

## The Western Gaze in Animation: A Case Study of *Kung Fu Panda*

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### ABSTRACT

Orientalists think western popular media extends cultural imperialism in the American Century. The increasing interest on producing diverse cultural perspectives in Hollywood raises the question of whether there is an “othering” process in its media representation, subordinating or distorting the image of non-Westerners. Consequently and consequentially, the naturalised ‘reality’ of Orientals and the Orient would be further reinforced to the global audience. *Kung Fu Panda* series (2008, 2011 and 2016) is one of the most popular Hollywood animations in recent years. In order to find out whether the animation is yet another Orientalism project based on occidentalist knowledge, this article will examine the Hollywood representation of characters, voice and mise en scène in *Kung Fu Panda*. Employing a combination of framing analysis and discourse analysis, this essay will examine visual images (the appearance and posture of main characters, landmarks, architectural features), depictions (the narratives of the stories), metaphors (cast members’ voices, words and deeds of characters), as well as cast members, movie posters, producers. The essay concludes that although *Kung Fu Panda* has remained within a traditional orientalist framework, it seems to have integrated different metaphors - depending on production settings and audiences.

**Keywords:** Orientalism; Media representation; Othering; Hollywood animation; Cultural imperialism; *Kung Fu Panda*.

### INTRODUCTION

The movie *Kung Fu Panda* is a story about a clumsy cuddly panda that was unable to achieve his kung fu dream until he was recognised as the Dragon Warrior by Master Oogway. He was then trained by Shifu, defeated enemies, took responsibility for protecting the Valley of Peace and finally became a hero and the kung fu master who saved China. This is a movie that presents a comprehensive collection of aspects of Chinese traditional culture and many spot-on cultural references ranging from character appearance, martial arts, architecture, landmarks, costumes, custom (ancient and modern), history, language, music, religion, ideology and philosophy. Globally, the movie grossed 631 million USD (Box Office, 2011). With a packaging of Chinese tradition, the star, a globalised Panda, ironically represents western values - bringing, to the Valley of Peace and China, western heroism (Sparks, 1996), individualism (Schindler, 1996) and liberalism. Hollywood movies offer entertainment as well as education (Giroux, 1999), and have over the decades conveyed much occidental knowledge of “the other” (Hall, 1992).

(Said, 1978). Hollywood representation of “the otherness” has framed a certain environment of images and narratives to shape a postcolonial hegemonic flow of knowledge from the West to the East (Said, 1994). Globalised culture has been consumed across the man-made sovereign borders by both the West and by the “others” (Orgad, 2012). The study of Orientalism focused on originally on the Near East and Middle East, expanding to India and then the Far East - China, Japan and Korea. In today’s hyper globalising world, the orientalist mindset reinforces occidentalist knowledge, naturalising the “reality” of differencing otherness, thereby empowering the West (Hall, 1991a). Hollywood, as the dominant American film industry in the global market, with its cutting-edge technology, has endeavoured to produce film animations, across the cultural spectrum, such as *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994) and *Mulan* (1998). With its potential global influence, the way Hollywood represents and re-presents cultural diversity could serve an educational end. Whether or not “*Kung Fu Panda*” is a manifestation of structural themes of orientalism, post colonialism or globalization, or a mixture of these will be examined by analysing reflections of these values in the film’s rhetorical structures. It is believed that the *Kung Fu Panda* series exemplifies a new tendency of Hollywood animation to both engage in “integration” and “distinction” of otherness (Hall, 1991b). Following this introduction, this article will (1) briefly review literature on Chinese stereotypes in Hollywood

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Orientalism takes the view that through western texts the “Orient”, as opposed to the “Occident”, is portrayed as weak, inferior and subordinates

cinema; (2) identify the research question and method; (3) present findings; (4) engage in a discussion; and (5) provide a conclusion.

