

**Will the Relationship Survive?:
Asian Cinematic Humanism and the Aesthetics of Interdependence
in Contemporary Asian Cinema**

Thanayod Lopattananont, Ph.D.

Mekong Studies Center, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Email: thanayod.lo@chula.ac.th

Saksit Thaweekul

Lecturer, Faculty of Communication Arts, Dhurakij Pundit University, Thailand

Email: saksit.tha@dpu.ac.th

Khomson Suebsaeng*

Lecturer, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, St Teresa International University, Thailand

Email: khomson.s@trsu.ac.th

*Corresponding Author

Received: 22/05/2026

Revised: 27/05/2026

Accepted: 29/05/2026

Abstract

This article proposes Asian Cinematic Humanism as a framework for analyzing how recent Asian films generate cross-cultural resonance through relational ethics and emotional interdependence. Using a qualitative interpretive approach combining comparative film analysis and audience discourse analysis, the study examines *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies*, *Nezha 2*, *Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle*, and *Blood Brothers*. The findings suggest that these films foreground relational fidelity, vulnerability, and emotional endurance, thereby recalibrating the meaning of heroism from individual conquest toward the preservation of fragile human bonds. Audience discourse further indicates that viewers frequently prioritize the survival of relationships over spectacle or narrative victory, reflecting a broader desire for connection amidst contemporary social fragmentation. Unlike state-driven soft power centered primarily on national branding, these films appear to operate through everyday humanism, particularly care, reciprocity, and relational responsibility. Here, the term “Asian” refers not to a fixed cultural essence, but to a contingent narrative tendency observable within selected contemporary Asian films. The study therefore suggests that the transnational resonance of these films derives not only from spectacle, but also from their emphasis on emotional interdependence and relational endurance.

Keywords: Asian Cinema, Relational Ethics, Affect, Humanism, Transnational Reception, Soft Power

1. Introduction

In an era increasingly shaped by geopolitical competition, economic uncertainty, and social fragmentation, soft power and cultural diplomacy have gained renewed importance as mechanisms for cultivating long-term international connection (Anziutti, 2023; Mbira, 2024). Yet cultural attraction does not emerge solely from national branding, economic promotion, or aesthetic novelty. The enduring appeal of cultural works also lies in their ability to communicate emotional and moral meanings that resonate across societies (Ham, 2005).

Successful cultural influence, hence, depends on the capacity to create shared human experience.

Scholars such as Joseph Nye (1990; 2004) have emphasized the role of culture in shaping people-to-people relations. Various Asian cultural trajectories, for example Japanese aesthetic sensibilities, Chinese philosophical traditions, and Indian spiritual-humanistic thought, however, demonstrate that cultural resonance often arises from deeper relational and ethical orientations rather than spectacle alone (Liu, 2004; Ishiguro et al., 2024; Mandavilli, 2024). Such resonance frequently emerges through themes of compassion, reciprocity, endurance, and coexistence.

In recent years, several Asian films have achieved substantial transnational resonance because they foreground relational ethics and emotional interdependence. The Thai film *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies* (Boonnitipat, 2024), the Chinese animated feature *Nezha 2* (Jiaozi, 2025), the Japanese anime *Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle* (Sotozaki, 2025), and the Malaysian film *Blood Brothers* (Syafiq Yusof & Chandra, 2025) each depict flawed characters struggling to preserve relationships under conditions of suffering, conflict, or structural pressure. Audience responses across multiple cultural contexts indicate that viewers are drawn to the fragility and endurance of human bonds as to narrative resolution or spectacle.

Given these emerging relational tendencies in contemporary Asian cinema, this study conceptualizes ‘Asian Cinematic Humanism’ as a recurring affective and ethical pattern observable within selected popular Asian films. Combining qualitative film interpretation with transnational audience discourse analysis, the article argues that contemporary cinematic resonance may increasingly emerge through frameworks of care, reciprocity, vulnerability, and emotional interdependence. In doing so, the study explores the broader implications of relational ethics for contemporary soft power, cultural diplomacy, and people-to-people connection within an increasingly fragmented global condition.

2. Objectives

2.1 To examine how recent Asian films construct relational ethics and interdependence as central narrative values.

2.2 To analyze why these relational narratives generate strong cross-cultural audience resonance in the contemporary global context.

2.3 To discuss the implications of Asian Cinematic Humanism for cultural diplomacy, soft power, and people-to-people engagement.

3. Concepts and Theories

To clarify the theoretical foundation of this study, three interrelated concepts are explored: cinematic affect, soft power, and Asian humanism. Together, these concepts explain how contemporary cinema functions not merely as cultural representation or entertainment, but as a form of affective mediation capable of shaping emotional perception, relational imagination, and people-to-people connection across cultural boundaries. Rather than approaching film solely as an instrument of national branding, this section emphasizes the capacity of cinematic narratives to organize emotional experience and construct shared understandings of humanity under conditions of contemporary social fragmentation.

3.1 Cinematic Affect and Relational Imagination

Cinema has long been recognized as a significant force within cultural and geopolitical relations because of its ability to shape emotional identification and collective imagination (Löfflmann, 2013; O'Meara et al., 2016). Unlike informational media that primarily transmit knowledge, film operates affectively by enabling audiences to feel, inhabit, and emotionally participate in alternate worlds. Through narrative immersion, audiovisual atmosphere, and

character identification, cinema constructs emotional experiences that may influence how audiences perceive morality, vulnerability, belonging, and interpersonal connection.

From this perspective, the influence of film extends beyond persuasion in the conventional communicative sense. Cinema functions as a form of affective mediation that organizes emotional attention and relational perception (Zumalde-Arregi, 2011). Viewers do not simply consume narratives cognitively; they emotionally rehearse forms of attachment, empathy, grief, loyalty, and coexistence through cinematic experience itself. The global circulation of Korean and Chinese cinema, for instance, demonstrates how film can reshape emotional familiarity with distant societies by generating affective proximity rather than merely transmitting cultural information (Juknevičiūtė, 2011; Gong, 2025).

Importantly, films do not merely reflect existing social values. They actively construct frameworks through which audiences imagine what kinds of relationships, moral responsibilities, and emotional behaviors are meaningful. Cinema therefore contributes to the formation of what may be termed relational imagination: the affective capacity to perceive human life as fundamentally interconnected rather than radically individualistic.

