

DOI: doi.org/10.21009/ISLLAE.07101

Received: 09 September 2024
Revised: 30 November 2024
Accepted: 20 January 2024
Published: 31 January2025

IMAGE OF CHINESE WOMAN WARRIOR IN *MULAN* FILM POSTERS: BETWEEN WOMEN'S POWER AND PATRIARCHAL DOMINATION

Ellita Permata Widjayanti^{1a)}, Satrio Pamungkas²⁾, Titien Diah Soelistyarini³⁾, Ariza Purnawati⁴⁾

Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia¹⁾

Institut Kesenian Jakarta²⁾

Universitas Airlangga³⁾

Universitas Gunadarma⁴⁾

ellitapermata@unj.ac.id^{a)}

Abstract

This paper aimed at examining the way women's power and patriarchal domination intertwined in the image of the woman warrior in Disney's *Mulan* film posters. To study *Mulan* film posters as a text, *mise-en-scene* and staging approaches in cinematographic theory were used to analyze the visual text, while Naomi Wolf's power feminism theory was applied to interpret the image of the Chinese woman warrior. Posters from two versions of *Mulan* films, the animated (1998) and live-action versions (2020), were chosen to observe the depiction of woman warrior that reflected the negotiation between women's power and patriarchal domination. The results of this study indicated a shift in the way woman warrior was depicted in the two posters representing two different eras. In the earlier film poster, the patriarchal domination was implicitly portrayed through women's efforts to assert power by borrowing and/or adopting masculine identity. In contrast, the portrayal of woman warrior in the latest poster showed that women can still maintain their power by presenting feminine identity. Furthermore, the depiction of the Chinese woman warrior in the two posters could be seen more as voicing Western feminism than promoting feminist values in Chinese culture.

Keyword: Chinese culture, patriarchal domination, western perspective, woman warrior, women's power

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana kekuatan perempuan dan dominasi patriarki terjaln dalam citra prajurit perempuan dalam poster film *Mulan* karya Disney. Untuk mengkaji poster film *Mulan* sebagai sebuah teks, pendekatan *mise-en-scene* dan pementasan dalam teori sinematografi digunakan untuk menganalisis teks visual, sementara teori feminisme kekuasaan Naomi Wolf digunakan untuk menginterpretasikan citra pejuang perempuan Cina. Poster-poster dari dua versi film *Mulan*, yaitu versi animasi (1998) dan live-action (2020), dipilih

untuk melihat penggambaran prajurit perempuan yang merefleksikan negosiasi antara kekuatan perempuan dan dominasi patriarki. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya pergeseran dalam cara penggambaran prajurit perempuan dalam dua poster yang mewakili dua era yang berbeda. Pada poster film sebelumnya, dominasi patriarki digambarkan secara implisit melalui upaya perempuan untuk menegaskan kekuasaan dengan meminjam dan/atau mengadopsi identitas maskulin. Sebaliknya, penggambaran prajurit perempuan dalam poster terbaru menunjukkan bahwa perempuan tetap dapat mempertahankan kekuasaannya dengan menampilkan identitas feminin. Lebih jauh lagi, penggambaran pejuang perempuan Tiongkok dalam kedua poster tersebut dapat dilihat lebih sebagai menyuarakan feminisme Barat daripada mempromosikan nilai-nilai feminis dalam budaya Tiongkok.

Kata kunci: budaya Tionghoa, dominasi patriarki, perspektif barat, pejuang perempuan, kekuatan perempuan

INTRODUCTION

The views of woman warriors are generally split into some controversies and debates regarding the appropriateness of attributing the label of a warrior to women. D'Amico (1996, pp. 379–380) suggests that for some, the existence of woman warriors is considered as a sad idea and against nature. In contrast, some others look at it as an alluring and amazing idea. Anti-feminists who think that gender differences are natural and inherent have criticized the image of women warriors due to its unnatural portrayal, its threat to the existence of the family institution, and the potential damage it may bring to society. Despite having a similar notion regarding gender differences, radical feminists view woman warriors as reflecting the potential power of women; therefore, instead of putting an effort to maintain gender hierarchy, they are determined to reverse or detach themselves from it. Other feminist groups hold a different view that praises the image of woman warriors as evidence of gender equality. However, D'Amico (1996) adds that apart from these two groups there is another feminist group that reminds us of the danger of woman warrior image that is considered promoting more of masculine values rather than attempting to redefine social values and power hierarchy based on gender.

Even though interpretations of woman's warrior image still vary, recently their existence has prevalently increased in popular culture. Strong women who are great in battle have landed leading roles in various movies, including action and superhero movies, and even in princess stories generally filmed by Disney known as Disney princess movies. The strong female figures have gradually competed with male figures who are commonly identified as heroes or warrior icons. Many women believe that watching female characters as heroes and warriors in movies can inspire them to be strong, brave, and self-confident (Pramudita, 2019).

