Globalizing Chinese Martial Arts Cinema
A Case Study of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

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中文摘要

逆向文化流動指的是從東方到西方的文化傳播。該說法是針對文化帝國主義理論所預設的文化由西方向東方的單向性流動觀點而提出的。本文以中國武俠片《臥虎藏龍》為案例，在文化/經濟的雙重層面上，研究一種非西方文化是如何被全球化，進而探討如何促進逆向文化流動。全球化並非西方文化霸權化。全球化中對地方特性的重視和人們對地方特色文化產品的日益提高的需求有助於逆向文化流動的形成和發展。依據對全球化生產和消費動態關係的深度認識，並立足於地方文化和地方力量，地方公司有機會和西方跨國公司在國際市場上進行競爭，並成功地向西方傳播自己的文化和產品。通過對本土文化和人才資源的充分利用，以及和其他本土公司或跨國企業的策略性合作，地方公司有可能突破西方的市場障礙，促進從東方到西方，從邊緣到中心，從弱勢到強勢的文化流動。

關鍵字：全球化，本土化，文化轉移，普遍化，特殊化，帝國主義理論，本土媒介，全球聯盟，臥虎藏龍
Abstract

Reversed cultural flow refers to the cultural flow from the East to the West. Looking at one specific case of Chinese martial arts film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in the cultural/economic interface, this study focuses on how to globalize a non-Western local culture and how to stimulate reversed cultural flow, against the odds predicted by cultural imperialism. The basic premise is that the global trend of “local particularity” – the preference and the construction of local difference around the world, and the demand and interest in local cultural products – encourages the cultural flow from the East to the West. By moving with an in-depth understanding of global production and consumption dynamics and grounding their actions in local cultures and strengths, local firms have a chance to be global contenders with the Western based TNCs, and then to promote their local cultural products to the Western markets. Through the exploration of local cultural resources and talents, and the strategic alliance with local or global companies, local firms may conquer the limitation of resources and the obstacles of Western markets, and then spread the cultural flows from the East to the West, from the periphery to the center, from the subordinate to the dominant.

Keywords: globalization, localization, transculturation, universalization, particularization, imperialism, local agents, global alliance, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*
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Chapter One: Introduction and Analytical Framework

Introduction

In the late twentieth century, the increasing global flow of goods, technology, information, people and practices dissolves the boundaries across national cultures and national economies and cultivates a consciousness of the world as a single place. Reflecting recent shifts in global capitalism and academic interests in transactional economic and cultural flows, scholars have begun to turn their attention to the traffic of cultural products in the interconnected global context. They have examined the flow of Euro-American media and cultural products — such as Disneyland, McDonalds and CNN news — that spread around the world and explored the ways in which they have been locally appropriated and remade. However, little attention has been paid to the inflow of non-Western cultural products into the Western market. This gap is particularly striking in the wake of the phenomenon of “eastern wave”, the increasing flow of cultural influence from the East to the West. The art-house veneration of Japanese director Kurosawa in the second half of the 20th century, the United States’ Hong Kong Kung Fu craze in the 1970s, the global success of Japanese game and television cartoon in the 1990s, and the hit of Asian movies in the past few years, would seem to question the hitherto unchallenged US hegemony in the export and circulation of global entertainment products, and in global culture itself (Allison, 2000). In fact, the concepts of cultural imperialism, westernization and Americanization that centre on “the increasing hegemony of a particular central culture, the diffusion of western or American values, consumer goods and lifestyles” (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 79) have been heavily criticized in academic circles and gradually lost its popularity since the late 1980s. The complex connectivity of social relationship, the increasing interaction of cultures, and audiences’ or the audience’s
active reception of cultural products have made these arguments problematic. More and more scholars believe that the increasing global traffic will not result in the domination of certain cultures and the destruction of other more vulnerable ones.

Thus, describing the transnational distribution as a far less coherent or culturally directed process, the concept of globalization is more valuable in the search for a coherent understanding of the historical forces that are shaping the socio-political realities of the current world (Barker, 1997; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 1991, 2000). The view of globalization does not rule out the existence of other cultural flows, however, past discussions focus too much on the western origin of globalization and the flow of Euro-American media and cultural product. Little research has been done on the global distribution of non-western cultural products and their influence, which is an inherent part of the complex process of globalization. In order to understand the dynamics of global integration and interaction better, further study on flows of influence from non-western countries to western countries—which may be described as “reversed flow” in comparison with the dominant western flow—is not only necessary, but also emergent.

This study is just about the globalization of non-western cultural products, by examining one specific case of Chinese export, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The central research question is: how will *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* serve as a good case for studying reversed cultural flow, against the odds predicted by cultural imperialism? It explores the ways in which non-western cultures can be appropriated and remade for the global market, by looking at the specific case in the

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1 The purpose of using the term “reversed” in this study is to be against the odds predicted by imperialism that global flow is a one-way traffic from the West to East and western or American cultures will dominate the whole world and destroy other cultures, and also to arouse the attention to the influence of non-western countries and their cultures, which have been ignored for a long time. Having defined non-western cultural flow as “reversed”, it does not mean that this trend opposes the process of globalization. Instead, it is an inherent part of the complex globalization. However, there is some limitation in the application of the term “reversed flow”. It is meaningful only in a certain period of globalization when Euro-American flow holds a predominant status in the global traffic. Western domination is not necessarily a character of globalization. It is just one period of the long history, occurring particularly during the past two hundred years, and it has been in change since the late 20th century. When this western predominance disappears, it is not necessary to call non-western flow “reversed”.

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cultural/economic interface, leading to the consideration of how to stimulate reversed flows in global traffic, and how to improve the competency of non-western cultural products in global competition.

As a Mandarin-language martial-arts drama, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is based on the fourth novel of the five-part series by Wang Dulu (1909-1977). Set in 19th century China, the film begins with a sword and develops as a mixture of martial arts and two romance stories – one about middle-aged repression and regret and the other about youthful abandon and confusion. Since the film’s language is Mandarin with subtitles, and it is a martial arts film that tells the story of Xia (swordsman’s story), Jiang-hu (swordsman’s world), - two concepts in Chinese culture that might be difficult for some foreigners to understand, no one expected the film to be a global blockbuster. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, however, turned out to be more than a blockbuster. It is a record-breaking phenomenon. Handled by Columbia-Tri Star Film Distributors International and Good Machine International in the international market, the film had opened in the number one box office position in Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Paris (and the biggest opening ever for an Asian movie, the number two box office position in its opening week in France). In the North American market, where audiences generally spurn sub-titled movies, this Mandarin film with subtitles had become the highest grossing foreign language film ever in North America, and is the first foreign language film to break the US$100 million mark in box office receipts. It also broke the box office records of foreign language films in England, France, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. At the worldwide box

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2 Mandarin is the official language in Mainland China.
3 Business Wire, February 12, 2001, Monday
office, it earned about US$280 million, including US$128 million in the North American market, and it is the highest grossing Chinese language film in history.

Besides its success at the box office, *Crouching Tiger* is also a big winner in various film festivals. It was named one of the best films of year 2000 by Times, scooping People's Choice Award in the 25th Annual Toronto International Film Festival, two awards in 2001 Golden Globes, four awards in 2001 Chicago Film Critics Awards, four awards in 2001 British Academy of Film and Television Arts, and most importantly, four awards in the 73rd Academy Awards, just one less than the biggest winner *Gladiator*. The 10 Oscar nominations it garnered are the most ever received by a foreign language film in Academy history, breaking the previous record seven held by Italy's *Life Is Beautiful*. Moreover, it is the first Asian film nominated for best picture. "It is amazing that a Chinese film has 10 nominations and is up for best picture," said Robert Rehme, President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In the past 72 years, only six non-English speaking films - all European (French, Swedish and Italian) - have been nominated for the Oscar's biggest prize. None won the Oscar, but none was as close as *Crouching Tiger*, named the year's best film by the Los Angeles Film Critics' Association. Even its director Ang Lee was surprised by the success, "in my wildest dreams, I never thought this movie would go so far".

The surprising success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* around the world has made it a good case for studying the globalization of non-western cultural products. Based on a cultural-economic framework, this study examines the preparation,
production and distribution process of the film and explores the ways in which a local culture can be globally appropriated and remade and then be effectively promoted in the global market. In the rest of this chapter, I shall first exam the existing global context that makes the globalization of eastern cultural products possible and provides theoretical framework for this study. The notion of globalization in connection with other related concepts such as imperialism, glocalization, localization, particularization and universalization, will be explained in this part. Looking at the specific case, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in the analytical framework provided, chapters 2, 3, and 4 exam how the alliance of local firms, global intellectuals, a Hollywood independent company and a Hollywood major could successfully transform a film based on the local culture into a global cinema hit, particularly in the US. Chapter 2 explains how and why such a film could get enough resources for its global production and distribution. It also includes a brief introduction of the film’s production and distribution companies and their collaboration. Chapter 3 focuses on the production process by examining how the filmmakers absorbed Hollywood formulas and western cultural elements into a Chinese martial art story. How did they maintain a sense of cultural authenticity while adapting to the needs of the global market? Chapter 4 explains the importance of distribution for the film, by exploring the film’s global distribution strategies and the innovative marketing campaigns in the North American market. The last chapter (chapter 5) is the conclusion of the study.

**Analytical Framework**

I. Globalization and Localization

**The critics of cultural imperialism theory**

In the increasingly interconnected world, cultural products from affluent core
countries especially America, have the greatest influence in determining the global consumption. Transnational corporations (TNCs), most of which are western based, distribute their products to almost any corner of the planet. In relation to the motion picture industry, Hollywood movies, which are controlled by seven major studios, hold around 85 percent of the world market (Segrave, 1997). This over-dominance of western media and cultural products has been criticized as kind of cultural imperialism, which is said to have a purpose of distributing western ideology, destroying the diversity of local cultures and spreading a homogeneous global culture (Schiller, 1979).

However, the complex connectivity of social relationship and the interdependence of different cultures have made such an argument problematic. While conceding the predominance of western media and cultural products in international communication, scholars dispute whether the global flow is necessarily a form of western or American domination or even a strictly one-way traffic. They argue that there is reverse flow from the periphery to the centre and between the nations in the periphery.

Clearly in the current world, not all global expansion is conducted by American or European-based companies, the assumption of the cultural imperialism. Financial giants of Australia, Asia and even Africa have discovered the lucrative Euro-American markets and have invested their capital there. Even Hollywood, which is located in the US, cannot escape from this global trend – it has drawn capital from around the world. In 1967, a subsidiary of Canadian company Seven Arts Production Ltd. acquired Warner and renamed it as Warner Bros.-Seven Arts Limited. Besides this, there are more recent examples of the globalization of Hollywood. Media baron Rupert Murdoch, who exercised control through his

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10 It was acquired in 1969 by the conglomerate Kinney national Service, Inc. In 1971 it was renamed Warner Communication.
Australian Company, News Corporation, bought Fox in 1985. In 1989, Sony, the giant electronics manufacturer from Japan, bought Columbia Pictures Entertainment. In 1990, MCA Inc. (owner of Universal) was purchased by the Matsushita Electrical Industrial Company of Japan. Five years later, Canadian conglomerate Seagram Co. got 80 percent of the MCA stake. Another Hollywood major studio, MGM/UA was also purchased by Pathe Communications Corporation with Italian financier Giancarlo Parretti in 1990. Two years later, French banking concern Credit Lyonnais took over the company and kept it for years.

The process of global integration not only manifests itself in inter-capitalist rivalry, but also in the enlarging size of non-western culture influx into western countries. The influence of non-western cultures and their products in the United States and Europe cannot be ignored. Moreover, with the rising of reception theory that views audiences as active readers of texts, some writers point out that the argument of cultural imperialism “makes a leap of inference from the simple presence of cultural goods to the distribution of deeper cultural or ideological effects” (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 84). Because of its increasing deficiency to explain the complex social reality, the concept of cultural imperialism gradually loses its popularity in the academic community. And the term “globalization” has now been preferred by more and more writers to describe current socio-political realities.

Conceptualization of globalization

Since late twentieth century, the world’s economy has become integrated more than ever. Meanwhile, the advent of information technologies such as computers, satellite television, cable television, Internet, mobile telephones, and the development of global transportation like airplanes have effectively shrunk the world, and increased transnational communication and interaction within the global network. It is against this backdrop that the idea of globalization begins to gain popularity in
both public and academic areas.

Being a far less coherent or culturally directed process, globalization suggests the interconnection and interdependency of all areas of human societies. Giddens (1994, p. 96) argues that "increasingly there is no obvious "direction" to globalization at all and its ramifications are more or less ever present". Sharing the same view, Chris Barker makes a clearer statement. He said "globalization is not to be seen as a one-way flow of influence from the west to the "rest", rather, globalization is a multi-directional and multi-dimensional set of processes" (1997, p. 5).

Briefly speaking, globalization is the description of a context in which the integration and interpenetration of all aspects of social life take place. It is the “increasing multi-directional economic, social, cultural and political global connections across the world and our awareness of them” (Barker, 1997, p. 385). As Anthony McGrew (1992) argues, globalization refers to those processes, which cut across national boundaries, operate on a global scale, integrate and connect communities and organizations in new space-time combinations, and make the world in reality and in experience more interconnected. The multi-directional flows and the interconnection of social relations have shrunk the world and made the world become a “single place”. The consciousness of global unity then raises any local activity to the global level.

However, global unity is not equal to global uniformity. Globalization is not simply a one-way flow that spreads a homogenous global culture based on western ideology. Featherstone (1990) contends that postmodernism is both a symptom and cultural image of the global culture enriched by diversity, a variety of local discourses, codes, and practices. In a similar vein, Hannerz (1990, p. 237) states that the world culture is “marked by an organization of diversity rather than by a
replication of uniformity”. Robertson (2001) also claims that the multidimensional process of globalization – as having political, cultural and further non-economic aspects – then includes numerous phenomena that are not related to Westernization or cultural imperialism. Thus, the central problem of globalization is the dialectic tension between cultural homogenization and heterogenization (Appadurai, 1990).

Discarding the binary logic, globalization should be viewed as the dynamics of homogeneity and heterogeneity, the differentiation within the sameness. Based on the discussion of global economy, Robertson argues that the production and promotion of goods and services on a global scale requires close, ongoing sensitivity to cultural difference in local circumstance. It is proposed that the ongoing interpenetration of the universal and the particular is the most general characteristic of global change. He claims:

“It is not a question of either homogenization or heterogenization, but rather of the ways in which both of these two tendencies have become features of life across much of the late-twentieth-century world. In this perspective the problem becomes that of spelling out the ways in which homogenizing and heterogenizing tendencies are mutually implicative. This is in fact much more of an empirical problem that might at first be thought. In various areas of contemporary life ... there are ongoing, calculated attempts to combine homogeneity with heterogeneity and universalism with particularism.”

(Robertson, 1995, p. 27)

Localization: the global need for “local particularity”

The mix of homogeneity and heterogeneity and the idea of difference-within-sameness can be seen from the global need of “localization”. There is a tendency to construct local difference around the world and this global “local diversity” is “the principle which allows all locals to stick to their respective cultures” (Hannerz 1990,
quoted in Robertson 1995, p. 29). The differentiating impact of globalization strengthens or reactivates national, ethnic and communal identities, and diversifies forms of social life. In fact, while globalization is an important trend, it has been understood in conjunction with localization: the global and local are relative to one another and both belong to the same dialectical process. This relativity and dialectical relationship are well captured by the notion of “glocalization” that Robertson (1995) uses to express the global production of the local and the localization of the global.

In cultural realm, while consumption orientation is spreading globally, consumer cultures are not homogenous. Consumers are pursuing a sense of difference in the global consumption orientation life form. In their own unique context, people draw products from all available sources – global and local, west and east, new and old, to mark social differences, to seek comparative status, to construct and communicate their own identity.

In this trend, consumers are increasingly interested in diverse local products rather than the standard, homogenized products of TNCs (Ger 1999). In affluent societies, consumers are increasingly exposed to and are becoming more curious about foreign cultures and foreign goods. They are becoming more exploratory, playful and active, thirsting after new experiences and meanings, and wanting to discover something exciting and, more importantly, unexpected (Firat, F & Venkatesh, A. 1995; Gabriel, Y & Lang, T 1995; Ger 1999). Also, there is a tendency for green, simple, ethnical and responsible consumption, which stirs up enthusiasm for products from developing countries. In less affluent societies, there is a revival of localism in consumption. Consumers are expressing a return to their roots, reconfiguring global goods and their meanings to better-fit local culture and, especially, mix and transfer cultures from disparate sources, both the old and the new,
the global and the local, the east and the west. Therefore, the demand and interest in
the local is increasing in both affluent and less affluent societies. The global need for
difference provides an opportunity for the globalization of eastern cultural products
in late twentieth century. Western consumers' increasing open attitude towards
foreign products and their increasing need of these products enlarge the size of
Non-western cultural influx into western markets.

II. The globalization of local cultural products

In particular many companies, local or transnational, have noticed the
potentiality of non-western cultural products in the global market and begun to
incorporate foreign cultural factors into their products. However, little attention has
been paid to the distribution and influence of non-western cultures in western
countries. In this issue, there are many questions waiting for further exploration.
Who are the agents involved in the global distribution of local cultural products?
How can a local cultural product become competitive in the global arena, while
sustaining a sense of its own cultural identity and sovereignty? Moreover, how does
the uneven power distribution influence and become influenced by the process of
production, distribution and consumption of these cultural products?

Agents involved

Local firms

The major agent of globalization in the cultural realm is the media organization,
the character of which has immense influence on both the production process and
consumption (Chan, 2002). While many scholars have examined the globalization of
western cultural products, which is based on the political-economic power of western
countries and western-based TNCs, there are few studies that concern the agents of
globalizing eastern cultures. Compared with western products, eastern cultural
products face quite different global conditions, which need further exploration. In theory, both TNCs and local firms can create products based on specific local culture and promote them in the global market. However, the limitation of economic resources, cultural resources or human resources, have restricted their practices.

TNCs are the most powerful promoters of cultural products in the global market. The accumulation of enormous capital, marketing experience and the control of the global market have given them advantageous status in global competition. However, these companies are usually more interested and confident in globalizing their own cultures and products. In the realm of movie production, the biggest transnational companies, seven Hollywood major studios, seldom borrow from the cultures of the developing world and produced films based in non-western cultures. The self-sufficiency of its domestic market and the keen American sense of cultural superiority are the main reasons for this rarity (Chan, 2002). Instead of producing foreign culture based films directly, they provide alternative choices for consumers by picking up independent movies around the world, particularly at international film festivals.

Therefore, local companies based on the developing countries become the major agents of globalizing their local cultural products. But this does not mean that all local companies have the ability to compete with western-based TNCs. Only those ones that understand the rules of global competition might have a chance of success. The interconnection and interaction among global cultural/economic traffic has made this understanding possible. Inescapably incorporated into global capitalism, some local firms have not only gained experience for how to do business in the global market, but also formed a global relation network that will benefit their future development. Knowing how to merchandise a local culture in the global market, these companies have the potentiality to make local cultural products a global hit. In
a word, local firms which base their practice on local cultural power and are equipped with an in-depth understanding of the global production and consumption dynamics, can compete with TNCs and promote their products in the global market (Ger, 1999).

Cosmopolitan intelligence

Besides media organization, some individuals would play a pivotal role in the globalization of local cultural products. While TNCs exploit the human resources of developing countries by poaching their talents, they also train groups of cosmopolitan professionals for these countries. Acquiring enormous experience in global competition, these professionals have become a strong power for the development of local economy and culture. Knowing the local culture, global production and distribution system well, these cosmopolitan talents can act as “new cultural intermediaries” (Barker, 1997, p. 167), stimulating the spread of local cultures in the world.

Thus, the globalization of local talents and companies are the premise for the global expansion of local cultural products. In fact, two kinds of agents cannot always be clearly divided. Local firms that have successfully expanded their influence to foreign markets often possess some talents who are familiar with global competition. Experienced in global cooperation and competition, local firms and cosmopolitan talents can work together to promote their local cultures. On one hand, local firms, especially the leading ones, have cultivated a market for their products and have accumulated certain resources for global expansion. On the other hand, knowing global production and consumption dynamics well, the cosmopolitans can produce things based on local cultures to satisfy the needs of “different products” in the global market. What they need to do now is to draw enough resources for the process of production and distribution.
Cultural resources – Alternative capital for globalizing local cultural products

While local firms – the major promoters of local cultural products, are clearly at a disadvantage with respect to economic resources, they can find cultural capitals for alternatives. Based on an adaptation of Bourdieu’s sociological analysis of capital and his notion of cultural capital for individuals, Guliz Ger (1999) argues that a local cultural resource can be converted into capital and controlled by local firms to promote their cultural products.

Capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, and refers to all material and symbolic goods, which seem to be rare and valuable. It has the potential to produce profits and to reproduce itself in an identical or different form. Bourdieu divides capital into three types: economic capital (material things); symbolic capital (prestige, status, legitimate authority); and cultural capital (culturally valued taste and consumption patterns – including art, education, skills, sensibilities, and creativity). And types of capital can be exchanged for other types of capital.

Bourdieu argues that capital serves as the basis for social domination. The structure of the distribution of different types of capital at a given point in time represents the structure of the social world – i.e., the set of constraints that govern its functioning. In order to circumnavigate the constraints social structure sets against them, individuals need to control certain capitals. Thus, the struggle of social position or domination changes into the seeking of capital. The objective is to accrue capital, which refers to the attributes, possessions, or qualities of a person that is exchangeable for goods, services, or esteem.

Cultural capital is a special form of resource, a proficiency in the consumption of and the discourse about prestigious cultural goods (Ger, 1999). It exists in three forms. In its embodied state, it is a cultural competence that derives a scarcity value from its position in the distribution of cultural capital and yields profits of distinction.
In its objectified state, cultural capital is the product of historical action in the form of cultural goods—material objects and media such as writings, paintings, monuments, and instruments. As the cultural capital incorporated into the means of production increases, the collective strength of the holders of cultural capital also tends to increase. However, the collective strength of the holders of cultural capital will only increase if the holders of the dominant type of capital (economic) do not set the holders of cultural competition with each other. In its institutionalized state, cultural capital is a certificate of cultural competence—an officially recognized and guaranteed competence. A cultural resource has the potential to be converted into capital when an institution sanctions a particular resource as capital. Official recognition makes it possible to establish conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital by guaranteeing the monetary value of the former.

These notions imply that when cultural resources and goods are made prestigious, they are potentially convertible into economic capital. Such a conversion will be most likely when cultural resources are symbolically reshaped and institutionally validated. Extending these notions of cultural capital and applying them to cultural influx within the current global context, Ger believes that greater chances exist for local firms with respect to their cultural resources rather than their economic resources. Local firms can rely on cultural capital to construct a sustainable, unique value and offer the symbolism of authenticity and prestige.

**Strategic Alliance – Investment and Marketing**

While local companies have different cultural resources as their advantages, they have to conquer many obstacles in the market as well as their subordinate status in the global competition. It is known that globalization is not a balance process. Different countries, organizations, agents, and individuals have different access to power, resources and control over events within the process (Tomlinson, 2000, p.
This uneven power distribution influences all the practices in the global context. Hegemony is reproduced and refigured in every aspect of the current world (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995). Related to cultural flows, western based TNCs and their cultural products, such as movies, TV programs and media information, have dominated in the global market for decades and have held a much more advantaged status than others. To compete with these giants and to promote eastern cultural products to such a context, local firms have to develop a more innovative and critical approach to draw investment in both economic capital and marketing (Ger 1999).

The shortage of economic capital is the most deadly problem for the development of local cultural products. With the competition of Hollywood movies, the shrinking of local markets and the rampant piracy problem, Hong Kong and Taiwan can no longer sustain production on a large scale, particularly in the days of Asian economic crisis. Meanwhile, the development of techniques and the increasing cost of film stars, advertising and distribution have driven the cost of a film higher and higher, making it almost impossible for any independent company to compete with Hollywood cartel on that level. Toward the end of the 1980s, the negative cost for an average film from one of the majors stood at around $20 million, with additional $10 million or so for advertising and distribution costs (Segrave, 1997). Since the global integration of film markets, the increasing investment of the film industry not only excludes new comers into the American market, but also impedes the development of other national cinemas.

Besides the deficiency of investment in individual films, the lack of international distribution power is another handicap to local cultural products. Since many local firms do not have subsidies or agencies in foreign markets, it is difficult for them to market their products there. Even if they find a distribution channel, few can afford
the promotion cost in western countries. With respect to the film industry, things become worse. From the late 1920s, Hollywood major cartel has strived to establish their own global distribution system, with the backup of its big domestic market and the strong political-economic power of the United States. Currently, each major studio and most big independent ones have output arrangements with associated distributors around the world to assure the revenue of a film no matter what it is. By the control or even direct ownership of local theatres, block booking in foreign markets, and the powerful publicity machine and star system, Hollywood cartel holds an increasing share of the global market (Segrave, 1997). It is Hollywood majors that make the decisions of which kind of films can be screened and spread around the world. Their success in global distribution is very clear by the revenue. Hollywood’s overseas receipts were US$6.6 billion in 1999 and US$6.4 billion in 2000 (Groves, 2001). With its vast production, strong export trade and extraordinary filmmaking tradition, however, China’s total overseas sales of films between 1996 and 2000 were just 13.86 million (Chinese Film Industry, 2001).

In addition, marketing cost escalates when five or six oligarchies control the global distribution, using expensive marketing campaigns to beat their rivals and hold back new competitors. Since no other filmmaking industry has sufficient capital formation to embark on such a global distribution network, it is impossible for Asian cinemas to compete with Hollywood movies and successfully promote their cultural products by their own power in such an environment.

But the disadvantages in economic capital and marketing do not mean the exclusion of local cinemas in the process of globalization. Faced with the threat of marginalization in the market and the lack of investment, local firms can be empowered by strategic alliances. Dholakia (1987) uses the term “interorganizational marketing” to refer to organizations linked on a long-term basis by joint ventures,
contracts, franchises, projects, and other methods. Ger (1999) believes that such linkages create globe-spanning networks that are able to mobilize resources and pursue opportunities more effectively than even giant firms unaffiliated with such networks.

Structurally, global linkage and alliance of organizations are intrinsic parts of globalization. The complex interpenetration and interdependence within the global networks bring out the pluralization and interconnection of organizational forms. In this context, there is an increase in options available in the modes of organizations that are in operation simultaneously: transnational, macro-regional, national, micro-regional, municipal, local. Crisscrossing this ladder, are functional networks of corporations, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as individuals such as professionals and computer users (W. Nederveen Pieterse, 1995) ell capturing the complex connections of organization, the term “structural hybridization” was used by Nederveen Pieterse (1995, p. 52) to describe “the mélange of diverse modes of organization” and “a pluralization of forms of co-operation and competition as well as to novel mixed forms of co-operation”.

In fact, the cooperation as well as competition of various forms of companies and organization is the principle of global capitalism. Through the articulation of different organizations and the extension of social relationship, information, advanced techniques and human resources, economic and cultural resources are able to circulate around the world, making the global capital market work. Even TNCs often affiliate with other national companies to reduce the risk in their global expansion. Competing in such a global context, local companies can also take advantage of global affiliation to promote local cultural products. And the global relationship can be formed in various kinds of affiliation. A local firm can cooperate with other local firms (at home and in other countries) to reap the benefits of mutual
competitive advantage (e.g., raw materials, human resources), to join forces against the TNCs, and to learn from each other. Relationships can even be formed with TNCs themselves, absorbing their capital, marketing resources and experience. Local firms can also network with and obtain assistance from local and global governments, non-governmental organizations, or other kinds of associations. Such networking and collaboration, through pooling resources, competencies, and skills, enables creative projects and increases the local capability and power of local cultural products. Through global affiliation, local companies can overcome their weakness in economic capital, marketing and distribution.

Strategic alliance and global view are crucial for the long-term development of local cultural products as well as for individual cases. To be competitive in the global market, local companies need more than marginal forms of integration into the world economy. Emphasizing the importance of alliances and partnerships in local firms’ global competition, Ger (1999) rightly argues that local firms must interact with TNCs and local companies from other countries in order to have the opportunity to learn from them, to learn about themselves, and to form alliances with them. They must also go beyond exports and establish deeper connections and integrated relationships in the international market with the emphasis being on the specificity of the local. Besides the alliance with various organizations, local companies should also have a global view and know the importance of the global market for them, realizing that the best markets may lie beyond neighbouring countries or other habitual export markets.

A global/local vision in the production

While non-western cultural products, regarded as unique, exotic, and unusual, can provide alternative choices for western consumers, they may also be thought “too different” or “too foreign”. Thus, the globalization of the local is needed. Actually,
the concept of glocalization captures the dynamics of the local in the global and the
global in the local. They are tied together as part of "globalwide nexus" (Robertson,
1992:102). This connection is based on the experience of universality and the
expectation of particularity. The "particularization of universalism" involves the
notion of giving the universal global-human concreteness in the locality, while
"universalization of particularism" includes the widespread idea that there is not
boundary to particularity, "to uniqueness, to difference, and to otherness" (Roberson,
1992, p. 102).

Universalization and particularization may coexist in the same production
process. In order to be accepted in western countries, local firms must adopt some
global formulas, which have been tested for efficiency in the markets, into their own
production. For example, Hollywood has developed a formulaic approach that has
been applied to almost every one of its blockbusters: the gathering of film stars or
super-stars, neat plot, splendid sceneries, emotional catchy songs or music and
romance stories between a beautiful woman and a handsome man. With regard to
action movies, a sequence of fighting scenes and astonishing special effects are
added. Many of these elements have proven to be effective, as attested by the wide
popularity of Hollywood movies around the world. That explains why the formula is
used over and over again in Hollywood and is gradually adapted by other national
cinemas. Exposed to such kind of films for a long time, an expectation has been
formed among moviegoers that a "good film" should at least have these qualities.
Therefore, in order to improve the competency of their products in international
market, local cinemas have to adapt these globalized formulas.

Besides the formats, local producers have to make some transformation in their
traditional cultural norms in order to catch up with the change of times. This is
mainly for two reasons. On one hand, in the twentieth century, with the global
spreading of capitalism, many western cultures, concepts and theories, such as
democracy, individualism and feminism, have been introduced into other parts of the
world and profoundly influenced indigenous cultures of these countries. In this
context, it is impossible for cultural producers to present a one hundred percent
"pure" local cultural product. Even if they claim a product to be culturally pure, it is
actually the result of people's reconstruction and, consumers, including local ones,
may find it difficult to be understood. On the other hand, the incorporation of global
or globalized norms and concepts into local cultural products will provide certain
ground for foreign audience's reading and understanding of the texts.

Then the producers have two tasks in their creation. They have to maintain a
sense of cultural authenticity and adapt to global tastes at the same time. To reach
these two aims, they have to identify what are to them the key elements of the
original culture and subject them to transformation that helps meet the needs of the
global market. To balance the needs of both the global and the local, innovative
producers need to be sensitive to the new global reality that consists of forces of
globalization and localization as well as rapid change. They must develop a profound
understanding of intercultural and intracultural dynamics. The greater availability
and accessibility of global media, the Internet, tourism and other means of
intercultural interaction make it possible for more people to develop a understanding
than ever before.

Innovative Distribution Strategies

Conventional wisdom mistakenly states that in order to modernize developing
countries, local firms have to adopt wholesale the strategies, skills and practice
directly from the West. However, good marketing needs to consider the
characteristics of the product and the speciality of the context. In general, consumers
have different perception of products from developed countries and that from
developing countries. “Country-of-origin” or “product-country image” affects product beliefs and the evaluations of consumers, importers, investors, distributors and retailers. While the former is often regarded as good quality, the latter is often associated with a negative evaluation. Meanwhile, cultural products from developing countries are often unfamiliar to mainstream consumers in western countries and more obstacles have to be overcome in its distribution. To conquer the weakness, innovative marketing strategies have to be devised.

The association of the positive “exotic”, “unexpected”, “fantastic” and “rare” with the negative notion “underdeveloped” provides a way to circumvent negative country images. Relating negative association to positive concepts, or emphasizing existing positive beliefs and symbols and intentionally erasing the national origin of the product may also reinforce favourable imagery. More important, finding and targeting segments that are likely to respond positively to local cultural products are one key factor in any competitive strategy. With a deep understanding about the characteristics of their products and the need of a potential audience, distributors can raise their chance of success.

III. Theoretical framework

Based on the above analysis, a theoretical frame for how to globalize local cultures and improve their competencies in the global market can be formed (figure 1).
In this frame, the global context, in which the trends of globalization and localization co-exist, provides an opportunity for the inflow of cultural products from non-western countries to western countries. The global need for difference and local particularity stimulates the global production and promotion of local cultural products. Moving with an in-depth understanding of global production and consumption dynamics, local firms and talents can compete with TNCs. The diverse culture traditions are their best capital in international competition and they must ground their practice on local power. However, the uneven distribution of power
determines the disadvantaged status of local cultural products in global competition. With the threat of TNCs and the shrinking local market, local firms and talents are often short of capital, especially economic capital, for their global expansion. The formation of a global alliance turns out to be a good solution, which has been adapted by various companies and organizations. Affiliating with local firms in other countries or TNCs, local agents can raise enough economical capital and acquire social relationship for the production and distribution. It is the joint resources and efforts of local and global companies that make the globalization of the local culture possible.

But the readiness of resources is just the first step of the long journey. Great efforts have to be paid in the production and distribution. In the process of cultural production, local producers must maintain a global/local view. In order to distinguish themselves from global rivals, they must exploit the particularity of local cultures and construct “different” products for consumers. On the other hand, they should also take into consideration the global market and cultural obstacles in the acceptance of non-western products. Universalization and hybridization often happen in the production, and the end product turns out to be a cultural hybrid.

The last but not least important step for globalizing a local culture is distribution. While local agents themselves may not have enough power to promote their products in the international market, they can also distribute the film with the help of their global alliances. Through the joint efforts of local firms and their partners, local firms in other countries or TNCs, the local cultural product can get a chance of be marketed around the world. Besides the acquirement of a global distribution channel, innovative marketing strategies are also needed for international distribution, because extra efforts have to be made to overcome western consumers’ negative associations and unfamiliarity with foreign cultures and products.
To study reversed cultural flow is to study the global spreading of non-western culture and its influence, which includes numerous topics and cases. Since it is impossible for me to exam the whole trend in a master thesis, I center my study on the specific case of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. In the following chapters, I will exam the case in the analytical framework and explore how to globalize a non-western local culture in the era of globalization.

**Research Methods**

Methodologically, I rely on text and document analysis.

1) I text-analyzed *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and its original novel, respectively, to identify the plot, the major themes, the characters and the artistic style. In order to find out why Ang Lee chose the story and how he and his partners rewrote the film, the comparison between the screenplay and the novel has been done. The textual analysis enables me to relate the text to the observations made by the film’s producers and myself.

2) To heighten my sensitivity and understanding of what the producers had done to the particular Chinese genre, I have reviewed the documents about the development of Chinese martial arts cinema, which are largely published by Hong Kong governmental organizations like Hong Kong Urban Council. Several old martial arts films that having an important influence on *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, have also been reviewed.

3) I rely on published interviews and documents for the analysis of the economic/cultural dynamics involved in the whole process of globalizing the film. Taking advantage of the convenience of the Internet and the power of academic databases, I collected large amounts of news articles
for my reference, which include film reviews, financial reports (such as the investment of the film, the budget for the distribution and the film's box office reporting), and interviews with the producers and other industry insiders. Two databases are used in the data collection process: *LEXIS-NEXIS Academic Universe* for English news and *WiseNews* for Chinese news.

*LEXIS-NEXIS® Academic Universe* provides access to a wide range of news, business, legal, and reference information. Using keywords of "crouching tiger, hidden dragon", I searched English entertainment news and book, movie, music and play reviews in this database. Spanning from July 1997 to April 2002, there are about 1250 English news articles collected. These news articles are from more than 100 US publications, and many of them, such as New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Washington Times, Variety, Daily Variety, are prestigious entertainment news sources for the world.

*WiseNews* is mainly a Chinese news database. It covers 396 publications (news agency, broadcast, government information, magazines, Web site and newspaper) from four regions — Hong Kong: 62; the United States: 3; China: 266; Macao: 10; Taiwan: 55. Using the key words of "crouching tiger, hidden dragon (Chinese)", I got about 13,000 articles, spanning from April 1998 to April 2002.

Besides these two databases, I also searched on the World-Wide-Web, especially on famous film Websites like Imdb.com, to supplement the databases. Interviews with Hong Kong and China moviegoers were also done, while they are not included in this paper. But the interviews with the marketing manager of Edko Film Ltd, one Hong Kong production company of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, gave me some information about the production and local distribution of the film.

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11 See Appendix 4 for the source lists of LEXIS-NEXIS Academic Universe Entertainment news and book, movie, music & play reviews.
The collection and review of the enormous news articles is not an easy task, however, the real challenge lies in the cross-validation of the data. Since I mainly rely on published interviews and news, extra attention has to be paid to the validity of the information. My way to resolve this problem is to check the same information in as many sources as possible and evaluate their validity. If any difference existed, I chose the most authoritative ones or the ones that have been cited most often.
Chapter Two: Local Agents and Global Alliance

Globalization is an interpenetration and integration process that all aspects of social life have been involved in, including the motion picture industry. In such a global context, no local firms and products can escape from the pressure of global competition, especially from TNCs. For their survival and development, many local industries have tried to promote their products and to build connections and relationships in the international market. Thus, globalization not only spreads the western cultures and products around the world, but also stimulates the reversed flow from the East to the West. In the case of the motion picture industry, there is a so-called “Asian wave” and an emergence of Asian cinema, which represents the globalization of Asian films and its talents.

The globalization of filmmakers and Chinese cinemas, especially Hong Kong and Taiwan, are the premise of the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. With a deep understanding of the global production and consumption dynamics, local companies and talents can work together to expand the global market for their local cultures. On one hand, the efforts of both the local industry and individual filmmakers have cultivated an increasing market for Chinese films. On the other hand, knowing global production and consumption in movies well, the cosmopolitans can produce films based in local cultures to satisfy the needs of ‘different products’ in the global market.

I. “Asian wave” – The premise of the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

While Hollywood films still dominate the global film market, there is an increasing need for diverse, different and non-standard films from other parts of the world. Asian films thus become a good choice. In the past few years, Asian cinema
has passionately emerged with a bounty of riches and delights, introducing different worlds, new sensations and fresh ways of telling stories to Hollywood and carving out an enlarging global market\textsuperscript{12}. Meanwhile, there is a growing Asian population in both the United States and Europe, hungry for films that address their lives and concerns. Industry observers believe that all these indicate an opportune time for a new Asian cinema and its blossoming in the West.

Asian films are nothing new to western countries. Asian cinema, which has been making waves at film festivals for about half a century, is consolidating its global position with the stealth and certitude of an Asian Tiger. Cinemas from China, Iran, Japan and Korea, in particular, have been richly rewarded at premier film festivals throughout Europe and Asia\textsuperscript{13}. Even in the United States, Asian films have gradually penetrated the market obstacles and gained popularity among audiences\textsuperscript{14}. They have entered the cultural landscape of the US for a long time. Chop-socky movies with Bruce Lee and Sonny Chiba date back three decades, the original Godzilla debuted in 1954 and the art-house veneration of Kurosawa spans the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century. The increasing exposure to these offerings has left people hungry for more.

Currently, Asian films – and filmmakers – are more popular than ever in the United States. Some critics even compared the current explosion in Asian cinema to European émigrés who revitalized Hollywood in the 1930s and 40s, the French New Wave of the late 50’s and early 60’s\textsuperscript{15} or the British music invasion of the 1960s\textsuperscript{16}. In the 1990s, Asian cinema’s influence on American culture broadens: the success of the Pokemon movies, cards, TV show and games; the crossover of Asian stars such as

\textsuperscript{12} Los Angeles Times even called year 2000 and 2001 as “Year of the Asian Film”. See “Movies; Winds of changes that come from the East; Standouts, including a potential blockbuster, make a strong case for a potent new wave of Asian cinema”, in Los Angeles Times, December 31, 2000, Sunday, Home Edition, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{13} For a brief review for the awards, see “Asian Invasion”, in The Time of India, March 21, 2001.

\textsuperscript{14} For a brief review of the influence of Asian films in the United States, see “Success of Asian Films Brings Cultural Awakening”, in Dayton Daily News, February 18, 2001, Sunday.


Chow Yun-Fat, Michelle Yeoh, Jet Li and Jackie Chan to English-language movies; and the resurrection of old Asian films (Chan’s 7-year-old The Legend of Drunken Master made $11.5 million in 2000)\(^\text{17}\). In 2000, “the Year of the Asian Film” called by Los Angeles Times\(^\text{18}\), Asian cinema is poised for the great leap forward. In Time magazine\(^\text{19}\)’s Top Ten films of 2000, no less than six were Asian. Taiwan director Ang Lee’s Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Edward Yang’s Yi Yi (One and a Two), Hong Kong director Wang Kar-wai’s In the Mood for Love, Chinese director Lou Ye’s Suzhou River, Zhang Yang’s Shower, Korean director Im Kwon Taek’s Chunhyang, had caught the attention of global film critics and scooped out awards in various international film festivals.