Within this framework, the significance of film lies not only in its capacity to entertain, but in its ability to communicate emotionally recognizable forms of humanity across cultural boundaries. This affective dimension ultimately connects cinema to broader discussions of soft power, cultural diplomacy, and people-to-people relations.

3.2 Soft Power and Affective Connection

The affective capacity of cinema is closely connected to the concept of soft power, particularly its emphasis on attraction rather than coercion in shaping international relations. Originally developed by Joseph Nye in the late twentieth century, soft power refers to the ability to influence others through cultural appeal, values, and emotional legitimacy rather than through military force or economic compulsion (Mirrlees, 2006; Nye, 2017). Unlike hard power, which operates through pressure and strategic enforcement, soft power functions by generating voluntary forms of identification, admiration, and emotional affinity.

Within this framework, cultural products become significant not simply because they circulate nationally branded images, but because they construct emotionally meaningful experiences capable of crossing social and political boundaries. Nye's observations regarding the global appeal of American popular culture in the late twentieth century demonstrated how entertainment media could cultivate emotional familiarity and symbolic attraction beyond formal diplomatic structures (Kaewanant & Sirisunhirun, 2024). Importantly, the effectiveness of such attraction lies not merely in visibility or commercial success, but in the ability of cultural narratives to resonate with deeply felt human desires, anxieties, and aspirations.

This perspective suggests that soft power should not be reduced solely to economic promotion or cultural marketing. While states frequently instrumentalize culture for branding purposes, affective influence operates at a deeper relational level through emotional recognition and shared human experience. Soft power therefore becomes sustainable when audiences perceive cultural narratives not as external propaganda, but as emotionally authentic articulations of humanity itself.

Film occupies a particularly significant position within this process because cinematic narratives enable audiences to emotionally inhabit the experiences of others across cultural, linguistic, and geographical distance (Keune & Frants, 2017; Kemachadakorn & Pintong, 2024). Through empathy, vulnerability, grief, sacrifice, and relational attachment, cinema can generate forms of affective proximity that reshape how audiences perceive unfamiliar societies and people.

Within the context of this study, soft power is therefore approached not primarily as a competition for geopolitical influence, but as a process of affective connection grounded in

relational ethics and emotional resonance. This perspective allows the concept of soft power to intersect with the framework of Asian Cinematic Humanism, where attraction emerges less through spectacle or ideological persuasion than through the communication of care, reciprocity, coexistence, and human interdependence.

3.3 Asian Humanism and Relational Ethics

Building upon the preceding discussion, the question of humanism becomes central to understanding how cinematic narratives generate emotional and cultural resonance across societies. Different cultural traditions have historically articulated distinct conceptions of what constitutes meaningful human existence. In many Western humanistic traditions, particularly those emerging after the Enlightenment, emphasis has often been placed upon individual autonomy, self-determination, and the realization of personal potential (Gregg, 2022; Ambrogio, 2023). Such orientations have significantly shaped the global appeal of modern Western cultural narratives centered on freedom, self-discovery, and individual agency.

Within many Asian philosophical and cultural traditions, however, human existence has frequently been understood through relational and ethical interconnectedness rather than radical individuality alone (Gier, 2002). Importantly, this study does not treat such tendencies as fixed civilizational traits shared uniformly across Asia. Rather, Asian humanism is approached here as a contingent analytical framework emerging from recurring relational and affective orientations observable within selected contemporary cinematic narratives.

From this perspective, humanity is often articulated through responsibility toward others, emotional reciprocity, coexistence, and the maintenance of social and moral relationships. Human worth emerges not solely through self-assertion, but through one's ability to sustain relational harmony amidst suffering, vulnerability, and interdependence. Such orientations can be observed across diverse philosophical and cultural contexts, including Confucian ethical responsibility, Buddhist compassion and non-self, as well as communal traditions emphasizing coexistence and mutual care within many Asian societies (So, 2017; Supjalern & Putthasem, 2022; Apendi et al., 2025).

Importantly, the framework proposed here does not suggest that relational ethics are exclusive to Asia, nor that all Asian cultural productions share identical values. Rather, the significance of Asian Cinematic Humanism lies in the particular narrative centrality granted to emotional obligation, relational endurance, gratitude, sacrifice, and coexistence within the films examined in this study.

Within contemporary cinema, these relational orientations become especially visible through narratives that foreground emotional repair, loyalty, interdependence, and the preservation of fragile human bonds under conditions of conflict and fragmentation. The Thai film *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies*, for instance, resonated strongly across ASEAN audiences not merely because of cultural familiarity, but because it communicated emotionally recognizable experiences of care, loneliness, sacrifice, and relational reconciliation.

In this sense, Asian humanism functions less as a civilizational identity than as a relational mode of cinematic meaning-making. The framework helps explain why certain contemporary Asian films generate powerful cross-cultural resonance despite linguistic, national, and religious differences. Rather than operating through ideological persuasion or exotic cultural representation alone, these narratives construct emotionally accessible forms of humanity grounded in care, vulnerability, reciprocity, and coexistence.

This relational orientation ultimately allows Asian Cinematic Humanism to intersect with broader discussions concerning affective soft power and people-to-people connection. The global resonance of these films suggests that audiences increasingly respond to narratives

capable of restoring emotional recognition and relational meaning within an increasingly fragmented social world.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive approach combining comparative film analysis, audience discourse analysis, and conceptual synthesis to examine how selected contemporary Asian films construct relational ethics and how audiences across different cultural contexts appear to respond to these relational themes.

The study focuses on four films released between 2024 and 2025, namely, the Thai film *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies*, the Chinese animated feature *Nezha 2*, the Japanese anime *Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle*, and the Malaysian film *Blood Brothers*. These films were selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria.

- (1) substantial transnational popularity
- (2) strong audience engagement across multiple cultural contexts
- (3) recurring emphasis on relational themes such as loyalty, reciprocity, sacrifice, coexistence, gratitude, and emotional interdependence.