## LITERATURE REVIEW OF CHINESE IN HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

There are three Chinese stereotypes discernible in Hollywood movies: The first image is of a vicious demon. During the first half of the 20th century, Fu ManChu, a fictional character created by a British novelist, had a "crafty yellow face twisted by a thin-lipped grin" (Frayling, 2014) and threatened all of white society. This was the first Chinese representation popularised with Western audiences. The representations of Fu appeared in several movies in the 1920s, which strengthened the negative and even violent image of Chinese in the US. The second was of a martial arts (Kung Fu) master. Representative Hollywood movies with Chinese martial arts include *The Way of the Dragon* (1972), *Enter the Dragon* (1973), *The Last Dragon* (1985), *Police Story* (1985), *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* (1993), *Rush Hour* (1998), and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000). The Kung Fu actors and actresses have been frequently presented in western popular media and have been greatly welcomed since 1970s. Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan achieved great popularity in the West. The third representation is more evident in modern Hollywood movies: Orientals are depicted as weak, inferior, subordinate, and non-masculine to westerners (Said, 1993). Such marginalised framing of Asians can also be found in American or British prime-time series, such as *Ugly Betty* and *Entourage*. For instance, in *Two Broken Girls* (2011-2017), an Asian restaurant owner is portrayed as a flamboyant, greedy, undesirable, asexual, nerdish, diminutive man-child.

Animating Asian cartoon characters is new in Hollywood and emerged after attention was given to the Asian regional theme in the wake of globalisation. *Mulan* in 1998, while based on Chinese folklore, has characters elaborated from a western point of view as "the other" - exotic and interesting. In some cases, an animation's surface treatment would be altered by the underlying storyline, or there would be important western references. For example the *Lion King* (1994) depicting a lion ruling an African animal kingdom, has resonances with William Shakespeare's 'Hamlet - Prince of Denmark' (McElveen&Rohlf, 1998). Hollywood animations are no different to other western media, in particular in the case of the American hegemon, they carry orientalist stereotypes and western cultural imperialism (Said, 1993). Although

dominant groups and minorities cannot be mutually exclusive, Hollywood has sought multiculturalization and regional collaboration in order to succeed in varied markets across the globe (Ibbi, 2013). Postcolonial scholars argue that globalisation is the new key to reinforce western hegemony and capitalism and amounts to neo-cultural-imperialism (Croteau&William, 2003). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1997) explains that the globalisation context has generated cultural hybridisation in representation, through an "English Eye" and more broadly a western gaze when viewing the "other". While the "otherness" of a character may be seen merely in a precise depiction of appearance, there seems to have been hardly any change in the "American soul" in the construction of Hollywood Asian narratives.

## METHOD

This research proposes that contemporary animated films on Chinese themes are not shaped exclusively by orientalist, postcolonial or globalism values but reflect features from all of these because of the dominance of globalization. A hybridity is discernible. The research question that will be addressed is whether frames of the Chinese in *Kung Fu Panda* carry stereotypes and values from orientalism and/or postcolonial and/or globalization perspectives. Frames have been defined as 'schemata of interpretation' (Goffman, 1974). Framing is a social science approach to analysis of media (as well as of other texts) that is situated between discourse analysis and content analysis (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Discourse analysis emphasizes the notion of political hierarchy while content analysis merely examines features in messages present at the time of the research without basing these on historical political relationships such as between the West and the East. Frames can capture political hierarchies and can be viewed as political "devices embedded in political discourse" (Kinder & Sanders, 1990). Zhongdang Pan and Gerald Kosicki's (1993) method, though it is aimed at the analysis of news discourse, may be modified to identify frames in films. Pan and Kosicki recommend the identification and analysis of syntactical, script, thematic and rhetorical structures, the latter being revealed in "metaphors, exemplars, and catchphrases. Depictions and visual images" (Pan & Kosicki 1993). For the purpose of identifying and analysing film it would be suitable to focus on thematic analysis - of larger structures that shape style, structures identifiable with globalization, post-colonialism and/or orientalism; and three selected rhetorical structures - metaphors, depictions and visual images. Norman Fairclough