One of the heroic legends of a woman warrior that has been passed down for generations and become a source of inspiration for thousands of years in China is the story of Mulan, which was brought into life as one of the most popular Disney animated movies back in 1998. Through this movie, Disney not only managed to revive Mulan's character but also helped to introduce her heroic story to all corners of the world. The successful version of this musical animation then pushed Disney to reproduce the live-action version of the movie in 2020. The movie once again depicts the figure of a woman fighting against traditional Chinese culture to become a hero for her family and her kingdom and has become one of the movies portraying woman warriors that are considered successful in inspiring women.

However, *Mulan* movies have not always easily gained positive acceptance as critical studies from various perspectives have been conducted especially on the 1998 animated

version. Highlighting hybrid cultural identity as a growing trend along with cultural globalization, Zhao, Ang & Ching (2020) suggest that cultural tension rises as a form of negotiation between Americanization and orientalization as well as between modernity and tradition that allow the transfer of cultural identity in this Disney's movie. Similarly, Yang (2018) states that the Mulan movie, which is different from its original version in Chinese legend, has created a new system of representation that reflects the contrast between modern American and ancient Chinese. Still from a cultural aspect but associated with translation, other studies observe the phenomenon of cultural borrowing in the form of cultural deformation, restoration, and reformulation (Tian & Xiong, 2013) as well as the cross-cultural perspective in the production and reception of the movie (Tang, 2008).

Meanwhile, from a gender perspective, the tough and strong figure of Mulan has been studied with masculinity concept (Sulistia, 2016), as well as critical discourse analysis focusing on the issue of shifting femininity (Biasini, 2018) and resistance against patriarchal ideology (Lailawati et al., 2020). The latter study compares the two versions of Mulan movies that despite featuring Mulan as a tough woman warrior in different lights do not promote women empowerment since in the end both movies still make Mulan resume her role as a child and a bride under patriarchal dominance (Lailawati et al., 2020, p. 75).

Previous studies on Mulan movies show that the movies have gained a lot of attention in the academic sphere. Nonetheless, there has not been much attention dedicated to studying the poster of Mulan as a form of film visualization. According to (2020), used to convey characters' visualization and serve as material promotion, film posters generally reflect the story and characterizations in the movies. Selection of Mulan film posters in two versions, animation (*Mulan*, 1998) dan live-action (*Mulan*, 2020), as the objects of this study is driven by various criticisms against woman's portrayal in the animated movie for not reflecting feminist spirit. Accordingly, a great expectation is placed on the new live-action version of the movie. The 1998 Mulan film poster shows the drawing of animated Mulan riding her horse wrapped with red and black colors as dominant background. Meanwhile, the 2020 Mulan film poster features Mulan as a real woman raising her sword amid a battlefield. Interestingly, the different versions of the posters also reflect different portrayals of women as a warrior.

Concerning film posters, Chen & Gao (2014, p. 346) view a film poster as one of the promotional media designed to create an impression that can captivate the audience of the film. Since film posters can help consumers to recognize newly-released films, Stockmans (2009) perceives that ads in a form of film posters must be effective for at least changing the consumer attitudes towards a movie and making it an interesting choice for their leisure time. Consequently, a poster for film promotion must display an appealing visual combination and furnish with colors and messages aiming to capture the attention and instill meaningful ideas in the memory (Sudjana & Rivai, 1990).

Tziamtzi et al. (2015, p. 295) emphasize the significant role of film posters as they are regarded not merely as a means of promotion but rather as a social product that may carry a certain ideology. Accordingly, a film poster as a text is worth to be studied in-depth to reveal the ideology behind the visualization displayed. In this article, two versions of *Mulan* film posters are studied to reveal the inextricable interrelation between women's power and patriarchal domination underlying the depiction of Mulan as a Chinese woman warrior.

To do so, it is worth remembering that the portrayal of woman warriors projects an understanding of women's ability to explore their potentials and appreciate their values without necessarily discussing the oppression against them. On women and war, D'Amico (1996) addresses the question of gender constructed in war as a male domain and a masculine attempt to ascribe women as victims, spectators, or mere booty. Accordingly, women need to regain their erased identities, legitimize their ability to speak up, and claim their "story of war" and

"genuine sound". Similarly, Lohyn (1994) states that it is time for women to change direction and promote their strength, and not just simply talk about oppression or equality.