All four films demonstrated substantial transnational visibility through theatrical circulation, streaming exposure, online discussion, and audience engagement across multiple countries and digital platforms during 2024–2025. *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies* achieved strong popularity across Southeast Asia and generated widespread emotional discussion on social media platforms concerning family relationships and intergenerational care. *Nezha 2* and *Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle* attracted extensive transnational fandom engagement through online discussion, fan commentary, and reaction content across Asian and global digital communities. Meanwhile, *Blood Brothers* received significant regional attention for its portrayal of loyalty, fictive kinship, and relational sacrifice within marginalized social contexts. These forms of circulation and audience engagement made the selected films particularly suitable for examining how relational narratives generate cross-cultural emotional resonance within contemporary Asian cinema.

The first stage of analysis employed qualitative film interpretation to examine narrative structures, character development, moral conflict, emotional tension, and representations of relational responsibility within the selected films. Particular attention was paid to how the narratives construct human worth through interpersonal bonds, ethical obligation, coexistence, and emotional endurance rather than through individual conquest or autonomous self-actualization alone. Comparative analysis was subsequently conducted to identify recurring affective and ethical patterns shared across the films despite differences in genre, industry, and national context.

The second stage involved qualitative audience discourse analysis. Audience reactions posted between 2024 and 2025 on digital platforms including Reddit, Twitter/X, YouTube, IMDb, and Douban were examined to explore recurring emotional responses and interpretive tendencies among viewers. Comments were collected through purposive and keyword-based sampling, focusing on publicly accessible posts that explicitly discussed emotional attachment, relational conflict, sacrifice, empathy, grief, loyalty, interpersonal responsibility, or moral reflection within the films. Duplicate posts, reaction-only comments, promotional material, and discussions unrelated to relational themes were excluded from analysis.

Rather than functioning as statistical audience measurement, this stage aimed to investigate how audiences articulated emotional recognition and relational meaning in response to the films. The selected comments were therefore treated not as representative of all viewers, but as indicative of recurring interpretive patterns circulating within transnational online discourse. Where necessary, comments originally written in non-English languages were

translated and interpreted contextually in relation to the broader thematic patterns emerging across platforms.

The final stage employed conceptual synthesis to formulate the framework of Asian Cinematic Humanism. Drawing from the comparative findings, the study theorizes a recurring relational storytelling orientation in which humanity is constructed through care, reciprocity, emotional vulnerability, coexistence, sacrifice, and responsibility toward others. Here, 'Asian' functions not as a fixed civilizational category or essentialized cultural identity, but as an analytical label referring to recurring affective and relational tendencies observable within selected contemporary Asian films.

This interpretive framework ultimately allows the study to situate cinematic relationality within broader discussions concerning affective soft power, emotional belonging, cultural diplomacy, and people-to-people connection in an increasingly fragmented global environment.

5. Results

The analyses below emphasize narrative orientation rather than cultural exclusivity, acknowledging that relational ethics, emotional interdependence, and humanistic storytelling may also emerge in non-Asian contexts. What distinguishes the films examined here is not, therefore, their possession of uniquely Asian emotions, but the particular intensity and centrality with which relational responsibility structures their cinematic narratives.

5.1 Human Worth through Relational Repair

The Thai film *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies* centers on the relationship between M, a young man motivated by the prospect of inheritance, and his terminally ill grandmother. At the surface level, the narrative appears to revolve around familial obligation and filial caregiving. Yet beneath this premise lies a fractured emotional landscape shaped by the inability of family members to properly communicate affection, vulnerability, and mutual understanding. The film, therefore constructs relational tension not through overt hostility, but through emotional silence and misaligned expressions of care.

Each principal character embodies a distinct relational deficiency. M initially approaches his grandmother strategically, hoping that acts of devotion will secure ownership of her house after her death. His apparent gratitude and attentiveness are therefore performative rather than sincere. M's mother genuinely loves the grandmother yet struggles to verbalize affection, rendering her emotional labor socially invisible. The eldest son remains preoccupied with maintaining social status and material success, leaving him incapable of recognizing his mother's loneliness. The youngest son lacks emotional and practical maturity, becoming a continuing burden upon the family structure. Meanwhile, the grandmother herself deeply loves every member of the household but consistently chooses silence over emotional articulation, unintentionally perpetuating cycles of misunderstanding.

The narrative's emotional progression emerges through cohabitation and gradual relational learning. What begins as strategic caregiving slowly transforms into genuine attachment as M witnesses his grandmother's aging body, emotional solitude, and quiet sacrifices. Through everyday interactions, he becomes increasingly aware that her love has always been expressed materially and behaviorally rather than verbally. Small gestures saving money from selling congee for him, silently enduring hardship, or sacrificing for her children without complaint reveal an ethic of care grounded in endurance and selflessness.

Importantly, the film frames these acts not as idealized moral perfection but as incomplete forms of relational communication. The grandmother's love remains unspoken love, sincere yet emotionally inaccessible because of her inability to communicate vulnerability directly. In this sense, the narrative avoids romanticizing traditional familial sacrifice. Instead,

it portrays relational repair as a mutual learning process. Just as M learns genuine care from his grandmother, she gradually learns emotional openness from him.

The culmination of this transformation occurs when M ultimately abandons his inheritance-centered motivations. Rather than using the inherited wealth for personal advancement, he purchases the Feng Shui burial plot his grandmother had long desired. The burial space symbolizes more than filial respect; it represents her hope that the family would continue gathering together annually after her death. M's final act therefore reflects not material repayment but the continuation of relational responsibility beyond individual self-interest.

Within this framework, character development is not measured through conventional moral binaries of good versus bad, nor through the didactic structure commonly found in traditional moral narratives. The film instead redefines human growth as the reduction of self-centeredness for the sake of sustaining relationships. Humanity is valued not because individuals achieve moral perfection, but because they possess the capacity to learn, change, adapt, and remain emotionally present for others.

This relational orientation distinguishes the film from strongly individualistic narrative traditions centered on personal conquest or self-actualization. Human worth here emerges through coexistence, reciprocity, and the willingness to preserve fragile emotional bonds. The film therefore presents humanity not as autonomous individuality, but as fundamentally relational—a condition in which personal transformation becomes meaningful only through sustained connection with others.