(1995) sees print as less personal than radio or television, but that television goes further than radio in “making people visually available, and not in frozen modality...but in movement and action”. However, for the purposes of this case study of *Kung Fu Panda* the frozen modality is suitable as it seeks to examine principle characters, in terms of their metaphors, depictions and visual images; and key architectural, cultural and locational features - *miseen scène*. Principle characters and key features are identified and described in the Tables. These will be discussed in terms of the existence of orientalism, postcolonial

(2008) and its two sequels (2011, 2016), it is found that Chinese culture has been represented as an exotic and magnified world of martial arts (kung fu). As seen in Table 1, each character has at least one martial arts related aspect to their visual images and has been presented in kung fu-style postures. Their dress code is kung fu-related and sometimes links to Chinese symbolic philosophy such as yin and yang.

Table 1. Principle characters in Kung Fu Panda movie series<sup>1</sup>

Character	Animal	Chinese Symbolism	Characteristic	Appearance	Master
Oogway	Galápagos tortoise	<b>Longevity; Power; Immortality; Tenacity; (Helping P'an Ku) Create the world; Sacred</b>	Creator of <b>Kung Fu, Dragon Warrior, and Dragon Scroll</b> ; Founder of the <b>Valley of Peace</b> ; Senior master of the <b>Jade Palace</b>	Long walking stick made from the wood of the <b>peach tree</b> ; Green cloak with stylized <b>yin-yang symbols</b>	Conjunction with the <b>Hero' Chi</b> which is a power gifted from Heaven that dwells within the tortoise's body
Master Shifu	Red Panda	No specific reference	Teacher, <b>Shifu</b> , of Furious Five and Po; Student of Oogway, learning “Hing Kung” - <b>Inner peace</b>	Orange-brown <b>robe</b> and brown belt; Green belt and green <b>shawl</b>	<b>Chi-based</b> move - <b>Wuxi Finger Hold</b>
Po (Dragon Warrior)	Giant panda	<b>National treasure</b>	Main protagonist; <b>Dragon Warrior</b> ; Adopted by Mr. Ping who called him “ <b>Xiao Bao (Po)</b> ”- ( <b>Little treasure</b> ); Son of biological father <b>Li Shan</b> , Trained by Master <b>Shifu</b> ; <b>Hero of Valley of Peace</b> ; <b>Protect and Save China from the enemies.</b>	Patched-up burlap shorts with <b>Shaolin wraps</b> around ankles	All <b>twelve Kung Fu</b> styles; <b>“Belly” defense</b> ; <b>Panda-style joke and tease</b>

Table continued on next page

and/or globalization structural themes. In this research *Kung Fu Panda* versions (2008, 2011, and 2016) were viewed and relevant metaphors, depictions and visual images of the principal characters and architectural, cultural and locational features were recorded in Tables. Following this they were reflected on in terms of whether or not they were consonant with the proposed theme structures of orientalism, post-colonialism and globalization.

## FINDINGS

Firstly, through analyzing the principal characters' appearances, architectural features and landmarks presented in *Kung Fu Panda*

<sup>1</sup> The table was constructed by the author, drawing on the following references: Kung Fu Panda characters [online]. Fandom. Retrieved May 25, 2016, from <http://kungfupanda.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Characters>; Kung Fu Panda Wiki [online]. Encyclopedia & Community. Retrieved May 23, 2016, from [http://kungfupanda.wikia.com/wiki/Kung\\_Fu\\_Panda\\_Wiki](http://kungfupanda.wikia.com/wiki/Kung_Fu_Panda_Wiki)

