



## The Great Wall: Understanding Chinese People's Psychology Through the Movie Context

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### **Abstract**

Today, the study of Chinese films has attracted the attention of researchers, both in China and other countries. In this regard, this article aims to explore a Chinese movie Great Wall from a psychological perspective. The study uses a qualitative method with descriptive exposure. The researcher uses the Great Wall movie as a data source. The data collection technique is a documentary study. The data analysis technique is carried out with three stages: identification, classification, and reduction. The study's result indicates the psychology of Chinese people in facing the enemies, which raises the psychology of nationalism and justice in dealing with captured enemies. In relation to human psychology with western people, Chinese people raise attitudes related to cautiousness and cooperativeness with western people.

**Keywords:** *Movie; Psychology; Character; East; West*

### **Introduction**

Today, Chinese movies are the biggest market in the world (Wu, 2015), whether in the Western area, Eastern area, or Asia. In the context of international movie production, China has developments each year (Zhang, 2019). It shows that the movie atmosphere in China is considered great. Not only that, but this also indicates that China is a country with international standard movie production. It is considered greater than any other countries in Asia based on its economic power and movie markets. China is a rising star. Chinese movies are currently and widely discussed in various segments. Therefore, Chinese movies are studied through literary perspectives (Ahmadi, 2020, 2015a), social (Zhao, 2004), translation studies (Hong, Jianping, & Semsel, 1990), history (Rea, 2021; Mello, 2019), and semiotics. (Zheng, 2016). Chinese movies are not only known in the Asian region but are currently also reaching Europe and America.

In the context of western movies, Chinese actors - such as Jacky Chan, Jet Lee, Donny Yen are included in Hollywood actors. As Chinese actors from Asia, they can also show their existence in international movies. Therefore, those Chinese actors are well known in other countries. Besides, they can also show their skills as world-class actors, not only as local actors who are famous in China. This shows explicitly that Chinese people are not only strong in political, economic, and cultural contexts (Bremmer, 2007; Ahmadi, 2015), but also in movie contexts (Li, 1969; Farquhar & Zhang, 2010; Chiang, 2004; Fu,

2016; Luo, 1998). It shows that Chinese movies and Chinese actors have indeed become a concern for various researchers, both researchers from China and researchers from other countries.

Studies on Chinese movies in the last ten years have been carried out by the following researchers. First: Wu (2015) who researched Chinese movies that became the box office from 2010 to 2013. The results of his research showed that the movie market in China from 2010 to 2013 increased. This deserves the attention of Hollywood movie production because the movie market in China is very strong. Second: Su, Liu, & Wang (2020) who studied Chinese movies in relation to their impact on the context of community employment, community work, and economic growth. In this research' context, the researchers suggest those who become a part of the movie industry must pay attention to economic stability so that the movie market can be good. The research is interesting because it shows the progressivity of Chinese movies. Third: Ahmadi (2019) which studied Chinese movies and focused on the film of Knight of Shadows (Between Yin and Yang). The researcher associated Chinese movies with a psychological-philosophical context. The result of his research showed that the Knight of Shadows (Between Yin and Yang) raised the dualism relationship in human life. This cannot be separated from the philosophies of Yin and Yang in Chinese society - it is believed that the powers remain strong until now.

Unfortunately, no one has examined Chinese movies from a psychological perspective that specifically refers to characters. In addition, in this context, a human psychology about the relation to the people from other countries. In fact, the study of Chinese movies from a psychological perspective is very interesting. On the one hand, the study shows how the psychological characters of Chinese people are represented in the movie. On the other hand, the research will be a parameter for the wider community of how the psychological typology of Chinese people in relation to people with other cultures. In connection with this phenomenon, this study aims to explore Chinese people's psychology in the movie of Great Wall (2016).

With regard to the benefits of research, namely as follows. First, the results of this study are expected to make a theoretical contribution to scientific developments related to literature, movie, and psychology. Researchers can use the results of this study to gain a theoretical understanding of the study of psychology. Second, the results of this study can be used by similar researchers in relation to being a comparison material so that they can get differentiators for conducting research related to psychology. Third, people who enjoy literature can use the results of this study as a reference to get deeper into literary research in the context of movies from a psychological perspective.