5.2 Relational Ethics beyond Fate and Abstract Morality

Nezha 2 presents a striking reinterpretation of destiny, morality, and human worth through the lens of relational responsibility. While traditional Chinese cosmology often places strong emphasis upon fate and heavenly order, the film reorients moral meaning away from predestination and toward interpersonal commitment. Rather than portraying liberation as individual rebellion against authority alone, the narrative suggests that humanity emerges through the preservation of relationships despite systems designed to divide individuals from one another.

At the center of the story lies the relationship between Nezha and the Dragon Prince, figures structurally positioned as natural adversaries by cosmic decree. Although fate determines that they should oppose one another, both characters repeatedly choose relational fidelity over predetermined hostility. Their bond ultimately becomes so profound that they temporarily share the same physical body in order to survive together. This symbolic merging emphasizes interdependence over individual autonomy, transforming coexistence itself into an ethical act.

The film therefore frames goodness not through abstract moral absolutism, but through contextualized ethics grounded in responsibility toward others. Moral legitimacy is not monopolized by heavenly institutions or official authority. Instead, humanity appears wherever individuals attempt to protect those to whom they are emotionally bound. The Dragon King's willingness to negotiate with enemies for the survival of his people and Shen Gongbao's unwavering protection of his younger brother both illustrate this ethical orientation. Although Shen Gongbao is positioned narratively as an antagonist, his devotion to familial responsibility reveals a deeply human dimension that transcends ideological alignment.

In this sense, *Nezha 2* destabilizes rigid distinctions between heroism and villainy. The narrative repeatedly suggests that ethical value emerges less from allegiance to abstract systems than from the willingness to preserve fragile relationships under difficult conditions. Humanity becomes visible when individuals choose responsibility toward others over loyalty to institutionalized moral categories.

The film simultaneously rejects deterministic conceptions of worth rooted in birth or prophecy. Shen Gongbao, originally born as a beast, devotes himself to relentless cultivation in hopes of bringing pride to his family. Likewise, Nezha, despite being fated as a demonic force, chooses to define himself through gratitude and reciprocal responsibility toward those who raised and protected him. Human value is therefore portrayed not as an innate essence, but as something constructed through endurance, discipline, sacrifice, and relational commitment.

One of the film's most significant symbolic moments occurs when Dragons, Humans, and Demons become trapped together inside a furnace. Within this enclosed space, long-standing racial hierarchies and cosmic divisions collapse under the shared vulnerability of survival. The furnace operates symbolically as a site of relational equalization where categories of species, status, and destiny lose meaning. Faced with collective suffering, the characters gradually recognize that their true enemy is not one another, but the structural system designed to force perpetual antagonism between them.

The destruction of the furnace therefore represents more than physical liberation. It signifies the rejection of a deterministic order that sustains itself through division and mutual destruction. By dismantling this system, the narrative reaffirms coexistence as the ethical foundation of humanity itself.

Importantly, the film does not equate humanism with unrestricted individual freedom in the liberal-individualist sense commonly associated with many heroic narratives. Humanity here is not realized through autonomous self-assertion alone, but through the preservation of relational bonds beyond fate itself. Goodness emerges through loyalty toward those with whom one shares emotional obligations, while self-cultivation acquires meaning primarily as a means of protecting others rather than elevating the self.

Within this framework, *Nezha 2* presents a relational mode of humanism in which emotional fidelity supersedes destiny, ideology, and cosmic hierarchy. As the narrative repeatedly suggests, human dignity emerges not simply by defying fate, but by honoring one another beyond it.

5.3 Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle and the Ethics of Relational Integrity

Following the global success of *Nezha 2*, the anime film *Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle* further demonstrates a comparable aesthetic of relational humanism, though articulated through a different moral and philosophical structure. Rather than centering heroic achievement upon an isolated protagonist, the film constructs humanity through interdependence, emotional responsibility, and collective sacrifice.

The demon-slaying operation depicted in the narrative is not organized around the logic of a singular savior. Instead, it functions as a system of collective intelligence sustained by trust, coordination, and relational duty. Combat itself becomes an ecosystem of mutual dependence. The Corps leader continuously maps the shifting structure of the Infinite Castle in real time to support frontline fighters and logistical teams, while supporting characters repeatedly risk themselves to ensure that no comrade is abandoned. Emotional expressions throughout the film fear, concern, grief, and encouragement reinforce the sense that survival depends not upon individual superiority alone, but upon the preservation of relational cohesion. The narrative therefore advances a "leave no one behind" ethic in which teamwork is grounded not merely in strategy, but in affective commitment toward others.

This relational ethics becomes especially visible in the confrontation between Zenitsu and Kaigaku. Kaigaku, who ultimately becomes an Upper-Rank Demon, severs his social bonds in exchange for power and survival. His betrayal of their shared master symbolizes the abandonment of relational obligation for individual advancement. Zenitsu, by contrast, willingly risks his own life to protect the honor and memory of his teacher. His battle therefore exceeds conventional heroic performance. It becomes an expression of what may be described

as an ethic of bond a moral orientation in which personal sacrifice derives meaning from loyalty toward relational commitments rather than from self-glorification.

Within this framework, demonhood itself acquires philosophical significance. Becoming a demon is not merely biological transformation but symbolic relational severance. Kaigaku's pursuit of isolated power reflects a rejection of reciprocal responsibility, positioning monstrosity as radical disconnection from others.

A similar tension appears through the character of Akaza. Haunted by the traumatic loss of loved ones, Akaza embraces emotional detachment and pursues eternal strength in an attempt to escape the pain of relational vulnerability. His immortality initially appears as liberation from suffering, yet the return of memory ultimately reveals the emptiness underlying power without emotional attachment. The narrative thereby associates isolated strength with nihilism a condition in which existence loses meaning once severed from human connection.

Akaza's final decision to relinquish immortality therefore functions as a form of redemption through memory. By recovering the emotional bonds he attempted to erase, he regains the capacity for remorse, grief, and love. Redemption emerges not through punishment or ideological conversion, but through the restoration of relational consciousness itself.

The film's protagonist, Tanjiro, offers perhaps the clearest articulation of this relational humanism. Unlike many dominant heroic traditions in contemporary global blockbuster cinema, Tanjiro repeatedly practices forms of self-abnegation and emotional restraint resembling the Buddhist notion of *anatta*, or non-self. His pursuit of victory is consistently subordinated to the protection of comrades and the preservation of life.