A preliminary observation on *Mulan* film posters indicates different portrayals of *Mulan* in both posters. *Mulan* is shown as a woman who disguised herself as a man in the 1998 poster version, while the 2020 poster version captures her as a woman in midst of the battlefield, in other words, a male domain. Hence, the different ways of presenting the image of *Mulan* as a woman warrior within the symbols of both masculine and feminine power in both posters are best analyzed with Naomi Wolf's *Power Feminism* (1994). Wolf is one of the feminists who criticize second-wave feminism that puts more emphasis on the vulnerability of women due to patriarchal oppression and hegemony. Instead, Wolf endorses the concept of postmodern women featuring the struggle of women with their own strength without necessarily relying on their feminine vulnerability. For Wolf, women are equal to men in their ability to express their opinions, determine their own lives, and convey the truth about their experiences. Furthermore, all of these can be achieved without having to hate men. Thus, by applying this concept, *Mulan* film posters are analyzed to reveal the image of *Mulan* as a Chinese woman warrior.

As *Mulan* is derived from the legend of China but narrated by Disney which represents the West, this research is also going to examine the perspective of the West, especially in looking at the figure of female fighters reflected in the second version of the *Mulan* movie poster in 1998 and 2020. Yang (2018, p. 45) explained that the *Mulan* legend had undergone a cultural filtering process when the story was brought from China to America. Various variations of *Mulan*'s story, including the Disney version, made her develop into a new representation system. Variations code of culture in the story of *Mulan*, according to Yang (2018), is not entirely related to the differences in culture between China and the West, but more emphasized the difference between ethics pre-Modern (Chinese ancient) and modern (Western modern). The analysis of the perspective of the West against the image of Chinese women fighters in both *Mulan* movie posters is expected to reveal the perspective of gender from the feminist *standpoint*. With such, the results of the study are expected to increase awareness of movie connoisseurs about the aesthetics of the poster that may have a lot of values and ideology, and in this case, is feminism.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is using the data from the two posters of *Mulan* movie versions in 1998 and 2020. The 1998 version was taken from the original poster which is accessible from the home page *Original Film Art*, while the 2020 version was taken from the original poster on the web page *Art of the Movies*. The method used in the collection of data in this research is a study of literature.

The data collected were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively based on the theory of cinema focused on *mise-en-scene* and *staging*. The theory is used to examine the visualization of the posters, from the action, reaction, and character scene through some aspects such as camera setup, costumes, lighting, framing, and others. *Mise-en-scene* which means "put into the scene" is used in films to signify the control of the director on what appears in the frame of the film (Bordwell, Thompson, & Smith, 2017, case . 113). Meanwhile, *staging* refers to the process of selecting, designing, adjusting, or modifying scenes in the film (Katz, 2004).

To explore more the power of women in the image of women fighters in the poster, the theory of Naomi Wolf's *power feminism* is used. Power feminism is a positive form of feminism thought that begins from the assumption that women have a huge strength and

women can use their power to affect change in the community system. Through this concept, Wolf emphasizes that women share more in their happiness and female strengths than share their vulnerabilities and sufferings as women.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Representation of Women Fighters in Mulan Movie Poster

The representation of female fighters becomes a dominant thing to talk about in the case of Mulan movie poster as there is a negotiation between masculinity and femininity in the visualization of Mulan's figure. Mulan poster as a reflection of the story and characterizations in the film when viewed from the perspective of *mise-en-scene* and staging arrangements shows how the identity of Chinese women is displayed. The representations in the animated version of the Mulan film poster (1998) and the live-action version (2020) will be presented in the following description.

Patriarchal Domination in the 1998 Mulan Movie Poster

From the aspect of the setting, the animated version of Mulan poster which was released in 1998 (Picture 1) shows the background of empty space with shades of red, that in Chinese cultural conventions is a symbol of luck and happiness, also symbolizes joy and success, which in the end brings good fortune (Ulya, 2013). Another color that appears on this poster is black. Shao (2011) explains that black symbolizes majesty, equality, justice, and sincerity. Red and black are two of the five main colors in Chinese history because they are believed to imply honor and adherence to tradition (chinafetching.com). The mixing of red and black colors as the most dominant background in this poster emphasizes the figure of Mulan who symbolizes greatness, equality, and justice which at the same time brings happiness and luck. From a feminist perspective, this setting then becomes a representation of Mulan's life as a woman who has to fight for equality. She is a lucky woman because she can take the opportunity to be

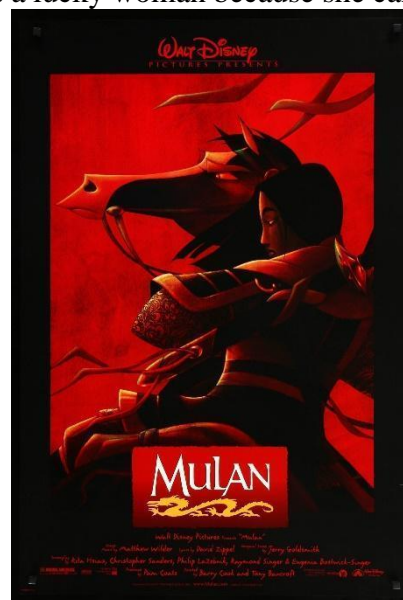


Figure 1. Poster of the Animated Version of Mulan Movie (1998)

equal to men by entering into a battlefield that is identical to masculinity. Even on the battlefield, she was always lucky enough to win the battle. However, ironically for a woman warrior, she gets this luck because she hides her feminine identity behind masculine symbols.

