	<p>Haier's CEO: “What Deng Xiaoping said, inspired me.”</p> <p>Haier's CEO: “Deng Xiaoping says there's an opportunity in taking risk.”</p>

Label	Examples
	Businessman coming to Haier's CEO office full of books among them those of Deng: “Now I know where all your wisdom comes from.”
<i>Superiority of Chinese - Efficiency</i>	<p>German businesswoman came to China to check the preparedness of the factory: “I am impressed. You remind me German people after second world war. Such an efficiency and hard work.”</p> <p>Haier sales manager to French businessman: “We need only three months to develop new product.”</p> <p>French businessman: “It's impossible. Japanese and Koreans need one year. Europeans two years.”</p> <p>French businessman in China: “You are the most efficient people I have ever worked with. I am impressed.” French businessman starts to cry and hug Haier's workers.</p> <p>German businessman: “I didn't predict correctly. Originally, I thought it will take Haier 50 years to catch up. But in reality it took him just fourteen years.”</p>

Warriors of Heaven and Earth (Tian di ying xiong), 2003

Director: He Ping

Writer: He Ping, Zhag Rui

Cast: Jiang Wen, Nakai Kiichi, Zhao Wei, Wang Xueqi

Production company: Huayi Brothers (China), Taihe Film Investment Co. Ltd. (China), Xi'an Film Studio (China), China Film Co-Production Corporation (China), Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia

Running Time: 114 min.

China's Awards:

Huabiao Film Awards: Outstanding Film, Outstanding Technical Achievement

Beijing Student Film Festival: Best Visual Effects (Jury Award), Best Actor, Best Actress (Students' Choice Award)

Synopsis: A Chinese emissary is sent to the Gobi desert to execute a renegade soldier.

When a caravan transporting a Buddhist monk and a valuable treasure is threatened by

thieves, however, the two warriors might unite to protect the travelers and deliver the

treasure to imperial palace.

Source: *IMDb*

The premiere of the movie, which became Chinese no. 2 box office hit in 2003, was held in Forbidden City in Beijing. The premiere in a place, which is the symbol of China's ancient power, was not the only sign of government's favour towards the movie. *Warriors of Heaven and Earth* also scored in the Huabiao Film Awards (Outstanding Film, Outstanding Technical Achievement) that are also referred to as Chinese government awards and are one of the major Chinese film industry awards. *Warriors of Heaven and Earth* were also nominated in China to contend for Academy Awards in the United States in the Best Foreign Film category, but finally this privilege went to *Hero*.

Warriors of Heaven and Earth were shot just about one month earlier than Zhang Yimou's *Hero* and as such has been hailed in China as the first ever domestic blockbuster. However, this movie bears some thematic similarities with *Hero*, which will be explained later.

In China, *Warriors* were welcomed warmly. *China Daily* wrote: "Most importantly, the film has a good story with engrossing plots and interesting characters, and the story is clearly told in a very dramatic way, critics say. The *Warriors* set a good example for how Chinese filmmakers can make a successful commercial Chinese movie." ("Best Action Movie Ever", 2003).

The western media were not so enthusiastic. American magazine *Entertainment Weekly* criticized *Warriors* “blocky choreography“ and “confusing storytelling“ (“Warriors of Heaven and Earth – movie review“, 2004) and *The New York Times* wrote that “characters rely on few words and many ready-to-pounce poses“. Moreover, *New York Times* reduced *Warriors of Heaven and Earth* to a Chinese version of American western film genre and wrote that “as the Chinese government sanctions filmmakers to explore history through film, it is fascinating to see how the nation that once feared Western influence is using American pop templates to repackage its own past“ (“It's High Noon in the Chinese Desert“, 2004). However, here must be pointed out that He Ping is well known for his western style *wuxia* movies (*Sun Valley*, 1995; *The Swordsman in Double Flag Town*, 1991).

The most prominent theme of the movie is heroism either performed by main character – Lieutenant Li and his ex-soldier friends, and by Japanese agent working for the Chinese emperor. However, this heroism performed along the journey of a caravan with Buddhist monks carrying the magic remains of Buddha, is more down to the earth than the heroism in Zhang Yimou's *Hero*. In *Hero*, the heroism was about readiness to sacrifice one's own life for the good of country and about neverending courage. In *Warriors of Heaven and Earth*, characters act more like humans and their heroism is based on courage when facing enemy, who is the actual danger for the country, and

most importantly on brotherhood when fulfilling what they feel is their duty.

Enemy, on the other hand, repeatedly referred to as “Turks and bandits“ is portrayed as evil, without emotions but only with passion for killing and power.

However, the emphasis on its cruelty is not so strong such as in movies dealing with Japanese atrocities during second world war such as *Purple Sunset* or *Tokyo Trial*.

The other nationalistic themes found in *Warriors of Heaven and Earth* are *Respect to the Chinese Political Authority* expressed here in relation with fulfilling the duty to the emperor and *Emphasis on Preservation (and Defense) of Chinese culture*. This theme constructs the core of the movie - protection of a Buddhist relics that have a power to unify and control the buddhist kingdoms. The structure of the themes is similar to the one offered in *Hero*: what was needed to be done for the rise of China and as such falls in the category of Smith's *Myth of Regeneration*. Here, the myth says that for the regeneration the heroism in protection of one of the pillar's of Chinese society against evil enemies – Turks – was needed. After the relics (whose possession is reserved just for those who are rightful and moral because enemies are dying after coming in close contact with them) were delivered to the emperor's palace “Tang dynasty enjoyed the era of imperial prosperity which became known as the Golden Age of China.“ The point of the thematic structure is quite similar to the one in *Hero* - the story culminates in emperor's palace, the themes meet there and the palace is being

acknowledged as the possessor of the greatest knowledge and best intentions (*Hero*) or the owner and protector of something powerful and sacred reserved just for the right ones (*Warriors*).

Table 8. Nationalistic Themes in *Warriors of Heaven and Earth*

Label	Examples
<i>Evil Enemy</i>	<p>Bold guy (working for enemy Master An) killing innocent people in the street market.</p> <p>Tradesman to master An: “The entire West will belong to you, the caravan carry something you would like to have.”</p> <p>Master An to tradesman: “Then you should get it.”</p> <p>Master An without any reason killing subordinates.</p> <p>Lieutenant Li: “Between the Turks and the bandits you will never make it.”</p> <p>Narrator: “Bandits and Turks were still the constant threat.”</p> <p>Bold guy cruelly killing old soldier.</p> <p>Bold guy enjoying firing arrows at the dying soldier without any weapon.</p> <p>Master An killing buddhist monk.</p>
<i>Chinese Heroism</i>	<p>Repeated fights against enemy who has more soldiers, refusal to give up even when there is no way to win.</p> <p>Willingness to die for others while trying to protect the buddhist relic (when looking for the water, when protecting the fortress).</p> <p>Li's soldier to Lai Xi: “Let us take care of this, it's not your time to die, yet.”</p> <p>Footage of dying soldier throwing a sack of water to his compatriots.</p> <p>Former soldiers leaving their families to help Li with his mission (to protect the</p>

Label	Examples
<p><i>Emphasis on Preservation of Chinese Culture</i></p>	<p>buddhist relic against bandits).</p> <p>Monk: “This is what bandits wants. Remains of Sakyamuni. These precious relics belonged to him. Western regions are steeped in Buddhism. Thanks to the power of Sakyamuni relics, all of the buddhist kingdoms could be controlled.”</p> <p>Lieutenant Li: “If we don't make it out of here, what about the relics?”</p> <p>Monk: “This morning I had a vision, I saw capital, I saw relics seated on the lotus throne.”</p> <p>Lieutenant Li: “Little monk, ask Buddha to protect us.”</p> <p>Lieutenant Li: “Little monk, ask Buddha to pass our mission.”</p> <p>Narrator: “The remains of Buddha were settled in the imperial palace. From this time forward Tang dynasty enjoyed the era of imperial prosperity which became known as the Golden Age of China.”</p>
<p><i>Respect to the Chinese Political/State Authority</i></p>	<p>Narrator: “He (Japanese imperial agent Lai Xi) wanted to go home, but the emperor never gave him permission.”</p> <p>Lai Xi (writing a letter to his mother): “Emperor will send me home soon.”</p> <p>To get the permission of the emperor, Lai must kill renegade soldier Lieutenant Li.</p> <p>Lai Xi to Li: “Are you quilty to disobey orders?”</p> <p>Li: “Orders have to be obeyed, so I give you one chance – a swordfight.”</p> <p>Lai Xi to Buddhist monk carrying precious relic: “I am the emperor’s emissar, you can trust me, monk.” After that monk uncover the relic he was hiding.</p> <p>Lai Xi’s protege to Lai Xi: “What will you do to him (soldier Li).”</p> <p>Lai Xi: “I will fulfill my duty to his highness.”</p> <p>Lai Xi: “I am in charge of killing Li when other officials are not around.”</p> <p>Lai Xi’s protege to Lai Xi: “Will you kill this men?”</p>

Deng Xiaoping in 1928, 2004

Director: Li Xiepu
Writer: Li Xiepu
Cast: An Rongsheng, Shawn Yue, Wang Lok Yung
Production: Shanghai Film and Music Studio
Running time: 95 minutes

Synopsis: The film concentrates on the persecution of communists by Kuomintang in 1920s and covers the story on young Deng Xiaoping hiding with Zhou Enlai in Shanghai.

Deng Xiaoping in 1928 is the second leitmotif movie from the director Li Xiepu that made it into the list of Chinese box office hits in 21st century. However, as a government promoted movie released during celebrations marking 100th birthday of Deng Xiaoping, the box office success was ensured by mandatory viewing from schools and free tickets from work units.

Deng Xiaoping in 1928 did not get any from the Chinese major awards, but official media led by *People's Daily* were praising the movie for its “thrilling plot that tell people about the dangerous circumstances that Deng had lived in”. Li Xiepu was quoted as saying: “In terms of revitalizing domestic movie industry, I hope this film is interesting enough to attract people, and to bring satisfactory box office revenue” (“Film *Deng Xiaoping in 1928* debuts in Beijing“, 2004). And for *China Daily* Li Xiepu said: “I believe that so long as we don't run contrary to the historical facts, we should incorporate every possible element to boost the attractiveness of home made

films. Even elements in entertaining films can be introduced into such revolutionary films, if used correctly” (“Chinese film gain attention“, 2007). For the sake to attract more audience, Li also hired Hong Kong star Shawn Yue for the role of Deng's assistant.