Importantly, Tanjiro's combat ethic is not driven primarily by hatred. Instead, he relies upon mindfulness, compassion, and self-control even while confronting enemies he wishes to defeat. At a critical moment, he realizes that suppressing killing intent is necessary in order to prevent the enemy from anticipating his movements. Yet even in combat, he chooses to warn his opponent before striking, refusing to secure victory through unfair exploitation despite facing a demon responsible for immense suffering. The scene reframes strength not as domination, but as the capacity to maintain ethical integrity under conditions of violence.

Within this narrative structure, humanity does not reside in immortality, superiority, or absolute power. Rather, it exists through what may be called the integrity of the self within a web of relations. To remain human is to recognize for whom one fights and to preserve relational responsibility even amidst suffering and conflict. Conversely, becoming demonic signifies the severance of those relational ties in pursuit of isolated strength and self-preservation.

Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle therefore extends the framework of Asian Cinematic Humanism by presenting humanity as relational integrity sustained through compassion, memory, sacrifice, and emotional interdependence. The film repeatedly suggests that the ultimate struggle is not merely against external monsters, but against the temptation to abandon one's relational obligations in pursuit of solitary power.

5.4 Blood Brothers and Humanism within the Subaltern World

In *Blood Brothers*, humanism emerges within a subaltern social space where legal institutions and dominant moral structures have failed to provide justice, dignity, or belonging. Under such conditions, humanity is no longer defined through legality or social respectability. Instead, the narrative reconstructs ethical meaning through relational ethics grounded in loyalty, gratitude, and emotional fidelity. Although the central characters operate within criminal networks, the film repeatedly suggests that the highest form of goodness within this world lies in the refusal to betray those to whom one is emotionally bound.

The film therefore relocates moral legitimacy away from institutional order and into interpersonal responsibility. Rather than portraying criminals as inherently devoid of ethical

consciousness, the narrative explores how humanity persists even within violent and marginalized environments through commitment to relational bonds.

One of the film's most significant interventions lies in its dismantling of blood-based family structures. The narrative replaces biological kinship with systems of fictive kinship constructed through mutual recognition and emotional reciprocity. The protagonist, Ariff, grows up deprived of affection and dignity within his biological family. It is only after entering the gang structure that he begins to experience a sense of belonging and personal worth.

Within this framework, family becomes a social and emotional construct rather than a biological inevitability. Fathers, brothers, and protectors are defined not by bloodline, but by their willingness to grant meaning, dignity, and recognition to others. The narrative therefore reconceptualizes kinship as relational constitution: individuals become who they are through those who acknowledge and sustain their existence.

The ethical climax of the film emerges through the conflict between Ariff and Ghaz, the gang leader who once rescued him from the slums and effectively gave him a new life. After Ariff is falsely accused of murdering Ghaz's lover, he becomes the target of violent retaliation. Yet rather than defending himself through reciprocal violence, Ariff chooses non-resistance.

Importantly, this submission does not signify weakness or passivity. It constitutes what may be described as ethical surrender a conscious relinquishing of self-preservation in order to preserve the purity of gratitude and relational loyalty. Ariff would rather accept death than harm the man who restored his humanity and granted him social existence. In doing so, the narrative elevates relational fidelity above biological survival itself.

Simultaneously, Ghaz undergoes a corresponding ethical transformation. Bound by the rigid codes of the criminal underworld, he is expected to eliminate the senior member of the gang in order to preserve organizational order and masculine authority. However, Ghaz ultimately violates these codes in order to preserve the meaning of brotherhood. His refusal to kill the senior member therefore becomes a form of ethical transgression directed against the moral rigidity of the violent system itself.

Crucially, this decision generates a reciprocal cycle of care and loyalty that eventually returns to save Ghaz later in the narrative. Mercy here functions not as weakness, but as the possibility of transforming destiny through compassion and relational trust. The film thus imagines humanism not as obedience to institutional morality, but as the capacity to preserve emotional bonds even within systems structured around violence and betrayal.

Within this relational framework, *Blood Brothers* asserts that individuals remain fully human as long as they continue honoring their emotional covenants with others. Humanity is defined less by social labels than by the willingness to stand beside those who constitute one's existence, regardless of how the external world categorizes them.

The film therefore expands the framework of Asian Cinematic Humanism into the realm of marginality and social exclusion. Even within the criminal underworld, human dignity survives through gratitude, loyalty, mercy, and reciprocal recognition. In this sense, the narrative suggests that humanity persists not because institutions protect it, but because relational bonds continue to generate meaning amidst structural abandonment.

5.5 Cross-Cultural Audience Resonance and the Universal Language of Affect

Despite the generic differences among these four films, a shared emotional core appears to drive cross-cultural responses. Our analysis of viewer discussions across Reddit, Twitter/X, Douban, YouTube, and IMDB (2024–2025) indicates that audiences consistently gravitate toward flawed characters who, despite their limitations, choose to prioritize their relationships.

What viewers appear to recognize collectively is not the perfection of the characters, but the persistence of relational attachment among deeply flawed individuals. In each narrative,

humanity is defined less through moral purity than through the capacity to preserve emotional bonds amidst suffering, misunderstanding, violence, or structural pressure.

Audience discourse analysis suggests that the popularity of *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies* does not primarily stem from idealized filial piety or sentimental family morality. Rather, viewers respond to the painfully human attempt to repair fractured relationships despite emotional inadequacy and selfish motivations. The appeal of *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* lies less in idealized filial piety than in the messy effort to repair damaged bonds. As Peter Bradshaw (2024) observes in *The Guardian*, the film becomes a “sweet, sad heart-warmer” that turns a cynical premise into genuine emotional depth. The film’s emotional force derives precisely from the imperfection of its characters and their gradual movement toward relational understanding.

Similarly, the global resonance of *Nezha 2* and *Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle* extends beyond visual spectacle or combat choreography. Audience responses reflect a profound engagement with relational vulnerability, even when manifested through aggressive, monstrous, or morally ambiguous characters. In *Nezha 2*, despite the protagonist’s fiercely defiant and destructive nature, viewers deeply connect with his latent desire for familial warmth; as one viewer noted, Nezha’s attempt “to try and hug his mom before she pilled away [sic]” stood out as one of the most emotionally affecting moments (Uanaka, 2025). Conversely, in *Demon Slayer*, fans interpret the antagonist Akaza’s final tragic choice not as weakness but as the resurfacing of his repressed humanity. As one YouTube commenter observed, “this demon almost killed both of them but his humanity stopped him” (ckumar-w8w, 2025).