In this new wave of Asian films, the most prominent one is “Great Chinese Cinema”, including Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. While Hollywood used to ignore Asian talent, now it is brazenly filching its leading actors and directors, especially from Hong Kong and Taiwan. These filmmakers are growing up and setting off for top jobs far from home – which, for movies, means Hollywood. New-wave Hong Kong icons such as Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Chow Yun-fat, Michelle Yeoh, John Woo, Tsui Hark are now in the position to create Hollywood vehicles with their names above the title.

Unlike Europeans that often worked in the US for an extensive period and eventually became US citizens. Hong Kong and Taiwan filmmakers treat Tinseltown as just one of their bases. This new generation of nomadic industrialists frequently commutes between Hong Kong, the US, and other Asian countries” (Cheung, 2000, p.130). For example, Stanley Tong, Director of Jackie Chan’s Super Cop and Rumble in the Bronx, treats his U.S. excursion as a learning experience: on one hand, he is

\(^{18}\) See “Movies; Winds of changes that come from the East; Standouts, including a potential blockbuster, make a strong case for a potent new wave of Asian cinema”, in Los Angeles Times, December 31, 2000, Sunday, Home Edition, p. 23.
\(^{19}\) Asian Edition.
learning the production system and the entrepreneurial style of the U.S. film and television industries; on the other hand, he is trying to infuse the unique Hong Kong-style action aesthetics into the films and television series he makes in Hollywood and show his freshness in production as a Hong Kong-based filmmaker (Cheung, 2000). Many other Chinese filmmakers share this experience and they have become a strong power in globalizing Chinese movies as well as Chinese culture.

In this new wave, there are two kinds of movies that are welcome by Hollywood. The first one is a Hong Kong martial arts film. A common character of the above-cited icons is that they are Hong Kong action movie directors or actors. Hollywood wants Hong Kong directors for the medium-budget action genre because they have visual verve, work fast and do not cost much. For a similar reason, Hong Kong actors make their fame based in their skills for producing action movies. With the help of these cosmopolitan filmmakers, Hong Kong's martial arts exports are already well entrenched in Hollywood and have their own appeal in the markets. Director John Woo bringing florid violence to Hollywood blockbusters (Face/Off, MI: 2), Kung Fu star Jackie Chan offers his annual comedy thriller, and Jet Li, Chow Yun-fat and Michelle Yeoh provide thrills, stunts, guns and glamour - all the pleasure of Hong Kong cinema. The limitation of this kind of film is that film critics often criticize them as low quality in aesthetics and too much violence.

Other, artier directors are valued for helming prestige products that are released in art houses. Taiwan and the mainland filmmakers, such as Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, Edward Yang, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Tsai Ming-Liang and Ang Lee, have made many acclaimed artistic films. Some of them are even courted by Hollywood majors or independent film companies to direct English-language films. The New York Times comments that "the 1990's may well be remembered as a heroic age of

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Taiwanese art cinema, a period of creative ferment akin to the French New Wave of the late 50s and the early 60s"\textsuperscript{21}. Unlike their French or Italian predecessors, however, these filmmakers received little attention from American mainstream audiences before the success of \textit{Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon}.

It was against this backdrop that \textit{Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon} could be produced and promoted in the international film market. The blossoming of Asian cinema in the West, the success of Chinese filmmakers in Hollywood and the favor of Hong Kong action movies provide an advantageous context for the globalization of Chinese martial arts film. Fusing two Hollywood flavors, artistic film and martial arts film, \textit{Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon} had the potentiality to enter both art houses and mainstream cinemas. Ang Lee, the producer and director of the film, said in an interview, "This is my summer blockbuster for Chinese audiences, but it’s also had to play to a more art house audience in the west. I was making two movies in one"\textsuperscript{22}. It was also an attempt to get out of the art house straitjacket into which people tended to put Ang Lee, said Schamus, the Executive Producer and Screenwriter of the film\textsuperscript{23}.

II. Local Agents

While poaching Asian talents and absorbing some elements from Asian cinema, Hollywood majors seldom produce films based on eastern cultures, let alone actively facilitating the spread of these cultures in their domestic market. Even though they finance movie production in Asia, the intention is more to invade this last big market that has not been controlled by Hollywood movies than to stimulate the flow of Asian movies into western countries. Hence, local film companies in Asia are the


\textsuperscript{23} See note 22.
most possible and persistent promoters of their films and its culture.

In global competition, local companies with an in-depth understanding of the global production and consumption dynamics can be the major agents of globalizing local cultural products. In the case of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, which was described as "a Sony Pictures Classics and Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia presentation, released by Sony Pictures Classics, in association with Good Machine International, an Edko Films, Zoom Hunt production in collaboration with China Film Co-Production Corp. and Asia Union Film & Entertainment Ltd."\(^{24}\), the initiators of the project were local film companies rather than a Hollywood major\(^{25}\).

It was producers Bill Kong, Hsu Li Kong and Ang Lee that launched the project of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. The trio represents the alliance of two local companies, Edko Films Ltd. (Hong Kong) and Zoom Hunt International Production Co. Ltd. (Taiwan), and the collaboration of Hong Kong and Taiwan cinemas and cosmopolitan filmmakers\(^{26}\).

**Bill Kong** (Co-producer) is head of Edko Film Ltd., one of the longest-standing independent film companies in Hong Kong. Founded by Kong's father Kong Cho Yee in 1959 as the first Chinese-run independent film company in Hong Kong, Edko began importing and exporting movies, and building cinemas across Hong Kong. Bill assumed the responsibility from his father in the 1980s and expanded the operation of cinema-operating, film distribution and film production. Today Edko operates one of the biggest theatre circuits in Hong Kong, consisting of ten theatres like the Broadway Mongkok (the SAR’s most profitable cinema), or the famous Edko Broadway Cinematheque art-house

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\(^{26}\) The information about Bill Kong, Hsu Li Kong, and Ang Lee is provided by Sony Pictures Classics. See note 24, or the moviebook Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Portrait of the Ang Lee Film, p.140-141.
complex in Yau Ma Tei. Edko distributes forty movies to the Hong Kong public every year. Edko is also a strong advocate of local movies, helping many local filmmakers get their movies made. Acclaimed filmmakers like Tsui Hark, Yim Ho, Jacob Cheung and Ang Lee all work closely with Edko to produce local films. Moreover, Edko has an arrangement with Sony to distribute Columbia Tristar films in Hong Kong.

**Hsu Li Kong** (Co-Producer) is one of the most important producers of modern Taiwanese cinema, and is currently President of Zoom Hunt International Productions Co. Ltd. Hsu was head of the Taiwan film archives before working for the Kuomintang Cultural Work Committee. He then joined the central Motion Picture Corporation as General Manager and Production Chief. During his tenure at CMPC, he oversaw the production of some of the best known Taiwan films, including Ang Lee's first three films "Pushing Hands," "The Wedding Banquet," and "Eat Drink Man Woman," as well as "Hills of No Return," "Vive L'Amour," "The Peony Pavilion," "Siao Yu," "The Accidental Legend," and "The River." Hsu left CMPC in 1997 to form Zoom Hunt International Production Co., which produces television series and films including "Sweet Degeneration," "Love Go Go," and "The Personals." Hsu has also written numerous television scripts.

**Ang Lee** (Director/Producer) was born in Taiwan in 1954, and moved to the United States in 1978, where he received his BFA in theatre from the University of Illinois and his MFA in film production from New York University. From 1991 to 1994, Lee produced three Chinese features in Taiwan – “Father Knows Best” trilogy: *Pushing Hands* (1991), *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), *Eat Drink Man Woman*, (1994). In 1995, Ang Lee went to Hollywood and directed *Sense and Sensibility*. The film was nominated for seven Academy Awards, including
Best Picture, and won the Oscar for Best Screenplay Adaptation. In addition, the film received the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival, as well as Golden Globes for Best Screenplay and Best Film. This success made Ang Lee a top artier director in Hollywood. After that, Ang Lee completed *The Ice Storm* (1996), his first feature on an entirely American subject, and in 1999, he directed *Ride With The Devil*, a Civil War era western adapted from Daniel Woodrell's novel “Woe to Live On” by James Schamus. Because of Lee’s rich experience of trans-cultural filmmaking and his deep understanding of both eastern and western cinema, he is regarded as a great director of amalgamating eastern and western cultures.

While the above information of the three producers and their companies is provided by Sony Pictures Classics for the promotion of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, we can also see the strength of the local agents in globalizing Chinese films. The two local companies are experienced in making independent films and have established a deep connection in the international market. The three producers are all senior filmmakers with abundant knowledge of both the local and the global film markets. Their alliance in producing the Chinese martial arts film would arouse the industry’s attention to the film easily, though it cannot guarantee the success.

The three have worked together for about a decade. In 1991, Lee had made his first feature called *Pushing Hands* for Taiwan’s Central Motion Picture Corporation that was headed by Hsu. Bill Kong made a deal to distribute Lee’s CMPC films (which went on to include *The Wedding Banquet* and *Eat Drink Man Woman*) in Hong Kong. And that was when the trio first got together and started talking about the Chinese martial-arts fantasy that would eventually become *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The film is the result of the three’s ambition of making a

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high-quality Chinese film, by using the power of excellent Chinese filmmakers around the world.

The conception and development of making this Chinese martial arts film took a long time. First of all, making a film based on the *wuxia* novels and films that he grew up with was a childhood dream for Ang Lee. "Ang Lee always wanted to make this film," said Bill Kong. "I know because I met him back when he started his career, and he would talk about it then. I suppose, in some way, every Chinese filmmaker wants to make the definitive, the perfect martial-arts film – Ang Lee was no different from any other director in that aspect." Once Ang Lee wanted to make a film based in Bai Yu-yu’s *wuxia* novels. But for some reason, he gave it up and turned to make *The Wedding Banquet*. In 1994, Ang Lee read the homonymous *wuxia* novel *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the fourth novel of Wang Du-lu’s five-part series, *The Crane-Iron Pentology*. Attracted by its realistic style, the strong sense of pathos and tragic sentiment and the tough female lead characters involved, he thought of adapting it for a film. In 1996, Hsu Li Kong announced his company’s plan of making *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and Ang Lee was the director. At that time, however, they could not acquire the right and other films also distracted Ang Lee. He was preparing for the production of *The Ice Storm* (1997). Later, when they got the right, they had to wait for the adaptation of the novel, because Ang Lee wanted a well-plotted screenplay, instead of just several pages of outline as the conventional practice of Hong Kong in making action movies. So

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28 See Ang Lee’s Foreword of the moviebook *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film*, p. 7.
31 See note 29. Also “It is American’s turn to read subtitles” (Chinese), in Nan Fang Du Shi Bao, March 21, 2001, Tuesday.
33 See “It is American’s turn to read subtitles” (Chinese), in Nan Fang Du Shi Bao, March 21, 2001, Tuesday.
34 See note 32.

It was 1998 that the trio all felt the time was finally right. After the production of the critically lauded *Sense and Sensibility, The Ice Storm* and *Ride With The Devil*, Ang Lee was thought to be at the optimum point of his career to make the film. Thus, in the following two years, the three producers exerted all their power to raise enough resources for the production of the film: they were looking for (or begging) money in the homeland and foreign markets, mobilizing top Chinese professionals around the world into their team, and asking for the cooperation of the mainland China and searching appropriate cites there. Ultimately, through the extended social network and the producers’ great efforts, the cooperation of Taiwan-Hong Kong-China cinemas and Hollywood major studio was successfully formed for the film’s production and global distribution.

III. Cultural resources

Cultural capital is a special form of resources, a proficiency in the consumption of and the discourse about prestigious cultural goods. In an institutionalized state, cultural capital is a certificate of cultural competence, and can be converted into economic capital (material things) or symbolic capital (prestige, status, legitimate authority). A cultural resource has the potential to be converted into capital when an institution sanctions a particular resource as capital. In the case of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Chinese martial arts cinema tradition and Chinese culture are the cultural resources that have the potentiality to be converted into capital. In fact, the past 80 years of the development of Chinese martial arts cinema has validated their value. The film companies, which produce, distribute or exhibit Chinese martial arts films in the local or international market, are the institutions that sanction the value

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of these cultural resources. Among these companies, it is local film companies, especially Hong Kong companies that control the cultural capital of Chinese martial arts genre. By gathering the top Chinese filmmakers around the world, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has an advantage in cultural resources. It is just because of this cultural advantage that the producers can raise enough money in the international market.

The success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a symbol of the greatness that can be achieved by exploiting local cultural resources. In the film, Chinese in Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and other Asian communities pool their imaginations and resources. And this was also what the three producers wanted to prove in their project\(^\text{36}\). In the past decades, cinemas from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China have been richly rewarded at various international film festivals. In such a good time, the three producers planned to gather the best Chinese filmmakers around the world to make a high quality Chinese film that was deeply based in Chinese culture. They had decided the film should be a Chinese martial arts film, the most distinct genre of Chinese cinema and wanted every position of the production team to be Chinese – top Chinese professionals in the industry. In the four years of preparation and production, they used all that they could acquire from Chinese cultures and Chinese communities to support the film.

Firstly, they intended to fuse martial arts with high quality artistic film, taking advantages of the two traditions favoured in the international market: martial art cinema tradition from Hong Kong and artistic film tradition from Taiwan and mainland China. In the aspect of artistic films, director Ang Lee, two of whose three Chinese features were already in the list of the five highest grossing Chinese-language films in the US, was one of the most famous Chinese directors in

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western art houses. His being the helmsman of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, in a sense, was a guarantee of the film's quality. Also, his involvement would certainly help to build up the film's international prestige and would benefit the box office as well.

In the other aspect of martial arts, the producers depended on the thousand-year-old *wuxia* culture and the 80-year-old *wuxia* film tradition. Wan Dulu's *wuxia* novel *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* provided a good story for the film's adaptation and Hong Kong experts gave the technical support for the shooting of action scenes. In making action movies, Hong Kong was the master. In the past 60 years, Hong Kong martial arts filmmakers had developed their own world of film language, aesthetics, acting skills and production methods and had trained groups of fighters and experts for the production. To make a Chinese martial arts film, Ang Lee and his partners had to consult Hong Kong experts, employing a Hong Kong production team leaded by Yuen Wo Ping, the best one of the community as well as the most famous one in the West. "I totally depended on them. Technically, I could not make the fights happen," said Ang Lee.37

Yuen, an expert in Hong Kong action movies, had made his name known in Hollywood before *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, for his excellent job as Fight Choreographer in Keanu Reeves' 1999 mega-hit *The Matrix*. Being the top choreographer of martial arts films, he has an extended list of film credits, in which he has taken on the role of action choreographer, director, actor and producer, and has collaborated with such celebrated Hong Kong martial artists as Jackie Chan, Jet Li, and Sammo Hung. In the 1960s, Wo Ping found work as stuntman and kung fu fighter. By the age of 26, he had earned his first film choreography credits with the

37 Cited in "Ang Lee's big noise: An intensely quiet man has film critics whooping in the aisles", in The Ottawa Citizen, September 14, 2000, Thursday, FINAL.
38 The information of Yuen is cited from the moviebook *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film*, p. 141.
early Kung Fu hits of Ng See Yuen. In 1978, Wo Ping directed his first film, the well regarded The Eagle’s Shadow, starring the now legendary, international cross-over star Jackie Chan. He went on to direct another Jackie Chan feature Drunken Master. By 1979, Wo Ping had formed his own production and choreography company. The timing proved fortuitous, with the popularity of Kung Fu growing steadily in China and worldwide. Through the years, Yuen Wo Ping has worked with or directed with many of China’s top film talents. Last Hero in China, Tai Chi Master, and Fist of Legend featured the incomparable Jet Li, recently seen in Lethal Weapon 4, and Romeo Must Die. Sammo Hung, now of CBS-TV’s “Martial Law”, worked with Wo Ping in both The Magnificent Butcher and Eastern Condor. One of Wo Ping’s most highly regarded film’s is 1991’s Iron Monkey, starring popular star Donnie Yen.

Besides the excellent martial arts crew, the film also benefited from the power of Hong Kong action stars, who had made their fame in both local markets and Hollywood. Female action movie actors like Michelle Yeoh and Chen Pei-pei were the treasure that no other cinemas could provide. Chow Yun-fat was also a good choice for his fame and his rich experience in action movies, after the failure of the producers’ attempt to include Jet Li, a real martial arts expert, to their cast. While there were few young famous action actors for the film, the producers also tried to select the best from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Mainland China.

In other aspects of the film, the producers were trying to muster top Chinese professionals in order to best explore the uniqueness of Chinese culture and make it attractive to both Chinese audience and foreign moviegoers. In music, Tan Dun39, skilled on traditional Chinese instruments, was invited by the producers to write the film score. Being a graduate of Beijing’s central Conservatory and Columbia University in New York, he had developed a style of music that blends influences

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39 To know better about Tan Dun, see the moviebook Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film, p.142; or “Modern Sounds in an Ancient Key: Composer Tan Dun on the International Stage”, in Sinorama, August 2001, p. 34-39.
from East and West, and from the past and the present, spanning an artistic realm situated between the traditional and the avant-garde. In production design and costume design, Tim Yip, with a remarkable list of credits in famous Chinese films, was included in the production team. And Peter Pau, one of the best Chinese directors of photography, was also picked up for his excellence.

Besides the gathering of top Chinese filmmakers, the producers also took advantage of the beauty of landscapes in Mainland China. Since the film story was set in the 19th century China, Ang Lee insisted all scenes be shot on locations over China, without sets in Taiwan or Hong Kong40. After half a year of hard work in Mainland China, the producers got the support of Beijing film companies and other local companies, and chose over one hundred locations for the film. In fact, the film was shot in almost every corner of China41, including the Gobi Desert and the Taklamakan Plateau, north of Tibet, near the Kyrgyzstan border; Urumchi where all the street signs are in Chinese and Arabic; the Bamboo forest in Anji and north of Cheng De, where the famous Summer Palace is. These diverse and breathtaking landscapes greatly contributed to the film’s attractiveness.

To sum up, the producers of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* initially wanted to explore Chinese cultures and Chinese talents to produce high quality Chinese films for the international market. The film was shot in almost every corner of China, the studio work was done in Beijing, they recorded the music in Shanghai, the background vocals for the end credit song were recorded in Los Angeles, and the post-production looping was done in Hong Kong. So the film was really bringing together almost every conceivable idea you could have of China. William Foreman, Associated Press Writer, commented, “the martial arts fantasy, winner of the best foreign film award, is a perfect marriage of Taiwanese creativity, Hong Kong star

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41 See “Location: Shooting in China”, in the moviebook *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, the Portrait of the Ang Lee Film*, p. 46.
power and China’s stunning scenery”\textsuperscript{42}. The gathering of top Chinese filmmakers, and their knowledge in Chinese cultures and skills in filmmaking, could be converted into cultural capital for the globalization of the Chinese wuxia film.

Moreover, the film implies a possibility of associating Chinese societies and Chinese talents in the future global promotion of Chinese cultural products. For decades, civil war, colonial rule and the Cold War have helped carve up the region known as “Greater China” – comprised of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. But in recent years, the pieces of the large Chinese puzzle are beginning to fit together, especially in the business world. Already, long-time rivals China and Taiwan, which separated amid civil war in 1949, are allowing their economies to be closely linked together. In the past decade, Taiwanese investors have flooded into China’s huge potential market. Hong Kong, the former British colony, has formed an even closer relationship with China since it returned to Chinese rule in 1997. This new union of economy provides a favourable political context for the future competition of Chinese cultural products in the global market. Indeed, it helped the production of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon a lot (“considerably” might be a better word. At a time when other directors often complain of troublesome government censorship and regulations, Ang Lee quickly dismissed such problems. The permission to shoot on Mainland China was granted by the Chinese government only after a close scrutiny of the shooting script.

IV. Fund raising process\textsuperscript{43} and the formation of global alliance

Uneven power distribution in the West and the East, especially in economic

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Cited} Cited in “Crouching Tiger’ is an example of Greater China’s hidden power”, in The Associated Press, March 26, 2001, Monday, BC cycle.
\end{thebibliography}
power, has restricted the globalization of non-western cultures and their products. With respect to the motion picture industry, Hollywood majors have controlled an increasing share of the international market and have spread their films into almost all countries. By increasingly pushing the production and distribution cost to a higher level that is almost impossible for independent companies or companies in other countries to afford, Hollywood majors exclude new comers into both domestic and international markets. However, the global integration and interpenetration provides another way for the development of local cinemas. Basing their practice in the power of local cultures, they can draw enough resources by finding appropriate partners in the international market. The fund raising process of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* shows this complexity.

The budget for the Chinese martial arts film is US$ 15 million, much lower than the average cost for a Hollywood movie. But it had already been the biggest budget for a Chinese film at that time. The difficulty of raising money for the film shows the disadvantageous position of Asian cinema and eastern cultural products in the global competition. However, the final settlement of the fund suggests that the global interconnectivity and interdependency of capital, talents and cultural resources can provide local cinemas a chance to compete the global market.