According to *Shanghai Daily* Li's movie “explores the private and passionate side of a young Deng Xiaoping” (“The red heart of 1928“, 2004). However, the movie focuses especially on the terror led by Kuomintang and on KMT's suppression of communists. It's not telling the story about Deng's private life as some reviews promised, nor about his work. The movie just shows the hard time during which communist leaders planning to bring happiness and prosperity to whole China, were living in great danger and were forced to hide. The *Evil Enemy* here is the Kuomintang which is willing to do anything to wipe them out. The movie does not constitute any particular nationalistic structure that can be analyzed, just simply tells a story about a life of one great leader in one particular year. The time here is more important than the character because the movie does not focus on Deng's life, but on the circumstances, on the life conditions in 1928. It tells a story about terrible time when great leaders had to live in fear, when people's heads were hanging in the streets and when corrupted British and French dignitaries were helping KMT against communists. As such, the movie tells a story about *China's dark age*.

Table 9. Nationalistic Themes in *Deng Xiaoping in 1928*

Label	Examples
<p><i>Reference to Communist</i></p> <p><i>China Ideology and State</i></p> <p><i>Symbols</i></p>	<p>Deng Xiaoping as a main character.</p> <p>Zhou Enlai as a supporting character.</p> <p>Deng listening to gramophone that his girlfriend bought in CCCP: “Do you remember when we were in Moscow and we were thinking when the people in China will be like the people in Russia? One day, every family will be able to afford to eat noodles every day.”</p> <p>Zhou Enlai and his wife travelling to Russia for first congress of communist parties.</p>
<p><i>Evil Enemy</i></p>	<p>Opening: “In April 1927, Chiang Kai-shek started a coup, betrayed revolution, killed people and fought communist.”</p> <p>KMT officer Chao Wu-kong to French representative in Shanghai's French concession: “If the communist are in the French concession, let me know. I will let them dissappear forever.”</p> <p>Chao Wu-kong killing without reason prisoner sitting in a cell.</p> <p>Chao Wu-kong to communist guy close to Deng (Chao Wu-kong and Deng's associate are sitting in a car in front of Deng's associate's house): “Did you name the baby yet? (Chao watching Deng's associate's pregnant wife) Parent's shouldn't die when the baby is small.”</p> <p>Heads of communists hanging in the streets.</p>

The Promise (Wu ji), 2005

Director: Chen Kaige

Writer: Chen Kaige, based on romance *The K'un-lun Slave*, written by P'ei Hsing during Tang Dynasty

Cast: Dong-kun Jang, Hiroyuki Sanada, Cecilia Cheung, Liu Ye, Chen Hong, Cheng Qian

Production: China Film Group, Moonstone Entertainment

Running time: 128 minutes

Synopsis: The story is set in an unknown time in history in an imagined Asian world, a setting that actually enhances the film's exotic atmosphere. Cecilia Cheung stars as a rich princess desired by all men but cursed to never experience true love. Slave Kunlun is willing to sacrifice everything he has, even his life, to alter her fate. Meanwhile, a ruthless warrior and a duke both fall for her. A silver-screen extravaganza about promise, loyalty, betrayal, and love.

Source: *YesAsia.com*

Before making *Curse of Golden Flower*, *The Promise* was the most expensive film in Chinese history. However, despite becoming a blockbuster in China, the movie was widely criticized and labeled as a “dissapointment“, especially in the West where it was even problematic to find a distributor for the movie. *The Promise* became a Chinese entry for Oscar, but didn't succeed.

The Wall Street Journal wrote that it is “absurdly overproduced“ (“The Promise review“, 2006) and the *New York Times* concluded that the film “occupies a curious landscape somewhere between opera and cartoon“ (“In Chen Kaige the Promise waiting for Winter to Follow Spring“, 2006).

Chen tried to deliver a big-budget movie after his low-profile movies such as *Together*. As he was quoted in *People's Daily*: “I want to let the media and audiences

know me better by 'The Promise'. I'm not just a metaphysical director who pays attention to philosophy and can only shoot films with profound meanings“ (“Interview: Chinese director Chen Kaige vows to redeem audiences by The Promise“, 2005).

Chen decided to lure the audience with his shift to action epic showing the mythical land and supernatural heroes represented by multinational cast. This pan-Asian appeal was enstrengthened by the movie's genre that was supposed to be love romance. The introduction of the movie takes the audience to the mythical fairyland where colors are bursting and sun and moon are always seen in the sky together. These long shots of beautiful ancient land consist one theme – *The Beauty of China*, which is here represented by the Asian kingdom where gods and men live side by side. From the map shown in the beginning of the movie and from the various references to Chinese culture (imperial palace reminding Forbidden City, Princess name Qingcheng referring to old Chinese poem about a beauty during Han Dynasty that was turned into a royal concubine, referring to enemies as barbarians, etc.) it becomes evident that this land is mythical China.

The other two nationalistic themes found in the movie are *Heroism* and *Loyalty among People of the Same Origins*. The heroism is shown not just when fighting barbarians, but especially when it comes to dealing with evil Duke who is the usurper of the land and who massacred several years ago a glorious people of the Land of Snow.

The strongest theme in the movie is the *Loyalty among People of the Same Origins*. The movie was being advertised as a story of a rich princess who can never find a true love. However, this is only one storyline, the other is developing between slave Kunlun and his enemy Snow Wolf. Snow Wolf is working for evil Duke and is ordered to kill Kunlun, however, when he realizes Kunlun comes from the same place – Land of Snow, he refuses to follow the Duke's order and starts to help Kunlun and his mission. Two of them, eventually, become friends willing to sacrifice their lives for each other. Their bond and loyalty is based on their origins. Snow Wolf tells Kunlun, who was taken as a slave from his homeland when he was a small kid, that he is not a slave but a noble man, and shows him how to cultivate his abilities. Kunlun, on the other hand, gives Snow Wolf the strength to revolt against Duke and to find his lost honor. The movie tells a story about the importance of knowing oneself's roots because just with that in mind, one can live as an honorable person. Therefore, the movie constitutes a superstructure of temporal origins and falls under the Smith's category *A Myth of Temporal Origins*.

Table 10. Nationalistic Themes in *The Promise*

Label	Examples
<i>Landscape/Beauty of China</i>	Beautiful lake – The Eye of Infinity where the goddess Manshen lives: “The Eye of Infinity contains each individual's destiny, every smile, every tear.” Valley reminding Great Canyon where Great General beats barbarians trying to invade the kingdom.

Label	Examples
	<p>Blossoming grass field, where Kunlun bury his master's body.</p> <p>Huge waterfalls, where Kunlun saves the princess.</p>
<p><i>(Chinese) Heroism of Ancestors</i></p>	<p>Soldier: "Commander Yeli, what was that noise?" Yeli: "Barbarians, they are hiding from us." Soldier: "How many?" Yeli: "20 thousands" Soldier: "20 thousand against three thousand?" Yeli: "Be proud to be one of the three thousand. Our enemies are the ones to quake in terror as they are about to face our Great General." Great General leading his army against barbarians: "To the death." Kunlun facing an army of the Duke – usurper of the land - when trying to rescue Princess Qingcheng Snow Wolf fighting against Duke – usurper of the land - and his companions while trying to save Kunlun</p>
<p><i>Loyalty among People of the Same Origins</i></p>	<p>Snow Wolf to Kunlun: "You move fast. Did you once live in the Land of Snow? I will not kill you." (leaving after realizing Kunlun has the same origins). Duke to Snow Wolf: "You failed to kill the general. Now, if you refuse to kill your contrymen, you will pay me with your life." Snow Wolf disobeying Duke's order and helping Kunlun to escape from Duke's palace where he was being held in prison. Snow Wolf escapes with Kunlun and decides to be become his companion: "You are a man of a most noble country. Where there was only light and trust and clarity. Where we ran like the wind. I will show you the land of your ancestors – the Land of Snow." Kunlun to Duke: "Let Snow Wolf go and give me the armor, or you'll die." Duke to Snow Wolf: "Once you betrayed your own people and now are betraying me, your beneficiar, who saved your life. A traitor is always a traitor." Duke gives Snow Wolf a choice: he can keep the cloak that keeps him alive but Kunlun will not get the precious armor he came for, or he give the armor back to the</p>

Label	Examples
	Duke and dies, but Kunlun will get the armor. Snow Wolf reacts by hugging Kunlun: “I told you once, the day the Duke came and massacred our people, I did not wrong anyone. Nor did I betray anyone. But now I realize I was mistaken. I have wronged somebody and betrayed somebody. Myself. I have to thank the Duke for showing me a life without honor. It makes me realize that death is not as terrifying as I thought. This is for you, my friend (giving Kunlun the armor).“ Snow Wolf thereafter take off his cloak and dissapears in the air.

Curse of Golden Flower (Man cheng jin dai chuang jin jia), 2006

Director: Zhang Yimou

Writer: Zhang Yimou, based on a play “*Thunderstorm*” by Cao Yu

Cast: Chow Yun-fat, Gong Li, Jay Chow, Liu Ye, Qin Junjie, Li Man

Production: Beijing New Picture Film Co.

Running time: 114 minutes

Synopsis: Zhang Yimou tells an epic tale of lust and power set in the opulent world of the Later Tang dynasty. The plot follows the story of the Emperor and his Empress and the tragic disintegration of their royal family. The ailing Empress has long been having an affair with her stepson, the Crown Prince Wan. But Wan has been dallying with the Imperial Doctor's daughter, and has plans to escape the palace with her. Everyone involved has a secret plan for either escape or domination.

Source: *YesAsia.com*

With the budget of 360 million RMB *Curse of Golden Flower* became the most expensive Chinese film to date. The movie is based on a very well-known Chinese play *Thunderstorm* written by Cao Yu. However, the original story is set in the 20th century,

while Zhang transports it to the imperial court of Tang dynasty.

Curse of Golden Flower was chosen as China's entry for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film for the year 2006, but it didn't succeed. It also didn't win any awards in China. However, the movie became a box office hit both in China and in the West. According to *Xinhua*, Zhang's story of bloody palace intrigue in ancient China, racked up 169 million RMB at the box office in China in 10 days since premiering. Although the movie was a hit among the audience, critics, especially in China, were not so excited. *Xinhua* commented that movie “has been criticized at home for its over-lavish scenes, gratuitous costumes and weak storyline“ (“Zhang Yimou calm over mixed reviews of box office of *Curse*“, 2006).