Master Tigress	South China Tiger	<b>Natural-born 'King'</b> - The pattern on her forehead is similar to the Chinese word for "King"; A traditional <b>martial arts style</b>	Leader of Furious Five; Trained by Shifu, learning how to control her strength and temper	<b>Chinese Qipao</b> with <b>golden vine patterns</b> and black pants; <b>Long-sleeved yellow tunic</b> with red vine patterns and black pants	<b>Tiger boxing</b> derived from <b>Hung Gar Tiger Crane</b> (Tiger and Crane boxing); Fierce and aggressive; Fluid, flexible and graceful
Master Crane	Black-necked crane	<b>Beauty; Immortality;</b> There is a close association between <b>Taoism and the Crane</b> ; A traditional <b>martial arts style</b>	Janitor at the Lee Da Kung Fu Academy (formerly); A member of Furious Five;	Blue trousers; <b>A conical Asian hat</b>	<b>Crane boxing</b> derived from <b>Hung Gar Tiger Crane</b> (Tiger and Crane boxing); Sweeping circular motions with the arms
Master Viper	Green tree viper	<b>Small dragon;</b> A traditional <b>martial arts style</b>	Viper clans signify descent from fire-breathing <b>Dragon Gods</b> ; A member of Furious Five	Two <b>lotus flower clips</b> on her head	Poison Fang Technique
Master Monkey	Gee's golden langur	<b>Wukong (Monkey King)</b> from the novel <i>Journey to the West</i> (India); Saved by a monk he became a follower of the Monk	<b>Wu Kong's</b> young brother; <b>Trouble-making hooligan (formerly); Surrendered to Oogway</b> and became a student of Oogway and Master Shifu; A member of Furious Five	Brown wrist braces; Golden belt; Reddish-brown pants	<b>Monkey style boxing</b> Quick, tricky and unpredictable; Using flips, spins, and jumps in his fighting
Master Mantis	Chinese mantis	Never makes a move - symbol of <b>meditation and contemplation</b>	A member of Furious Five; <b>Master of patience and stillness</b> - was locked in a cage for days and forced to sit and wait for something to happen	Skin colour: Green	<b>Staying-still-for-a-really-long-time technique;</b> Super low stances; Praying Mantis style; Using hooked mantis-claws to trap, kick and punch.
Mr. Ping; Po's adoptive father	Chinese goose	<b>Sacred</b> bird; In early mythology, the goddess fed geese with her peaches of immortality	Noodle-maker; Owner of the noodle shop; <b>High-expectation that</b> his son Po will carry on his family business	Burgundy/maroon and <b>gold robe;</b> <b>noodle -bowl-shaped hat</b>	Noodle-making; "secret ingredient"

The locations chosen for the movie are all preferred attractions for western tourists, with exotic names. In the case of the Jade Palace, the original attraction is the Jade Buddha Palace in Anshan, Liaoning, where China houses the World's largest Buddha statue made entirely of jade. The Sacred Pagoda in GonMeng City is very similar to the Leifeng Pagoda near the West Lake in Hangzhou. WuDang Mountain is the most famous place for the eternal martial arts of TaiChi and is located in Hubei. Thread of Hope (the Infinite Bridge in the movie) and the Valley of Peace are both among the most popular attractions in China. Moreover, pagodas are traditional oriental architectural forms; notably, in East Asia, pagodas are normally built by Buddhists; in China, they are also used as Taoist houses of worship). Other traditional architectural forms include palaces. Streets filled with red lanterns and traditional noodle shops, portraying an exotic China, distinct from western modernity and culture, are other aspects of *miseen scène*.

Secondly, by comparing the protagonist Po and other characters in terms of depictions of personality through words, voice and deeds, as well as visual image, it is not hard to see that Po's frames are distinctive and contrast with those of others. As shown in Table 1, Po's depictions and visual image include being laid back and having a western sense of humour and enjoying joking and teasing, compared with the other kung fu masters' serious, strict and unsmiling faces. Even his master skills are half-jokingly, in a western style, referred to by him as "belly defense", although he is expert at all twelve kung fu styles. This distinctiveness has been represented throughout the movie, and is best seen in comparison with his adoptive father - Mr. Ping (a goose). Mr. Ping is portrayed as a more traditional Chinese noodle-shop owner who is somehow simple-minded ('silly goose?') and expects his son to succeed him in his noodle business. As shown in Table 2, the entire cast for this animation consists of western-born actors except for Jackie Chan, who is identified with kung fu in the western mind following the success of the *Run Run Shaw* movies. However, only Mr. Ping's speech has been dubbed over with a first generation (more traditional) Chinese-American accent.