In this animated version, Mulan is physically shown with flowing hair, riding a horse with a sharp expression filled with anger. From the point of view of staging, it can be highlighted that the photographer controls the point of view by manipulating narrative logic through camera angles or placing the subject of the image in a frame (Bordwell et al., 2017, p. 188). Mulan's eye contact is very sharp, staring at the events that are happening in front of her eyes. In addition, the action movements on the stage of this poster show the position of a woman which scenes the actions and reactions that follow the conventions of male masculinity.

Mulan also does not appear with the usual makeup of a woman. She is shown with a fierce, masculine face without using makeup that shows femininity. This kind of arrangement shows femininity that seems repressed. The use of symbols and expressions of masculinity implies that Mulan cannot show her identity as a woman and hides behind symbols of masculinity to do things that are considered only accessible to men, namely the battlefield. Long hair flowing down to be the only feminine remaining symbol that emblazoned on the poster. Her face is not visible, hidden among the dominance of other masculinity symbols. This confirms the subordinate position of women in a patriarchal culture.

The masculine action shown is supported by the wardrobe or costume worn. In this poster, Mulan is shown wearing male armor, and in staging, she looks fierce by controlling her horse. The full armor that protects Mulan's entire body also illustrates that she has trapped herself in the shadow of a symbol of masculinity. Even though her loose hair implies femininity, the presence of a battle armor that symbolizes masculinity makes Mulan more dominant to be represented as a masculine character.

The dominance of patriarchy in this poster is also further confirmed through the properties displayed. The property that stands out in this poster is the warhorse. In terms of staging, in this poster, the horse appears more dominant with a larger portion of the image than Mulan, who incidentally is the main character in the film. Mulan is positioned on the right embracing and holding the reins of the horse. In Chinese culture, the horse is a representation of masculinity as it symbolizes the power of men (Yang), and even at first, the horse was considered stronger than the dragon (Cunha, t.thn.). Therefore, the dominant portion of horses in this poster indicates that patriarchal power is still more dominant than the existence of women even though the woman is a warrior who is shown in control.

Another aspect of *mise-en-scene* and staging that is also important to reveal the image of female warriors in this poster is the camera setup and lighting. From a camera perspective, this poster uses the eye-level camera position or parallel to the audience's eyes so that the character of Mulan is positioned parallel to the audience, both male and female, who are looking at this poster. This can be interpreted that Mulan can be an equal reflection or reflection for both men and women. This poster is also framed with a medium-long shot type that shows the subject's knees to the top of the head clearly. This type of shooting is usually used to show a clear form of the main character's motion in the picture.

Meanwhile, in terms of lighting, Mulan is highlighted with low-key light which usually evokes feelings that are closely associated with mystery, intimacy, and sometimes even fatalism (Alegria, 2018). Therefore, subjects shot with this kind of lighting are seen as the focus of the image against a dark background, which gives a dramatic effect. This is also seen in the poster for the Mulan movie (1998) which seems to give a dramatic impression on Mulan's figure as a woman warrior. However, this low-intensity lighting also disguises her female identity, thereby implying the nuances of mystery surrounding Mulan's identity. From the camera and lighting perspective, it can be seen that the framing of Mulan in this poster seeks to construct Mulan as a Chinese woman who is different from other traditional Chinese women because she is 'capable of being equal', superior, tough, and masculine like a warrior.

This visual analysis of the animated version poster (1998) shows that although Mulan can achieve gender equality with men, she is still in the shadow of the domination of patriarchal symbols. The concept of women who are in the shadow of this kind of patriarchal power is a concept criticized by Naomi Wolf (1994) which is termed 'victim feminism.' Wolf criticizes the way women struggle to achieve gender equality by relying on compassion for their oppression in patriarchal power. In such feminist thinking, as a result, women cannot emerge their own identity without being overshadowed by patriarchal domination.

In this 1998 poster, Mulan is visualized as a 'victim' because she struggles against patriarchal oppression but is clad in symbols of masculinity. This does not show that even women can struggle and contribute to their own identity. She sacrifices her identity as a woman to show that she is capable of being equal or even more than men. The figure who appears as a fighter in this poster is Mulan who takes on the identity of a male figure and ignores his true identity as a female. In other words, women can be equal if they adopt masculinity in their identity.

