

"The Knot" is China's Oscar Entry

After a tense political row and some frantic maneuvering by mainland movie mandarins, the Film Bureau in Beijing has announced that the wartime drama "The Knot" is China's entry in the foreign-language Oscar category.

Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences' deadline for submission was Oct. 1. Most countries announced their submission before that date.

Ending weeks of suspense and a fittingly knotty dispute, the Chinese film authority confirmed what had been strong rumors that "The Knot" (Yun shui yao), a melodrama by Yi Lin starring Li Bingbing and Chen Kun, was the mainland submission.

"Lust, Caution" is Taiwan's submission, and Johnnie To's gangster pic "Exiled" will represent Hong Kong.

"The Knot" won best film at China's top domestic kudofest, the Huabiao Awards, as well as a special jury award at the Shanghai Intl. Film Festival in June.

Coming up with the Chinese-language submission has been a thorny process this year. Jiang Wen's "The Sun Also Rises," more arty than populist and not setting any B.O. records, first was replaced by "Exiled" for Hong Kong's candidacy, and subsequently lost out to "The Knot" in representing the mainland.

Taiwan submitted "Lust." For awhile, it looked as if China was going to nominate "Lust, Caution" instead of Taiwan -- a territory Beijing sees as a renegade province, not a sovereign nation. Lee's stock is rising in the People's Republic of China -- his Shanghai-set film was surprisingly given a mainland release with some snipping, and he also is involved in Olympics coordination next year.

"The Knot" was very carefully constructed to have a multiterritory Chinese-Hong Kong-Taiwanese production pedigree and a theme of healthy and happy pan-Chinese cross-strait relations. (Written by Clifford Coonan, 10 October 2007, www.varietyasiaonline.com)