

AEMS / CEAPS Educator Workshop:

## Teaching Chinese History Through Film

Featured speaker:

Charles W. Hayford, Visiting Scholar,  
Department of History, Northwestern University

**Spring 2011 ICSS Conference: Seeing Eye to Eye**  
**Friday, April 19, 2011 - 8:30AM**

**I Hotel and Conference Center at the University of Illinois**  
1900 S. First Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820

This workshop will model a pedagogically sophisticated method of using feature films and television clips to teach Chinese history and politics. The workshop will use clips from Chinese movies and the 2008 Olympic opening ceremonies to dramatize the debates taking place in China over the significance of Mao's revolution, the impact on individuals and families, and its relation to China's history – is "tradition" an inspiration or a nightmare? Participants will receive DVD hand-outs with the film clips and documents discussed to use in their classes.

Target audience: Middle school secondary, and college/university teachers

Workshop Resources:

[Chinese History and Film](#) (PowerPoint Presentation by Charles W. Hayford)

[Teaching Chinese History Through Film \(PDF\)](#)

[Olympic Opening Ceremonies \(PDF\)](#)

[Red Flag Canal \(PDF\)](#)

[To Live \(PDF\)](#)

[Hero \(PDF\)](#)

[CLICK HERE for more information on the Spring 2011 ICSS Conference.](#)

This event is funded with support from the U.S. Department of Education, Title VI Grant.

The Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies (CEAPS) is the steward of campus-wide teaching, research, programming, and outreach on East Asia, as well as Southeast Asia and the Pacific at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

*Last updated: April 12, 2011*



CENTER FOR  
EAST ASIAN  
+  
PACIFIC  
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AT URBANA - CHAMPAIGN

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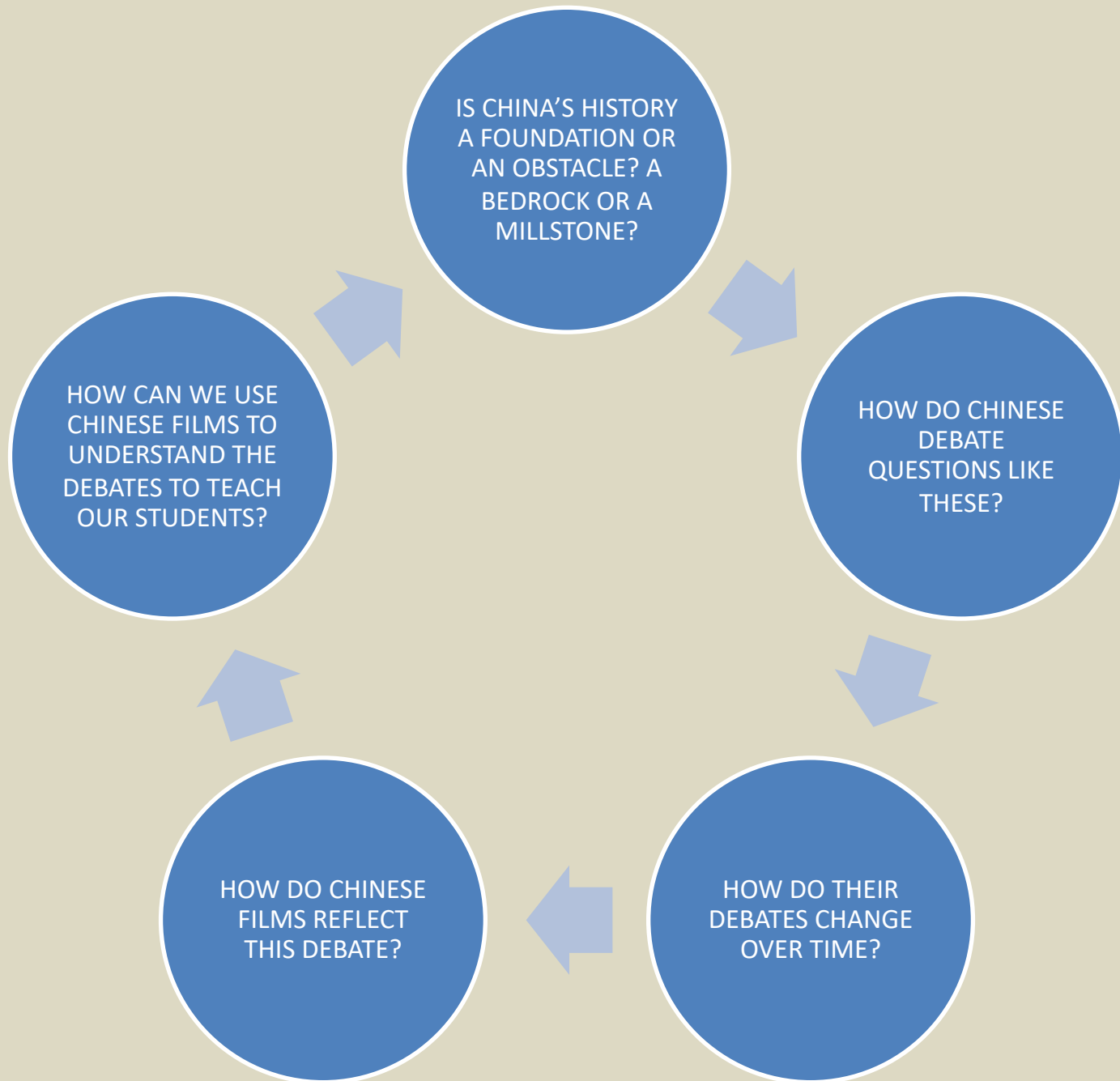
*ILLINOIS SOCIAL SCIENCE COUNCIL  
APRIL 15 2011*