The Power of Women in the 2020 Mulan Movie Poster

In the live-action remake version of Mulan released in 2020 (Picture 2), Mulan is depicted in the middle of a battlefield with a backdrop of white snow mountain collapses that narratively drowns the entire enemy army (Roran/male). The white color itself in Chinese culture is a symbol of death, bad luck, failure, and stupidity (Shao, 2011). Furthermore, the white color which is identical to the white tiger, the figure of the guardian of the sky in Chinese mythology, is also considered a representation of autumn, war, and death (chinafetching.com). Thus, the dominance of the white background in this poster articulates the existence of Mulan amid the dominant discourse of ignorance, bad luck, and/or death collapse. From the point of view of feminism, this aspect of setting and action can be interpreted that Mulan with her identity as a woman becomes a hero for the collapse of bad luck or even the collapse of the masculine power symbol or patriarchal domination.

Viewed from the staging aspect, Mulan's action is shown to be bolder and looks dominant as a woman compared to the previous poster. This aspect emphasizes how Mulan is



Figure 2. The 2nd Poster Image of the Live-Action Version of Mulan Movie (2020)

shown as an independent individual who dares to present a feminine identity as a woman, even though at the same time she is in a masculine arena (battlefield) and is able to do things that are associated with masculinity, such as fighting in a war arena. As seen in Figure 2, Mulan is shown holding her sword up, free to act and ready for battle. She seems to make a sword move like a knight. Mulan is also positioned much more central and dominant than the previous poster which gives her a smaller portion than her horse. Mulan is placed in the center as the focus of the image and choreographically dominant with a very masculine stance. The eye contact is also displayed very sharply, staring at the situation and conditions of the war that is happening in front of her. The position of the action moves on the stage of this poster also features Mulan who acts and reacts as the male convention.

Physically, Mulan is depicted with flowing hair (as in the previous poster) and wearing natural makeup that accentuates her feminine face. This aspect shows Mulan in her true identity, different from the previous poster, which still disguises her identity as a woman. To become a formidable fighter, Mulan no longer needs to borrow a masculine male identity. Women also have power so that they no longer need to pretend to be men to show their power. This is in line with the feminist thought of power from Wolf (1994) which considers women to have the same position as men because both are equally important and have the same power or power.

Furthermore, from the wardrobe or costume side, Mulan is shown to be more realistic with white interiors that stick out between the red domination of the robes that Mulan wears on the outside. Unlike the animated version of the poster, in this latest film poster, Mulan is not shown wearing a battle suit that completely covers her body. She only left a little armor at the waist. The red color on her robes symbolizes luck that seems to always be on her side, so that in any condition and no matter how difficult it is, Mulan is able to avoid death. So the meaning of death (white) is only worn as an undergarment that only looks a little under the red robe she is wearing. This indicates that the 'unlucky' is covered by the dominance of Mulan's luck as a female warrior in a war dominated by patriarchal rulers, namely men.

In the previous version of the poster, a horse becomes the main property and is used as a symbol of masculinity, meanwhile in this Mulan poster (2020) the symbol of masculinity still appears but through the war property in the form of a sword held by Mulan. In general, the sword is always seen as a symbol of masculinity. In Chinese culture, the sword is the physical embodiment of a chivalry figure, which means pride, freedom, justice, and strength. A knight defends justice with the sword, and through the sword, the knight can remove any obstacles on the path to the new world (Lu, 2018). In this poster, the sword that Mulan uses is the *Jian* sword, which is a sharp double-edged sword commonly used in Chinese martial arts. This sword is not only a weapon but also an important symbol in Chinese culture as it contains the spirit of Chinese people and their moral values (Zhang, 1998, p. 15). In history, there was even a woman named Yue Nü who was also a *Jian* swordswoman at the time of Emperor Yue whose teachings were highly respected and appreciated, even by the Emperor (p. 17). Yue Nü, if examined closely, is similar to the character Mulan in the film who also received respect and appreciation from the Emperor for her abilities even though she was a woman, and both Yue Nü and Mulan were able to show the power of women amid patriarchal domination.

In addition, in Chinese folklore, the *Jian* sword is also known as 'the gentleman of weapons' (Rodell, 2003), which has a very masculine connotation. Thus, the placement of *Jian*'s sword in Mulan's grip can be interpreted as a symbol of masculinity that can be controlled by female power. The feminine Mulan can have power over masculinity which has been identified with men. Meanwhile, the other properties such as stone fragments and broken arrows that are

also seen in the vicinity further emphasize the destruction of the patriarchal domination, which is also reinforced by the background of the collapse of the snowy mountains.