## **Method**

This study uses a qualitative method because it is included in the area of social humanities studies (Weinberg, 2002). The researchers verbally explain the data obtained from the results of an in-depth interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). This study refers more to interdisciplinary qualitative research because it uses a cross-disciplinary perspective (Liamputtong, 2020) so that it is able to disassemble symbols in literature in depth. In relation to the research approach, the researchers use literary psychology (Ahmadi, 2015b), relating to the thoughts and actions of characters referring to movie studies. The data collection technique in this study refers to a qualitative context that uses a documentary study related to Chinese movies. Regarding the data source, the researchers use a Chinese movie: The Great Wall (2016). This movie is the result of a collaboration between China and America. The data used in this study is the psychology of the characters that appear in the film. The psychology of the characters appears in the form of: monologue, dialogue, or narration that is raised by the narrator.

The data analysis technique of this research is carried out with three stages, they are movie identification that is related to psychology, movie classification that is related to characters' psychology, and also data exposure. In order to maintain the scientific level of the data, the researchers validate the data by re-checking the theory and methodology. This is done so that researchers can find gaps or shortcomings

in the process of analyzing and presenting data. In addition, the researchers also hold discussions with colleagues to get inputs that are related to the theory and methodology.

## ***Discussion***

### **Psychology of Chinese People in Facing the Enemies**

Human psychology in relation to the psyche appears into two parts. First, human psychology in relation to themselves. This is related to the psyche and also their behaviors in dealing with life. In this context, the individual thinks and behaves on the basis of inner desires. Second, human psychology in relation to other people. In this case, the individual raises the psyche and behavior related to the context from outside of themselves. In relation to Chinese people's psychology in the Great Wall (2016) is exposed as follows.

First, having a high sense of nationalism. Chinese people have a high sense of nationalism. They really love and respect their nation and country. As humans who love their nation and country, they are willing to sacrifice their body and soul for the glory of the nation and country. They, as Chinese people, do not want their country to be defeated or conquered by other countries. For that reason, they fight with all their might for the nation and country, even though they have to sacrifice their lives for the nation. The sense of nationalism towards their country can be implicit in other languages, namely something bigger than that, it is nationalism as a belief. If trust is built properly and well, they will become a good nation as well. This picture can be seen in the following quotes.

00:35:49,316 --> 00:35:52,644  
we're fighting not  
for food or money

00:35:53,440 --> 00:35:56,190  
We give our lives  
for something more

00:35:57,300 --> 00:36:02,160  
Xin ren is our flag.  
Trust each other

Based on the quotes, it appears that the Chinese soldiers are not soldiers who have an orientation to money. They are warriors who have a true vow in terms of belief. In this case, they believe in and uphold the kingdom as the place where they live. The kingdom and the emperor are their lords that must be protected. Therefore, when there was an attack from the Tao Tei, they as warriors with strong nationalism fought to the death to defend the kingdom and the emperor. In a larger context, the spirit of nationalism is related to the nationalism of the nation and the country which cannot be exchanged with property and goods.

An attack from outside that wants to overthrow the kingdom and the emperor, is an attack on oneself. The enemy outside is the enemy of the self. If humans are negligent with enemies that come from outside, the enemy will come and attack their lives. Therefore, they must also be able to fight the enemy and defeat the enemy because the destruction of the kingdom and emperor is the destruction for themselves as well. Therefore, the soldiers really instilled idealism and a high sense of nationalism so that they are truly able to protect the kingdom from enemy attacks, both from within and from outside enemies.

Second, being fair. When the soldiers caught a stranger who was considered a spy, they did not necessarily arrest, imprison, and kill him. They, as Chinese soldiers, first conducted a trial to find out whether the stranger was a spy or not. Justice in this case is very necessary because as humans sometimes

we do not know whether someone is really a spy or not. If the stranger is not a spy, like it or not, the stranger must be released for the sake of justice. However, if the trial decides that the person is a spy, like it or not, the law must be followed. The description of justice in relation to dealing with the enemy is exposed as follows.

00:11:38,400 --> 00:11:39,740  
We have to kill them!

00:11:41,860 --> 00:11:43,000  
General.</font>

00:11:43,480 --> 00:11:46,020  
Before we've found the truth...