Table 2. Cast in Kung Fu Panda movie series<sup>2</sup>

Character	Cast	Country of Birth	Accent
Po	Jack Black	USA	American
<b>Mr. Ping</b>	<b>James Hong</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>Chinese American</b>
Shifu	Dustin Hoffman	USA	American
Oogway	Randall Duk Kim	USA	American
Tigress	Angelina Jolie	USA	American
Monkey	Jackie Chan	China	Hong Kong Chinese
Mantis	Seth Rogen	Canada	British
Viper	Lucy Liu	USA	American
Crane	David Cross	USA	American

By analysing the scenes in Table 3 where Mr. Ping appears, we see that the narrative has given him the role of being the main obstacle in his son's way to becoming the hero of the village and saving China. He did not believe his son had a martial arts hero's destiny. Rather he believed his son's destiny was to take over from him his family-run noodle shop like he did from his father before. The role of Mr. Ping is absent in the process of Po being trained as a kung fu hero. There were three occasions before Po was accidentally recognized as the Dragon Warrior by master Oogway, where Mr. Ping appeared on the screen and discouraged his son from dreaming other dreams and persuaded Po to remain in the noodle shop (scene 1, 2 and 3, in Table 3). At the outset Po could not contravene his father's will; but later, he eschewed the noodle cart and followed his own heart (scene 2, in Table 3, and in the end, Po even questioned whether Mr. Ping was his father (scene 4, in Table 3).

<sup>2</sup> The table was constructed by the author, drawing on the following references: Kung Fu Panda (2008) full cast & crew. *IMDb*, Retrieved May 30, 2016, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0441773/fullcredits>; Kung Fu Panda 2 (2011) full cast & crew. *IMDb*, Retrieved May 30, 2016, from [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1302011/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1302011/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm); Kung Fu Panda 3 (2016) full cast & crew. *IMDb*, Retrieved May 30, 2016, from [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2267968/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2267968/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm).

Table 3. The Scenes of Mr. Ping in Kung Fu Panda<sup>3</sup>

<p>Scene 1.</p> <p>One morning Po was having a Kung Fu dream, when he was woken up by his father, Mr. Ping, in order to serve in their family noodle shop. Po wants to tell his father his dream is about becoming a Kung Fu master rather than a noodle person.</p> <p>But finally he could not, since Mr. Ping wants Po to inherit his noodle business and tells Po that we are noodle folk, here is our destiny and other dreams are just stupid.</p>	<p>MR. PING: What were you dreaming about? [He puts down the basket and begins chopping vegetables next to Po as he listens.]</p> <p>PO: What was I...uhh... I was dreaming about... [He sees Mr. Ping listening expectantly, and can't bring himself to say the truth. He glances down at the bowl he's holding.] Uh..noodles.</p> <p>...</p> <p>MR. PING: <b>Oh, happy day! My son finally having the noodle dream! [He begins rummaging through something and arrives with an apron and a noodle hat. He ties the apron around Po's waist and places the noodle hat in Po's paws].</b></p> <p><b>You don't know how long I've been waiting for this moment. This is a sign, Po!</b></p> <p>...</p> <p>MR. PING: <b>You are almost ready to be entrusted with the secret ingredient of my "Secret Ingredient Soup", and then you will fulfill your destiny and take over the restaurant! [He quickly runs over to section of wall with three portraits and points at them]. Just as I took it over from my father, who took it over from his father, who won it from a friend in a game of mahjong.</b></p> <p>PO: Dad, Dad, Dad, it was just a dream. [<i>Chuckles nervously</i>].</p> <p>MR. PING: <b>No, it was the dream. We are noodle folk. Broth runs through our veins.</b> [While saying this, he hands two customers their bowls without even looking at them.]</p>
<p>Scene 2.</p> <p>When Po saw the poster in the restaurant, he was excited and desired to go to the Jade Palace to see the Dragon Warrior.</p> <p>When Mr. Ping asked him where he wanted to go, he could not say the truth.</p> <p>Mr. Ping stopped him and said that Po should take the noodle cart to sell noodles to the villagers who would crowd in the Jade Palace.</p> <p>Po was exhausted carrying the noodle cart all the way up to the Jade Palace.</p>	<p>MR. PING: <b>Po! Where are you going?</b></p> <p><b>[Po struggles to hide his dismay as he turns back to his father.]</b></p> <p>PO: To the... Jade Palace?... [<i>Inches slightly out of door.</i>]</p> <p>MR. PING: <b>But you're forgetting your noodle cart! [He rolls a heavy-looking noodle cart towards Po.] The whole Valley will be there, and you'll sell noodles to all of them!</b></p> <p>PO: <b>Selling noodles? [Mr. Ping nods happily.] But Dad, I was kinda thinking maybe I...</b></p> <p>MR. PING: [smiling] Yeah?</p> <p>PO: <b>I was kinda thinking maybe I...</b></p> <p>MR. PING: [still smiling] Uh-huh?</p> <p>PO: <b>... could also sell the bean buns. They're-they're about to go bad.</b></p> <p>MR. PING: <b>That's my boy! I told you that dream was a sign!</b> [He walks back into the shop.]</p> <p>PO: [<i>Looks down at the cart, disappointed.</i>] Yeah, heh heh, glad I</p>