The meaning of women's power in this poster can also be seen from the *mise-en-scene* aspect which includes camera setup, lighting, and framing. In terms of camera layout, it is not different from the previous poster. The poster of the 2020 version also uses an eye-level camera position or is in line with the eyes of the audience who sees it. This can be interpreted as an alignment of Mulan's character who is positioned on an equal footing with all the men and women who see her in the poster. However, unlike the animated poster version (1998), the live-action version (2020) is displayed with high-key lighting or bright and clear. This concept is also strengthened in terms of framing. As in the previous version, this poster also features the character of Mulan with a medium-long shot type, which shows the border from the knee to the top of the subject's head clearly to show a clear form of movement of the character. This confirms Mulan's identity as a woman which is increasingly being clarified (not dark, vague, and hidden as in the previous version) and can also be interpreted as a female character who provides enlightenment.

Based on the *mise-en-scene* and staging aspects, Mulan in the live-action film poster (2020) is clearly shown as the main and dominant focus with her own identity and her femininity. This shows that as a fighter woman, Mulan can be masculine without having to abandon her true identity as a woman (which is feminine). The androgynous image displayed is interpreted not only because Mulan disguises herself as a man, but rather a harmony between male and female characters (masculine and feminine) in one body. This is similar to the nature of yin and yang in traditional Chinese philosophy which describes the balance of two opposites (Yang, 2018, pp. 51–52).

This harmony again hints at the existence of equality between women and men because women also have respect and dignity like men (Wolf, 1994) so that women no longer need to sacrifice their femininity to get equality. In this version, Mulan is even shown with the absence of the male face she previously played. She releases herself from the shadow of masculinity symbols such as armor, and it asserts that her femininity has the power to overpower the symbols of masculinity. She can even make her best contribution by saving her country, which is symbolized by the avalanche of snowy mountains, which is burying enemy troops, that is used as the background of this poster.

The representation of women fighters in this poster shows that women can have power over themselves and become independent without having to exploit their vulnerabilities and weaknesses as women. This is in line with the concept of power feminism, which calls for women to use their power and exert influence that can move changes in the world's perception of women. With their power, women are expected to be able to contribute by giving back to others (Wolf, 1994). Mulan uses her superiority and strength to give her country value, honor, struggle, and victory. This is nothing but the essence of women's struggle in the view of power feminism.

The interesting thing regarding this finding is the difference in the readings of the two versions of the poster when compared to the results of the study by Lailawati, Islami & Nursafira (2020) on the two versions of the Mulan film, which do not see the depiction of tough women in the film as a form of women's empowerment. As previously stated, the animated version of the poster still shows the dominance of patriarchy so that the strong woman figure in the poster cannot be said to portray women's empowerment. However, unlike the film, the poster of live-action version which displays women's power has shown a shift in viewing women warriors who are more empowering.

Chinese Women Warriors from a Western Perspective

The animated version of Mulan (1998) and the live-action version (2020) produced by Disney were both directed and worked on by a crew who were all Western (Americans). The screenplay of the live-action film version was also worked on by four Western writers. Only the actors in this film are from China. That is, the point of view and ideology of the West (Disney) is very thick in this film. Players can only obey the director's power and submit to the scenario that has been made. Thus, although this film tells the story of Chinese female warriors and has a Chinese cultural background, this film is presented from a Western perspective.

Hua Mulan is a female warrior character who has been told from generation to generation in Chinese society and has been written in various types of Chinese literature. Various forms of stories about Mulan have the same story, namely about a woman who disguises herself as a man to replace her father in the task of defending the country on the battlefield. In various legends written in Chinese literature, Hua Mulan is shown as a traditional Chinese woman who has the value of *Xiao* which means 'good and filial', and *Zhong* which refers to 'loyalty to ancestors' (Yang, 2018, p. 46). In these stories, no one puts forward the discourse that Mulan is a person who wants to break the patriarchal domination. He just wanted to replace his father and protect his family.

In the Disney version, the character of Hua Mulan is shown in different shades. In the 1998 animated version, Mulan is shown as a girl who begins to question her femininity by doubting whether she can be the bride her family wants and at the same time be a good daughter according to her parents' wishes. She answered that question by becoming the pride of the Chinese nation through his very masculine heroic actions on the battlefield. The poster for the film Mulan (1998) as a reflection of the content of the story and the characterizations in the film represents this. Meanwhile, in the 2020 live-action film version, Mulan is depicted as a woman who does not want to be shackled in symbols of masculinity. Through the analysis of his poster above, it can be seen that she appears with her own identity and shows that she is also capable of doing things that are usually identical to men, namely fighting.

