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Identity, Tradition and Globalism
in post-Cultural Revolution
Chinese feature films

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ABSTRACT

After the Cultural Revolution officially ended in 1977, China began its reforms from 1978. Although the initial goal of the reforms was to improve the nation's economy, changes soon took place across other fields ranging from politics to culture, from society to the legal system. These changes throughout the 1980s and 1990s had a significant impact on the development of Chinese film. Contemporary Chinese films reflect these changes either directly or indirectly.

This thesis studies the development of film in post-Cultural Revolution China to the mid-1990s. The thesis argues that Chinese film experienced a shift of cultural identity from being subject to Chinese tradition to submitting to transnational globalism. The causes of this shift were a combination of China's own reform process and international cultural and financial involvement in the Chinese film industry.

In light of some Western cultural theories, such as structuralism, post-structuralism (including deconstruction), psycho-analysis and postmodernism, this thesis examines a series of acclaimed Chinese directors and films. Many of these directors and films are internationally well known either for their cinematic achievements or for the political controversies about their films. They are seen as representative, especially when contemporary Chinese film is assessed from a cross-cultural, global perspective.

In a new millennium Chinese cultural policies on film production and censorship are changing. This thesis summarizes how the Chinese film industry in the last two decades has responded to, and from time to time accelerated the country's modernization, commercialization and internationalisation.

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