Taken together, these audience reactions demonstrate a form of radical empathy that transcends conventional moral binaries of hero and villain. Rather than perceiving Nezha’s rage or Akaza’s monstrosity as innate wickedness, viewers recognize these behaviors as defensive mechanisms against loneliness, grief, and emotional severance. In both narratives, destructive impulses emerge less from inherent evil than from relational isolation. The emotional impact of these films therefore lies in their ability to humanize conflict, revealing that the longing for relational belonging persists beneath layers of violence and alienation.

In the case of *Blood Brothers*, audience responses heavily emphasize its affective core, specifically the tension between loyalty and survival. An IMDB reviewer describes the narrative as anchored in “brotherhood, betrayal, and loyalty,” producing an experience that is “emotionally intense” and driven by relational conflict (Trevor23, 2025). So, the narrative’s emotional intensity emerges from the unbearable pressure placed upon characters forced to choose between survival and loyalty. Rather than celebrating criminality, viewers respond to the ethical weight of gratitude, brotherhood, and emotional debt operating within morally compromised environments.

Taken together, these reception patterns suggest that Asian Cinematic Humanism functions not merely as a regional cultural identity, but as a translatable affective framework capable of crossing national, linguistic, and religious boundaries. The films communicate through what may be understood as a universal language of affect grounded in care, reciprocity, sacrifice, vulnerability, and relational endurance.

Importantly, this cross-cultural resonance appears particularly significant within the contemporary global condition of social fragmentation, emotional alienation, and increasing individual isolation. The popularity of these films suggests that audiences are not merely seeking spectacle or narrative resolution, but emotional recognition itself the desire to be seen, emotionally understood, and connected to others. In this sense, Asian Cinematic Humanism resonates globally because it addresses a fundamental contemporary longing for relational belonging in an increasingly atomized world.

6. Analysis and Discussion

If Joseph Campbell's (2008) Hero's Journey conceptualizes the purpose of the journey as the realization of one's fullest individual potential—becoming fully oneself and returning with a transformative gift for the world—Asian Cinematic Humanism suggests an alternative relational orientation toward human value. Within this framework, human worth is frequently articulated not solely through individual capability or self-actualization, but through the capacity to sustain relationships and preserve forms of emotional interdependence that allow others to endure. Competence and strength therefore acquire ethical meaning when they are directed toward protecting, supporting, or remaining responsible toward those with whom individuals share relational bonds.

Consequently, the character arc found in many of the films examined in this study differs from dominant heroic trajectories centered primarily upon personal mastery, self-realization, or individual conquest. Rather than pursuing fulfillment through autonomy alone, protagonists often evolve toward becoming the responsible being an individual capable of sustaining loyalty, obligation, gratitude, and relational integrity even in situations where betrayal or self-preservation may offer greater personal advantage.

Table 1 Individual-Centric Narratives vs Relation-Centric Narratives

Analytical Framework	Individual-Centric Narratives	Relation-Centric Narratives
Primary Narrative Goal	Self-development	Development of relational bonds
Definition of Success	Becoming one's fullest self	Becoming responsible to others
Core Competence	Individual, specialized skills	Capacities directed toward sustaining others
Heroic Ideal	The conqueror	The one who never abandons relationships
Narrative Pathway	Individual growth	Relational duty

Beyond narrative structure, Asian Cinematic Humanism also operates through a distinctive mode of affective engagement. Emotional resonance emerges through the fragility and endurance of relationships rather than through spectacle alone. Instead of focusing primarily on whether the hero ultimately triumphs a question frequently emphasized within many blockbuster traditions the emotional center of these narratives often becomes whether relationships can survive conditions of suffering, conflict, or separation. This shift directs audience attention toward vulnerability, coexistence, emotional responsibility, and relational endurance.

Such a process opens space for what may be described as an aesthetics of interdependence. Viewers are invited to recognize that meaningfulness may emerge not solely through individual achievement or superiority, but through becoming part of one another's existence. Emotional fulfillment therefore appears relationally grounded rather than competitively structured.

This relational orientation becomes especially visible within fan discourse, where audiences actively interpret the emotional and moral significance of cinematic narratives through online discussion. Mainstream global franchises such as superhero universes or Star Wars frequently stimulate debates centered on world-building mechanics, lore consistency, and power scaling. In contrast, the four films examined in this study generate discussions focused primarily on the moral dynamics of relationships. Online audiences repeatedly analyze the meaning of sacrifice, the ethics of gratitude and repayment, emotional trauma, relational obligation, and the motivations underlying the characters' decisions.

These patterns suggest that the films function not merely as spectacles, but as forms of affective technology that is, cinematic structures capable of organizing emotional attention and relational perception beyond visual spectacle alone. In doing so, they redirect audience engagement toward the emotional meaning of human connection and relational vulnerability within increasingly fragmented social environments.

This redirection of emotional attention becomes especially significant in the post-2020 global context, where algorithmic isolation, socio-economic pressures, and social fragmentation have intensified what may be described as a crisis of connection. The audience discourse analyzed earlier indicates that contemporary cinema increasingly functions as an alternative ethical arena in which viewers emotionally negotiate and rehearse values of mutual care, loyalty, empathy, and relational responsibility that often appear fragile within atomized societies. Cinematic narratives therefore operate not only as entertainment but also as sites of affective reflection, relational imagination, and emotional recognition.

Importantly, Asian Cinematic Humanism should not be understood as a reproduction of essentialist notions of inherent "Asian-ness," nor as an attempt to freeze Asian cultures into external symbols such as costumes, architecture, or exoticized aesthetics. Such approaches risk reproducing the Orientalist framework criticized by Edward Said, in which Asia becomes reduced to spectacle and difference for external consumption.

Instead, Asian Cinematic Humanism operates as a form of relational praxis grounded in everyday humanism: caring for others, refusing abandonment, sustaining loyalty, and preserving both biological and fictive kinship networks. Within this framework, relational responsibility becomes central to how narratives construct moral meaning and emotional value. This orientation reflects ethical tendencies observable across multiple Asian philosophical traditions, including Confucian mutual obligation, Buddhist notions of compassion and non-self (anatta), and broader communal traditions emphasizing coexistence and reciprocity.