Feminist ideology is quite clearly shown in the 1998 Mulan poster but is even stronger in the 2020 Mulan poster. This is not surprising considering that several Disney Princess films released since the 2000s began to feature female main characters who were independent and wanted to break free from the shackles of gender stereotypes and patriarchal domination. Some of the Disney princess characters include Elsa (*Frozen*), Moana (*Moana*), Merida (*Brave*), and Jasmine (*Aladdin*, live-action version). These characters are contrasting versions of the early Disney Princess characters such as Snow White, Cinderella, Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*), Aurora (*Sleeping Beauty*), and Ariel (*The Little Mermaid*), which fit the damsel in distress stereotype, namely women who have no power over themselves and are very dependent on patriarchal domination as they are always depicted waiting for the prince to come to their rescue (Daalmans & van Kessel, 2014; Maity, 2014).

This feminist ideology was also raised in the film Mulan, which featured her as a woman who was able to carry out a masculine role. This is contrasted with the traditional Chinese women who are depicted in the film as well as women whose honor is to marry so that the practice of matchmaking became common among adult Chinese women at that time. In both the animated and realist versions of the film, the emphasis on 'place' or 'role' in the context of gender is also evident, that fighting is the domain of men, while women are in the domestic sphere. This concept is then contrasted through Mulan's struggles on the battlefield and represented in posters featuring masculine (Mulan, 1998) and feminine-masculine (Mulan, 2020) figures.

Yang (2018) states that when the Mulan myth rooted in Chinese culture is included in Western culture, she turns into a feminist who seeks to break down patriarchal oppression compared to women who are loyal to *Xiao* and *Zhong*'s attitudes. In other words, there are

different motives for the actions performed by the figure of Mulan in the Chinese legend with the Western-style Mulan. In the end, ideology as a representation system will always be embedded in the text that represents Mulan as a feminist (Yang, 2018). In this case, the text of the Mulan poster representing the film becomes Disney's feminist ideology manifesto. In the 1998 poster, Mulan is a representation of the second wave of feminist figures who call for gender equality, while in the 2020 poster, Mulan is a postmodern feminist figure who is no longer awkward with her female identity. By showing her identity as a woman, she is able to prove herself as a strong, independent person, and can even show her power in the arena of masculinity.

The penetration of Disney's ideology in the legend of Hua Mulan in this case can be understood as a commercial necessity to be able to adapt to the tastes of a global audience. According to Zhao, Ang & Ching (2020, p. 36), by reframing Mulan's identity in the context of contemporary American culture, Disney seeks to strengthen Western culture and values to meet the expectations of global audiences that have hitherto been satisfied by glamorous Hollywood festivities. What's more, the global trend towards feminism makes Disney not want to waste a moment to install public awareness about the role of women in the modern era. The figure of Mulan then becomes a reflection for modern women to ask about their positioning amid traditional understandings of women and women's modernity promoted by the ideology of feminism (Yang, 2018). Disney created this reflection while hoping to make the most of the Mulan film production, regardless of whether the Chinese symbols they display represent the real Chinese culture or are just a camouflage for ideological and profit interests.

CONCLUSION

A reading of the Mulan film posters visual text both animated version (1998) and the live-action (2020) one shows a shift in the depiction of the female warrior figure representing different eras. The visualization of Mulan's character in the poster of 1998 version shows Mulan as a 'victim' who struggles against patriarchal oppression. Mulan's figure as a woman warrior is dominated by symbols of masculinity. This means that she must sacrifice her identity as a woman who is to reach equality with men.

Meanwhile, in the film poster of the 2020 version, Mulan becomes the central and dominant figure with a feminine identity. In other words, Mulan can be shown as a feminine and masculine figure as a reflection of the harmony between male and female characters in one body. This is in line with the concept of power feminism, which calls for women to use their power and influence to drive change. The visualization of women warriors in the new version of the Mulan poster shows that women can be shown to have power over themselves freely without being constrained by patriarchal values.

Regarding the Western (Disney's) perspective on the image of Chinese women warriors, the analysis of the text of the Mulan poster shows the penetration of feminism ideology. The Chinese women warriors in the two posters are more represented as figures who want to break the domination of Western-style patriarchy than women who hold traditional Chinese values tightly. This further confirms that apart from being a promotional medium, film posters cannot be separated from their role as carriers of ideology. This study of Mulan's poster at least shows that both of them are not free from the influence of ideological messages that are played from behind the production screen.