**The failure of raising money in Asian markets**

While the long-time conception and the mobilization of Chinese talents were important to the film, the vital issue for the survival of the film was fund raising. Because Lee insisted that the film be made on location in the mainland – with no sets in Taiwan or Hong Kong, US$15 million was the absolute minimum *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* could be made for. However, trying to raise money during the Asian economic crisis was a spectacular case of poor time. There was no chance in

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Asia. Meanwhile, both Hong Kong and Taiwan cinemas were at the nadir of their fortune, by the assaulting of Hollywood movies, the shrinking of local market and the rampant piracy. They could no longer afford production on a big scale, let alone US$ 15 million, the highest investment for an individual film in the local cinemas’ history. If dependant only on the local cinemas, combining Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the mainland together, the revenue of the film would not be able to cover the investment. The global distribution, however, was not an easy thing. Even if the film could be distributed in foreign markets, no one had confidence in its box office. For all these reasons, the producers had trouble in the fund raising from day one.

As a senior Taiwan film producer, Hsu Li Kong firstly tried to find investment in his homeland. However, in such an economic depression, no local film company dared to risk millions of dollars in a Chinese martial arts film, even though a well-known director like Ang Lee helmed it. The Central Motion Picture Corporation that had enough strength to cover the investment denied Hsu, to no one’s surprise. Later, Taiwan billionaire, Chen Tai-ming, the President of a listed company, Taiwan Guo Ju Electronic Co., promised to entirely finance the film by investing $12 million and he even signed the contact with Zoon Hunt International Production Co. Ltd

Because of difficulties in the Asian stock market, Chen hesitated in investing millions of US dollars in a Chinese wuxia film, and wanted to delay the project for one year, which was impossible for the producers. And when everything was ready and the production team was ready to go to the mainland, Chen finally drew back his money. Till then, the attempts in raising money in local areas failed.

The global agent of pre-selling rights and raising funds in the global market

With no financing in place and the film’s preparation well underway in Beijing, the producers and director became responsible for keeping the movie alive.

45 Taiwan Daily, February 20, 2001.
Producers Ang Lee and Bill Kong had already had their houses at stake. However, with no chance in Asia, the traditional source for the investment of Chinese martial arts film, they had to go to the United States. The producers tried all they could to get money. They wanted to pre-sell the rights of the film and get money for the production, a common way of raising money for independent film production in Hong Kong (Grace & Chan, 1997). Since the 1950s, the inflow of capital from the overseas market has benefited the development of Hong Kong independent film production. The so-called “pre-sale” system, referring to the practice of pre-selling the copyright or exhibition rights of unfinished films to raise the money for production, had the impact of promoting the growth of small independent companies that lacked financial-resources. According to the government’s 1958 annual report, apart from the two major production companies, Hong Kong had over 50 small and medium film production companies, nearly all of which relied on capital from the ‘pre-sale’ system (Grace & Chan, 1997). The system has survived to the present and has become the major source of finance for many film companies. Its popularity makes small and medium companies more agile, and at the same time, this system was helpful for the diversity of local films.

In the fund-raising process, New York based Good Machine International (GMI) played a vital role. GMI, founded by Good Machine after the joint of David Linde, a senior professional in selecting international theatrical rights and picking up independent films, announced its formation at the 1997 Venice Film Festival as a film sales, marketing, and financing entity. In addition to films produced and acquired by production company Good Machine, Inc., GMI maintains an ongoing relationship with USA films as the latter’s exclusive foreign sales agent while also working on films separately with Universal Pictures, New Line Cinema, Columbia...

46 For the information about GMI, see the moviebook Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film, p. 142.
Pictures, Miramax Films, Sony Pictures Classics, and Fine Line Features, among others. Hence, GMI was a good agent of globally distributing the Chinese martial arts film. Having a longtime relationship with Hollywood majors, international cinemas and local Hong Kong-Taiwan-China cinemas, GMI worked on the sales of the film's global rights, connected Hong Kong-Taiwan producers with Hollywood major studios, a European bank and bond company in Los Angeles and pre-sold rights in Asia, America, five European territories and Europe, making the production and global distribution of the film possible.

The involvement of GMI and its great contribution to the film's fund-raising and global distribution are good evidence of the importance of establishing a global relationship network in the globalization of local cultural products. The three producers, Ang Lee, Hsu Li Kong and Bill Kong, had already had a long time relationship with Good Machine and its co-presidents. Good Machine, an independent film production company, was formed in 1991 by James Schamus, a great screenwriter and businessman in raising money who has no technical filmmaking skills, and Ted Hope, a man with production skills but who knows nothing about raising money. Among Hope's tasks was finding people who had directed promising short films and offering them deals to make full-length features. One day, he ran across the prize-winning student film by Ang Lee. Ever since then, GM has produced all seven of Lee's film, and the GM co-president James Schamus was involved in all of them: besides executive-producing and co-writing Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, he produced Lee's first feature, Pushing Hands (1991); produced and co-wrote The Wedding Banquet (1993); co-wrote and associate-produced Eat Drink Man Woman (1994); co-produced Sense And Sensibility (1995); wrote and produced Ride with the Devil (1997); produced and

wrote *The Ice Storm* (1997). Besides these, Schamus, a native Californian who has practiced in the art of “begging” for money for independent movies ever since going to New York in 1987, is skilled in fund raising. Therefore, Schamus and GMI were the best choice for the three producers in looking for money in Hollywood.

**The complex financial commitments and global alliance**

Fund-raising in the United States brought the Hollywood business system into the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Before the success of the film, the traditional pre-sale market of Chinese films, including Hong Kong martial arts films, was mainly in Southeast Asia. To reduce the risk of investment, Hollywood distributors often picked up finished Chinese products in international film festivals, instead of financing them directly. But this practice may change in the near future. Increasingly recognizing the importance of Asian markets for their global development, some Hollywood majors may become more willing to invest in Asian films or even establish subsidiaries in Asia to produce their own films, by using local talents. Schamus says that *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* serves as “a good snapshot” of what the international independent film business looks like today. “It’s one of the first times that this level of financial sophistication was applied to a Chinese-language film.” With Lee’s New York lawyers, Schamus worked for seven months from Good Machine’s Soho offices, stringing together a complex web of financing commitments that crossed Asia, Europe and North America. A Paris bank financed the production once the producers got a bond company in Los Angeles to insure the film.

However, the pre-selling of a martial arts film in Chinese dialogue in North American was not an easy task. While the producers were looking for only $15

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48 See the moviebook *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film*, p. 140.
49 See “Columbia is entering the Asian market” (Chinese), in Power News, April 6, 2000.
50 Cited in “Company town; the biz; funding for ‘crouching tiger’ a work of art”, Los Angeles Times, December 12, 2000, Tuesday, Home Edition SECTION: Business; Part C; Page 9.
million – a pittance by Hollywood studio standards, and Ang’s last film (*Ride With the Devil*) had a budget of $35 million, there was no way that Hollywood investors would finance a Chinese-speaking film (Lee insisted that Mandarin be the film language), not even with Ang Lee at the helm. Their reasoning was simple: they could buy a finished Jackie Chan movie for less – so why invest in something unproven? No one could blame Hollywood investors for their lack of confidence in a Chinese film, because Ang’s biggest Chinese-language film, *Eat Drink Man Woman*, had grossed only $7 million in the States. Even Ang Lee himself was not confident in the American box office, “I think you can only get three times to flop and frankly I thought this one (*Crouching Tiger*) would be the third one.”\(^{51}\) Actually, before the success of *Crouching Tiger*, Hidden Dragon, Chinese-language films had a tough time in the U.S., with most top performing films making less than $10 million:

Figure 2: Chinese films among the top-grossing Chinese-language films in terms of U.S. box office receipts:

1. *The Legend of the Drunken Master* (Cantonese): $11.5 million
2. *Eat Drink Man Woman*: $7.3 million
4. *Farewell My Concubine*: $5.2 million
5. *Raise the Red Lantern*: $2.5 million
6. *Shanghai Triad*: $2.3 million

(Source: Los Angeles Times, December 12, 2000, Tuesday, Home Edition Section: Business; Part C; Page 9)

Raising money for a foreign language film at Hollywood was really a very difficult and complicated thing. Schamus describes a typical day during that

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exhaustive fund-raising process\textsuperscript{52}.

"I'd start the day about 6 in the morning, because I had to talk to everybody in Hong Kong and Taipei before they closed for business. When I finished those discussions, I worked with our attorneys in New York and our international sales company and started interfacing with Europe.

"We'd have to get all the European business done before noon. Then, we'd start talking to Columbia and our bond company in Los Angeles and their lawyers, who would be opening for business at 1 o'clock our time.

"We'd spend the afternoon wrangling with the Sony attorney and the bond company. And then, at the end of the day, I'd pick up the phone and fill in my partners in Asia, Hong Kong, Taipei and Beijing because they'd just be waking up." (Los Angeles Times, March 25, 2001)

In the end, Sony Picture Entertainment agreed to finance the film, because some of its subsidiaries were interested in the Chinese martial arts film. Even so, on paper, the project was not appealing enough for any one of them to take on the whole thing. But fortunately, it was appealing enough for all of them to take pieces. Thus, GMI, on behalf of producers Hsu Li Kong, Bill Kong and Ang Lee, got backing from several different pieces of Sony: one branch of Sony in Hong Kong, Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia, had an interest in producing a Chinese film; Sony Pictures Classics had an interest in artsy films; Another division, Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International, had a distribution apparatus in Asia. GMI also pre-sold the rights for European distribution to several companies. It was because of these commitments, that the producers could go to a bank and borrow the money they needed. Thus, dragging for months, the fund-raising process was closed in July 1999. Sony Pictures Classics, Columbia, the European bank, and a Chinese company

\textsuperscript{52} See "Company town; the biz; funding for 'Crouching Tiger' a work of art", Los Angeles Times, December 12, 2000, Tuesday, Home Edition SECTION: Business; Part C; Page 9.
respectively afforded a quarter of the investment.

In the long process of preparation, a global alliance was also formed for the film: the film was produced by a production company formed by Hsu Li Kong, Bill Kong and Ang Lee, Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia, and two film companies in Beijing; the releasing companies were Sony Pictures Classics, Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International and Good Machine International; the financing bank was in Paris and the insurance company in Los Angeles. In this sense, the film became a one-hundred-percent global production.
Chapter Three: Particularization and Universalization

“Sense and Sensibility with martial arts” and “Bruce Lee meets Jane Austin” are Ang Lee’s description of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. While they are Hollywood pitches used for the film’s global promotion, these phrases suggest the mixture nature of the film: the film is best-described as a cross-genre and cross-culture product that fuses romance, adventure, drama, action and fantasy together; labelled as a Hong Kong martial arts movie, it borrows heavily from Hollywood westerns, Greek tragedy, Beijing opera, dramas and dance; spiritually, it is rooted in the ancient Chinese philosophy of Taoism as well as in western philosophy like individualism or feminism; in technique, it takes advantage of both Hong Kong martial arts film production style and Hollywood management system. This mixed nature serves to improve the legibility of the Chinese martial arts film and contributes greatly to the surprising success of the film in the European and American markets.

Transformation of original cultural traditions and forms and amalgamation of diverse cultural elements from different sources are necessary for the process of globalizing a culture or cultural product, especially for an eastern based one like Hong Kong martial arts movie. Globalization, or more precisely from Robertson’s standpoint, glocalization, has involved “simultaneity and interpenetration of what are conventionally called the global and the local, or in more abstract vein – the universal and the particular” (1995, p. 30). In the process of globalization, the producers need to consider the particularities of local cultural contexts including local traditions, life styles and tastes, and the global trends and rules. The particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular exist in the

same process. On one hand, moviegoers are thirsty for innovative, unexpected and exciting movies that differ from the standard Hollywood products. The fantasy *wuxia pian* based in Chinese cultural traditions and imagination, may satisfy this need by its cultural particularity and richness. On the other hand, the particularity of Chinese *wuxia* culture and its philosophy might be “too foreign” to be accepted by western audience. It needs to be transformed in order to appeal to the international market. Thus, transculturation and hybridization happened in the production process of this Chinese martial arts film.

Transculturation, defined by Joseph Chan (2002), refers to the process by which a culture is transformed by another for self-aggrandizement. In a case study of the Disney animated feature *Mulan* based in a Chinese legend, Chan argues that transculturation is an evolving process involving both organization routines and experimentation through which the foreign culture is decontextualized, essentialized, recontextualized, domesticated, and sometimes universalized. Besides, transculturation always results in the hybridization of two or more cultures. It is the two-way borrowing and lending between cultures (Rosaldo, 1995). Focusing on how a Chinese legend is adapted and globalized by Disney, the study suggests the necessity and importance of cultural borrowing from different cultural sources and cultural synthesizing of these diverse elements, in the process of globalizing a local cultural product.

With *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, transculturation and hybridization also work. However, unlike *Mulan* in which a Chinese legend is adapted and transformed by a western company for the aggrandizement of western cultures, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a project initiated by Chinese producers and local companies for

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Thinking Chinese cultural traditions and imagination as the resources for producing “particular” Chinese *wuxia pian*, I do not mean that Chinese *wuxia pian* has to stick to its original form and hasn’t changed during its development. In fact, the *wuxia* novel and the *wuxia pian* also adapted and transformed original cultural forms in order to create cultural products for their own particular time and their own particular audience.
the development of Chinese cinema. It is a case of the reversed flow – how local cultural producers globalized their cultural heritage and promoted it to the western market. Chinese transculturators actively transformed the Chinese martial arts cinema tradition for its market aggrandizement, by fusing elements from eastern and western cultures together. In this process, the particularity of the original culture serves as a basis for its promotion in the global market, and the authenticity of the wuxia culture is cherished and reproduced in the film. To expand Chinese cinema into the western market, however, transformation of the original cultural tradition and assimilation of the Hollywood system and western cultures are necessary for the film. Thus, in the production process, the creation of a sense of cultural authenticity and the transformation and assimilation of different cultural elements coexist. Filmmakers from Chinese communities were trying to stay true to their heritage while appealing to the West. Bill Kong, one of the film’s producers, said in Hong Kong: “Ang Lee was keeping faithful to the novel while being comprehensible to Westerners. He hired a scholar of Qing etiquette to teach the girls how to walk, how to treat their elders.”\textsuperscript{55} What the producers want is something that is “as legible as anything Hollywood has made, and yet is still quintessential Asian”.\textsuperscript{56}

I. Particularization: the reproduction and refiguration of Hong Kong martial arts cinema tradition

The sense of cultural authenticity is carried out by constructing an ancient China and wuxia world in the film. Here authenticity does not refer to artistic authenticity, instead of historical authenticity, because wuxia culture itself is the outcome of popular imagination, and Jianghu is an abstract world which does not exist, except in

\textsuperscript{55} Cited in “Balletic Kung Fu blockbusters gets the chop in China”, in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH (LONDON), January 13, 2001, Saturday.
\textsuperscript{56} James Schamus’s words, cited in “Culture: Film – Look out, Hollywood – the Chinese are coming;” December 24, 2000, Sunday.
the novels and imagination. The abstract nature of wuxia provides plenty of room for the producers to embody their feelings, emotions and imaginations, and that is why Ang Lee chose the martial arts genre to be the story telling tool.

Based on the cinema tradition developed by Hong Kong filmmakers in the past 70 years, especially the old styled wuxia films of the 1960s and 1970s, Ang Lee presented a new style of martial arts film, fusing martial arts, romance, drama, Chinese opera and dance together. He drew nutrients from Chinese culture – new or old, traditional or modern, classic or popular, reproducing and refiguring the martial arts cinema tradition:

"My team and I chose the most populist, if not popular, genre in film history – the Hong Kong martial arts film – to tell our story, and we used this pop genre almost as a kind of research instrument to explore the legacy of classical Chinese culture. We embraced the most mass of art forms and mixed it with the highest – the secret martial arts as passed down over time in the great Taoist schools of training and thought."

Wuxia culture and martial arts cinema tradition

As a kind of action movie, Chinese martial arts film is a genre appropriate for the global market. Its focus on martial arts and fight sequences with tight dialogue makes it easy for foreigners to understand. This has been proven by its increasing popularity in America and Europe in the past two decades. From a historical perspective, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon is "a millennial synthesis of the great wuxia tradition" (Borderwell, 2000, p. 20). The producers and director valued the cultural particularity and prestige of Hong Kong martial arts cinema and used the genre as the vehicle to tell the story of the abstract China.

58 Cited in Ang Lee’s Foreword of the moviebook Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film, p. 7.
Chinese wuxia pian, or martial arts film, or martial chivalry film, or swordfights film, is a genre rooted in Chinese wuxia culture that has around 2000 years of history. A xia is a knight-errant, who might come from any class, and wuxia involves knightly chivalry. The Chinese concept of the knight-errant originates in the fourth century BC, but chivalric stories as we know them today go back to the Tang dynasty, around the ninth century AD. Some were literary efforts composed by men of learning; others were oral tales and ballads in colloquial prose or simple verse. By the seventeenth century, these forms had become a flourishing fictional genre concentrating on vagabond warriors who display outstanding courage, honour, and fighting skills. Magical elements had also entered the mix, so knights were often given superhuman powers like flying, hurling balls of fire, or becoming invisible. Many stories played on the boundary between pure fantasy and what might be barely possible for a supremely trained and gifted warrior: not really flying but the "weightless leap"; not being invulnerable but being able, through control of breathing, to make one's body as hard as iron. To enjoy the wuxia tale we must grant that supreme skill in martial arts could give a fighter extraordinary powers.

Like the Arthurian legends of Europe, wuxia culture promotes a concept of knightly virtue. Strong and skilful in martial arts, the roaming knight-errants were courteous, brave defenders of the right, especially in a dire situation. Here political history becomes crucial. China has an unhappy history of corrupt and tyrannical regimes, dislodged only by court intrigue and assassination. Since civil society could not guarantee the rule of law, the wuxia knight-errants became the central heroes of popular imagination. They could deliver vengeance in a society where law held no sway. The revenge motive took on moral resonance through the Confucian scale of

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59 For detailed information about wuxia culture and novels, see Liang Zhongshou's The History of Wuxia Novel. For Hong Kong martial arts cinema tradition, see Bordwell's Hong Kong Martial Arts Cinema and his introduction about Wuxia Pian, in the moviebook Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film, p. 14-21; p. 112.
obligation: the child owes a duty to the father, the pupil to the teacher. They could also right wrongs according to the moral rules of Jiang-hu, an abstract place that refers to the society of the warriors.

*Wuxia* characters and plots entered Peking Opera in the nineteenth century, where dazzling acrobatics added to their impact. The genre grew during the interwar years, both on the mainland and Hong Kong. When Mao’s 1949 revolution dictated new cinema policies, Hong Kong and Taiwan held a monopoly on *wuxia* filmmaking. In the 1950s and 1960s, the supernatural aura of warriors vanished in *wuxia* films, and a school of more realistic swordplay films influenced by Japanese movies emerged. Warriors were commoners instead of aristocrats. Driven by ambition or revenge or devotion to justice, they endured extremely hard training to acquire astonishing abilities. The artistic styles became diverse as well and two main traditions of martial arts film were set in this period. One was the violent style represented by Zhang Che’s films. In contrast were the delicate, lyrical style of King Hu, which influence Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* greatly. Hu’s films are acclaimed by Boadwell (2000, p. 19) as masterworks that “brought the energy and finesse of classical Chinese theater and painting to the new swordplay movies”. “His films lingered on breathtaking landscapes, treated swordfights as airborne ballets, and created a gallery of reserved, preternaturally calm warriors who fought not for prestige or vengeance but to preserve human values” (Boadwell, 2000, p.19). Another important change in this period was the increasing importance of women warriors (Boadwell, 2000). The popularity of action actresses at that time was evident. Cheng Pei-pei (Jade Fox in *Crouching Tiger*) was one example. She was eulogized as the “Queen of wuxia pian” for her roles in *Come Drink With Me* (1966, directed by King Hu) and *Golden Swallow* (1968).

Like all film genres, the fantasy *wuxia* wound down and the traditions were
explored and developed by Chinese Kkung-Fu choreographers and producers. As the master of martial arts cinema, Hong Kong has built up a specific production system for *wuxia pian*: it has its own styles of plotting, shooting and action aesthetics; based in Chinese society and *wuxia* culture, it constructs a fantasy *wuxia* world and *wuxia* beliefs for both the filmmakers and moviegoers; it has trained a group of professional *wuxia* filmmakers, including directors, choreographers, actors, stunts and even a martial arts film production team for the genre; moreover, the hundreds of movies produced in the past serve as best reference for the future production and development of the genre.

**The construction of *wuxia* world in the film**

The film’s adoption of many typical plots of *wuxia* stories, such as wandering warriors, swords, revenge, Wudan style of martial arts, sequence of fighting, and *qing-gong* (the so-called defiance of gravity by western media); its dependence on Hong Kong martial arts movie production style and production team; its presentation of *wuxia* philosophy based in Chinese culture, especially Taoism; its setting in ancient China and show of Chinese traditions, customs, costume, music, architecture, and landscapes, and its film language of Mandarin Chinese; all these collectively created a fantastic *wuxia* world. In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Hong Kong martial arts cinema tradition was reproduced and refigured.