<sup>3</sup> The table was constructed by the author, drawing on the following references: Kung Fu Panda Transcript [online]. Fandom. Retrieved May 25, 2016, from [http://kungfupanda.wikia.com/wiki/Kung\\_Fu\\_Panda/Transcript](http://kungfupanda.wikia.com/wiki/Kung_Fu_Panda/Transcript)

<p>He decided to throw away the family noodle cart and go to the Jade Palace to witness the selection of the Dragon Warrior.</p>	<p>had it.</p>
<p><b>Scene 3.</b></p> <p>Mr. Ping brings Po's noodle apron and wanted to stop Po trying to enter in the Jade Palace by fireworks chair.</p> <p>After Po failed to enter the Jade Palace using his fireworks-propelled chair, Mr. Ping proffered the noodle apron towards Po and asked him to return to the noodle shop.</p>	<p>MR. PING: Po! [He appears at the top of the stairs, holding Po's apron. He sees Po sitting on the fireworks chair.] <b>What are you doing?! [He rushes forward and attempts to blow out the fuse.]</b></p> <p>PO: I lied. I don't dream about noodles, Dad!</p> <p>[Mr. Ping's eyes widen. Po looks down and sees that the fuse is almost out. He braces himself and yells to the heavens.]</p> <p>I LOVE KUNG FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!!...</p> <p>[When Po opens his eyes, he finds himself still on the ground: the fuse was a dud. He loses balance on the little chair and falls flat on his face (the chair still stuck on his rear), then begins to snuffle, defeated at last. Though sympathetic, Mr. Ping holds out Po's apron.]</p> <p>MR. PING: <b>Oh, come on, son. Let's get back to work.</b></p> <p>PO: [He sighs.] Okay.</p> <p>[Po is sadly getting up when all of a sudden, the fireworks on the chair go off, propelling Po into the arena wall.]</p> <p>MR. PING: Po! [Propelled by the fireworks, Po slides along the wall on his face, wailing.] <b>Po, come back!</b></p>
<p><b>Scene 4.</b></p> <p>Mr. Ping repeatedly reminds Po that they are noodle folk, which leads Po to wonder whether Mr. Ping is his father.</p>	<p>MR. PING: <b>We are noodle folk. Broth runs deep through our veins.</b></p> <p>PO: I don't know, Dad. <b>Honestly, sometimes I can't believe I'm actually your son.</b></p>