00:11:46,560 --> 00:11:50,340  
I suggest letting them live.

Based on the quotes, it appears that one of the soldiers wanted them (strangers) to be killed. However, the general fairly said that the strangers should not be put to death until the truth was found out. Therefore, a more in-depth investigation was needed to find out whether the foreigner was guilty or not. This is the justice that the Chinese people do to their enemies. They first conduct a deep investigation to find out whether the enemy is really guilty or not. If not, they have to be released.

### **Psychology of Chinese People in Facing Western People**

Human psychology in relation to people outside oneself is divided into two: the relationship between oneself and others and the relationship between oneself and society. In the *Great Wall* (2016), the researchers focus on the relationship between Chinese people and foreigners. Chinese people's psychology in relation to dealing with foreigners, which in this case is represented by westerners, is exposed as follows.

First, being careful. When the Chinese soldiers were in trouble facing evil creature - it is said to be a representation of Tao Tei. The existence of the creature was kept a secret so that people would not be afraid of the appearance of the creature. Therefore, when they – the soldiers who fought against the creature – found foreigners who were able to kill the Tao Tei creature and he was in good condition, it was considered dangerous. They are afraid that the foreigners will spread the story about the creature to other people. This picture can be seen in the following quote.

00:11:31,280 --> 00:11:34,740  
To protect our secret,  
we have to kill them.

Based on the quote, it appears that the soldier wanted to show his strength so that the foreigners were killed in order to keep the secret. Not only that, it was also inseparable from their sense of nationalism towards the kingdom – which in this case is actually a representation of the Chinese state and nation – which they uphold and are proud of. Besides, killing foreigners in order to keep the kingdom intact was what seemed to be the main requirement for a soldier. They didn't want the secret about the Tao Tei creature to be exposed and spread to the world.

Second, collaborating. Humans are born homo socius. Therefore, in the development of life, humans need other humans. Humans cannot stand alone without the help of other humans. In this context, *Great Wall* (2016) shows that humans are unable to stand alone without the help of others. Therefore, humans need cooperation with other parties. In this case, the Chinese soldiers who fought the Tao Tei

creature, initially doubted the westerners in fighting the evil creature. However, on one occasion – a war that broke out between the royal soldiers and Tao Tei, the westerners helped them. This picture can be seen in the following quotes.

00:25:36,640 --> 00:25:40,880  
You fought well today.  
You are praised by General Shao

00:25:43,980 --> 00:25:46,440  
What we can do  
is getting ready.

00:26:20,080 --> 00:26:21,520  
Thank you for saving my life

The picture shows that the Chinese are also cooperating with other parties, namely westerners. In their view, at first, they doubted the westerners whether they would help fight the Tao Tei. That was indeed a starting point in working together, especially at a critical and dangerous moment. One was afraid of cooperation, because they feared being harmed or afraid of being betrayed by other parties. This matter originally appeared among the royal soldiers who were going to fight Tao Tei. They doubted the westerners because the westerners did not have Chinese nationalism. Thus, the concern of the royal soldiers was that they didn't want traitors or outsiders because outsiders didn't necessarily have high spirits to fight.

### ***Conclusion***

Based on the previous explanation, it can be concluded as follows. First, in the psychological context, Chinese people show their attitudes and behaviors in relation to their enemies, (1) having a high spirit of nationalism. That way, they are willing to fight and are willing to die for the kingdom and/or nation they uphold and (2) Chinese people are fair to the enemy. This is done so that no one gets hurt or punished just because of something that is unclear or because the person is an enemy. Second, in terms of Chinese people's psychology in dealing with westerners, they show an attitude of cautiousness. This is because they do not know the true thoughts and behavior of western people. Therefore, as Chinese people, they show caution so as not to be trapped and lost to the enemy. In addition, Chinese people in relation to their relationship with westerners, they try to cooperate when they understand and recognize that westerners or foreigners are not bad people. Therefore, cooperation between China and the western people is established.

The recommendations for this research are as follows. First, this research refers to psychology and leads to a data source of a movie. For this reason, future researchers can use more various data sources. It is hoped that by using many data sources, the research results can be more comprehensive. Second, for future researchers, the results of this study can be used as a starting material for conducting comparative studies of Chinese movies and Indonesian movies from a psychological perspective.

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