**The plot: the continuing of *wuxia* pian tradition**

Based on a *wuxia* novel, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* recapitulates elements from the tradition of martial arts films. Male and female warriors, security men, security officers, bandits, and thieves are typical characters of a *wuxia* story; security compound, inns, and even the Royal Guard, are the locations where *wuxia* stories often happen. Besides the characters and places, the story is nothing new to

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60 For the detailed story of the film, see appendix 5.
Chinese audiences. The serene self-possession of Li Mu Bai is reminiscent of King Hu’s fighters, and his decision to give up his Green Destiny sword reflects his tiredness of Jiang hu and wasteful killing and his deep yearning for peace – a kind of feeling very common among great warriors after years of wandering and fighting (Bordwell, 2000). But warriors can never really escape from Jiang hu. Before his leaving, Li has to finish his final mission: avenge the death of his master. In fact, vengeance is one of the most important impetuses for the existence of Jiang hu, and becomes indispensable plots of wuxia pian from its first day. Besides Li’s vengeance, there is another revenge plot for the death of the mother in the film.

As a martial arts film, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon goes on around the Green Destiny sword. After Yu Shu Lian, a long time friend and lover of Li, delivers the sword to Sir Te, it is stolen, which comes as no surprise to the Chinese audience. In the extensive investigation, policemen, fighters and a series of other colourful characters appear on the screen. Jen, the beautiful young daughter of a high government official, turned out to be the masked thief, and her governess to be Jade Fox, the killer of Li’s master. After a long pursuit and fighting sequence, Jade Fox and Li Mu Bai kill each other and the vengeance mission is over. And the thief Jen, for reasons of guilt or maybe for her honour and love, also dies by jumping from the Wudan Mountain. From a historical perspective, this plot was composed within the scope of traditional wuxia culture.

New style of martial arts film: The fusion of drama, martial arts, Chinese opera and dance

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, is not a Kung Fu movie associated with street fighting. “I wanted to try something different”, said Ang Lee, in the movie book of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. With the more elaborate camera movement, lighting, beauty, aesthetics, the film’s martial arts style and its fighting scenes are not
usually what most martial arts films are now about\textsuperscript{61}. Ang Lee adopted the old style of \textit{wuxia} film in the 1960s and 70s, and choreographed the drama as a kind of martial art, in which “the fighting is never just kicking and punching, but is also a way for characters to express their unique situation and feelings”\textsuperscript{62}. “Through the martial arts you express how you feel instead of just beating someone up. There is a dramatic quality to it”, said Ang Lee in a conversation with James Schamus\textsuperscript{63}. In order to stress the inner strength and centredness, more romantic choreography and dance came together in the film to create low pace and graceful fight scenes that are rare in martial arts cinemas. Ang Lee actually produced the film from the perspective of an artier director and fused martial arts into his art house direction style.

This can be seen particularly from the very beginning of the film. There is a full 16 minutes of exposition before the first action scene – essentially a sequence of conversations outlining the characters and the behavioural and ethical codes of their world. Sixteen minutes may not seem long to those used to art house films -which is how \textit{Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon} is being marketed. But for those versed in Chinese action cinema - particularly the Hong Kong variety that has dominated the field for 20 years, it is an eternity. The conventional practice for an HonKong director is to contrive an opening action scene before settling in for the slower stuff, even if that scene had no real internal justification. No Hong Kong director – except perhaps the anomalous art house filmmaker Wong Kar Wai – would dare lead off with that much exposition and character development.

Lee explains the reasons of this practice: he wanted to surprise the audience by setting up the drama and the characters in a very static, slow-paced beginning, before

\textsuperscript{61} Ang Lee’s point of view, see the movie book \textit{Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{63} Cited in “Fighting as a way of thinking and feeling”, in the movie book \textit{Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film}, p. 42.
unleashing the first dance-like fight sequence between the two main female characters. He drew inspiration from Chinese opera in producing these scenes. “I took the rhythm of a Chinese opera,” he said in an interview, “where there is singing and singing, and then a fight with these very long, very percussive moments that are very, very noisy. I took that rhythm where they stop and look at each other, and they go on to the next level, both emotionally and physically.”

Besides the offer of surprise to consumers, this low pace and the graceful fighting scenes would also serve the purpose of globalizing the wuxia film and add credits to the attractiveness of the film in foreign markets. Its art movie style would separate the film from the negative impressions western audiences have of Hong Kong Kung Fu movies, and the low pace was not a problem at all in foreign markets (while it really was a problem in Chinese markets). After all, the audience that knew Ang Lee's other work – would not be bothered or surprised at all by the pacing; few of them had the expectation of how martial arts films were supposed to be paced according to the rules of the genre. This form of graceful action – which implies some sort of spiritual as well as physical development – was so alien to most Western eyes that audiences might titter at first before accepting it as part of the movie's fantastic production. Moreover, the long conversations, which outline the characters and, crucially, their behavioural and ethical codes was helpful, serving as a brief introduction of wuxia norms to foreign audience.

The influence of earlier martial arts cinemas

While Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon presented a new style of martial arts, the transformation was still based in the martial arts cinema tradition and Hong Kong production power. The ways in which Lee's film deviates from the standard Chinese

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action film practice may be a simple case of his particular concerns and personality, but it also may have to do with the models he is operating from. Ang Lee had gone on record about how it was the martial arts films of his Taiwanese childhood that made him fall in love with cinema, and those films were from an earlier era. In particular, the influence of King Hu, the first Chinese director to achieve critical recognition in the rest of the world, can be seen throughout Ang Lee’s martial arts film. David Bordwell (2000) implies that three particular elements of Hu’s work are strongly reflected in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: his incorporation of the dance and acrobatic moves of Chinese opera into a previously stiff style; his elaborate camera movements, combining traditionally stylized staging with sweeping camera movement and ingenious cutting; and his offer of equal or superior standing in the world of action to women.

Moreover, reviewing the influential wuxia movies in the past 70 years, Bordwell points out that the 60s and 70s’ martial arts films have a influence in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon’s main fighting scenes: Yu Shu Lien’s rooftop pursuit of the mysterious thief echoes 1960’s adventures, especially The Jade Bow (1966), in which the hero and heroine pursue ninja-like assassins over rooftops with a fluidity that seems only a slight exaggeration of natural human grace; the fight between Mubai and Jen on the trees branches was inspired by King Hu’s A Touch of Zen (1971), where fighters have a combat under bamboo trees; the scuffle in the restaurant is a typical plot in many martial arts films, such as the fight in a rogue-filled inn in King Hu’s set picture mentioned above; its show of the weaponry can be seen in Lau Kar-leung’s Shaolin vs. Ninjia (1978).

The application of Hong Kong production techniques

While the inspiration of the new martial arts style was primarily drawn from the

66 For more information about these films, see Bordwell’s Hong Kong Martial Arts Cinema.
earlier films, the realization of Lee's conception of wuxia could only be done by using all the achievements of Hong Kong martial arts cinema and with the help of advanced computer technology. Since Lee had no background in making martial arts films, he had to depend on Yuen Wo Ping for fight sequences. Yuen, being familiar with Chinese Kung Fu action scenes and the tradition of Chinese Opera, helped to turned Ang Lees ideas of wuxia into reality. In the production process, Lee discussed each action scene with Yuen, not in terms of specific movements, but in terms of the dramatic themes he wanted to convey. Then Yuen and his production team choreographed and shot the action scenes according to Lee’s ideas.

The Hong Kong label on Yuen’s work is evident in the film’s application of Hong Kong action movie production technique called “wire work”. The so-called wirework refers to the use of cable to suspend actors high in the air for action scenes. It first appeared in 1928’s Burning of the Red Lotus Monastery and has now be adopted in almost every Hong Kong martial arts film and TV program. With the help of this technique, Hong Kong filmmakers can create more realistic scenes where actors can fly and fight in the air, than Hollywood producers can with just computers.

Wirework is a tricky and dangerous business, especially in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. That is one reason Ang Lee needed Yuen in his production. “Wo-Ping was moving away from the hard Hong Kong - based Kung Fu of his early work, taking the exhilaration to another level. The style was more operatic than anything he had done before, and his talent for wirework really came to the fore”, explained Ang Lee. In order to achieve the effect Lee wanted, there was enormously dangerous wirework in each fight scene. And the progress was painstakingly slow: each action scene took three weeks, on average, to shoot. Actors

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68 For the information about Ang Lee and Yuen’s cooperation, see “Martial Arts”, in LA Weekly, December 15, 2000, Friday.

69 Cited in “Martial Artist”, in LA Weekly, December 15, 2000, Friday.
had to be hooked up for hours to harnesses and wires, which were later erased digitally. “To be able to make it look effortless, weightless - my God, it's torture,” confessed Michelle Yeoh, who plays a master warrior in the film. “Being up on a wire, 30 or 40 feet in the air, running on a rooftop – it looks like you’re flying, but physically you’re being lifted by five or six guys at the end of the wire, so you have to work with subtle movements, changes in direction, and if you do not catch it right, the whole stunt can go wrong.”

Another torture the ambitious wirework brought was the difficulty of removing wires in post-production. Thanks to computer graphics, wires can be erased and figures can be pasted into landscapes with stunning effect – updating the special effects on which the genre has always depended. But even so, it still took the Hong Kong based Asia Legend Limited about four months to do the wire removal and digital effects. Leo Lo and his team at Asia Cine Digital only slept for four to five hours a night for about seventy days to meet the deadline for Cannes. Just for the scene in the bamboo trees, 300 wire-removals, sky replacement, and the colouring of the entire bamboo sequence were needed to be done. Some of the most difficult wire-removal shots took two months to complete due to thousands of leaves moving in the background.

In summary, by recapitulating elements from traditional martial arts cinema tradition, fusing drama, martial arts, Chinese opera and dance together, and depending on Hong Kong production experts and techniques, Ang Lee reproduced and refigured Chinese martial arts cinema and presented a new style wuxia movie to the world. In this process, Ang Lee and his partners tried to find the “Good old China” – a history, a dream or an impression in the memory of Chinese people. Actually, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon was the home and identity searching

71 See the movie book Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film, p. 122.
practice of the cosmopolitan Chinese filmmakers. Since such a China does not exist anymore, the fantastic Chinese wuxia world in the film was the filmmakers' reminiscence and reconstruction of their memory and impression of the homeland. The insistence of film language in Mandarin, the use of the martial arts genre, the exploration of the traditional philosophy – Taoist, the shooting locations around China, the show of vaudeville in Beijing City, Jen’s Chinese calligraphy and grand bridal procession, the Chinese in natural fabrics, the grey buildings, and so on, are the ways “Good old China” was constructed. With Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, the Chinese filmmakers introduced a fantastic land to the West, according to their dream of China and their understanding of classic Chinese cultures.

II. Universalization

While Ang Lee and his partners put a lot of efforts to maintain a sense of cultural authenticity, some important transformation was also added to the original form. The promotion of local cultural products to the international market is part of the global cultural flow, where different cultures meet, clash, and mingle with each other. To meet the need of the global market, producers should consider both the particularity of the local cultural traditions and the global trend, tastes, and industry formulas. Thus, the transformation of original cultural forms and traditions and the amalgamation of diverse cultural elements from different sources have become necessary in the process of globalizing a local cultural product, especially for an eastern based one that often holds a subordinate status in the global competition. With Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, the local producers and cosmopolitan filmmakers knew the importance of universalization and hybridization. They improved the competency of the Chinese martial arts film by giving it universal themes and producing it in a Hollywood method.
Universal themes and their contextualization

The pre-sale of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon in the international market, including American and European rights, had destined the film to be distributed around the world. Actually, the revenue of foreign markets would be crucial for the film, for the film could not draw back its US$15 million investment from its traditional South-eastern cinemas. Given the importance of the global market to Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, there was a tendency for the producers to give the Chinese martial arts film a universal spin.

The Feminist and individualistic touch

Perhaps the film’s biggest innovation is that it focuses so centrally on its female protagonists, unexpected in an action film. While female warriors are conventionally included in Chinese martial arts cinema, they seldom steal the whole film as they do in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. Besides the Green Destiny sword, the film tells the story of two women, both capable fighters, whose fates intertwine during the Qing Dynasty. One of them, Jen (the thief of the sword), tries passionately to break free from the constraint society has placed upon her, even if it means giving up her aristocratic privileges for a life of crime and passion. The other, Shu Lian, in her lifelong pursuit of justice and honour, discovers too late the consequences of unfulfilled love. Moreover, Jen – young and energetic – is the soul of the film. She is the real dragon.

As individualism has long been part of the West’s cultural fabric and has been globalized in late twentieth century, feminism has begun to take hold. With Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, director Ang Lee took advantage of the feminist touch to attract western audiences, particularly female. Heintently chose a wuxia novel that focuses on tough female characters, and subtly contextualized the ideas of feminism into the Chinese martial arts film. He wanted to move away from what had
become a “macho genre” and transform it into a story-driven action fantasy led by women. “I wanted to take a journey through these women’s emotion”, he said in an interview, “I felt it was important to bring back old-fashioned storytelling, and the best way to do it was through the emotional lives of the women in my film. Luckily, we had the best choreographers available, so we got to have the best of both worlds: the new standards of martial arts with what I hope is an unprecedented level of storytelling in the genre.”

Tough and attractive, women in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* can serve as the models of feminism theorists. These female protagonists echo the popular post-feminism theory, which emphasizes that woman can maintain their traditional feminine good looks with a new exercise of women’s power. Unlike female characters that are only sexy objects or weak dependants of men, the three-generation women in the film are skilled fighters, strong enough to protect themselves and to pursue what they want: Jade Fox, is a villain who kills Southern Crane (the master of Li Mu Bai) and Li; Shu Lien, is a security woman that runs the Yuan Security; and Jen, the daughter of a governor, finally breaks from her family and wanders alone in *Jiang hu*.

The fight sequence between Jen and a group of male characters in the stall and the restaurant best manifests the power of female characters. Disappearing after the bridal procession, Jen travels to a nearby town with the Green Destiny, masquerading as a man. Intrigued by the Green Destiny, a group of local male martial arts characters, challenge Jen to fight. Not fearing the siege at all, Jen swiftly defeats all of these male characters one after another. She declares her defiance of the dominant male power, by slashing and maiming the opponents,

“Who am I? I am the invincible Sword Goddess. Armed with the incredible

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72 Cited in “Cover Story/Women on The Verge of A Breakthrough/Female Warriors Are Kicking their Way to Hollywood Heights – Thanks to A Pair of Masters Who Teach Actresses How to Fight”, In Newsday (New York, NY), December 24, 2000, Page D06.
Green Destiny. Be you Li or Southern Crane lower your head and ask for mercy. I am the desert dragon. I leave no trace. Today I fly over Eu-Mei. Tomorrow I’ll kick over Wudan Mountain.”

Such scenes and words will certainly attract female audiences into the cinema. In fact, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon is one of the recent popular movies and TV shows featuring women as the action heroines. From Carrie-Anne Moss of The Matrix to the trio (Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz and Lucy Liu) of Charlie’s Angels and Buffy the Vampier Slayer, being strong, athletic and feminine are no longer seen as contradictions. But the producers refrained from going to the extremes of feminism, understanding that most audiences are in the middle and extremism may alienate the mainstream. They chose a feminist touch – the combination of traditional femininity and strong power – that would provoke least displeasure among audiences. They also shaped Li Mu Bai and Shu Lien as role models within the story, and to the larger audience. In the original novel, the real protagonist is Jen, self-centred, wild, headstrong and thirsty for freedom, which is at odds with China’s feudalistic past. While Li Mu Bai and Shu Lien, the acclaimed knight-errants, are only supporting roles and occupy little space in the novel. The filmmakers rewrote the story and took longer to shape these two characters. Respecting the social norms and rules, they are alternative to Jen and Lo.

Besides this middle-of-the-road approach, the film also restrains feminism into the film’s central theme: the conflict between social obligation and individual freedom. We can see this theme from the dialogue between Jen and Yu Shu Lien when they meet first in Sir Te’s Study.

Jen (longingly): It must be exciting to be a fighter, to be totally free!

Yu: Fighters have rules too: friendship, trust, integrity... Without rules, we wouldn’t survive for long.
Jen: I've read all about people like you. Roaming wild, beating up anyone who gets in your way!

Yu: Writers wouldn’t sell many books if they told how it really is.

Jen: But you’re just like the characters in the stories.

Yu: Sure. No place to bathe for days, sleeping in flea-infested beds... They tell you all about that in those books?

Jen: You know what I mean. I’m getting married soon, but I haven’t lived the life I want.

Yu: So I heard. Congratulations. It’s the most important step in a woman’s life, isn’t it?

Jen: You’re not married, are you?

Yu: What do you think?

Jen: No! You couldn’t roam around freely if you were.

Yu: You’re probably right.

Later, Jen really breaks from her family to be a fighter, to be totally free. But she is fated to be disappointed because there is no such kind of freedom at all, even in the fantastic martial arts world. Her pursuit of the “total” freedom is defined as impetuous and dangerous, and she is punished by the disillusion of Jiang hu’s dream and by her death at the end of the film.

**Social obligation vs. Individual freedom**

The central theme of social conflicts is another part of the process of transformation and universalization used for the globalization of the Chinese martial arts genre. Ang Lee brings his persistent interest in social conflicts into the *wuxia pian*. As James Schamus, the executive producer and screenwriter of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, says, “Ang’s central focus for much of his work has been the

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73 Cited in “The yin and yang of box office Ang Lee’s new film, a mystical, martial-arts Chinese epic, opens this week. It’s one of the year’s big hits, says Anne Billson”. In Sunday Telegraph (London), December 31, 2000.
notion that individual freedom, as you grasp for it, can often lead to a clash with social values, and that maintaining that balance, or finding a destiny that encompasses both your obligations to the social order and your yearnings for freedom – that’s the narrative. And it’s a narrative centered on female characters in the late 18th or early 19th century, whether they kick butt or make tea.” In Lee’s family dramas and Sense and Sensibility, there is a verbal fight, while in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, the martial arts form “externalizes the elements of restraint and exhilaration” through kicking butt⁷⁴.

The film is in two parts. And each part has its own social conflict. Jen and Lo (a desert bandit) are headstrong, self-centred, wild and young. For freedom and love, Jen can break from her family and social obligation, and fight under the rules of Jiang hu. In contrast, Li Mu Bai and Shu Lien respect the ideals of honour and selfless duty and live a life of duty. They choose to suppress their passions and desires for each other, because Shu Lien’s fiancé is a good friend of Li and died for Li.

Focusing on the social conflicts and sliding over the elusive concepts of Xia and Jiang hu, which are the conventional themes of Chinese martial arts film, the Chinese martial arts film is no longer “too different” or “too foreign” for western mainstream audiences. After all, the social conflict between social obligations and individual freedom exists in every society and a film based on such a theme would easily arouse the sympathy of an audience, even though they are from different countries. Bringing their own social context into the film, different audiences can draw out different meanings from the film.

Transformation of the genre

The focus of female characters and social conflicts actually changes the genre of the film. With his interests in the emotions and social conflicts, Ang Lee chose a

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⁷⁴ See Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A Portrait of The Ang Lee Film, p.83.
wuxia novel by Wang Du Lu. The story of Wang Du Lu differs greatly from the current popular wuxia novels. There is a degree of realism in it, which makes it not too crazy and too out of bounds. It also has outstanding female characters and a Greek tragic ending, both of which are unusual for a martial arts film. Cleverly exploring the two romance stories of the original novel, Ang Lee recontextualized the universal themes like feminism, individualism or social conflicts into the Chinese martial arts genre. The passion, emotion and desires of the characters become the centre of the film. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is not only excellent in its fantastic martial arts scenes, but also in its drama power which lies in the romance stories among the four martial arts fighters and the Greek tragedy ending of the film. In the end, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has turned out to be a romance martial arts film that blends drama, romance, tragedy, fantasy and martial arts together. It is no longer a male centred genre. Female warriors and their emotions hold a central position in the film. This change helps the globalization of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and may influence the future development of Chinese martial arts genre.

**The adoption of Hollywood formulas**

Universalization and hybridization not only happened in the theme and the content of the film, but also in the production style. Director Ang Lee received training in both Taiwan and the United States, and has rich experience in transcultural production. He knows the advantages and disadvantages of both Chinese filmmaking and Hollywood system. In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, he applied what he learned from the past six films to produce a Chinese martial arts film. Besides the transformation of Chinese martial arts cinema tradition and the assimilation of universal themes, he adopted Hollywood production formulas whose efficiency has been attested in its long term popularity around the world.