The films examined in this study translate these ethical orientations into contemporary narrative structures rather than merely preserving them as abstract philosophical ideas or static cultural symbols. When *Blood Brothers* reconstructs kinship through loyalty rather than biological lineage, or when *Demon Slayer* depicts combat as an ecosystem of mutual dependence and sacrifice, relational ethics become embedded within the emotional logic of the narrative itself. Human dignity is therefore articulated less through status, birth, or institutional validation than through the active commitment to preserve fragile worlds of human connection under conditions of suffering and instability.

Importantly, these values are not geographically exclusive. They instead function as affective strategies through which filmmakers respond to emotional isolation and fragmentation within contemporary societies. In this sense, the term 'Asian' refers less to race or geography than to a relational narrative paradigm emphasizing mutual dependence, ethical responsibility, and emotional coexistence.

Although many Western films including *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016), *Inside Out* (Docter, 2015), *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014), and *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* (Gunn, 2014) also foreground relationships and emotional interdependence, such narratives frequently position relationality as part of a protagonist's journey toward individual healing,

self-discovery, or personal fulfillment. Relationships often function as emotional resources that assist characters in realizing inner potential, overcoming trauma, or reconstructing personal identity.

By contrast, the films examined in this study place comparatively greater narrative emphasis on preserving relational worlds through loyalty, duty, gratitude, reciprocity, and coexistence. Relationships are not merely pathways toward self-completion; they constitute ethical worlds that characters feel morally responsible for sustaining even at personal cost.

7. Implications for Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy: Moving Beyond State-Driven Branding

The relational paradigm proposed through Asian Cinematic Humanism invites reconsideration of how soft power and cultural diplomacy are conceptualized within contemporary international relations. For decades, state-centric frameworks derived from Joseph Nye's formulations have frequently approached popular culture as a strategic asset for national branding, economic promotion, or geopolitical positioning. Within this logic, cultural success is often measured through visibility, market expansion, and the circulation of recognizable national symbols. However, the transnational resonance of the films examined in this study suggests that cultural attraction may also operate at a deeper affective level through emotional recognition, relational vulnerability, and shared human experience rather than through overt ideological persuasion or state-centered image construction alone.

In this sense, the framework also aligns with broader discussions within emotional film studies and affect theory that examine how cinematic narratives organize emotional attachment, empathy, and relational identification across audiences.

By shifting the emotional center of cinematic narratives from individual triumph toward relational survival, these films appear to foster what may be described as a form of bottom-up cultural diplomacy. This mode of affective connection does not rely primarily on projecting idealized images of national superiority. Instead, as reflected in audience responses to films such as *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies* and *Blood Brothers*, emotional attachment emerges through the shared recognition of loneliness, imperfect relationships, fragile social structures, and the struggle to preserve care amidst conditions of suffering and instability.

From this perspective, the study suggests that contemporary soft power may increasingly depend not only upon spectacle, visibility, or strategic branding, but also upon the ability of cultural narratives to communicate emotionally recognizable forms of human attachment and interdependence. Rather than functioning solely as instruments of national representation, films may also contribute to people-to-people connection by constructing shared affective experiences that allow audiences across cultural boundaries to recognize aspects of their own emotional lives within the experiences of others.

8. Conclusions

This study has argued that the recent transnational success of several Asian films cannot be explained solely through production quality, visual spectacle, or industrial expansion. Instead, the comparative analyses of *How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies*, *Nezha 2*, *Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle*, and *Blood Brothers* reveal a recurring narrative orientation centered upon relational ethics, emotional interdependence, and the preservation of fragile human bonds. Through these patterns, the study conceptualizes Asian Cinematic Humanism as an affective and ethical framework in which human worth is articulated through the capacity to remain responsible toward others rather than through individual conquest or self-actualization alone.

Across all four cases, characters derive meaning not solely from personal achievement, but from loyalty, gratitude, sacrifice, coexistence, and relational endurance. Whether situated

within family structures, mythological conflict, collective struggle, or criminal marginality, the narratives repeatedly position human dignity within the maintenance of emotional bonds under conditions of suffering and fragmentation. Heroism therefore becomes relational rather than purely individualistic. The central dramatic question shifts from “Can the hero win?” toward “Can the relationship survive?”

Importantly, this framework should not be interpreted as an essentialized expression of immutable Asian values. Asian Cinematic Humanism is used here as a contingent analytical category emerging from observable tendencies within contemporary Asian cinema of the 2020s. Its significance lies not in cultural exclusivity, but in its ability to articulate forms of relational meaning that resonate across national and cultural boundaries. Audience discourse suggests that viewers from diverse backgrounds respond strongly to narratives emphasizing emotional vulnerability, ethical responsibility, and interdependence amidst increasingly atomized social conditions.

In this sense, the global appeal of these films reflects more than successful entertainment production alone. It may also indicate a broader cultural desire for narratives capable of restoring emotional connection within societies marked by isolation, competition, and fragmentation. The films examined in this study may therefore be understood as forms of affective technology that redirect audience attention toward the ethical significance of care, reciprocity, coexistence, and relational responsibility.

The study therefore suggests that contemporary soft power may no longer operate effectively through national branding alone. Cultural influence increasingly depends upon the ability to communicate emotionally recognizable forms of humanity. Asian Cinematic Humanism demonstrates one possible pathway through which cinema can contribute to people-to-people relations by constructing shared affective experiences rooted in relational responsibility rather than ideological persuasion.

Ultimately, the significance of these films lies not in their ability to proclaim cultural superiority, but in their capacity to remind audiences of a fragile truth increasingly threatened in contemporary life: human beings continue to survive emotionally through one another.