Western reviews were generally positive focusing on visual appeal of the movie and performances brought by Asian superstars Chow Yun-fat, Gong Li and Jay Chow. “The outstanding acting, exceptional photography by Zhao Xiaoding, beautifully choreographed action scenes, elegant set designs by Huo Tingxiao, and traditional ceremonial formality, makes the *Curse of the Golden Flower* a true masterpiece,“ wrote *Independent Film*. (“Curse of the Golden Flower is China’s official 2007 Oscar entry“, 2006). The author also focused on the contrast between form and content “represented by the exterior gold and jade glitter, and the internal family darkness, therefore heightening the tragic feeling of the story and of the characters” (ibid.).

This contrast characterized by Chinese saying: “Gold and jade on the outside, rot and decay on the inside“ that have been put forward also by Zhang Yimou is not the only one in the movie. The other, probably even more important, is the one between ideals and reality. The immorality, selfishness and cruelty of main protagonist contrast with the traditional ideals of bringing prosperity and happiness to the whole nation. This contrast that emerges thanks to repeated references to old virtues and Chinese philosophy is especially evident in the end of the movie after all the bloody intrigue, when the imperial court is singing: “Father to son, all king wise, follow the heaven's way, peace and glory above, rain down on whole nation below.“

The movie is set in golden palace, which is showing the greatness of China during late Tang dynasty. However, the movie tells a story about China's decay. It also has an answer to the question why the decline is inevitably coming – because the powerfull don't follow Chinese traditional ideals and rules of great governance. Therefore, *Curse of Golden Flower* falls into Smith's category *Myth of Decline*.

Table 11. Nationalistic Themes in *Curse of Golden Flower*

Label	Examples
<i>Greatness of China</i>	Lavish interiors of the imperial palace. Thousands of emperial servants, golden robes, golden jewelry. Golden armory, thousands of emperials soldiers. Largeness of imperial palace (repeated footage showing how big and decorated the

Label	Examples
<p><i>Respect to the Chinese</i> <i>Political/State authority</i></p>	<p>palace is).</p> <p>Soldiers, servants kneeling down, looking to the ground, showing gratitude to imperial family.</p> <p>Imperial doctor to Emperor: “Your humble servant kneels in front of emperor. Your servant would willingly give up his life.”</p> <p>Soldiers: “We thank our gracious prince.”</p> <p>Emperor to defeated Prince: “After the festival, I was going to remove Wan as a crown prince and appoint you as my heir. I had told you before: What I do not give you, you must never take by force.”</p>
<p><i>Reference to Chinese</i> <i>Cultural Icons</i></p>	<p>Traditional Chinese medicine practiced by Emperor and his doctor.</p> <p>Empress' Chrysanthemum embroidery (Chrysanthemum as a symbol of upheaval – referring to Tang dynasty poem attributed to rebel leader Huang Chao).</p> <p>Repeated footage referring to traditional Chinese calendar, the beginning of the hour of snake/monkey/rat... being the time when Empress is forced to drink her medicine.</p> <p>Imperial servant: “Heaven, men and earth unite, fortune and prosperity to all. Midnight. The hour of rat. Chrysanthemum festival begins.”</p> <p>Imperial court singing: “Father to son, all king wise, follow the heaven's way, peace and glory above, rain down on whole nation below.”</p>

A Battle of Wits (Mo gong), 2006

Director: Zhang Zhiliang

Writer: Zhang Zhiliang (screenplay), based upon a Chinese story written by Japanese author

Cast: Andy Lau, Lin Yongjian, Wang Zhiwen, Fan Bingbing

Production: Huayi Brothers (China), Sundream Motion Pictures (Hong Kong), Small Potato Pictures (Hong Kong), Hark and Company (Hong Kong), World Top (Hong Kong)

Running time: 133 minutes

Chinese awards:

Golden Rooster Awards: Best Art Direction

(Zhang Zhiliang nominated for best director)

Beijing Student Film Festival: Jury Award for Best Picture

Synopsis: Andy Lau portrays a superhero in ancient China - a man who fights tough battles with great intelligence. Besides witty battle strategies, *A Battle of Wits* creates greater interest with its philosophical content about Mohism, a belief in universal love and peace that actually existed in Chinese history. The main character of the film, Ge Li, is a follower of Mohism. The story takes place in the city-state of Liang, ruled by the incapable King, which is now the target of invasion from its neighboring kingdom. The Kingdom of Zhao sends ten thousand soldiers led by the renowned general Xiang Yanzhong in attempt to conquer this little city-state, inhabited by only 4000, but Ge Li succeeds in protecting the city.

Source: *YesAsia.com*

A Battle of Wits was one of the biggest Chinese blockbusters of the year. As a Hong Kong-China co-production with a minor involvement of Korea and Japan, it scored both in mainland China awards and Hong Kong awards. Moreover, the movie set in 370 B.C., during the chaotic Warring States period prior to China's unification under a single leader, received also positive reviews abroad. According to American *Variety* magazine "pic manages to meld a mixed cast into an involving story of psychological warfare and military bluffs, while still delivering the goods on the action

front. Toplined by Andy Lau in one of his best recent perfs, movie could have a career in the West with the right marketing“ (“A Battle of Wits“, 2007).

Both Western and Chinese media agreed on strong anti-war message of the movie, *People's Daily* even described the movie as a story about “Chinese anti-war saint“ (“Movie on long-standing love across Taiwan Strait wins Beijing Student Film Festival“, 2007). The anti-war message is based not just on various proclamations made by main character – hero Geli, who believes in Mohism (philosophy spreading in China before Qin dynasty came to power), but also by repeated sequences of desperate refugees trying to find a safe place to live. These sequences construct one of the main themes in the movie – *Suffering of People from Civil Wars or Rebellions against Government*. The key to the final joy and peace is, according to Geli, universal love. However, this is the concept that even Geli considers idealistic. Then, another solution to the suffering is offered to him by a peasant: “There are never ending wars and battles. Peace will only come when the seven nations are united“. Audience will get to know in the end of the movie that after few more wars, China was finally united.

The other two nationalistic themes in the movie are: *Chinese Heroism* and *Defense of Homeland*. While the *Defense of Homeland* on one hand signifies the refusal of people to give up, and their decision to protect their piece of land against enemy, the *Suffering*, on the other hand, refers to their exhaustion due to the war, and to their hope

to return home (or to find home, finally) where they can live peacefully. *Chinese*

Heroism in this movie is represented by courageous Geli, who promotes peace and perform great wisdom when facing an army.

The single theme – *Suffering of Chinese People from Wars* leads to the possible structure: suffering of Chinese people from wars is bad, and must be stopped. However, the movie doesn't offer the only answer how to achieve this goal. When witted hero proclaims the peace can come just thanks to the universal love among people, there is also other way offered: unification of China. The basic statement in the end of the movie about China's unification let us think what was more probable. However, the movie let the question to remain open. It's main purpose is to show the suffering. Therefore, *Battle of Wits* falls under the superstructure *Chinese Suffering*.

Table 12. Nationalistic Themes in *Battle of Wits*

Label	Examples
<i>Defense of Homeland</i>	<p>People of Liang: “We can't give up our homeland. Lead us. Take action now, Zhao army is already here“.</p> <p>King of Liang: “The king sees his people as everything. My decision is at all costs...Geli will command all troops to resist Zhao's invasion“.</p> <p>Geli: “No one is allowed to intrude into my city.“</p> <p>Yi Yue (royal female soldier of Liang): “This is my homeland. When my father was still alive he was always on the front line“.</p> <p>People of Liang resisting Zhao's attack: “Fight for our homeland“.</p>

Label	Examples
	Zhao soldiers: “Geli will not come. We'd taken Liang already. Why don't we go back to protect our homeland?”
<i>Chinese Heroism</i>	<p>Geli: “Why don't you give a try? We would die in battle, but at least you'd tried.”</p> <p>Geli protecting the Liang city against the Zhao's army ready to sacrifice his life.</p> <p>Blacksmith: “Geli is real hero. He is humble and skilled. Just the opposite of our royals. If our king got a bit of his talent, Liang would be undefeatable.”</p> <p>Liang's archer: “Geli has done nothing wrong. He saved all Liang people.”</p> <p>Geli: “Mozi people didn't send anyone to Liang.”</p> <p>Peasant: “You came upon your will?”</p>
<i>Suffering of Chinese from Disunited China, Civil Wars or Rebellions against Government</i>	<p>Peasant: “There's war everywhere. I don't want to run again. Why they just don't give up the city? Who cares whom we pay the tax?”</p> <p>Repeated sequences of desperate refugees trying to find safe place to live.</p> <p>Refugee peasant: “Let's go home.”</p> <p>Another peasant: “We have no home.”</p> <p>Peasant to Geli: “There are never ending wars and battles. Peace will only come when the seven nations are united.”</p> <p>Geli: “Both the dead and the living ones have to suffer because of war. And you say survivors are winners?”</p> <p>Geli leaving the city with poor and dirty refugee children.</p>

The Knot (Yun Shui Yao), 2006

Director: Li Yin

Writer: Zheng Kehui (original story), Liu Heng (screenplay)

Cast: Chen Kun, Vivian Hsu, Li Bingbing, Liang Luoshi

Production: China Film Group, Emperor Motion Pictures, Long Shong Entertainment Media Company

Running time: 117 minutes

Chinese awards:

Golden Rooster Awards: Best Director, Best Film, Best Sound
Huabiao Film Awards: Outstanding Film, Outstanding Director, Outstanding Actor
(Chen Kun), Outstanding Screenplay
Shanghai International Film Festival: Golden Goblet - Special Award of the 10th
Shanghai International Film Festival
Beijing Student Film Festival: Jury Award for Best Film

Synopsis: Chen Qiushui is an English teacher in Taiwan. The boy he tutors has a sister, Wang Biyun. They fall in love. But he's a leftist and leaves Taiwan to fight for a new China. They make a pledge to see each other one day. On the mainland Chen Qiushui is active in the Korean War as a doctor and a soldier and later in rebuilding the country, working in Tibet. He changes his name to Xu Xiuyun. A woman by the name Wang Jindi, also a soldier, falls in love with him, but he is still thinking of Wang Biyun. Wang Jindi sees he will never forget Wang Biyun, so she changes her name to Wang Biyun herself. After quite some time, they get married, but it's all still very painful for both of them. In the meantime, the real Wang Biyun is still in Taiwan, waiting and trying to find out what had happened to Chen Qiushui. One day, while crossing the mountains, an avalanche kills Chen Qiushui. We follow the story in retrospective, as the real Wang Biyun now (60 years later) lives in New York and has sent her adopted daughter to Tibet, to find out what exactly happened to Chen Qiushui.

Source: *IMDb*

The Knot was characterized by Chinese official media as a “love epic in a time of

war”. However, the movie is not primarily about love. The story being told is not a story of two lovers separated by the war, it is a story of China's separation. *The Knot* bears a strong message saying that the separation was a tragedy and that just re-union can bring happiness.