In finance management, "Completion Bond", a common practice in American
and European motion picture industries, was applied to the film. The so-called
"completion bond" refers to an insurance operation of film bond companies. The jobs
of these companies are to supervise the whole process of film production, to limit the
production cost to the budget plan and to finally assure the investors that the quality
of the end product is up to the requirements of the contract. Because Crouching Tiger,
Hidden Dragon was funded mostly by Hollywood film companies and a European
bank, such a management system was brought to the Chinese cinema. It assured the
efficiency of the production while it also forced the Chinese producers to practice in
a western system.

The production companies knew the importance of stars for a film. Originating
in the early 1920s, the star system has been used by Hollywood as a major method to
promote its films, both in the domestic and global markets. Bearing this in mind, the
producers of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon tried their best to invite the most
famous Chinese actors and actresses to join the film. It features four leading actors:
Chow Yun Fat, Michelle Yeoh, Zhang Zi-Yi and Chang Zheng. The first two are the
most recognizable Asian stars in American and are considered as the guaranty of
export sales in Hong Kong. Zhang Zi-Yi was a new actress discovered by Zhang
Yi-Mou, and had become a well-known name in Mainland China at that time.
Chang Zheng is also a famous actor in Taiwan. Another name needs to be mentioned
here is Cheng Pei-pei, "Queen of wuxia pian" in the 1970s. The production team is
also the best. Director Ang Lee, three screenwriters - James Schamus, Wang Hui
Ling, and Tsai Kuo Jung, director of photography Peter Pau, action choreographer
Yuen Wo Ping, production and costume designer Tim Yip, music writer Tan Dun,
cello solo player Yo-Yo Ma, and even the song singer Coco Lee, are all household
names, in the world or in Asia. It would be almost impossible to convene a stronger

73He is another Chinese director known in Hollywood,
cast than this in today’s China. Assembling such an all-star line-up of talents, the film had the potentiality to conquer Asian cinemas and western audiences.

Besides the star system, the producers of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* applied the Hollywood production system to stop the short (I don’t know what you mean here) of Hong Kong martial arts cinema. Hong Kong action films were often associated with a negative impression among western audiences – they were “traditionally squeeze poor acting, slapstick humour, and silly story lines between elaborate fight scenes in which characters can literally fly”.

To overcome these deficiencies, the producers planned the whole production process carefully, especially the script writing.

Terence Chang, the Executive Producer of all John Woo’s Hollywood films and several of Woo’s films in Hong Kong, considers the main difference between Hong Kong and the US film industries lies in the development of the script (Cheung, 2000). In Hollywood, time and effort have been exhausted in an attempt to achieve the best results, which is in sharp contrast to the normal practice in Hong Kong. He believes, “to revamp Hong Kong’s film industry, one must start from the script” (Cheung, 2000, p.133). Director Ang Lee obviously agrees with this opinion. It took about four years to get the script done. Firstly, Lee turned to Tsai Kuo Jung, an acclaimed film critic and screenwriter in Taiwan. Unsatisfied with the script, Lee went to Jame Schamus, his long time partner, and Wang Hui Ling, a successful television writer in Taiwan.

The process of script writing was literally commuting between Hollywood and Taiwan. Lee prepared a précis of the parts that interested him. Schamus drafted a screenplay, which was translated into Mandarin to be worked on by Wang Hui Ling and Tsai Kuo Jung, before being translated back into English. “And then translated

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76 The comment on Hong Kong action films in the Amazon.com film review of *Crouching Tiger.*
back into Mandarin, and then back again, and rewritten each time. It was like Ping-pong,” said James Schamus. According to Schamus, the original English script had a very strong narrative focusing on breathless storytelling. But when the English script was translated into Chinese, it was clear that there were a lot of cultural meanings missed and it would be difficult to make the text into the movie. Great revision had to be done, by Wang Hui Ling, a writer based in Taiwan. When the script was translated again into English, Schamus was able to ingest an enormous amount of information in detail and also a feeling of the martial arts genre. He restructured the script, bringing it back into a more western narrative form. This before and after translation is actually a decoding and re-encoding process of the Chinese martial arts film. The producers firstly translated all the information to English and then represented the film in a western narrative way, making the fantasy wuxia pian comprehensible to western audiences while maintaining a sense of cultural authenticity by using Mandarin.

Between the Chinese and English versions was Ang Lee – “the guy who was in the middle, who was between the two worlds”. He directed the cooperation of the three screenwriters and finally brought out a screenplay that tells a wuxia story in a Western narrative. This jointed work in the script writing was the result of the long time interaction between the east and the west. It solved the language problem of the film. There is no wonder that so many film critics gave credits to the beautiful English subtitles in their explanation of the success of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon in North American market.

The application of the Hollywood production and management system in

77 Cited in “The yin and yang of box office Ang Lee’s new film, a mystical, martial-arts Chinese epic, opens this week. It's one of the year's big hits, says Anne Billson”. In Sunday Telegraph (London), December 31, 2000).
78See “Production notes: A Conversation with Ang Lee and James Schamus”. In the official Chinese Website: http://joy.fm365.com/zhuanti/tiger/nrindex.htm
79 Schamus does not know Chinese. He cannot speak, read, or write Chinese.
80 Cited in “Production notes: A Conversation with Ang Lee and James Schamus”. In the official Chinese Website: http://joy.fm365.com/zhuanti/tiger/nrindex.htm
"Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" really helps the globalization of Chinese martial arts cinema. While some scholars would consider it as the invasion of Hollywood to the Chinese cinema, it is more precise to treat it as a two-way borrowing and learning between the east and the west. Here, established systems or formulas only serve as tools for the communication of cultures and ideas. By adsorbing Hollywood’s advantages, Asian cinema can further improve the competency of their movies in global competition and then stimulate the interaction, cooperation and mutual understanding of the East and the West.

In summary, the coexistence of universalization and particularization results in the hybrid nature of the film. Absorbing resources from different cultures and systems, the end product is a cross-genre and cross-culture hybrid. It represents and refigures the tradition of Hong Kong martial arts cinema and constructed a Chinese *wuxia* story for the global audience. The cultural particularity of Chinese martial arts cinema is the selling point of the film. However, it also adds some universal themes into classic Chinese cultures, like individualism or feminism, and adopts the Hollywood style of production. These practices give the film a western appeal. Fusing Hong Kong martial arts film, western action movies, romance, Greek tragedy, adventure, and fantasy together, the film can target almost every group of moviegoers around the world.
Chapter Four: Distribution, Marketing, and Exhibition

I. The importance of powerful alliance in global distribution

The alliance with a large company, which has a dominant status in the market, is very important for globalizing of a local cultural product. Studying the influx of Japanese cultural products into the US market, Anne Allison (2001) compares two specific cases of Japanese exports to the US, one (*The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*) a success and the other (*Sailor Moon*) a failure, and implies the necessity of a strong American affiliate in promoting Japanese television shows. *Go Renjia (Five Rangers)* was a Japanese live-action superhero television show developed in the 1970s. In 1985, Haim Saban, head of the US-based Saban Entertainment, purchased the rights to televise *Jurenjia*, a later segment of the *renjia* series, in the United States. While Saban found the show to be dynamically new, none of the networks Saban approached with the footage shared his enthusiasm. It is after eight years that the program had the chance to be televised, which was due to the affiliation of Fox. A giant in broadcasting, Fox re-titled it *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, re-shot fresh footage of all the pre-morphed scenes, and then run the show in the USA. A massive multimedia campaign was used by Fox to spread the fantasy of the Rangers. There had been highly popular live shows, guest appearances by the rangers, and tie-in sales with companies like McDonalds, and Bandai*[^1]*, *Power Ranger* movies, and video games. As a result, the show became a great success in the United States and worldwide. It is obvious that without the support of Fox, *Ranger* the program could not succeed in the American market. Only major companies like Fox have the resources to take the risk of recasting a foreign TV show and raising a costly marketing campaign to promote it.

[^1]: In fact, *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* marketed with tie-in merchandise boosted Bandai, a Japanese toy company, into the ranks of the world’s leading toy producers.
Sailor Moon, a very successful TV cartoon in Japan, failed for the same reason. The decision to export the popular Sera Mun (Sailor Moon), to the United States and other countries was made by Bandai, a Japanese-based toy company, as part of an aggressive campaign to globalize its toy products. However, this TV show flopped in the US. Allison argues that the failure of the show is due to poor marketing strategies. The US affiliate Bandai chose, DIC Entertainment, is a small and seemingly inexperienced company. It broadcast the show at hours unfriendly to children. Additionally, the promotion campaign of Bandai itself was also scattered and inefficient, making a gross error in getting the dolls out late and marketing them poorly. The US media market is quite close to upcoming competitors because of the increasing investment in production and distribution, and the long-time domination of several major companies (Kerry Segrave, 1997). These companies control the distribution system, having enough resources for investment and experience in marketing. Without their support, it would be difficult for foreign companies, even big ones, to promote their products in the United States. Both inexperienced and weak in the US, DIC and Bandai were not strong enough to promote foreign cultural products in the United States.

The global distribution of a film is no easier than that of a television program. International theatrical distribution is very expensive, due to the high cost of prints, advertisements and labour. In order to differentiate from other industries and national cinemas, Hollywood’s average costs of promotion increase from US$19.8 million in 1996 to US$22.0 million in 1997 (European Audiovisual Observatory, 1998). This persistent and growing investment in marketing reinforces the major’s existing scale economy barrier to the entry of new competitors in film distribution worldwide. It safeguards the major distributors’ market power and Hollywood’s hegemony. Both domestically and abroad, distribution is massively concentrated in the hands of
several major Hollywood studios. These seven companies control about 85 percent of global media production and distribution. Operating vertically integrated networks of distribution, each major studio and most big independent ones have output arrangements with associated distributors, which means one-third of production costs will be returned no matter what the film is. United International Pictures (UIP), Fox, Warner Bros., Buena Vista (Disney) and Columbia (Sony) all operate in this manner.

In the US, distribution is basically an oligopoly (I do not recognize this word), whereas the rest of the world is somewhat splintered (World Trade Organization, 1998). Warner Bros., Fox and Columbia TriStar have their own international distribution networks. Other studios operate joint ventures. UIP, which has been subject to cartel investigations by the EU, released for MGM, Paramount and Universal until MGM left for Fox International. In Canada, distributors collude to assist multinational multiplex owners; while in Spain there is not a single national distributor that is not a subsidiary of a Hollywood major (Toby Miller, 2001, p. 146-151).

So in practice, competitive marketing in the international market now requires investment on a scale beyond the reach of smaller distributors everywhere. Without powerful support in the distribution system, a film could not be distributed in the international market, especially in North American, where the domestic market is tightly controlled by Hollywood. In the United States, a foreign language film is seldom shown in mainstream commercial cinemas until a Hollywood major distributes it. It was the involvement of Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE) in the film’s global distribution that made the production and the worldwide screening of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* possible. Co-financing the film, SPE had acquired the film’s global distribution rights before they got the end product. The buy

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represented a joint effort among SPE division Sony Pictures Classics (SPC), Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia and Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International. SPC, one of the leading distributors of independent films in USA\(^{83}\), would distribute the film in North and South America. Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International, Sony's international distribution arm, had picked up Asia (except China\(^{84}\)), Eastern Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Greece, Turkey, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan and Brazil. Good Machine Intl. – another co-financer of the film – handled the remaining territories on behalf of producers Bill Kong and Shu Li-Kong\(^{85}\) and pre-sold rights in five European territories – Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the Benelux. The three producers of the film retained the Chinese rights\(^{86}\).

The importance of the affiliation of a Hollywood major company in distributing non-English films in the US can also be seen from another Taiwan movie “Yi Yi” (A One and A Two), Edward Yang’s intergenerational story of families and lost love. While the film won the director’s award at the 2000 Cannes Film Festival\(^{87}\), and was named 2000’s best picture by the National Society of Film Critics, and top foreign film by the Los Angeles and New York critics circle, it could not be distributed in the USA, simply because no major American studios picked it up. It is only after the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, that American media began to pay attention to Asian movies, and “Yi Yi” got the chance to be shown in the US. But even in this craze of Chinese movies, “Yi Yi” was only screened two nights

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\(^{83}\) With the acquisition of "Tiger," more than half of Sony Classics' release slate is comprised of foreign-language titles, including entries from Brazil, China, Denmark, Germany and Spain. The New York-based distributor, headed by co-presidents Michael Barker, Tom Bernard and Marcie Bloom, handled Oscar nominees "Central Station" and "Tango" as well as "The Dreamlife of Angels," a French drama acquired last year at Cannes. See "Sony Classics puts its paws on Lee's 'Tiger'" in *The Hollywood Reporter*, May 19, 1999.

\(^{84}\) It referred to the Mainland China.


\(^{86}\) See *Los Angeles Times*, December 12, 2000, Tuesday, Home Edition.

\(^{87}\) *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* premiered at this festival too.
(February 29 and March 2 in 2001) in Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum, with the help of Winstar Cinema (which distributes specialty films to the US market).88

In such a context, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was lucky to pre-sell its global distribution rights to a major Hollywood studio that has an international distribution network. Otherwise, no film studio in Asia had the ability to afford the cost needed for the promotion of a Chinese-language film in the US. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has been the most expensive Chinese film ever produced in history. However, the marketing campaign to promote the film in the North American market cost even more, almost three times that of production. Without the co-finance of Sony, it would be very difficult for the film to catch the attention of mainstream moviegoers. The success of the film also shows that, while subordinate in the global market, Chinese cinema can also promote their cultural products to the western market by finding appropriate partners in the international market.

II. The difficulty of distributing a foreign language film in North America

However, marketing a foreign film in North America is not an easy task even for a major Hollywood studio. Normally, major Hollywood studios make their films “open wide” – that is, they open films in theatres across the country at the same time. In one city, a film premieres in the first-run theatres, then the second-runs, the third-runs, and so on. After shown in the domestic market for a time, the film would be promoted to foreign markets with some adjustment to the domestic box office and to local situations. But this way might not be useful for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Innovative thoughts and strategies are required to overcome the negative stereotypes and images associated with products from foreign countries.

Foreign films seldom receive widespread recognition in the United States. It is known that the North American audience used to spurn sub-titled films and it is difficult to popularize a foreign film without dubbing in this market. Past experience shows that it is almost impossible for a foreign language film to be screened outside some mini-theatres or art houses in a few big cites. Since *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a film in Mandarin with subtitles, and it is based on a Chinese martial arts novel, shot in the Mainland China, directed by a Taiwan director, and played by Chinese actors, no one had expected it to succeed in the North American market.

Furthermore, Hong Kong Kung Fu films or martial arts films are often thought to be low quality, which have dodgy dubbing, no discernible plot, gobsmacking action sequence, and they are generally found in ‘wire baskets outside Texaco stations’. Although enthusiasm for Hong Kong style Kung Fu movies can date back to Bruce Lee in the seventies, the genre is derided critically and ignored popularly. Its audience is often limited to urban action crowds, and the films are traditionally exhibited in mini-theatres for these audience. In other words, Chinese martial arts film was not a popular genre for mainstream commercial cinemas before the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

III. Innovative strategies of marketing

Then, SPC, the American distributor of the film, had to put additional efforts to overcome the limitation of the market, as well as the negative associations that Americans have with Hong Kong Kung Fu films. There is an agreement in the

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89 *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was planned to be a summer blockbuster for Chinese audiences according to its producer, Ang Lee. See The Independent (London), December 24, 2000, Sunday. And James Schamus, the movie’s executive producer and screenwriter also said that “In a sense, the American release is kind of gravy.” See USA TODAY, December 5, 2000, Tuesday, Final Edition.

90 Hong Kong is the major production centre for Chinese Kung Fu films including martial arts films. And in the USA, most of Kung Fu movies are from Hong Kong.

91 See *The Independent* (London), December 24, 2000, Sunday.
industry that the distribution and marketing strategies of Sony contributed greatly to the global success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Sony broke rules, took advantage of buzz on the festival circuit and critical plaudits, used carefully chosen cable and Internet venues for ads and different trailers, adopted a limited release from art houses to mainstream theatres to build word-of-mouth of the film, and finally broke the language barrier of the market and reached the female audience and the youth market.

**Extensive exposure in international film festivals**

In order to arouse audience's interest for the film and avoid the negative impression of Hong Kong Kung Fu movies, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* did not follow the conventional way of distributing a Hong Kong movie in the US. Instead, it used the methods of promoting high-quality Chinese films, which was developed in the past two decades. In the 1980s, there was a boom of movie production in Hong Kong. In order to break out its Southeast Asia market reliance and expand into the international market, a more systematic and expert approach of distribution was adopted to promote Hong Kong movies (Grace & Chan, 1997): Firstly, Hong Kong moviemakers participated in international film festivals like Milan or Cannes and Hong Kong films caught the attention of international distributors’. Secondly, they tried to distribute higher quality Hong Kong pictures in foreign mini-theatres and art houses. This led to the rise of Hong Kong cinema’s international prestige. Thirdly, they strived for opportunities to release Hong Kong pictures in Western countries’ mainstream commercial circuits. A good example of this kind of distribution is King Hu’s *A Touch of Zen* in 1969, as a hit in American art house.

Actually, this kind of practice is very common for Asian film companies. Asian cinema that has been making waves at international film festivals for about half a century, as it attempts to embrace a global audience. Cinema from China, Iran, Japan and Korea, in particular, has been richly rewarded at premier film festivals
throughout Europe and Asia. Among the outstanding Asian winners has been *A Taste of Cherry* by Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami at Cannes, *Red Sorghum* by China's Zhang Yimou at Berlin, and *Uttara* by Buddhadeb Dasgupta at Venice. Significantly, many film-makers have been able to translate festival glories into successful theatrical runs in the West, including Chen Kaige with *Farewell, My Concubine*, Majid Majidi with *Children of Heaven* and Jafar Panahi with *The White Balloon* (the last earning nearly $1 million in its U.S. release).92

Since a large part of global rights was pre-sold, there was no need for the film to worry about exhibition in most of the world's biggest movie markets, including North America. However, the distributors still adopted Asian cinema's way of promoting films in the international market. They took advantage of film festivals to catch the attention of the critics, to increase the film's prestige and to publicize the film. This intention could be seen from the film's worldly debut at the 53rd Cannes Film Festival on May 16, 2000. Cannes is a very important international film festival and it has favoured Chinese films in the past two decades. Shown at the Cannes Film Festival, the film is very likely to have a good start in the global market. But in order to avoid putting undue pressure on the movie, according to SPC93, it was only shown as a "special selection", instead of being in the official competition. David Linde, a partner in Good Machine, said the movie was deliberately not submitted for competition at Cannes "because this film early on needed to be perceived outside the arthouse ghetto," which frequently stigmatizes prize-winners. Instead, says Linde, "we wanted to be perceived as entertainment, and expand the audience."94 And things went on as the distributors hoped: the film received ecstatic reviews and caught the attention of the industry.

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93 See Daily News (New York), May 19, 2000, Friday SPORTS FINAL EDITION.
The participation of film festivals not only brought out positive reviews of the film, but also served as part of the global marketing campaign. Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International and Good Machine International, the international distributors of the film, scheduled it to be intensively shown at film festivals around the world from September to October in 2000, the period of exhibition of the film in European countries. This persistent participation at film festivals and the very positive reviews it got, especially at Cannes Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival and New York Film Festival, helped the film to built up a very high international prestige gradually before the releasing in some of the biggest movie markets in the world, including the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia, and then caught moviegoer’s interest in a foreign film.