Thirdly, the official posters with different frames, from the two film property owners, are observed here. The original *Kung Fu Panda* (2008) and *Kung Fu Panda 2* (2011) were produced by American DreamWorks Animation. *Kung Fu Panda 3* (2016) was produced by Oriental DreamWorks Animation - a joint Chinese-American cooperation film production company. In *Kung Fu Panda* in 2008, American DreamWorks prefers a red and yellow background with a solitary chubby Panda (Po) in a classic kung fu pose. Po is kicking out with his left leg with a red rising sun behind him. *Kung Fu Panda 2* (2011), has two poster versions, one being akin to the former - Po in a preparatory kung fu position standing on the number 2 with a golden sunrise behind him. Another *Kung Fu Panda 2* poster presents both Po and the Furious Five. Po diving from an orange sky with the Furious Five. Interestingly, the

posture presented is like that of superman's flying pose rather than a kung fu pose. The most distinct one is the *Kung Fu Panda 3* poster that has shifted to a green and blue background and is filled up with Po and many panda family members who are completely ignorant about kung fu. Unlike in the previous kung fu theme posters, he is holding dumplings in his hand and his posture is not typically related to kung fu posture - he looks like he is about to lose his balance on account of the many little pandas riding on his body.

Not only the posters, as Table 4 shows, the storyline of *Kung Fu Panda 3* has altered from 'one-save-all' heroism (Sparks, 1996) to 'collective power is stronger' theme.

Table 4. The storyline summary<sup>4</sup>

Kung Panda (2008)	Fu	Po, a son of a noodle shop owner, is the biggest fan of Kung Fu. He was tired of working every day in his family's noodle shop. Unexpectedly chosen to fulfill an ancient prophecy, Po's dreams become reality when he was recognised by Master Oogway as the Dragon Warrior. He joins the world of Kung Fu and studies alongside his idols, the legendary Furious Five and is trained by Master Shifu. Tai Lung (a villainous leopard) is on his way to the Jade Palace, threatening the peace of China; the Furious Five have failed to defeat this enemy. Po puts his heart into understanding the secret of the Dragon Scroll, taking on the task of saving all the villagers and China.
Kung Panda 2 (2011)	Fu	Peace reigns in the Valley a year after Po becomes the Dragon Warrior. He and his companions, the Furious Five, take on the responsibility to protect the whole of China. However, in the distance, in Gongmen City, Lord Shen (a peacock) is planning a new technological weapon threatening the peace of China. Meanwhile Po gets to know that he is an orphan, feels depression, but finally he chooses to overcome the past and to be a real hero and defeat Lord Shen, thereby saving China and everyone again.
Kung Panda 3 (2016)	Fu	Po's biological father (Li) reappears one day, in the noodle restaurant, and influences Po to return to a Panda village where his big panda family lives. However, the supernatural villain Kai (a bull) begins to sweep across China defeating all the kung fu masters. Po must train a village full of his fun-loving, clumsy brethren to become Kung Fu Pandas like him. He recalls that Master Shifu taught him to be himself with his weaknesses and strengths - this is Confucian wisdom. Finally he make the impossible mission possible and the whole Panda village defeated Ka; the world returned to

being peaceful again.

## DISCUSSION

A postcolonial structural theme has been recognised in lingering orientalist visual images but the otherness has been subordinated in other visual images, depictions and metaphors because of the dominance of the globalization structural theme (Hall, 1991b). Globalization becomes the new face of orientalism - a cute face in cartoon animations. First, there is a totally exotic martial-arts presented to world audiences. An enthusiastically use of traditional Chinese cultural references and martial arts related elements in the Kung Fu Panda series is omnipresent, from small symbolic items such as food (noodles and dumplings) to characters' appearances (martial-arts costumes and poses), to traditional landmarks and exotic architecture. Those symbolised images signified an orientalist view of China. Secondly, Po is depicted as a Chinese on the surface but an occidental inside (in contrast with other principle characters who are Chinese throughout). Notably, protagonist Po in this movie, with his western humour and western thinking, which is depicted through his words, and a young urban American accent, makes Kung Fu Panda a metaphor for individual freedom in an American-dream plot with a 'one-save-all' ending. This universal theme in hollywood hero movies is applied to this Chinese-theme animation under a postcolonial structural theme. Furthermore, in the American company-produced movie poster, American individualism and heroism is depicted through Po - standing out against a background of yellow and red - stereotypical colours used to represent the Yellow Peril and Red China. Thirdly, only Mr. Ping has been cast with a traditional Chinese-American accent. He is depicted as being subordinate to Po in the narrative, Mr. Ping being a more traditional Chinese goose while Po is the exemplification of a modern westernized Panda. In the story, Po's father (Mr. Ping) wanted him to inherit the family noodle business, but Po felt he was not a noodle kind of person and wanted to learn kung fu instead. In a way kung fu has been appropriated by the West here and his rejection of tradition for kung fu represents an acceptance of western values. Finally, under an "American Dream"- like plot, Po became a kung fu master and a hero who saved China, by ignoring Mr. Ping's traditional Chinese "noodle dream" obstacle. This subordination is also applied to the Five Furious. In the movie, they always fight enemies' shoulder-to-shoulder - a metaphor for Chinese-style collectivism. However, Po, a metaphor for the West, ultimately understood the secret in the