The Knot is not the only contribution of director Li Yin to the “main melody” movie genre. Two years before *The Knot* Li Yin directed *Zhang Side*, film about the life of Mao's bodyguard and model soldier. In general, Li Yin is well known for mainstream movies that sell well and as a member of CPPCC he is one of the handful directors for the Party. He is currently a director for the China Film Group Corporation.

The original story of *The Knot* was written by Zhang Kehui, Vice-Chairman of 10th CPPCC, National Committee and Honorary Chairman of All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots. Chen Qiushui character in the movie is based on personal experience of Zhang Kehui, who was born in Taiwan and fled from the island to the mainland after communist victory in China.

The critics in China were ecstatic about the movie. According to *China Daily*: “Critics are calling the movie a great, poignant love film such as we haven't seen in years, a film without Hollywood frills that moves people deeply and a movie that urges people to reconnect with their long-lost days of pure, sincere feelings“ (“Kiss your way to get discount to the romantic movie“, 2006). *The Knot* collected many official awards

in China and was also chosen as a Chinese entry for Oscar, however it was not accepted as a nominee in the United States.

The Knot didn't win western audience's interest neither the hearts of audience in Taiwan despite stars from Hong Kong, mainland and Taiwan hired for the movie to promote the idea of unified three Chinas.

The movie was screened in Taiwan, but filmmakers were not allowed to shoot it neither to promote it in Taiwan due to the movies' portrayal of 228 incident and attempt to spread “unification“ message. The movie was also a Chinese Oscar entry, but was not approved in USA.

The nationalistic themes found in the movie are: *Reference to Chinese Cultural icons, China's Modernity, The Knot between Chinese People, Reference to Communist State Ideology and Symbols, Communist China as a Liberator, Misconducting Enemy and Suffering of Chinese from Disunited China. Reference to Chinese cultural icons, China's modernity and Reference to Communist State Ideology and Symbols* construct the setting, i.e. traditional Taiwan versus fast developing China under communist rule. The other four themes – *The Knot between Chinese People, Communist China as a Liberator, Suffering of Chinese from Disunited China and Misconducting Enemy* construct the thematic structure that says: it was the misconducting enemy (Kuomintang) of Communist China's high ideals who separated the loving couple

(mainland China and Taiwan) that is now suffering. However, we should know, we, Chinese people, are all the same blood and should stick together. As so, the superstructure of the movie can be called as *China seeking re-unification*.

Table 13. Nationalistic Themes in *The Knot*

Label	Examples
<p><i>Reference to Chinese Cultural Icons</i></p>	<p>Shots of Taipei in late 1940s: people playing traditional Chinese instruments, traditional Chinese wedding, puppet show.</p> <p>Qiushui and Biyun enjoying puppet show in the Taiwanese countryside.</p> <p>Qiushui's mother praying in the old Chinese temple.</p> <p>Biyun asking gods about the future in Chinese temple.</p>
<p><i>China's Modernity</i></p>	<p>Xiaorui (Biyun's niece) in Hong Kong looking at the skyscrapers, having a beer in a modern bar, where people are speaking many languages.</p> <p>Xiaorui having cocktails in modern bar in Shanghai with her two fashionably dressed Shanghai friends.</p> <p>Shots from Tibet full of foreign tourist and mountaineers speaking in English with locals.</p> <p>Tibet: High-class coffee shop on the top of the building with the view of Potala palace, where people drink wine and stay connected to the internet while using their notebooks.</p> <p>Modern beer bar in Tibet, where people are drinking Heineken beer and Xiaorui talk to her aunt in New York using ICQ.</p>
<p><i>The Knot between Chinese People</i></p>	<p>Xiaorui: "I am in Taipei. This is little Taipei in Shanghai. Everything here is even more than Taipei itself."</p> <p>Jindi (from Shanghai) to Qiushui (from Taiwan): "You are from Taiwan and I can see that you are also fond of brushing your teeth."</p> <p>Qiushui to Jindi: "You are right. You people from Shanghai are fond of rice, so are we from Taiwan."</p> <p>Jindi referring to Biyun as to her "sister"</p> <p>The ending: Eagle flying from Tibet all over Chinese area including Taiwan</p>
<p><i>Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols</i></p>	<p>Chinese flags all over Tibet</p> <p>Chinese flags and red stars on the train in Korea</p> <p>Mao's uniforms</p>
<p><i>Communist China as a Liberator</i></p>	<p>Biyun: "Qiushui, do you belong to any of that left-wing groups?"</p> <p>Qiushui: "If I say yes, would you be afraid?"</p> <p>Biyun: "Left and right, for me are only words. I am not a political person."</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>Qiushui: “I feel I am that kind of person described by Lu Xun. I am a rebel, brave fighter.”</p> <p>Biyun: “Why should one want to be a rebel? What is bad about a quite life?”</p> <p>Qiushui: “To make it possible for more people to live with dignity.”</p> <p>People singing, laughing and cooking for Chinese soldiers in Korea in the end of the war.</p> <p>Footage of PLA helping Tibetans working under the slogan “Self-sustain and hard work” on their barracks.</p>
<i>Misconducting Enemy</i>	<p>KMT officer getting of the rickshaw refusing to pay to the poor rickshaw man saying: “Go to hell.”</p> <p>KMT officers at Biyun’s house: “Have any strangers visited your house recently?”</p> <p>Biyun’s mother: “No“</p> <p>KMT officer: “Still, if any strangers come, let us know.”</p> <p>Qiushui’s classmates urging Qiushui to leave after military searched the school and took away some of his friends: “They took away the others. You are on the list. Get away, there is still time.”</p> <p>Biyun’s mother to Biyun: “Want to get engaged? Go ahead now. Give him the ring so that he can pay for the bullet for his own execution.”</p> <p>The atmosphere of fear when Qiushui is trying to run away and Biyun is going to say bye to him. KMT soldier stopping her car. Biyun’s father nervously to the soldier: “Your commander want me to extract his teeth.”</p> <p>Qiushui’s mother frantically destroying Qiushui’s forbidden books when KMT officers are approaching.</p>
<i>Suffering of Chinese From Disunited China of from Wars and Rebellions against Government</i>	<p>Repeated sequences of suffering Biyun (psychologically and physically when her illness is still getting worse) waiting for Qiushui.</p> <p>Biyun taking care of Quishui's seriously ill mother, who is still hoping to see her son before she dies.</p> <p>The sad marriage between Qiushui and Jindi, Qiushui giving up his true love.</p>

Tokyo Trial (Dongjing Shenpan), 2006

Director: Gao Qunshu

Cast: Gao Qun Shu, Kelly Lin, Ken Chu

Production company: Ban Dao Yin Xiang Chu Ban She

Running Time: 111 min.

China's Awards:

Golden Rooster Awards: Best screenplay

Huabiao Film Awards: Outstanding director (Gao Qunshu), Outstanding Film

Synopsis: The mega-budget movie depicts the true story of the military tribunal held to

prosecute Japanese war criminals for the atrocities committed during World War II.

And the role of a Chinese judge in the tribunal.

Source: *YesAsia.com*

The premiere of *Tokyo Trial*, a movie that evoked patriotism among Chinese, was held such as Zhang Yimou's *Hero* in Great Hall of People in Beijing. In China, the historical movie that documented the post-war international trial with Japanese criminals happened to be very much debated and promoted by government and party's media. However, it didn't get much attention abroad. *Tokyo Trial* was the 5th most successful domestic box office hit in China in 2006. *People's Daily* reported that “ten days after its debut on September 1, the film about the trial of Japanese war criminals had raked up 10 million yuan (1.25 million U.S. dollars) at the box office, despite competition from Hollywood blockbuster *X-Men III: The Last Stand*.” (“Tokyo Trial Enjoys Big Success“, 2006). *People's Daily* continued: “Student Zhou Zhou admitted feeling a surge of patriotism during the movie: It is awful that Japanese rightists are trying to distort history and that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi keeps on visiting the Yasukuni Shrine” (“Tokyo Trial Enjoys Big Success, 2006“). The article that appeared about the movie on the website of *Chinese Radio International* (CRI) had a title “Tokyo Trial: A Movie No Chinese Should Miss“. *CRI* quoted Hong Kong actor Damian Lau, who starred in the movie as

Chinese judge Dr. Mei as saying:

Mei Ruao is a person with a strong sense of ethics and national pride.

He represented his country at a significant international affair. He had

to shoulder great responsibility as well as a lot of pressure. If he did not

harbor strong emotions and a patriotic heart within his bosom, he could

hardly successfully overcome the many difficulties before him and fulfill

the mission given by the country. He was cool-headed and witty

throughout the trial. I tried to master his inner world through these

aspects. I really respect him (“Tokyo Trial: A Movie No Chinese

Should Miss“, 2006).

Xinhua referred to the movie as “critically acclaimed“ and reminded that director

Gao Qunshu claimed it accurately portrays how a Chinese judge swayed opinion on

the international panel of 11 judges to narrowly avert a miscarriage of justice

(“Chinese Film Tokyo Trial Debuts to Acclaim“, 2006).

Gao, who is just about 40 years old and worked for a long time as a journalist, emphasised the educational potential of the movie and regretted the Japanese distortion of history. *Tokyo Trial* was widely used for education in China. It was screened in cinemas and at around 100 universities across mainland China to mark the 75th anniversary of the start of Japan's invasion of China. It also got Huabiao award

for Outstanding film and Outstanding director and Golden Rooster Award for Best Screenplay, as well.

The nationalistic themes found in the movie are *Evil Enemy*, *Enemy as a Liar*, *Pride of Chinese*, *Moral Superiority of Chinese*, *Injustice towards China* and *Suffering of Chinese*. The thematic structure is quite straightforward here – pride and moral superiority of Chinese is needed to win over evil and lying enemy; this pride and morality leads to a hardline stand essential for the success in an unfriendly environment where injustice towards China is still practised. The right attitude finally leads to triumph that means final satisfaction after long period of China's suffering. As so, the superstructure of the movie can be labeled as *China's search for recognition/China as a final victor*.

Enemy in the movie is represented not just by cruel war criminals denying to commit anything against humanity, but also by brainwashed Japanese hostile towards Chinese nationals. Then, the injustice towards China driven by anger comes from them. However, notable injustice comes also from representatives of Western powers (USA and Britain) who want to degrade China to the lower status by seating Chinese judge to the inferior place.