REFERENCES

- Alegria, F. (2018). *How To Get Low-Key Lighting And Exposure Right Every Time*. Light Stalking. <https://www.lightstalking.com/low-key-lighting/>
- Biasini, N. (2018). Pergeseran Representasi Feminitas dalam Film Animasi Disney Princess. *Widyakala Journal*, 5(2), 111. <https://doi.org/10.36262/widyakala.v5i2.113>
- Bordwell, D., Thompson, K., & Smith, J. (2017). *Film Art: An Introduction*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Chen, Y., & Gao, X. (2014). Interpretation of Movie Posters from the Perspective of Multimodal Discourse Analysis. *GSTF International Journal on Education, Volume 1 Number 1, 1(1)*, 346–350. https://doi.org/10.5176/2345-7163_1.1.11
- Color Symbolism in Chinese Culture*. (n.d.). China Fetching. Retrieved December 31, 2020, from <https://www.chinafetching.com/chinese-color>
- Cunha, L. S. (n.d.). *The Horse in Ancient Chinese History, Symbolism and Myth*. Retrieved December 31, 2020, from <http://www.icm.gov.mo/rc/viewer/20009/883>
- D’Amico, F. (1996). Feminist perspectives on women warriors. *Peace Review*, 8(3), 379–384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659608425983>
- Daalmans, S., & van Kessel, L. (2014). The Everlasting Damsel in Distress ? Analyzing the evolution of the female Disney character over time The Everlasting Damsel in Distress ?: Analyzing the evolution of the female Disney character over time Department of Arts , Radboud University Nijmegen . 2014 AEJMC CONFERENCE, Agustus. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282333975%0AThe>
- Katz, S. D. (2004). *Film Directing, Cinematic Motion*. Michael Wiese.
- Lailawati, R., Islami, Q., & Nursafira, M. S. (2020). The Camouflage of “Tough Woman”: The Resistance of Female Character Against Patriarchal Ideology in Mulan. *Elsya : Journal of English Language Studies*, 2(3), 35–39. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v2i3.4926>
- Lohyn, M. (1994). Naomi Wolf and the New Feminism: Women’s Power Revisited. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 15(3), 143–149.
- Lu, Z. (2018). *Longquan Swords*. China Today. http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/english/culture/2018-01/08/content_752029.htm
- Maity, N. (2014). Damsels in Distress: A Textual Analysis of Gender roles in Disney Princess Films. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(10), 28–31. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-191032831>
- Mulan*. (1998). <https://www.originalfilmart.com/products/mulan>
- Mulan*. (2020). <https://artofthemovies.co.uk/products/mulan-2020>
- Pramudita, B. A. (2019). *Meningkatnya Perempuan dalam Peran Superhero*. Warta Ekonomi Online. <https://www.wartaekonomi.co.id/read251262/meningkatnya-perempuan-dalam-peran-superhero>
- Rodell, S. M. (2003). *Chinese Swordsmanship: The Yang Family Taiji Jian Tradition* (S. S. B. and Video (Ed.)).
- Shao, L. (2011). *Color Me Confused: Colors and Meaning in Chinese Culture | The World of Chinese*. The World of Chinese. <https://www.theworldofchinese.com/2011/12/color-me-confused-colors-and-their-meaning-in-chinese-culture/>
- Stokmans, M. (2009). Effectiveness of promotional film posters. *10th International Conference on Arts and Cultural Management, December*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254833602>
- Sudjana, N., & Rivai, A. (1990). *Media Pengajaran*. CV Sinar Baru.
- Sulistia, R. (2016). Female Masculinity of Fa Mulan and Its Impact Towards Her Relationship With Male Characters in Disney Movie Mulan. *Litera~Kultura*, 4(3), 12–19.

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/230653305.pdf>

- Sutanto, S. M. (2020). Dekonstruksi Representasi Perempuan pada Poster Film Pahlawan Super Produksi Hollywood. *ANDHARUPA: Jurnal Desain Komunikasi Visual & Multimedia*, 6(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.33633/andharupa.v6i1.3234>
- Tang, J. (2008). A cross-cultural perspective on production and reception of Disney's Mulan through its Chinese subtitles. *European Journal of English Studies*, 12(2), 149–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13825570802151413>
- Tian, C., & Xiong, C. (2013). A cultural analysis of Disney's Mulan with respect to translation. In *Continuum* (Vol. 27, Issue 6, pp. 862–874). Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2013.843636>
- Tziamtzi, C., Kyridis, A., Vamvakidou, I., Christodoulou, A., & Zagkos, C. (2015). Social Signified in the Movie Posters of Hollywood Movies Made for Children. *Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(5), 295–310.
- Ulya, Y. A. (2013). *Makna Lampion Merah dalam Kebudayaan Cina di Jakarta*.
- Wolf, N. (1994). *Fire with fire: the new female power and how it will change the 21st century*. Vintage.
- Yang, Q. (2018). Mulan in China and America: From Premodern to Modern. *Comparative Literature: East & West*, 2(1), 45–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25723618.2018.1482681>
- Zhang, Y. (1998). *The Art of Chinese Swordsmanship: A Manual of Taiji Jian*. Weatherhill.
- Zhao, M., Ang, L. H., & Ching, F. T. H. (2020). Hybridization of the Cultural Identity in Disney's Mulan. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 9(5), 27–37. <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2020-0083>