<sup>4</sup>The table was constructed by the author, drawing on the following references: Osborne, M. & Stevenson, J. (Directors). (2008). *Kung Fu Panda* [film] USA: DreamWorks Animation; Carloni, A. & Nelson, J. Y. (Directors). (2011). *Kung Fu Panda 2* [film] USA: DreamWorks Animation; Nelson, J. Y. (Director). (2016) *Kung Fu Panda 3* [film] CHINA-USA: Oriental DreamWorks Animation.; Kung Fu Panda Wiki [online]. Encyclopedia & Community. Retrieved May 23, 2016, from [http://kungfupanda.wikia.com/wiki/Kung\\_Fu\\_Panda\\_Wiki](http://kungfupanda.wikia.com/wiki/Kung_Fu_Panda_Wiki)



Dragon Scroll all by himself, combated enemies by himself and saved all the people himself.

It is occidentalist knowledge that, through the film industry's globalisation based cooperation, leads to neo-imperialist coloration. This Kung Fu Panda deviates from the classic orientalism by being a hybrid production that is seeking to do well both in the West and China seeking pure Chinese cultural references and bringing in much Chinese tradition and culture to the whole world. By maintaining an attitude of western-supremacy China is framed for audiences as an exotic culture, a martial-arts nation with an otherness that is inferior to western cultural values - individualism and liberalism - that have been embedded in a universal Hollywood-style hero (Waxman, 1998). Remarkably, Kung Fu Panda 3 has had its frame dramatically shifted by a different plot structure and posters, looking lightly on kung fu or other symbols of China with a western gaze, neither providing metaphors for American individualism nor for American heroism. The Chinese-American jointly-produced animation, aimed at Chinese audiences, emphasized more on pure Chinese ideology dissemination such as the teaching of Confucian and Taoist wisdom, with collective power, rather than individual heroism, defeating the villain.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this essay has discussed the literature of orientalism and Hollywood movies' continuing historical framework of "othering" and "Oriental" in depicting China (Hall, 1996). The three types of Chinese image represented by Hollywood have been reviewed: Demon, martial arts master, weak and subordinate. The essay examined whether the Kung Fu Panda series maintained this western orientalist framework and infused its own occidental perspectives, using the methodology of framing analysis - focusing on rhetorical structures. It categorizes three aspects, that are: (1) visual images that include exotic traditional appearances and landmarks as well as an essentialised martial-arts image; (2) depictions, through comparing Po's accent, personality and his own narratives with the others who have been recognised as displaying more traditional Chinese features; (3) metaphors that refer to western culture and values such as individualism and liberalism. Hence, although Kung Fu Panda series embraces several Chinese cultural elements, the two stereotypes of China have been maintained by integrating postcolonial and neo-imperialist knowledge for the global audience. This is seen clearly when contrasted with metaphors

addressed to Chinese audiences in the Chinese co-production. It has been established through this research, that different frameworks have been used by different elites or executive institutions for different audiences, by comparing two versions of posters and plots. The result is a hybrid image where orientalism lingers.

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