Pride and morality are themes that are accumulated in the character of Chinese judge Dr. Mei. Referring repeatedly to the suffering of Chinese people from Japanese

aggression he refuses to give up his mission – to bring justice and recognition of China's dignity to the world. He succeeds several times: when he is finally seated next to the presiding judge, when he convince the tribunal to judge Nanjing massacre as a separate issue and finally, when he persuades other judges to vote for death penalty.

Table 14. Nationalistic Themes in *Tokyo Trial*

Label	Examples
<i>Evil Enemy</i>	<p>Prosecutor Keenan to the witnesses: “Tell us what you saw after the Japanese army entered Nanjing.”</p> <p>Witness no. 1: “Nanjing became hell on earth.”</p> <p>Witness no. 2: “Endless looting and rape.”</p> <p>Footage from the movie taken in Nanjing after Japanese army entered the city with dead bodies lying everywhere on the streets.</p> <p>Witness Wang Defu: “Me and three real monks, we bumped into Japanese soldiers. They were ten of them, they were raping a Chinese girl. They wanted us to rape her, too. We refused. Then they used baoynets, they asked us to put off our clothes. They ask us to rape that Chinese girl, otherwise they will kill us. Mingxin refused, they cut off his...sexual organ. He was lying on the ground, the blood was all around his body.”</p> <p>Presecutor Keenan: “What about the Japanese soldiers?”</p> <p>Witness Wang Defu: “They were all laughing. Mingkong and Mingfa also didn't answer their request. Japanese cut off their sexual organs, too.”</p> <p>Narrator: “In the first six weeks, 200 000 people were butchered by Japanese army. The number Chinese government released later made it clear that 300 000 people</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>were killed by the Japanese army in Nanjing.“</p> <p>Chinese Prosecutor: “How many Chinese people did Japanese army kill?“</p> <p>Hideki Tojo: “I don't know.“</p> <p>Chinese Prosecutor: “According to Japanese imperial accounts between 1937 and 1941 Japanese army killed two million and fifteen thousand Chinese people. Isn't that logical that slaughtering of two million Chinese lifes rose a fury among Chinese people?“</p> <p>Hideki Tojo: “I think it was misfortune.“</p> <p>Chinese prosecutor: “Many of those you butchered were innocent civilians. Why was the treatment of these uninvolved people so atrocious?“</p> <p>Prosecutor Keenan: “Do you think that initiating hostilities is morally and legally acceptable?“</p> <p>Hideki Tojo: “I think it is.“</p> <p>Prosecutor Keenan: “So if you and your colleagues would be released you would go and do it again? You would launch more invasions and start more wars?“</p> <p>Hideki Tojo: “Yes.“</p> <p>Prosecutor Keenan: “Throughout the history of civilization, no one has ever seen such a peak of cruelty and barbarity.“</p> <p>Veteran Japanese soldier Mr. Hideo to Japanese nationalist Yuiqi: “Japanese devil.“</p> <p>Veteran Japanese soldier Mr. Hideo to Japanese nationalist Yuiqi: “I killed your brother. I had to. Have you ever seen a person killing a child? Your brother became a devil in the war.“</p>
<i>Moral Superiority of Chinese</i>	<p>Chinese judge Dr. Mei to the presiding judge Sir William Webb: “This (seating order of judges) is not a trivial matter. Besides, our concern here is what's right and what's wrong. There's nothing trivial about it.“</p> <p>Dr. Mei: “If the seating arrangement is not to be determined by weight then the only fair method is to follow the order on the Japanese instrument of surrender. I have no wish at all to allow this international tribunal to become a boxing ring.“</p> <p>Dr. Mei to the French judge: “You said, you can't agree with the death penalty because you believe in a civilized world. In general, I agree with you, but I have</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>doubts. According to your logic, civilization should be respected, but what about life? This glass represents humanity, the water inside civilization (Mei throw the glass on the floor). Civilization is created by human being. If people murder, how can we talk about civilization?“</p> <p>Dr. Mei to the Indian judge: “I have learned from my parents that buddhism encourages people to do good and avoid evil, is that right?“</p> <p>Indian judge: “That is the fundamental idea.“</p> <p>Dr Mei: “Isn't there also punishment of evil?“</p> <p>Indian judge: “Yes, but buddhism says, punishment is carried out in the next life.“</p> <p>Dr. Mei: “But who will prevent the crime now? Could Buddha prevent Japanese aggression, does Hideki Tojo believe in Buddha?“</p> <p>Judges finally vote for death penalty.</p> <p>Dr. Mei: “If they would say no, I can't imagine what would happen to me, to all Chinese people, to the whole world. I can only say I did my best.“</p>
<i>Pride of Chinese</i>	<p>Dr. Mei to Sir William: “As a Chinese, it is my solemn duty to remind you, that I didn't come to Tokyo to be pleased. My homeland China has been plundered by the Japanese for over fifty years. To the Chinese people, trying Japanese war criminals bring to the justice is a heavy responsibility. We are not here for pleasure.“</p> <p>Sir William to Dr. Mei: “Dr. Mei, you won. Your country should be proud to have a fighter like you. “</p> <p>Dr. Mei: “I am not a fighter. I am a judge. A Chinese judge.“</p> <p>Dr. Mei (after receiving the information that majority of judges oppose the death penalty for Japanese criminals): “People can not identify the evil spirit of the war and crime until they face it. I have never regretted anything, but today I regret coming to Japan.“</p> <p>Chinese prosecutor to Dr. Mei: “We have a mission here. It is Chinese spirit to stand up if you are not dead.“</p> <p>Dr. Mei: “I will stand up.“</p>
<i>Injustice towards China</i>	<p>Dr. Mei: “I believe the seating order of the judges in this trial should follow the order of the signatures in the Japanese Instrument of surrender. China was second on the list. Therefore, the judge from China should be seated right after the USA (not after Britain).“</p> <p>Sir William: “Dr. Mei, this has been the common practice.“</p> <p>Dr. Mei: “What common practice? Whose practice?“</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>Sir William: “This decision (seating of the Chinese judge after the British one) absolutely does not reflect any prejudice against China.”</p> <p>Dr. Mei: “We all know that this is international tribunal, not British or American one. I don't see any need to seat the American and British judges at the center.”</p> <p>Sir William: “With this arrangement you will be seated between American and French judges instead of next to the Russian general. I can not imagine that would please you.”</p> <p>Dr. Mei: “Sir William, this is insulting.”</p> <p>Drunk Japanese to Dr. Mei on the street: “Chinese pig. Get out of Japan. We were beaten by Americans not China. Get out.”</p> <p>Yuiqi to Chinese reporter Xiao Nan: “It was China that killed my brother.” (then start to beat Xiao Nan)</p> <p>Yuiqi to Xiao Nan: “You Chinese people are still here to insult our country. I will kill you. It is you , who made Japan being humiliated, it is you, who made us to become an orphan.”</p>
<i>Enemy as a Liar</i>	<p>Narrator: “Many Japanese didn't believe in the Nanjing massacre because of the lies and misinformation being spread by Japanese officials.”</p> <p>Japanese criminal: “There was no butchery in Nanjing. What is said that Japanese army did to Chinese civilians – rapes, murders, it is all lie.”</p> <p>Chinese prosecutor to the Japanese war criminal about the Japanese involvement in September 18, 1931: “You have the nerve to deny this has ever happened?”</p> <p>Hideki Tojo: “There was no aggression, nor exploitation of Chinese people.”</p> <p>All of the criminals pleading „not guilty“.</p> <p>Japanese criminals refusing involvement in June 4th incident, invading Manchuria, refusing Nanjing massacre and September 18th incident even when facing witnesses and numerous materials convicting them guilty.</p>
<i>Suffering of Chinese</i>	<p>Narrator: “They (Japanese war criminals) were organizers of Japanese aggression which threw the Chinese people into pain and suffering.”</p> <p>Dr. Mei: “In this war against Japanese aggression China suffered the most and fought the longest and the hardest.”</p>

Label	Examples
	Dr. Mei: “If I would agree with this arrangement I would be insulting my country. I would be insulting all the countrymen suffering, sacrificing their lives and resisting Japanese aggression.”

The Warlords (Tou ming zhuang), 2007

Director: Chen Kexin

Writer: Chun Tim Nan, Guo Junli (screenplay), based on Suzhou massacre from 1863 when Taiping government was defeated and thousands of people slaughtered

Cast: Jet Li, Andy Lau, Takeshi Kaneshiro, Xu Jinglei

Production: China Film Group (China), Beijing Jinyinma Movie & TV Culture Co. (China), Media Asia Films (Hong Kong), Morgan & Chan Films (Hong Kong)

Running time: 126 minutes

Chinese awards:

Beijing Student Film Festival: Jury Award for Best Visual Effects

Synopsis: Emerging from a field of corpses, Qing General Pang (Jet Li) is the only member of his troop to survive a fatal battle with enemy forces. Wandering through the impoverished land, he encounters young outlaw Jiang (Takeshi Kaneshiro) and ends up joining a gang of bandits led by the brash and brazen Zhao (Andy Lau). Realizing that the only way to survive during such times is to join the fight, Pang, Zhao, and Jiang form their own army and offer their services to the Qing. Bounded by their blood oath, the sworn brothers lay down their lives for victory on the battlefield, but their brotherhood is tested by politics, personal ambition, and rivalry for the hand of Zhao's wife.

Source: *YesAsia.com*

The movie set during the Taiping Rebellion, during the “chaos of the 14 years long civil war when 70 million people died in war or from starvation“, as the viewers are informed in the opening of the movie, became another costly co-production between China and Hong Kong. However, the director Chen Kexin (Peter Chan) decided not to tell the story of the leader of rebellion Hong Xiuguan, who claimed to be a younger brother of Jesus Christ, neither the story about the decline of corrupted imperial court (that was previously told in Zhang Yimou's *Curse of Golden Flower* and Feng Xiaogang's *Banquet*), but about people who were by the difficulties of their lives forced to stand between these two sides. No one is the possessor of the ultimate truth and no one is a true evil in this movie, when the overall situation is the agent of doing. In this sense the movie is similar to the *Battle of Wits* or *Hero*, showing the dilemma of Chinese people during difficult times and as such stands in the opposition to movies showing clearly foreign enemy when Chinese people are possessors of good, morality or wisdom (*Tokyo Trial*, *Purple Sunset*).

The Warlords is not a nationalistic movie in essence, but it bears a relevance to this issue. There are three main themes related to nationalism recurring in the movie: *Reference to Chinese Cultural Symbols, Chinese Heroism and Suffering of Chinese from Civil Wars and Rebellions against Government. The Reference to Chinese*

Cultural Symbols in the movie is more often presented in the second half of the movie when the heroes moved from the poor village, gained power and wealth and can enjoy the comfort of watching Chinese opera in high-class pubs or doing tea ceremony in lavish Chinese carved houses. This theme indicates the changes in the setting – from the battlefield to the imperial court.