References

- Ambrogio, S. A. (2023). A (post)-humanistic meeting of Bruno, Wang Yangming and Braidotti. In M. M. Kosec (Ed.), *Program and book of abstracts from the conference on Humanism, posthumanism and transhumanism in the East Asian past and present* (p. 12). University of Ljubljana.
- Anziutti, R. (2023). *European cultural diplomacy and its influence on sustainable development: A case study on Libya* [Bachelor's thesis, LUISS University].
- Apendi, D. A. O., Pea-Assounga, J. B. B., & Bambi, P. D. R. (2025). Principles and ethical teachings of Confucius: Relevance and application in today's society. *Gradiva*, 11(5), 105–112. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15387234>
- Boonnitipat, P. (Director). (2024). *How to make millions before grandma dies* [Film]. GDH 559 Co., Ltd.
- Bradshaw, P. (2024) 'How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies review – sad but sweet Thai inheritance tale', The Guardian, 24 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/dec/24/how-to-make-millions-before-grandma-dies-review-lahn-mah-pat-boonnitipat> (Accessed: 20 January 2025).
- Campbell, J. (2008). *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 3rd ed. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Ckumar-w8w. (2025) 'this demon almost killed both of them but his humanity stopped him', comment on: AniWanPodcast (2024) Akaza moment – Demon Slayer, YouTube. Available at: <https://youtube.com/shorts/KOCsLd-BabM> (Accessed: 20 November 2025).
- Docter, P. (Director). (2015). *Inside Out* [Film]. Pixar Animation Studios.
- Gier, N. F. (2002). The virtues of Asian humanism. *The Journal of Oriental Studies*, 12, 174–188.
- Gong, Q. (2025, February 18). *Chinese films acclaimed in world film industry*. Science and Technology Daily. https://www.stdaily.com/web/English/2025-02/18/content_297892.html
- Gregg, S. (2022). *American individualism, rightly understood* (First Principles, No. 55). The Heritage Foundation. https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/FP85_0.pdf
- Gunn, J. (Director). (2023). *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* [Film]. Marvel Studios.
- Hall, D., & Williams, C. (Directors). (2014). *Big Hero 6* [Film]. Walt Disney Animation Studios.
- Ham, P. van. (2005). Power, public diplomacy, and the Pax Americana. In J. Melissen (Ed.), *The new public diplomacy: Soft power in international relations* (pp. 47–66). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Howard, B., & Moore, R. (Directors). (2016). *Zootopia* [Film]. Walt Disney Pictures.
- Ishiguro, C., Sato, T., & Inamizu, N. (2024). The Japanese conception of creativity: Myths and facts. *Creativity Theories – Research – Applications*, 11(1), 64–87. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ctra-2024-0005>
- Jiaozi (2025) *Ne Zha 2* [Film]. China: Chengdu Coco Cartoon; Beijing Enlight Media; Beijing Enlight Pictures; Chengdu Zizai Jingjie Culture Media; Beijing Coloroom Technology. Distributed by Beijing Enlight Pictures.
- Juknevičiūtė, L. (2011). The soft power implications of the new South Korean cinema: Approaching audiences in East Asia and Lithuania. *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia*, 12(1), 121–137. <https://doi.org/10.15388/AOV.2011.0.1100>
- Kaewanant, W., & Sirisunhirun, S. (2024). Thai soft power: Moving forward in the right direction. *Journal of Language and Culture*, 43(1), 194–216. <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JLC/article/view/279758>

- Kemachadakorn, N., & Pintong, S. (2024). Thai film and the soft power concept in the international film industry. *Asian Creative Architecture, Art and Design*, 37(2), 1–26. <https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/archkmitl/article/view/272308>
- Keune, O., & Frants, V. (2017). Cinema as an element of a state's soft power system. *Discourse-P*, 27(2), 154–162. <https://doi.org/10.17506/dipi.2017.27.2.154>
- Liu, F. (2004). *Chinese philosophical studies, XXIII: China's contemporary philosophical journey: Western philosophy and Marxism* (Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change Series III, Asian Philosophical Studies, Vol. 23). The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Löfflmann, G. (2013). Hollywood, the Pentagon, and the cinematic production of national security. *Critical Studies on Security*, 1(3), 280–294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2013.820015>
- Mandavilli, S. R. (2024). *Making India a scientific and an intellectual powerhouse: Why we should also help everyone else*. Sujay Rao Mandavilli.
- Mbir, C. (2024). Role of cultural diplomacy in strengthening soft power among emerging economies. *American Journal of International Relations*, 9(6), 44–55. <https://doi.org/10.47672/ajir.2464>
- Mirrlees, T. (2006). American soft power, or, American cultural imperialism? In C. Mooers (Ed.), *The new imperialists: Ideologies of empire* (pp. 199–227). One World Press.
- Nye, J. S., Jr. (1990). Soft power. *Foreign Policy*, (80), 153–171.
- Nye, J. S., Jr. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public Affairs.
- Nye, J. S., Jr. (2017). Soft power: The origins and political progress of a concept. *Palgrave Communications*, 3, Article 17008. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.8>
- O'Meara, D., Macleod, A., Gagnon, F., & Grondin, D. (2016). *Movies, myth, and the national security state*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- So, P. (2017). *Shared culture in the Mekong region: Observation from REPFest World Music Festival* [Reflection paper]. Southeast Asian Cultural Values: Preservation in Community Spirit.
- Sotozaki, H. (2025) *Demon Slayer: Infinite Castle* [Film]. Japan: Ufotable. Distributed by Aniplex and Toho; worldwide distribution by Crunchyroll/Sony Pictures Releasing.
- Syafiq Yusof and Chandra, A. (2025) *Blood Brothers* [Film]. Malaysia: Skop Productions. Distributed by Primeworks Studios and CBI Pictures.
- Supjalern, R., & Putthasem, D. (2022). Brahma Vihara 4 for executives in the 21st century. *Journal of Graduate Review Nakhon Sawan Buddhist College*, 10(3), 57–66.
- Trevor23. (2025) Review of *Blood Brothers: Bara Naga*, IMDB. Available at: <https://m.imdb.com/title/tt32369229/reviews/> (Accessed: 1 December 2025).
- Uanaka. (2025) Comment on 'Official Discussion: Ne Zha 2 (Spoilers)', Reddit. Available at: https://www.reddit.com/r/movies/comments/1j5dv7y/official_discussion_ne_zha_2_spoilers/ (Accessed: 1 December 2025).
- Zumalde-Arregi, I. (2011). The filmic emotion: A comparative analysis of film theories. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 66, 326–349. <https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-66-2011-936-326-349-EN>