Figure 3: Dates of the film festivals that the film was showed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film Festival</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannes Film Festival</td>
<td>May 16, 2000</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem Film Festival</td>
<td>July 22, 2000</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telluride Film Festival</td>
<td>September 04, 2000</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto International Film Festival</td>
<td>September 10, 2000</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reykjavik Film Festival</td>
<td>September 29, 2000</td>
<td>Iceland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titanic International Filmpresence Festival</td>
<td>October 07, 2000</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Film Festival</td>
<td>October 09, 2000</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders International Film Festival</td>
<td>October 13, 2000</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viennale Film Festival</td>
<td>October 15, 2000</td>
<td>Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo International Film Festival</td>
<td>November 01, 2000</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii Film Festival</td>
<td>November 03, 2000</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mumbai Academy of Moving Images</td>
<td>November 23, 2000</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Target campaign in North America

However, promoting a foreign film in the US needs more than building up international prestige for the film. While buzz at the international film festival, positive reviews and exhibition in the arthouses might set off the negative impressions Americans had of Hong Kong Kung Fu movies, SPC knew it had to overcome the disadvantage of the subtitles and the limitations of the market. Referring to the first problem, the distributors decided not to dub the film. Unlike director Ang Lee who insisted that all the actors should speak Mandarin in order to pursue the authenticity of the film, Tome Bernard, co-president of SPC made the decision more on the consideration of the characteristics of the audience and of the martial arts genre. "American audiences don’t like it when lips move and the words don’t match. Plus, today’s youth market grew up with the Internet, and it’s their communication device, their telephone. They’re used to subtitles", said Tom Bernard.95 He believes that the breaking of subtitle barrier – particularly for young audiences – could mean a foreign films revival. The success of “Life Is Beautiful”, a foreign film that grossed $57 million and was an Oscar winner in 1997, also demonstrated the potential of the foreign film market. In addition, the action movie is a good genre for international markets because of its tight dialogue (Segrave, 1997; Chen, 2000). Sony had a test screening this summer for about 100 mainstream moviegoers. They discovered the action elements of the film were so strong that most viewers did not even remember it was in Chinese. This opinion was shared by Paul Dergarabedian, box-office analyst of Exhibitor Relations, "this film is so

visually stunning that after the first fight scene, people won’t even notice the subtitles.96

Now the only question left was that how could SPC break *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* out of the arthouse ghetto. Clearly aware of two sets of distinct characteristics of the film - the mixture of martial arts and love story, SPC located a new audience for this subtitled Asian martial arts fantasy - teenagers and young females. By an innovative marketing campaign, SPC targeted five different groups: the art house crowd, the young, females, action lovers and popcorn mainstream, according to SPC Co-President Tom Bernard97. A costly multiple-stage marketing campaign was adopted to reach these targets gradually. Starting from insiders of the industry to the outsiders, from small groups to large special communities and then to mainstream audience, the distributors gradually built up a nationwide interest in the film and promoted the film to be the highest grossing foreign film in history and the winner of four Oscar awards. On the whole, there are three stages in this process. The first one was the six months before releasing the film in the US, at a cost of US$ 8 million. The second one was the period when the film expanded from art houses to mainstream theatres, at a cost of US$ 12 million. The third one was the time when the film was continuously awarded, at a cost of US$ 20 million. At the end of March 2001, the total promotion expense had accounted for forty percent of the film’s US$ 100 million box office98, which was almost two times higher than the production cost.

Finding and targeting segments likely to respond positively to the possible offering are key success factors in any competitive strategy (Guliz Ger, 1999). One determinant of the success of the film is that the distributor knew clearly who would

96 Cited in “It’s the Year of the Dragon”, in Newsweek, December 4, 2000, U.S. Edition
97 See Advertising Age, March 26, 2001, Monday, Pg. S2.
98 See “Special Report: The Rising of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”. In Asian Times (Hong Kong), April 2, 2001, p.30-36.
be its potential audience and did its best to attract them to the cinema. Targeting an action teenage crowd, highbrow art crowd, women with its strong female characters and a sort of mainstream popcorn-movie crowd, SPC designed a multi-pronged marketing campaign to reach each of these groups. All of its promotion strategies at the first stage (from July to December in 1999), including early screenings, The Internet, TV ads, the print barrage and the release pattern, were used to target this special audience.

Firstly, SPC utilized word-of-mouth of influential people among their target audience. It is a tactic well suited to a market that is glutted with traditional advertisements. Marketers who sell everything from sneakers to music to vodka are desperate to slip their messages into consumers' ears directly from the mouths of real people. And when the approach works, it is much more cost-effective than buying mass-market ads. One of the pioneers of word-of-mouth marketing in Hollywood was Walt Disney Co.'s 1996 hit *Mr. Holland's Opus* starring Richard Dreyfuss. Paula Silver, a marketing consultant on the movie, set up screenings for orchestra leaders, music-teacher associations, instrument makers and congressional spouses to hit the funding-for-the-arts crowd. "We went to the constituents that would really have something to gain from seeing the movie," said Silver, in the hope they in turn would spread the word. The strategy "magnified the movie outside the realm of movie marketing," she said, resulting in "off-the-entertainment page editorials" in newspapers about the importance of music programs in the schools, and box-office grosses of $82.5 million.\(^9^9\)

The marketers of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* took the tactic to an unusual extreme. A crew of public relations agents chose a core group of influential viewers for early screenings, hoping they would fan out and create a sort of party-circuit

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dialogue about the film. New York publicist Peggy Siegal was hired to carry on this plan. She held a 20,000-name database of people in the New York film and media community, which once made Entertainment Weekly’s 50 Greatest Lists of All Time. But in order to reach as wide audience as possible, Tom Bernard wanted her to reach out alternative buzz-makers she did not know. Over October and November in 2000, Ms. Siegal staged a series of eight screenings at a total cost of about $40,000 that brought in twenty thousand viewers from different groups:

1. To increase the coverage of the film in mass media, a screening in New York for on-air newscasters was hosted by NBC anchor Chuck Scarborough and attended by NBC staffers Sue Simmons and Dan Abrams, CNN fashion reporter Elsa Klensch and ABC’s John Stossel. The studio also arranged Wall Street screenings for financial reporters, inviting people like venture funding manager Alan Patricof, advertising executive Jay Chiat and CNBC’s “Squawk Box” host Joe Kemen.

2. Targeting the group of Kung Fu fans, the Tiger Schulmann Karate, a nationwide chain of 35 martial schools in Connecticut, Florida, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, hosted several screenings along with martial arts exhibitions in New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia. Playing up the prominent role of women in the movie, several female karate teachers and students gave demonstrations at some of the screenings.

3. Hoping to capitalize on the close relationship between hip-hop and martial arts – especially on the heels of last year’s box office hit “Romeo Must Die”, which intertwined hip-hop with martial arts; SPC hired Lizzie Grubman, the daughter of music-industry lawyer Alan Grubman. Through Grubman’s connections to the “hip-hop” community, SPC was able to persuaded hip-hop artist Wu Tang Clan to host two screenings of the film at Sony’s headquarters in New York.
The screening had the desired effect: it won a mention in the New York Post's Page Six column, even though it mistakenly reported that the Wu-Tang Clan stars in the film. The movie itself has generated considerable enthusiasm in the hip-hop community. Vibe magazine, which chronicles hip-hop culture, had no fewer than four stories or mentions of the film.

4. To reach female audience, the marketers of the film set up a screening, hosted by Sport Illustrated for Women magazine, aimed at female athletes. Feminists participated in the promotion as well. Naomi Wolf not only presented the film to 150 graduates of the Woodhull Institute, a New York-based organization to mentor young women for leadership, but also wrote an article to introduce the film to female communities.

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* benefited greatly from the early screenings. It had become a hit even before the releasing in theatres, promoted by strong word-of-mouth from the influential viewers. The strategy takes advantage of a simple fact: most people are tempted by the offer of a free movie and the flattery of an early invitation. If the film were good enough, these viewers would not hesitate to say some good words about it. Hence, picking appropriate influential viewers as Sony did is an especially effective tactic when a film poses some kind of marketing difficulty, a very common situation for a foreign film, and it might be a good method for the future for foreign films to break out of market barriers.

The studio also started an early online campaign, which holds out the magical combination of low costs and high visibility. Seeing what the Internet did for "the Blair Witch Project", Tom Bernard wanted to utilize this powerful tool to target the potential audience, especially the action teenage crowd. The opportunity to create such a site came in the summer of 2000 when the movie was just starting in Asia. A friend showed Bernard her 13-year-old son’s Web site (cablejump.com), which was
devoted to the boy’s views of movies and games. Impressed, Bernard paid the teenager, John Otrakji, $100 to develop a teaser campaign there. The boy declared on the site: “This is a movie everyone in my generation has got to see”. Another official site (crouchingtiger.com) also went online that summer, generating more than 500,000 hits. These two sites were regularly updated to keep people coming back for more. In addition, in order to attract more attention to the martial arts film, SPC distributed an action-heavy trailer to 400 Web sites, including Austin, Texas-headquartered Ain’t-It-Coll-News, a movie-buff site that can act as an on-line early-warning system for cinematic hits and misses.

The studio promoted the film on traditional media too, but in an untraditional way. Feeling the normal studio system of buying TV time inefficient, SPC target-marketed in the cable and regional TV programs. “The best way for us was cable”, said Michael Barker, the other SPC co-president, “we bought Manhattan Cable time for a fraction of the cost that a big studio would pay for free TV in New York”\(^{100}\). When they publicized the film by free TV time, it was targeted to special groups. Commercials that highlight the film’s romantic aspects run on American Movie Classics and afternoon talk shows, while spots that feature the most riveting action scenes run on ESPN and news shows. Instead of making huge TV ad buys, SPC chose more regional spot TV placements likely to draw large audiences, such as a UCLA-Stanford basketball game and a New York Giants National Football League playoff contest.

Targeted marketing strategies can be seen from the versions of trailers. Before the releasing, three different trailers were cut to appeal to different markets, according to Barker\(^{101}\). Sony put a hard-core action trailer in the theatrical release of "Urban Legends: Final Cut" to attract the youth market and one in the video of "The

\(^{100}\) Cited in “Marketing campaign kick boxed its way to the top”, in Variety, May 14, 2001-May 20, 2001.

\(^{101}\) See “Marketing campaign kick boxed its way to the top”, in Variety, May 14, 2001-May 20, 2001.
Patriot" to capture the family. Another softer one, stressing the film's reviews and lyrical nature, also made the rounds.

The Asian community got involved as well. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was released in China in the summer - although it is officially a Taiwanese film. Soon enough, Chinese families were sending bootleg copies of the film to their American relatives as well as sending unsolicited faxes to the studio with marketing advice for the Asian community, Bernard said.

**Special release plan**

Accompanying the targeted marketing strategies and the word-of-mouth campaign was the special release plan. Adopting a limited release pattern, the film was first shown in art houses, the traditional market for foreign films, and then gradually expanded to the multiplex. In the first three weeks, it was released as an art movie. Unlike mainstream films such as *Hannibal* or *The Mexican*, which "open wide" in theatres across the country at the same time - art movies such as *Billy Elliot* or *Requiem for a Dream* are often "platformed," or opened first in large centres. Typically, a movie is platformed in New York and Los Angeles, and then a week or two later, it has a platform release in Toronto (Canada). As an art movie, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was distributed in a similar way. It was first released in New York and Toronto, then Los Angeles, and one week later, expanded to the top 25 cities in USA.

Selective release is nothing new to the movie business. Studios in the 1970s "platformed" films, releasing them in a few urban theatres, hoping positive reviews and word-of-mouth would help them expand successfully to the hinterlands. With eyes on the lucrative Oscar season, several distributors opened their most prestigious

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103 See "How they decide where a movie is shown: The dark science of film distribution", in The Ottawa Citizen, March 8, 2001, Thursday Final edition.
pictures in a limited number of theatres at the end of 2000, allowing time for them to build word-of-mouth and collect the kind of critical praise that anchors Academy Award campaigns. After accumulating “a critical mass”, they let the films go as wide as possible. Besides *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the films “going wide” included Gus Van Sant’s *Finding Forrester*, Lasse Hallstrom’s *Chocolate*, Roger Donaldson’s *Thirteen Days*, David Mamet’s *State and Main* and Joel and Ethan Coen’s *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, Steven Soderbergh’s *Traffic*.

But none of the above could compete with *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in the game. Following a pattern similar to *Life Is Beautiful* that reached 1,136 engagements in the process of earning $57.2 million, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* exceeded the normal 600-engagement limit for niche product in one month and grossed $21.6 million in the limited release. SPC is really expert at selective release to build up word-of-mouth, through innovative marketing strategies and various film festivals and awards. Sony platformed the film, chose the date of wide release carefully, intentionally avoiding the competitive Christmas holiday, and added additional prints when it received some new film awards. The prestigious awards boosted the film’s popularity and helped it to gain a critical mass to support wide release. By Oscar night, more than 2,000 prints of the film had been distributed and grossed $100 million in the US, setting the record for foreign films. The number of theatres reached its zenith after the announcement of four Oscar awards, 2207, a stunning number for an art movie.

Figure 4: the release dates of the film in the US:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theatres</th>
<th>Film Festivals or Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 8, 2000</td>
<td>New York (16 theatres)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 15, 2000</td>
<td>New York, Los Angeles (31 theatres)</td>
<td>4 awards at the Los Angeles Film Critics Association on December 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 22, 2000</td>
<td>The top 25 cities (143 theatres)</td>
<td>2 awards at the Toronto Film Critics Association on December 20, 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 12, 2001</td>
<td>693 theatres (wide)</td>
<td>Several films went wide today</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 16, 2001</td>
<td>447 theatres added, for a total 1,651</td>
<td>10 Oscar norms on February 13, 2001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 23, 2001</td>
<td>1,749 theatres</td>
<td>2 awards at the 58th annual Golden Globes on February 21;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 awards at the British Academy Film Awards on February 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 23, 2001</td>
<td>2027 theatres</td>
<td>Before Oscar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26, 2001</td>
<td>167 theatres added, for a total 2207</td>
<td>4 Oscar awards on March 25, 2001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Official site of Sony Pictures Classics; Variety; Daily Variety; The Internet Movie Database)

From the above analysis, we can see the importance of distribution, marketing and exhibition for a film. To dominate the global market, Hollywood studios have taken decades to develop control of both domestic and international distribution, which is lacking in other national cinemas. In such a context, without support in the international distribution system, it would be very difficult for local cinemas to spread their cultural products beyond their boundary, let alone to the North American...
market, the closest one to foreign films.

In the case of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the support came from Sony Pictures Entertainment. Through their close connection to Hollywood, James Schamus and Ang Lee were lucky to pre-sell the rights of the Chinese martial arts film to Sony. The involvement of Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International and Good Machine International made the film’s global distribution possible, and Sony Pictures Classics, the expert independent film distributor that has more than 20-years’ working experience in the United States, pushed the film to be a record breaker in the United States. The successful cooperation with Hollywood majors to promote an eastern cultural product provides valuable experience for the future development of Chinese cinema and other local cinemas.

Another lesson from the film is its marketing strategy. The success of the film in the North American market is due, in large part to the way it was handled and aggressively marketed by local outfits. Based on the film’s characteristic, SPC had a clear plan of its target audience. Its untraditional marketing campaign, a combination of on-line campaign, early screening to influential viewers, cable, regional TV ads, and limited release pattern, gradually built up a strong word-of-mouth for the film and broke it out of the art house market. By saying this, I do not mean reducing circulation of cultural products around the world to mere business (I don’t understand this phrase. But business does play a large part in the business of the imagination where culture, as a way of life, is dislodged from its homeland. Chinese cinemas should learn something about how to promote films in the international market from this film.
Chapter five: The Globalization of a Local Culture

Looking at one specific case of Chinese martial arts film, Couching Tiger, Hidden Dragon in the cultural/economic interface, this study focuses on how a non-western local culture is globalized. In the past three chapters, I have examined the globalization process of the Chinese martial arts cinema, including the global context of filmmaking, the agency of local film companies and filmmakers, the formation of global alliance, particularization and universalization of wuxia culture, and the innovative marketing strategies to distribute the film internationally. The basic premise here is that the global trend of “local particularity” – the preference and the construction of local difference around the world, and the demand and interest in local cultural products stimulate the cultural inflow from the East to the West. By moving with an in-depth understanding of global production and consumption dynamics and grounding their actions in the local culture and strengths, local firms have a chance to be global contenders with the Western based TNCs, and then successfully promote their local cultural products to the Western markets. Through the exploration of local cultural resources and talents, and the strategic alliance with local or global companies, local firms may conquer the limitation of resources and the obstacles of Western markets, and then promote the cultural flows from the East to the West, from the periphery to the centre, from the subordinate to the dominant.

However, we should not be too optimistic toward the reversed cultural flow. Firstly, some compromise has to be made in this process. The alliance with other companies, especially TNCs, often weakens local firms’ control of the product and the market. And there is a danger that TNCs may finally take over the control of local cultural resources from local firms after they recognize the value of these resources. But the entry of TNCs into the competition is not always a bad thing for the
globalization of local cultures. They may be more willing to invest in eastern cultural products and promote them in the global market, in effect, stimulating the reversed cultural flow.

Secondly, we should be aware of the extent of the reversed cultural flow. There is an undeniable fact that, currently, the scale and the influence of the reversed cultural flow are not comparable to those of the flow from the West to the East. The unbalance of power distribution between the West and the East still exists and continually influences the global production, distribution and consumption. Besides this, we should also think of the difference between the cultural success and the economic success. Did the film's success at the box office mean its success in cultural areas? We cannot make such an equation, however, the film did have important cultural influence. It boosted the interests in the eastern cultures, drawing the attention of both the industry and the public to the potentiality of non-Hollywood/non-Western cultures and products.

We have to consider the generality of the case as well. Can we generalize the result of this study to other cases? For the author, while the worldwide success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has some uniqueness, the reason behind the success can be generalized to other movies and to other industries. The film is actually emblematic of a trend toward new modes of collaboration, the collaboration of the global and the local.

**Globalization and localization**

I place the specific case, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, into a larger perspective, examining the recent theorization of globalization and localization. The study argues the increasing cultural influx from the East to the West has questioned the US hegemony in the circulation of global entertainment products and in global
Globalization is not equal to Westernization or Americanization. It is not a one-way flow of influence from the West to the rest of the world, and it can “no longer be spoken of only as a matter of one-way imperialism” (Giddens, 1994:96). Rather, globalization is a multi-directional and multi-dimensional set of processes. It is distinguished from imperialism in that it is a far less coherent or culturally directed process. In his book Cultural Imperialism, Tomlinson persuasively concludes after the analysis of diverse cultural imperialism theses, “the idea of ‘globalization’ suggests interconnection and interdependency of all global areas which happens in a far less purposeful way. It happens as the result of economic and cultural practices, which do not, of themselves, aim at global integration, but which nonetheless produce it. More importantly, the effects of globalization are to weaken the cultural coherence of all individual nations, including the economically powerful ones and the ‘imperialist powers’ of a previous era” (1991, p. 465).

Globalization should be understood in conjunction with localization. The process of globalization enhances the interconnections of all locals around the world and gradually blurs their boundaries, as it strengthens or reactivates national, ethnic and communal identities at the same time. It has involved “the simultaneity and the interpenetration of what are conventionally called the global and the local, or in more abstract vein – the universal and the particular” (Robertson, 1995, p. 30). Local particularity has been carefully maintained or reconstructed and sometimes commercialized for both the local and the global needs. Cultural products based in local cultures have become alternatives to the standard, homogeneous products of TNCs. The cultural particularity of the products, often labelled as Japanese roots, Chinese roots, or other local cultural roots, is now a selling point in the market. Consumers are increasingly exposed to and are becoming more curious and open to foreign cultures and foreign goods. Cultural products based in local cultures are
increasingly welcome not only in its homeland, but also in foreign markets. It is just because of this global local particularity and the interest in the local, that local cultures can maintain their social boundaries in the global traffic by constructing their local particularity, and can extend their influence beyond their boundaries.

The simultaneity of globalization and localization exist in all aspects of social life, including the motion picture industry. Although Hollywood is America-based and it is trying to dominate the world with its movies and cultural ideology, Hollywood itself has been gradually globalized in the past twenty years. That is, in its global expansion, Hollywood is losing its American cultural edge. New and interesting characters and stories from different locals and cultures are absorbed to diversify Hollywood movies; foreign talents are employed by Hollywood studios to serve their global development. Moreover, a large part of Hollywood studios are controlled by foreign capital. Ever since the late 1960s, foreign investors have discovered the potentiality of the North American market, the hitherto biggest one in the world, and have begun to assert their influence on Hollywood by purchasing major studios.

Besides the de-Americanization of Hollywood, the globalization of the motion film industry also manifests itself in the emergence of Asian cinema in the past ten years. Cinemas from China, India, Japan, and Korea, in particular, have tried to develop their own ways of filmmaking and extend their products to the Western market. They have been richly awarded at film festivals throughout the world and have been picked up by American and European distributors for their domestic exhibition. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is the most distinguished case in this trend. Though the influence of Asian cinema in the global market cannot compare with Hollywood, its emergence and its energy in the global market at least implies that there is a global need for non-Hollywood and non-Western movies. And more
important, Asian cinema has been accumulating resources, including talents, social relationships, and cultural and economic resources for its development. The experience in the global production and consumption, the mutual understanding of the East and the West, the reputation acquired at film festivals, the international social network it has built and the rich cultural resources, become the basis for Asian cinema’s global expansion.

The “Crouching Tiger” phenomenon: a flash or a long-time trend?

By the joint efforts of Chinese filmmakers and the Hollywood major studio, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon turned out to be a global success. But there is another question needed for further discussion: will the phenomenon of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon be a flash or a long-term trend?

First of all, there should be a global need for local particularity to support the reversed cultural flow. From the historical examination of Asian Cinema in the West, we find that there is a long-time interest on Asian movies and the potential for the success of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon crucially relied upon previous successes by John Woo, Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Chow Yun Fat, and Michelle Yeoh. Moreover, the worldwide success of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon has boosted interests in Asian films on both sides of the Pacific, especially in action features with an eastern twist. Both the industry and the public are thirsty for Asian movies. To satisfy this new hunger, University of Southern California has even set up a comprehensive Internet site (asianfilms.org). The setting up of the site signifies the increasing importance of Asian cinema, as the aim of the site is to “revolutionize international access to culturally significant films from China, India, Korea and Taiwan”\textsuperscript{105}. Built by the University’s Annenberg Centre for Communication, the site

\textsuperscript{105} Cited in “Success of Crouching Tiger boosts interest in Asian films”, in The Gazette (Montreal), March 24, 2001 Saturday Final Edition.
includes an extensive online catalogue of contemporary films from the five countries, with synopses, biographies, commentaries and video clips. This increasing need for Asian movies really stimulates the reversed cultural flow.