The other two themes, *Chinese Heroism* and *Suffering of Chinese from Civil Wars and Rebellions*, can tell the audience more about the message of the movie. The main characters are originally warlords who care just about themselves and their families. They become heroes when they decide to make free all the Chinese people, to stop the suffering of Chinese from wars and to bring peace to the nation. Even under Qing command they don't take sides. They want to fulfill their mission, their ideal. At this moment they reach the same point as Geli, the main character of *Battle of Wits*. However, when Geli remains committed to his path that he considers as the right one, *Warlords* are stucked in the intrigues of the imperial court, rivalry, pride and the hunger for power that brings them to the end.

Chen Kexin shows in the movie the failure of ideals, the dark period of Chinese history. *The Warlords* as such fall under the superstructure *Decline of China* defined by Smith.

The movie was not analyzed from this point of view in China neither in the West.

When Chinese media commented on the movie in terms of “biggest blockbuster“ and focused on its revenues, grandiose opening and star-studded cast, Western media considered *The Warlords* as a “redefinition of Chinese epic“. For example, *Newsweek* wrote: “While the action-packed war drama has stunning cinematography, with 1,520 extras in military costumes and impressive horse-riding sequences, it doesn't rely on flashy action-choreography or colorful costumes; three quarters of the movie is shot in near monochrome, and actors wear raglike clothing“ (“Redefining The Epic; China's latest big-budget drama has plenty of grit, gore and action but not a flying swordsman in sight,“ 2007). *Newsweek* also quoted producer Andre Morgan, saying that director Chen Kexin was trying in the *Warlords* to bring some realistic action that was seen in the biggest American films like *Saving Private Ryan* or *Braveheart*. Again, as in the case of the *Warriors of Heaven and Earth* the inspiration by Western movies was stressed out.

Table 15. Nationalistic Themes in *The Warlords*

Label	Examples
<i>Reference to Chinese</i>	Suzhou as a city rich in Chinese culture – setting in teahouse with Chinese scrolls.
<i>Cultural Symbols</i>	Repeated sequences of Chinese opera with the plot about betrayal (reminds Er-Hu

Label	Examples
	<p>how Pang betrayed him).</p> <p>Qing court officials playing Chinese chess while discussing military strategy.</p> <p>Fight in traditional Chinese opera symbolizing the real battle – capture of Nanking.</p> <p>References to the lunar calendar: Qing official to Pang: “I checked the lunar calendar. The 8th day of the 4th month will be the most auspicious time for your inauguration.”</p> <p>Pang conducting tea ceremony while waiting for the assassination of Er-hu.</p>
<i>Chinese Heroism</i>	<p>Pang: “My brothers...more than 1600 men...they all died. They were slaughtered one after another, no one survived.”</p> <p>Blood oath: “Join brotherhood today. We take the blood oath, those who bring us harm must die, a brother who harms another must die.”</p> <p>The decision of the men from the village to join the army and fight to bring prosperity and peace to their village.</p> <p>Jiang: “We are no longer bandits. Bandits kill for their own interest, but a hero sacrifices for others. I wanted to be a hero.”</p> <p>Er-hu going to Suzhou (enemy's city) to take some food for his starving brothers.</p> <p>Pang: “Men and women, all of us should be freed from oppression. That's what we are fighting for.”</p> <p>Pang to Er-hu: “If Kai army arrives first to Nanjing, those thousands of civilians are dead. I promise you, after Nanking there will be peace.”</p>
<i>Suffering of Chinese from Disunited China and/or Civil Wars</i>	<p>Jiang: “Noone cared. Famine was everywhere. We either robbed or died.”</p> <p>Scene when warlords under Qing are conquering first city: dirty, poor, frightened people are hiding, babies are crying. Soldiers are rapig innocent women.</p> <p>Famine in besieged Suzhou. Suzhou civilian: “We will soon start to eat each other.”</p> <p>Suzhou governor to Er-hu: “As long as I live, the people of Suzhou would never be free. Spare my soldiers. Don't make the civilians suffer any more.”</p>

Assembly (Ji jie hao), 2007

Director: Feng Xiaogang

Writer: Liu Heng (also working on the screenplay for *The Knot*) adaptation of Yang Jingyuan's novel *Guan Si* based on a real story of a veteran army captain

Cast: Zhang Hayun, Yuan Wanlong, Tang Yan, Deng Chao, Lian Fan

Production: Beijing Film Co-Production Corporation

Running time: 124 minutes

Chinese awards:

Beijing Student Film Festival: Jury Award for Best Film

Synopsis: Assembly opens on the battlefield in 1948 during China's Civil War. The Ninth Company of the People's Liberation Army led by brash Captain Gu Zidi (Zhang Hanyu) are sent out to defend a mine from the advancing Kuomintang troops. Given an essentially impossible task, the vastly outnumbered Ninth Company are ordered to hold their positions until they hear the bugle assembly call. Of the 48 members of the Ninth Company, Gu alone survives the devastating defeat, only to find that he has become a forgotten man, written off as missing in action, just like his fallen comrades. Gu struggles to keep alive the legacy of the Ninth Company and finally becomes honored as a war hero.

Source: *YesAsia.com*

Feng Xiaogang, one of the Chinese most prominent directors, who scored in 21st century with quite a lot of movies (*Sorry Baby*, 2000; *A Sigh*, 2000; *Big Shot's Funeral*, 2001; *Cell Phone* 2002; *A World Without Thieves*, 2004; *The Banquet*, 2006) decided to

do the first commercial movie about China's civil war. The production of *Assembly* cost 80 million RMB, but the movie proved to be big success in China, becoming the second biggest box-office hit just after *The Warlords* in 2007. The movie was praised for its realistic portrayal of war, in China and abroad, as well. It was widely reported that *Assembly* is a Chinese answer to Hollywood's *Saving Private Ryan* and as so, the movie started to be called the Chinese version of *Saving Private Ryan*.

Western media such *The Times* and *The Guardian* focused on the realism of the movie that they put in contrast to the Chinese propaganda war movies. "Those old movies were all fake. The lead characters always want to fight and be a hero, whereas the truth is that most people are reluctant to fight. And the men showed no fear, which is completely unreal. The men in my film have to fight their fear as well as the enemy," Feng Xiaogang was quoted by *The Times* ("Feng Xiaogang has the West in his sights with *Assembly*," 2007). *The Guardian* emphasized that Feng's film "eschews triumphalism and the customary patriotic rhetoric" ("*Assembly*: Review", 2007).

However, the domestic media hold another point of view. According to *Xinhua*, Feng's movie "seeks to be entertaining, patriotic, and a box-office success" ("*Assembly*: Answer to *Saving Private Ryan*", 2007). *China Daily* even published an editorial trying to answer the question: What should we make of *Assembly*?:

War-themed feature films have been a staple of Chinese cinema,

especially since the founding of the People's Republic. And there is a reason for such a large number of them being made over the years - a strong political demand. However, it is not a good enough reason if we only focus on politics. The Chinese society maintains a historical and psychological craving for war dramas. Looking at this phenomenon from an historical point of view, it shows the Chinese viewing public wants to accord the nation's struggles in the past century, a cultural recognition through the most accessible medium - the cinema. From the psychological point of view, Assembly represents an artistic attempt to carry on a tradition born of the humiliations the nation has suffered as a weakling for decades before the founding of the People's Republic.

(“More to war movie than meets the eye“, 2007).

In this sense, the movie can be perceived as building on national sentiment reminding audience about the down-to-earth heroes of the war, who were forgotten and had to fight for the recognition of their deeds. The themes related to nationalism that appear in the movie are: *Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols, Chinese Heroism and Misconducting Enemy.*

The reference to communist China state symbols was pre-determined by the movie's setting and topic, however this theme plays a more important role when the

main character is seeking recognition from the state he and his soldiers were fighting for. When the other two themes are nationalistic in essence, their portrayal in the movie differs from truly nationalistic movies such as *Charging out Amazon*, *Hero* or *Purple Sunset*. The heroes in *Assembly* do mistakes and some of them even show fear from death. They are still heroes, they prove their courage after all, they sacrifice their lives and the movie has a clear message: they deserve to be immortalized despite not being perfect.

Also the portrayal of enemy differs from other movies, when nationalists are not demonized neither ridiculed. They are even called “brothers”, who share the same fear from death as PLA soldiers. The power of the movie comes from its realism showing despair of a single man who gave up everything for his country and didn't gain anything. As a conclusion, he and his men are honored in the end of the movie, finally finding peace. This is probably also the moment when the audience watching Gu finally receiving the communist medal can cry with him. As such, the movie tells a story about *Chinese suffering and seek for recognition (internal)* from its own people.

Table 16. Nationalistic Themes in *Assembly*

Label	Examples
<i>Reference to Communist</i>	Opening and ending of the movie with war heroes' memorial crowned by red star on the top.
<i>China Ideology and State</i>	

Label	Examples
<i>Symbols</i>	<p>Mao Zedong's poster in Chinese military base in North Korea.</p> <p>1955 – Wen River Battle Site – red flags, officers in uniforms.</p> <p>Ceremony acknowledging Gu's soldiers as heroes – uniforms, medals, Chinese flags, salves.</p>
<i>Chinese Heroism</i>	<p>PLA officer: “In our last battle, the 3rd battalion's 9th company fought bravely without giving up. They suffered heavy casualties.”</p> <p>As a punishment for stealing KMT uniforms Gu Zidi and his company is sent to the front even though they don't have enough artillery neither soldiers. Their mission is to defend an old mine.</p> <p>Captain to Gu: “If you don't hear the bugle call, even if you are the last man standing, you will keep fighting.”</p> <p>Gu: “Yes, sir.”</p> <p>Gu giving his helmet to young political officer: “Bullets are like dogs. They bite just those who are scared.”</p> <p>Gu's company fighting against stronger and better equipped nationalists' soldiers.</p> <p>Soldiers from Gu's company helping each other, sharing food, protecting each other.</p> <p>Gu to soldier Wang: “If I get wounded like that, don't bother with the bandages. Save them for someone who really needs them.”</p> <p>Gu to the company: I haven't heard a bugle call. I can't order a retreat. Sorry, guys. Leave, if you want, I won't stop you. I didn't hear anything, so I am staying.”</p> <p>Officer: “This (letters) is written by our dead brothers. Some are martyrs.”</p> <p>Narrator: “The entire 9th company was sacrificed in the battle, only Gu Zidi survived.”</p> <p>Gu Zidi with pride putting helmets on the graves of dead communist soldiers.</p> <p>Gu Zidi talking to officials: “My company, all my 47 brothers, fought to death</p>

Label	Examples
	<p>bravely. How could they be called missing in action?“</p> <p>Soldiers from Gu Zidi's company finally acknowledged to be heroes. Official letter statement: “All died as heroes for the liberation of the Chinese people, now they are posthumously decorated as revolutionary heroes.“</p> <p>All Gu's soldiers received medals of valour.</p> <p>Ceremony proclaiming Gu's soldiers as heroes: “Heroes of the 9th company, you can all rest in peace.“</p>
<i>Misconducting Enemy</i>	<p>Gu Zidi: “Our brothers of the Nationalists' 168th Division. This is captain Gu Zidi from the Special 2nd Division of the Liberation Army. I would like to greet you on behalf of my company. We offer you two choices. You can get bullets or maybe you'd prefer dumplings. If you had enough, trade your weapons with chopsticks. Sit down with your brothers here in 9th company. We can all eat dumplings.“</p> <p>Gu Zidi doesn't want to accept surrender because KMT soldiers killed his political officer: “Tell them to defend themselves.“</p> <p>Gu and his company being killed one after another while defending the old mine.</p>

5.2 Themes and Structures among the 14 Movies

Most of the previous researches on movies' themes and structures were trying to find differences among movies from the same genre (Wright: *Six Guns and Society*, 1975) or done on the same topic (Devin: *Vietnam at 24 Frames per Second*, 1999). This thesis took another approach, focusing on various movies and trying to find similarities among them. These similarities are represented by the occurrence of defined nationalistic themes. As has been shown already, 22 nationalistic themes were found in the selected 14 movies. Table 17. shows their occurrence among the movies.

Chinese Heroism became to be the most common theme - altogether, it appeared in seven movies. This theme consists of characteristics such as courage, self-sacrifice and brotherhood. Heroes of all the seven movies (*Hero*, *Charging out Amazon*, *Warriors of Heaven and Earth*, *The Promise*, *Battle of Wits*, *The Warlords*, and *Assembly*) were sharing these characteristics from which the most important one was the readiness to sacrifice their lives for the country (in *Hero* for unification of China, in *Charging out Amazon* for acquiring honor for China, in *Warriors of Heaven and Earth* for defense of China against Turks, in *The Promise* for fellow countrymen) or greater good (in *Battle of Wits* and *Warlords* for innocent civilians, in *Assembly* for communism). Even though characters of the heroes differed, this shared feature qualified them to be heroes. The concept of a hero is worth more attention. Communist China has a history of model heroes that people have been asked to follow and learn from them. Now, as one can see, the usage of patriotic hero is widespread in Chinese commercial movies. These movies retell the Chinese history from the perspectives of people who love their country, or offer stories of these patriots (exception in this category is the movie *Charging out Amazon* that is not commercial movie in essence - it was sponsored by the government and most of the non-Chinese characters in the movie were delivered by students from Beijing universities).

Table 17. Themes' Occurance among the Selected Movies

Theme	Films	Year
<i>Chinese Heroism</i>	<i>Hero</i>	2002
	<i>Charging out Amazon</i>	2002
	<i>Warriors of Heaven and Earth</i>	2003
	<i>The Promise</i>	2005
	<i>Battle of Wits</i>	2006
	<i>The Warlords</i>	2007
	<i>Assembly</i>	2007
<i>Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols</i>	<i>Red Turn</i>	2001
	<i>C.E.O.</i>	2002
	<i>Charging out Amazon</i>	2002
	<i>Deng Xiaoping in 1928</i>	2004
	<i>The Knot</i>	2006
	<i>Assembly</i>	2007
<i>Reference to Chinese Cultural Icons</i>	<i>Hero</i>	2002
	<i>The Knot</i>	2006
	<i>Curse of Golden Flower</i>	2006
	<i>The Warlords</i>	2007
<i>Pride of Chinese</i>	<i>Purple Sunset</i>	2001
	<i>C.E.O.</i>	2002
	<i>Charging out Amazon</i>	2002
	<i>Tokyo Trial</i>	2006
<i>Superiority of Chinese</i>	<i>Purple Sunset</i>	2001
	<i>C.E.O.</i>	2002
	<i>Charging out Amazon</i>	2002
	<i>Tokyo Trial</i>	2006
<i>Suffering of Chinese from Disunited China or from Civil Wars and Rebellions Against Government</i>	<i>Hero</i>	2002
	<i>Battle of Wits</i>	2006
	<i>The Knot</i>	2006
	<i>The Warlords</i>	2007
<i>Suffering of Chinese</i>	<i>Tokyo Trial</i>	2006
<i>Evil Enemy</i>	<i>Purple Sunset</i>	2001
	<i>Warriors of Heaven and Earth</i>	2003
	<i>Deng Xiaoping in 1928</i>	2004
	<i>Tokyo Trial</i>	2006
<i>Misconducting Enemy</i>	<i>The Knot</i>	2006

	<i>Assembly</i>	2007
<i>Enemy as a Liar</i>	<i>Red Turn</i>	2001
	<i>Tokyo Trial</i>	2006
<i>Irrational Enemy</i>	<i>Purple Sunset</i>	2001
<i>Respect to the Chinese Political/State Authority</i>	<i>Red Turn</i>	2001
	<i>Hero</i>	2002
	<i>Warriors of Heaven and Earth</i>	2003
	<i>Curse of Golden Flower</i>	2006
<i>Wisdom of Chinese Political/State Authority</i>	<i>Red Turn</i>	2001
	<i>Hero</i>	2002
	<i>C.E.O.</i>	2002
<i>Injustice/Arrogance towards China</i>	<i>Charging out Amazon</i>	2002
	<i>C.E.O.</i>	2002
	<i>Tokyo Trial</i>	2006
<i>Landscape/Beauty of China</i>	<i>Hero</i>	2002
	<i>The Promise</i>	2005
<i>Greatness of China</i>	<i>Hero</i>	2002
	<i>Curse of Golden Flower</i>	2006
<i>Emphasis on the Preservation of Chinese Culture</i>	<i>Hero</i>	2002
	<i>Warriors of Heaven and Earth</i>	2003
<i>China's Modernity</i>	<i>C.E.O.</i>	2002
	<i>The Knot</i>	2006
<i>Communist China as a Liberator</i>	<i>Red Turn</i>	2001
	<i>The Knot</i>	2006
<i>Defense of Homeland</i>	<i>Battle of Wits</i>	2006
<i>The Knot among all People of Chinese Culture (the Idea of Chineseness)</i>	<i>The Knot</i>	2006
<i>Loyalty among the People of the Same Origins</i>	<i>The Promise</i>	2005

The following two themes, *Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols*, and *Reference to Chinese Cultural Icons*, tell more about movies' setting. While the

first one appears in movies dealing with issues from modern Chinese history and in classical revolutionary movies such as *Red Turn* or *Deng Xiaoping in 1928* (the theme is here expressed through what Smith called “language of nationalism“, i.e. usage of symbols such as flags, uniforms, coinage, etc.), the other one occurs in films about ancient and imperial China (the only exception here is *The Knot*, set in 20th century; however, here the reference to Chinese cultural icons is limited to Taiwan that is portrayed as a cape of traditional Chinese culture). It is interesting to note that movies from the first category were all backed by the government and the logo of China Film Bureau and SARFT appears in the beginning of all of them. On the other hand, the movies from the other category (with the exception of *The Knot*) are purely commercial movies with stars from greater China area. Therefore, it can be concluded that more distant Chinese history is perceived by filmmakers as a topic with a great chance to lure the audience. And, as the box-office results show, their assumptions were proved to be right.

The other four themes: *Pride of Chinese*, *Superiority of Chinese*, *Injustice/Arrogance towards China*, and *Suffering of Chinese* are related, and appear as a consequence of what Gries called “the Century of Humiliation“. According to Gries, the painful past memories led in 1990s to victimization narrative (blaming other countries for China's suffering and her degradation) that superseded to victor narrative

presented in previous years. The victimization element has been found in three movies .

In all three cases, West is being blamed for arrogance towards China looking down upon her. Japan is the only foreign actor being blamed for China's suffering. However, in all movies the *Injustice/Arrogance towards China* and *Suffering of Chinese* themes are accompanied by *Pride of Chinese* and *Superiority of Chinese* themes. Then the meaning is: even when others are killing our people or look down upon our nation, we never lose our pride and thanks to our superiority (the superiority is expressed in two ways: moral superiority, and superiority in performance or efficiency) we finally succeed, reach satisfaction and recognition by others. As such, it can not be said that victor narrative is superseded by victimization one because these narratives including victimization element are becoming victorious in the end. In sum, it can be said that “restoration nationalism“ mentioned by Wang (2005) has been still present in Chinese 21st century movies that are very strongly expressing the wish for China's regeneration, self-respect and, most importantly, respect from other countries.

While the *Suffering of Chinese* caused by foreign nationals is strongly expressed just in one movie (*Tokyo Trial*), the theme *Suffering of Chinese from Disunited China, Civil Wars or Rebellions against Government* is much more present in selected blockbusters. These movies are set in more distant Chinese history (again, with the exception of *The Knot*), when filmmakers surprisingly decided not to present the

Chinese golden era, but China's dark age. Then, two movies (*Hero*, *Battle of Wits*) present conclusion to this suffering – unification of China. In *The Knot*, which is the special case in this category, the “suffering“ theme is strengthened with the theme *The Knot among all People of Chinese Culture (the Idea of Chineseness)*. The movie is dealing with China-Taiwan issue and argues that people from Taiwan and China are the same (brothers and sisters) and are suffering because of the unfriendly cross-strait relations. The movie is very clearly seeking re-unification of China. *The Warlords* are the least nationalistic movie in this category when the movie is just showing the suffering but does not offer any solution.

Together with heroism, the “enemy“ theme was the most common one. In total, this theme appeared in seven movies. However, distinctive variations led the coders to split the category into four themes: *Evil Enemy*, *Misconducting Enemy*, *Enemy as a liar*, and *Misconducting Enemy*. The enemies were: Japanese (*Purple Sunset*, *Tokyo Trial*), Kuomintang (*Deng Xiaoping in 1928*, *The Knot*, *Assembly*), Turks (*Warriors of Heaven and Earth*) and capitalist (*Red Turn*). Japanese were portrayed in both movies (*Purple Sunset*, *Tokyo Trial*) as “evil“ enjoying killing of Chinese people. Moreover, in both movies the “evil theme“ was accompanied by another one, strengthening the badness of Japanese. In *Purple Sunset*, they were portrayed not just as evil, but also irrational. This portrayal resulted in a caricature of “Japanese devils“. In *Tokyo Trial*,

the theme *Enemy as Liar* is added to the *Evil Enemy* theme. Therefore, Japanese are portrayed not just as ruthless, but also as unwilling to admit atrocities they committed and to express their regret and apology.