The success of the Chinese martial arts film also mobilizes local companies and tales, which are the major force of promoting their culture and their products. The control of the diverse local cultural resources is their advantage in global competition. Grounding their actions on local culture and strength, local companies and talents can be the contenders with TNCs. Encouraged by the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Asian film companies have become more ambitious in the international market and have speeded up their global extension. “Film buyers from the United States and Europe are becoming more aware of Chinese-language films, especially those featuring martial arts and special effects. Local filmmakers in the past looked only to Asia and China as possible markets, while now they are paying more attention to the U.S. and Europe,” said Crucindo Hung Cho-sing, Chairman of the Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories Motion Picture Industry Assn. At the 2001 Cannes Film Festival, a lot of Asian film companies came to find distributors for their work. A visible presence was Hong Kong’s, although it had no films in the competition. The Hong Kong Trade Development Council had poured $3 million into its Cannes campaign and is representing 12 film companies. Grabbing the tail of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the Hong Kong film industry is poised for recovery from the repression. Its movie production increased 30% in the year 2001.

However, global interconnectivity is inevitable for the globalization of local cultures. Local agents have to face the global competition from TNCs, the marketing obstacles set by the foreign markets and their lack of resources in the production and

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global distribution. To meet these challenges, local companies must negotiate globalization. The alliance with other organizations, such as TNCs, local companies in other countries, governmental or non-governmental organizations may help to solve the problems. Such networking and collaboration – through pooling resources, competencies and skills – enable creative projects and increase the local capability and power.

But local companies need much more than marginal forms of integration into the global economy. They must go beyond exports and establish deeper connections and relationships in the international market. One reason for the current global domination of Hollywood movies is that the major studios have a global network. They have begun to build subsidiaries or find local partners in foreign markets since the 1930s (Segrave, 1999). Although other cinemas may not have enough resources to form such a global distribution system, they can also build their network by finding long time partners or agents in foreign markets.

And now is a good time for Asian cinema to form such a relationship. The success of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon has attested the potentiality of Chinese language films at the global box office and then improved the international situation for Chinese filmmakers. It is very likely that Hollywood majors would establish a long time cooperation relationship with Asian filmmakers. Hollywood studios like Miramax, MGM and Columbia Pictures are hungry for Asian films with crossover potential. “Everybody is looking to make the next Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon,” said Barbara Robinson, the Managing Director of Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia, one of the financiers of Ang Lee’s film109. He believed the surge of interest would help Asian films, both financially and through exposure. And it does help. Projects that in the past used to rely on financial support from countries such as

Taiwan, South Korea and Japan have gained access to U.S. coffers and distribution channels. The 2001 Cannes International Film Festival brought a scramble for rights to Chinese movies and a record number of distribution deals with U.S. and European partners. Buyers spent $20 million – double 2000’s amount – to pick up a crop of fresh and not-so-fresh Hong Kong pictures, according to Hong Kong’s Trade Development Commission. The Hong Kong production house Media Asian (should this be Media Asia?), for example, received $1 million from Western distributors, including Miramax, for DVD rights to late 1970s Hong Kong action classics and older Jackie Chan pictures culled from the company’s vaults. The increasing interest in Asian films was also shown in the 2001 Hong Kong International Film and Television Market. It attracted 1,200 buyers, a 30 percent increase over the year 2000. As the result, Tsui Hark’s The Legend of Zu, Allan Lam’s Flying Dragon, Leaping Tiger, Stephen Chiau’s Shaolin Soccer, were snapped up by Miramax for distribution in the U.S. and elsewhere; Michelle Yeoh’s The Touch was financed by international capital and was picked up by a French distributor, M6, for European release in the film’s pre-production stage; and also before its shooting, Zhang Yi Mou’s $17 million adventure Hero had caught the imagination of a foreign distributor who longed for another blockbuster.

Such confidence in Chinese-language films would be impossible two years ago. However, it also carries risks for Asian filmmakers. Foreign studios are likely to back films that may flop later in the box office, or make expensive deals with producers that do not pay off. Hurt a few times, they may hunt elsewhere for foreign films as happened after the success of Life is Beautiful. “After Life is Beautiful, everybody was looking for Italian movies,” said Wouter Barendrecht, a Hong Kong-based sales agent for Asian films. “But they couldn’t find enough good ones. It was great for

110 See “Buoyed by the popularity of Asia’s most acclaimed movie in the West in years, Hong Kong’s film industry is...” in Los Angeles Times, June 9, 2001 Saturday, Home Edition.
Roberto Benigni (that film’s Director and star), but what did it do for Italian cinema as a whole?" Now Asian filmmakers, especially Chinese filmmakers face the same problem. Repeating the success of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon may be impossible. No one predicted a martial arts romance, filmed in Mandarin and set in ancient China, could gross $50 million, let alone $200 million. Even now Ms. Robinson seems a bit incredulous at the movie’s performance. “If they want me to repeat or get even close to ‘Crouching Tiger’, I’m going to be up against a wall,” she said. But Asia has the ability to support its global expansion. It can produce plenty of films that could gross $10 million to $20 million each. Japan, India, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, in particular, have already build a well-developed motion picture industry and have owned enough talents for filmmaking. If they can explore the cultural resources they hold in an appropriate way, and catch the chance created by Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, the long time film export from the East to the West and the break of Hollywood domination will be possible.

However, the readiness of organizational preparation does not mean the success of future products. Local producers should pay more attention to the transcultural production, appropriating and remaking local cultures for global need. The diversity and particularity of local cultural resources is their advantage in global competition. Local companies must have a global/local vision, considering consumers are thirsty for particular products as well as the degree of their tolerance of foreign cultures. They should base their action in the local culture and strength. On the other hand, local firms should also give the cultural product a global image, by transforming the original culture and adding some universal elements. In a word, local agents need to be sensitive to the new global reality that consists of forces of globalization and

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localization as well as the specific situation and rapid change inside the industry.
## Appendix 1: Awards for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of film Festival</th>
<th>Awards received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 73rd Annual Academy Awards</td>
<td>Best Foreign Language Film, Best Cinematography, Best Score, Best Art Direction,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 Independent Spirit Awards</td>
<td>Best Feature, Best Director, Best Supporting Actress (Zhang Ziyi),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 Directors Guild Awards</td>
<td>Best Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 Chicago Film Critics Awards</td>
<td>Best Cinematography, Best Foreign Film, Best Original Score, Most Promising Actress (Ziyi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA)</td>
<td>Best Director, Best Foreign Language Film, Best Music, Best Costume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Broadcast Film Critics Association</td>
<td>Best Foreign-language film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 Golden Globes</td>
<td>Best Director, Best Foreign Language Film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Toronto Film Critics Association</td>
<td>Best Film, Best Supporting Female performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Golden Horse Awards (Taiwan's version of the Oscars)</td>
<td>Best Picture, Best Sound Effects, Best Action Choreography, Best Original Film Score, Best Film Editing, Best Visual Effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 National Board of Review</td>
<td>Best Foreign Film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 New York Film Critics Circle</td>
<td>Best Cinematography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Los Angeles Film</td>
<td>Best Picture, Best Cinematography, Best Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critics Association</td>
<td>Design, Best Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Boston Society of Film Critics</td>
<td>Best Foreign Film, Best Cinematography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Online Film Critics Society</td>
<td>Best Foreign Film, Best Cinematography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th Annual Toronto International Film Festival</td>
<td>People's Choice Award</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Credits of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Release Date</td>
<td>December 22nd, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Ang Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producers</td>
<td>Ang Lee; Bill Kong; Hsu Li Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Producer</td>
<td>James Schamus; David Linde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAST</td>
<td>Zhang Zi-Yi; Michelle Yeoh; Chow Yun Fat; Chang Zhen; Cheng Pei-Pei; Gao Xi-An</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screenwriters</td>
<td>James Schamus; Wang Hui Ling; Kuo-Rong Tsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Story</td>
<td>Wang Du-Lu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Photography</td>
<td>Peter Pau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Choreographer</td>
<td>Yuen Wo Ping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>Tim Squyres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Tim Yip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/Costume</td>
<td>Tim Yip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Tan Dun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cello Solo</td>
<td>Yo-Yo Ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Companies</td>
<td>Sony Pictures Classics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Machine International;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2000 Colour Scope Mandarin Chinese/English Subtitles 120 minutes
## Appendix 3: Ang Lee’s Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of feature</th>
<th>Production year</th>
<th>Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crouching Tiger,</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>See Appendix 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Dragon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ride with the Devil</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ice Storm</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Best Screenplay Adaptation at the 50th International Film Festival in Cannes (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense and Sensibility</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Best Screenplay Adaptation and seven nominations at the Annual Academy Awards, including Best Picture; Golden Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival; Golden Globes for Best Screenplay and Best Film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat Drink Man Woman</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>The opening night film in the Director’s Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival (1994); Nomination at the Academy Awards and Golden Global Awards (1995); Best Foreign Language Film voted by the National Board of Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wedding Banquet</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>The Golden at the Berlin Film Festival (1993); Nomination for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards and Golden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pushing Hands</th>
<th>1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screened in the Panorama section of the 1992 Berlin Film Festival; Best Film in the Asian-Pacific Film Festival (1992); Three awards including Special Jury Prize for Ang Lee’s direction, and nine nominations at Golden House Awards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Source List for the Database

I. Source List of **LEXIS-NEXIS® Academic Universe** Entertainment news:


II. Source List for LEXIS-NEXIS® Academic Universe Book, Movie, Music & Play Reviews:


III. Part of the Source list of WiseNews:

1. Hong Kong News Agency: PR Newswire HK
2. Hong Kong Broadcast: ATV Internet News
3. Hong Kong Government Information: Hospital Authority; Information Service Department, Hong Kong SAR Government (Chinese); Information Service Department, Hong Kong SAR Government (English); The Equal Opportunity Commission
4. Hong Kong Magazine: Career Times; China Automotive Journal; China Incorporation Journal; China PFP; China Plastic and Robber Journal; China Telecommunication and Construction; China Textile and Apparel; China Wireless Communication; China Woodworking and Furniture Journal; Chinamac Journal; Cup; Easy Finder; Eat & Travel Weekly; Hong Kong Property; I.T. Times; Job Finder; Monday; Monday Times; My Money; Next Magazine; Open Magazine; Oriental Sunday; Packaging Pro; Property Times; Sudden Weekly; Textile and Apparel (Asian Version); Vitality Healthcare Magazine; Weekend Weekly

5. Hong Kong Website: Asiawise; Irasia.com; Solicitor.com

6. Hong Kong Newspaper: A Daily; Apply Daily; Everybody's Daily News; Hong Kong Commercial Daily; Hong Kong Daily; Hong Kong Economic Journal; Hong Kong Economic Times; Hong Kong Globe; Hong Kong Standard (before 2000:5); Mingpao; Oriental Daily; SCMP.com; Sing Pao; Singtao Daily; South China Morning Post Special Supplemental; Star; Sun; Ta Kung Pao; Tin Tin Daily News; Wenweipao; HkiMail; The Standard

7. United States News Agency: PR Newswire US; PR Chinese Content

8. United States Government Content: American Consulate General (Public Affair Section)
Appendix 5: The Story of  *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*\(^{113}\)

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is an epic love story set against the breathtaking landscapes of the 19\(^{th}\) century China. The handsome and powerful Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun Fat), considered one of the greatest martial artists of his time, is giving away his sword (the legendary Green Destiny) because, after years of fighting he wants to follow a new path in life. He asked Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh), his long-time friend, to deliver the sword to Sir Te (Lung Sihung), a respected leader who was a friend of Shu Lien's father. The romantic sparks and history between the two are immediately evident.

Li asks Shu Lien, who is on her way to Beijing, to give Shu Lien is reluctant to take the sword until Li explains that he is giving away the Green Destiny because, after years of fighting he wants to follow a new path in life. Shu Lien tries to persuade Li to join her on her trip to Beijing and present the sword to Sir Te himself. But Li tells her that he is on his way to Wudan Mountain (the training ground for the most skilled warriors) to pay his respects to his late Master, who years ago was poisoned by a notorious female criminal, Jade Fox. He agrees to do his best to meet her later in Beijing.

When Shu Lien presents the sword to Sir Te he is reluctant to take it, agreeing only to "act as the sword's custodian" and says that Li can reclaim it anytime. At the home of Sir Te, Shu Lien meets Jen (Zhang Ziyi), the beautiful young daughter of Governor Yu (Li Fa Zeng), a prominent political figure. Jen, seemingly naive and innocent, quickly endears herself to Shu Lien. Jen is apprehensive about her upcoming arranged marriage and speaks longingly of the freedom of being a fighter, probing Shu Lien with questions about the Giang Hu (martial arts life).

\(^{113}\) Cited from the newmarket pictorial moviebook: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, A portrait of The Ang Lee Film including the complete screenplay.*

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That night a masked thief steals the Green Destiny. Sir Te's chief security officer Bo (Gao Xian) and Shu Lien, both skilled fighters, try in vain to stop the thief. The news of the theft of the Green Destiny quickly spreads throughout the city and, as the investigation gets under way, suspicion is cast in many directions. Bo announces that he tracked the thief back to Governor Yu's compound. Police Inspector Tsai (Wang De Ming) and his daughter May (Li Li), a team of skilled martial artists from the countryside; claim that the thief is none other than Jade Fox, who also killed Tsai's wife. But Shu Lien has her own suspicions, which she is reluctant to share with the others until she can investigate further.

Shu Lien goes to Governor Yu's compound to visit Jen. Jen, who is still apprehensive about her impending marriage, tells Shu Lien that she wishes she could live the Giang Hu life and enjoy the freedom of Shu Lien and Li Mu Bai. Shu Lien tries to quell Jen's schoolgirl fantasies by telling her the reality of her relationship with Li - Shu Lien was once engaged to another man, who was a brother by oath to Li Mu Bai. After her fiancé was killed defending Li in battle, Li and Shu Lien grew closer and wanted to be together, but they could not dishonour her fiancé's memory. Shu Lien explains that, even though she lives the Giang Hu life, as a woman she still has to abide by tradition. As Shu Lien leaves the Yu compound, Jen's sinister governess watches her.

Later that day, Li Mu Bai arrives in Beijing and is quickly swept up in the search for the Green Destiny and his mission to avenge the death of his Master by killing Jade Fox. Later, Jade Fox (Cheng Pei Pei) arranges a meeting with Tsai and May to settle their feud once and for all. Security Officer Bo, who has developed a fondness for May, insists on accompanying them. At their meeting, Jade Fox reveals her true identity: since her murder of Li's Master, she has taken cover as Jen Yu's governess. A fierce battle ensues between Jade Fox and her adversaries. Tsai, May, and Bo fight
skilfully but are only able to keep her at bay until Li Mu Bai arrives. Li is about to defeat Jade Fox when the masked thief appears to assist her, with the Green Destiny in hand. Jade Fox kills Tsai and escapes with her masked accomplice.

The following day, Shu Lien asks Sir Te to invite Jen Yu and her mother to his home for tea, so she can investigate her suspicions about the identity of the masked thief. Shu Lien tells Jen and Madam Yu (Hai Yan) of Jade Fox’s villainous acts and hints that if the Green Destiny is returned the thief will not be persecuted, all the time watching Jen’s reactions. That night, the masked thief creeps into Te’s study to return the Green Destiny, but is intercepted by Li Mu Bai. They begin to fight. The masked thief is skilled but does not have the training of Li Mu Bai. He offers to take the thief to Wudan Mountain to train as his protégé? The thief begins to imitate Li’s graceful style but rebuffs his offer.

When the thief returns to Governor Yu’s compound, she removes her mask and we discover her true identity: the beautiful Jen Yu. The advice of Shu Lien and Li Mu Bai has affected Jen. She reprimands Jade Fox, who is still acting as her governess, for killing Tsai and tells her to leave.

That night, a handsome stranger sneaks into Jen’s sleeping quarters. Jen is about to attack when she realizes it is Lo (Chang Chen), her long lost love. Then, we go back in time to a scene in the desert. A younger Jen is riding in a carriage with her mother, with warriors surrounding the carriage for protection. Suddenly, bandits led by Lo surround the carriage. Lo reaches in through the window of the carriage and snatches Jen’s jade comb from her hand. Without hesitation, Jen races after him on horseback. When Jen catches up with Lo, they fight until she collapses from thirst and hunger. She wakes in his den. He is kind and gives her food and water. But Jen’s temper still rages. She hits him on the head with a rock and runs off again. Hours later, lost and exhausted, she collapses again. When she wakes she finds herself weak
and dehydrated in Lo's bed. He nurses her back to health and, when she tries to fight him again they fall into an embrace.

Lo and Jen begin a passionate love affair. They live happily and freely in the desert for a while. But Governor Yu's men are looking for Jen. Lo tells her she should return to her parents and he will earn their respect and come for her, so they can be married with her parents' blessing. He tells her the legend of a boy who jumped from a mountain they gaze upon, so that his wish would be granted. His parents were ill and he jumped to save them. The boy did not die, and was not even hurt. He just floated away on the clouds, never to return. He knew that his wish had come true. Lo assures Jen that they will be together someday with the Han saying, "A faithful heart makes wishes come true." Jen gives Lo her Jade comb and tells him to return it to her when they are together again.

In Jen's bedroom, Lo tells her that he tried and tried to become respectable but he was always recognized as the bandit Dark Cloud. He begs her not to marry, and to return with him to the desert. Jen tells Lo to leave and never come back. Lo returns the jade comb to Jen and leaves.

At Jen's bridal procession the next morning, with throngs of onlookers gathered around, Lo causes a commotion shouting "Come with me to the desert! No one marries you but me!" Governor Yu's security men chase after Lo, but Shu Lien steps in and helps him escape. Lo tells his story to Shu Lien and Li Mu Bai. Hearing echoes of their own thwarted love, they are sympathetic to Lo's plight and offer to help. Li sends Lo to Wudan Mountain with an introduction and tells him to wait there for news. After the bridal procession, Jen disappears. And, on top of it all, the Green Destiny is stolen again, and Sir Te commissions Li and Shu Lien to find Jen and the sword.

Jen travels to a nearby town with the Green Destiny, masquerading as a man.
Intrigued by the Green Destiny, local martial arts characters challenge Jen to fight. She swiftly defeats them one after another. After the fight, some of the men report the incident to Li Mu Bai and Shu Lien. When Shu Lien returns to her compound to prepare to search for Jen, Jen shows up on her doorstep calling Shu Lien her sister and begging for guidance. Shu Lien comforts her and advises her to return to her parents, and then decide about Lo. When Jen learns that Shu Lien has partnered with Li Mu Bai to track her down, she becomes suspicious and tries to leave. Shu Lien tries to stop Jen and a battle begins between the two women. Shu Lien uses every weapon in her arsenal but the Green Destiny is too powerful.

As Jen is about to defeat her, Li rushes in and saves Shu Lien. As they fight, Li makes his offer to train Jen at Wudan again. Jen presents a challenge - if Li can take the sword from her in three moves, she will be his pupil. Li succeeds, but Jen reneges on their deal. Li throws the Green Destiny into the rushing rapids below and Jen dives after it. Jen is knocked unconscious and nearly drowns, but Jade Fox swoops in and rescues her. Jen awakes groggy and confused in an abandoned kiln. Jade Fox declares that she and Jen will stick together from now on and rule the Giang Hu world. She leaves Jen alone clutching the Green Destiny. When Jen wakes again she is flushed with fever. Li Mu Bai arrives and, realizing Jen's been drugged, he expels the poison from her body. Shu Lien and Bo arrive, having tracked Jade Fox back to the abandoned kiln. At that moment, Li realizes they have been lured there by Jade Fox, who suddenly appears shooting a flurry of poison arrows. Li deflects most of the arrows, but one hits his neck. Li kills Jade Fox, but the damage has already been done. The poison is already in his bloodstream. Jen knows the antidote to the poison and offers to save Li as he saved her. She races to Shu Lien's compound to obtain the antidote.

Shu Lien and Li are left alone counting the minutes until Jen returns, hoping it
will not be too late. As Li and Shu Lien wait for Jen, they are finally able to admit their true feelings to each other. But it is too late, and Li dies in Shu Lien’s arms.

Jen travels to Wudan Mountain and reunites with Lo. But there is still one unexpected and sublime act to be played out in this epic tale of love and honour...
### Appendix 6: Release dates for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

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<thead>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>Date</th>
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