The portrayal of Kuomintang is much more variable. In *Deng Xiaoping in 1928* Kuomintang is portrayed as wise evil enemy killing (without any emotions) people who sympathize with communist ideology and later on displaying their heads in the streets. However, in *The Knot* the KMT is not portrayed as evil, anymore. KMT soldiers are seen as being rude, and Taiwan under KMT portrayed as full of fear, however there is no footage showing KMT killing or physically hurting people, neither enjoying their suffering. In *Assembly*, KMT soldiers are still enemies, however, they appear to be normal people, too. They are even called “brothers“ by communist soldiers and despite being communist enemies fighting with them in a war they are not portrayed as enjoying the killing. It can be said that Chinese movies moved from horrifying KMT towards more realist portrayal.

The other enemy portrayed as evil are Turks, however, they appear as an enemy just in one movie, the same is true for capitalist (businessmen) being portrayed as selfish liars usurping people in revolutionary movie *Red Turn*. Traditionally, there is also a category of Westerners as enemies in the movies dealing with the era of 19th and the beginning of 20th century. Western enemy appeared for example in movies like

Opium War (1997) or *Red River Valley* (1997) that were released around the time when Hong Kong was about to be returned to China.

In the selected movies, however, Westerners were not enemies, however they were not friends either. They shared one characteristic – arrogance towards Chinese people.

The other nationalistic themes that were found are related to Chinese political authority that is portrayed as respected (especially when it comes to the emperor; this theme usually appears in films set in more distant Chinese history) and wise. In these movies (with the exception of *Curse of Golden Flower*) the political authority becomes savior of people during hard times, having a vision for the nation and bringing peace, security and/or prosperity. As such, these movies are lobbying for respect, loyalty and trust towards Chinese political authority whose intentions for the nation are always good. Worth mentioning is also the role of imperial palace that appeared in five out of 14 selected movies (*Hero*, *Warriors of Heaven and Earth*, *The Promise*, *Curse of Golden Flower*, *The Warlords*) and to the great extent shows the fascination of filmmakers by the Chinese imperial past. In *Hero* and *Curse of Golden Flower* the greatness of imperial palace is being used to signify the greatness of China, and in *Warriors of Heaven and Earth* the imperial palace becomes the possessor of precious buddhist relic that gives the emperor the ultimate wisdom and brings the era of golden

age to the Chinese people.

When it comes to portrayal of China, the country is being described as “great“, some movies also emphasize the beauty of China's landscape, or China's breathtaking development. The other nationalistic themes found in more than one movie are:

Emphasis on the Preservation of Chinese Culture (in historical movies), and

Communist China as Liberator (in propaganda movies as *The Knot* and *Red Turn*).

Of course, not all the themes bear the same importance. While *Heroism*, sometimes accompanied by *Pride of Chinese* and *Superiority of Chinese* (themes relating to characteristics of the main character) together with contradictory *Enemy* or *Arrogance towards China* build the main structure, themes such as *Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols*, *Reference to Chinese Cultural Icons*, *Landscape of China*, *Greatness of China*, and *China´s Modernity* are less important because they relate just to the setting of the movie and accompany the main themes.

Among the other main themes are also *Respect to the Chinese Political Authority* and *Wisdom of Chinese Political Authority*. These two themes are related and show the political authority as standing above the people. These themes accompany *Heroism* and/or *Superiority of Chinese* themes, because the political authority itself is portrayed as a hero, or as standing on the hero´s side.

The Knot among all People of Chinese Culture and *Loyalty among the People of*

the Same Origins are themes with different portrayal but the same message. When *Loyalty* theme that appears in *The Promise* set in mythical China is more general calling for love and loyalty based on common roots, *The Knot* goes further and promotes this idea in case of China and Taiwan.

Pride of Chinese, Superiority of Chinese, Injustice/Arrogance towards China, and *Suffering of Chinese* are another main themes. As has been mentioned already, these themes usually appear together telling the story about strength and devotion of people that finally leads to the victory. To this basic structure, *Enemy* theme is sometimes added stressing the importance of the victory over something bad, or evil. In case of movies telling about recent successes of Chinese people, *Reference to Communist China Ideology and State Symbols* can be identified.

The other common thematic structure was comprised by *Heroism, Suffering of Chinese* and *Reference to Chinese Cultural Icons* themes. This structure was telling a story about past heroes always thinking for Chinese people trying to bring them peace and prosperity. The *Reference to Chinese cultural Icons* theme tell us that these stories are set in pre-communist China.

5.3 Superstructures among the 14 Movies

As has been mentioned, themes construct a storyline (structure) that conveys the main

idea or message of the movie (superstructure). Gries' nationalistic narratives (*China as a victor*, *China as a raped woman*) and Smith's ethnic myths (*Temporal origins*, *Location and migration*, *Ancetry*, *Heroic age*, *Decline*, *Regeneration*) were taken as a basis. However, also new superstructures were found: *Chinese suffering and search for recognition (internal)*, *China's dark age*, and *China seeking re-unification*.

In general, fourteen selected movies fall under eight superstructures shown in Table 18. *Chinese search for recognition (external)/China as a final victor*, *Regeneration of China*, *Chinese suffering and search for recognition (internal)*, and *Decline of China* being the more common ones. What is their message to the audience? *Chinese search for recognition/China as a final victor* structure (*C.E.O.*, *Charging out Amazon*, *Tokyo trial*) says that to be proud, stubborn and hardworking is good because thanks to these characteristics one can finally bring victory and glory to China as did successful businessman (*C.E.O.*), outstanding soldiers (*Charging out Amazon*), and righteous judge (*Tokyo Trial*). These movies are showing that China has a lot to offer to the world and Chinese people have a lot of idols to look up to.

The *Regeneration of China* narrative was well defined by Smith, who wrote that tells a story about actions needed to accession of the golden age. The selected movies present introductions to three golden eras: China under Mao Zedong (*Red Turn*), China unified under the Qin dynasty (*Hero*), and China under Tang dynasty (*Warriors of*

Heaven and Earth). These movies are set in times preceding the golden eras and present the problems that were needed to be solved for China's ascent. These problems includes defeat of enemies, assertion of plans of the great leaders and/or unification of China.

Table 18. Nationalistic Superstructures of the Selected Movies

Structure	Movie	Year
<i>China as a raped woman</i>	<i>Purple Sunset</i>	2001
<i>Chinese search for recognition (external)/China as a final victor</i>	<i>C.E.O.</i>	2002
	<i>Charging out Amazon</i>	2002
	<i>Tokyo trial</i>	2006
<i>Regeneration of China</i>	<i>Red Turn</i>	2001
	<i>Hero</i>	2002
	<i>Warriors of Heaven and Earth</i>	2003
<i>Chinese suffering and search for recognition (internal)</i>	<i>Battle of Wits</i>	2006
	<i>Assembly</i>	2007
<i>Decline of China</i>	<i>Curse of Golden Flower</i>	2006
	<i>The Warlords</i>	2007
<i>China's dark age</i>	<i>Deng Xiaoping in 1928</i>	2004
<i>Temporal origins</i>	<i>The Promise</i>	2005
<i>China seeking re-unification</i>	<i>The Knot</i>	2006

The structure *Chinese suffering and search for recognition (internal)* is in contrast to *Chinese search for recognition (external)* superstructure focused on internal problems

that are long civil wars letting people to suffer and to lose their dignity. These movies have strong anti-war message.

The superstructure *Decline of China* is similar to the previous one, however, here the focus is being put on the rottenness of Chinese political authority (imperial family). These movies therefore possibly bear a relevance to Chang's (2000) argument that for Chinese the bond is much more based on the culture than loyalty to political authority. The movies retelling China's past bring the viewers to the various periods with various emperors from different dynasties. However, Chinese nation is still the actor in these movies. It is still Chinese nation and Chinese culture that is surviving and as such these movies bring stories about the thews of Chinese people.

All of the movies included without an exception refer to Chinese history or recent events. There are movies from the mythical, ancient, and imperial China (*Hero*, *Warriors of Heaven and Earth*, *The Promise*, *Curse of Golden Flower*, *Battle of Wits*, *The Warlords*), movies from the Century of Humiliation (*Purple Sunset*, *Tokyo Trial*), classical revolutionary movies (*Red Turn*, *Deng Xiaoping in 1928*), movies referring to the conflict with KMT (*The Knot*, *Assembly*), and movies based on true stories of new Chinese heroes (*C.E.O.*, *Charging out Amazon*). Moreover, almost all of the movies act like historical annals, presenting written introduction (sometimes accompanied with a map of China) to the year or era in which the movie is being set and offering the written

postscript in the end of the movie (describing what happened later). Most of the movies fall under the first category, and are set in more distant China's history, or in other words the pre-communist China. In these movies, the emphasis on Chinese culture and heroism is being put. This can work very well for the government, because, as Zhao argued, the Chinese tradition was used to link communist China with its non-communist past even by the Party in a propaganda campaign of education in patriotism that was launched after the crackdown on Tiananmen (Zhao, 2004, p. 9). Classical historical revolutionary movies can be still found in the list (*Red Turn, Deng Xiaoping in 1928*), however they comprise just a minor part.

Gries (2004) argued that in 1990s the traditional Maoist victory narrative “was superseded by the victimization one“ (China as a raped woman) (p. 48) . According to Wright (1975) blockbusters represent a popular social myth and the structure of the myth (story) corresponds with “the conceptual needs of social and self-understanding required by the dominant social institution of that period“ (p. 14). Wright analyzed 57 movies that were made between 1931 and 1972. This time span enabled him to trace back the shifts in the movies' structures and superstructures and to uncover their social meaning. This is not possible in this study, because the time span here makes less than ten years. However, Table 18 shows slight shift from optimistic superstructures (*China as a final victor, Regeneration of China*) in the first years on 21st century to the

less optimistic ones (*Chinese suffering, Decline of China*) in latter years. The possible reason could be the euphoria of Chinese filmmakers from China's development at the turn of the century, and latter acknowledgement of Chinese problems such as the threat of social unrest caused by the growing disparities among rich and poor, and corruption among government officials. This argument can be backed by the fact that these movies are stressing Chinese culture and suffering of Chinese from disunited China or from civil wars and rebellions against government. As such, they point out shared roots and memories of Chinese people, and call for peace.