# *AEMS PRESENTS*

*WITH THANKS TO  
NANCY JERVIS  
AND THE WONDERFUL FOLKS IN  
THE OFFICE*

# Debating Chinese History Through Film





# *Objectives*

- To deepen our own knowledge & interest
- To identify the problems and challenges facing decision-makers in China
- To help our students see various sides of the debate in China
- To help our students understand differing positions and develop their own
- To show that movies have ideas in them.

# 19<sup>th</sup> Century Reformers: WE MUST CHANGE BUT ON CHINESE FOUNDATIONS

“We have only one thing to learn from the barbarians, and that is strong ships and effective guns.....

The Way of Confucius *is the Way of mankind.*”

*19th century reformers*

# *DISASTER*

- *1895 DEFEAT BY JAPAN*
- *1900 DEFEAT BY ALLIED INVASION*
- *1911 QING DYNASTY DISINTEGRATES*
- *1915 JAPAN'S 21 DEMANDS*
- *1916 REPUBLIC DISINTEGRATES*
- *1919 VERSAILLES: ALLIES GIVE SHANDONG TO JAPAN*

*WE NEED A*

*NEW*

*CULTURE!!!*

# *May Fourth Movement 1919*



*DOWN*

*WITH*

*MR.*

*CONFUCIUS!*

*WELCOME*

*MR.*

*DEMOCRACY*

*MR.*

*SCIENCE*



# *LIBERATION*



*CHINA HAS STOOD UP*



*1989*





# 大屠殺



# *WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?*

*LINGERING FEUDAL VALUES?  
(COMMUNIST) REVOLUTION?*

*WAS MAO A MONSTER?*

*MAO 70% GOOD 30% BAD?*

*MISTAKES WERE MADE?*

*WHAT IS THE ANSWER?*

*IS HISTORY THE PROBLEM OR  
THE ANSWER?*

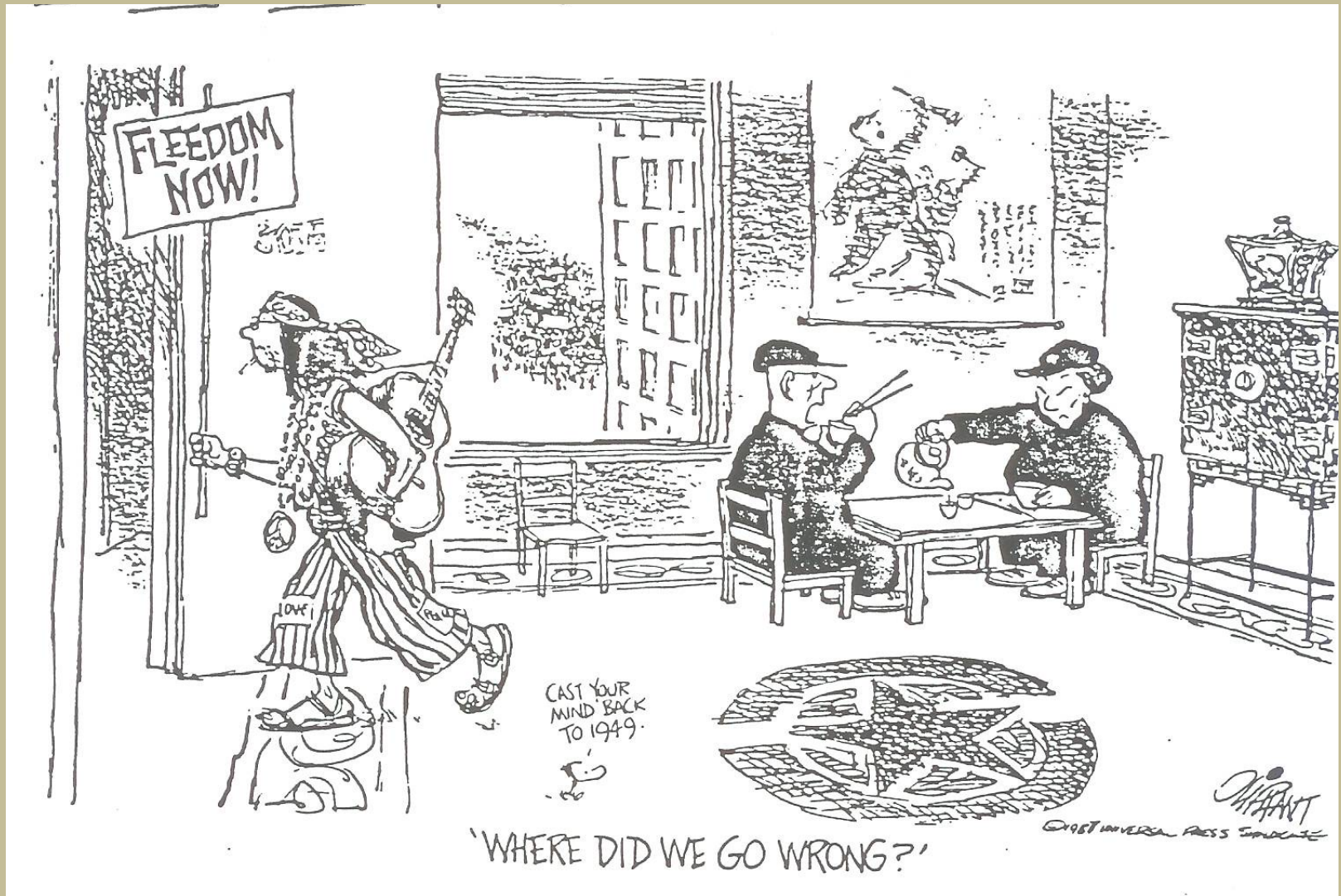
*IS MAOISM?*

*GLOBALIZATION THE PROBLEM  
OR THE ANSWER?*

*THE CHINESE NATION?*



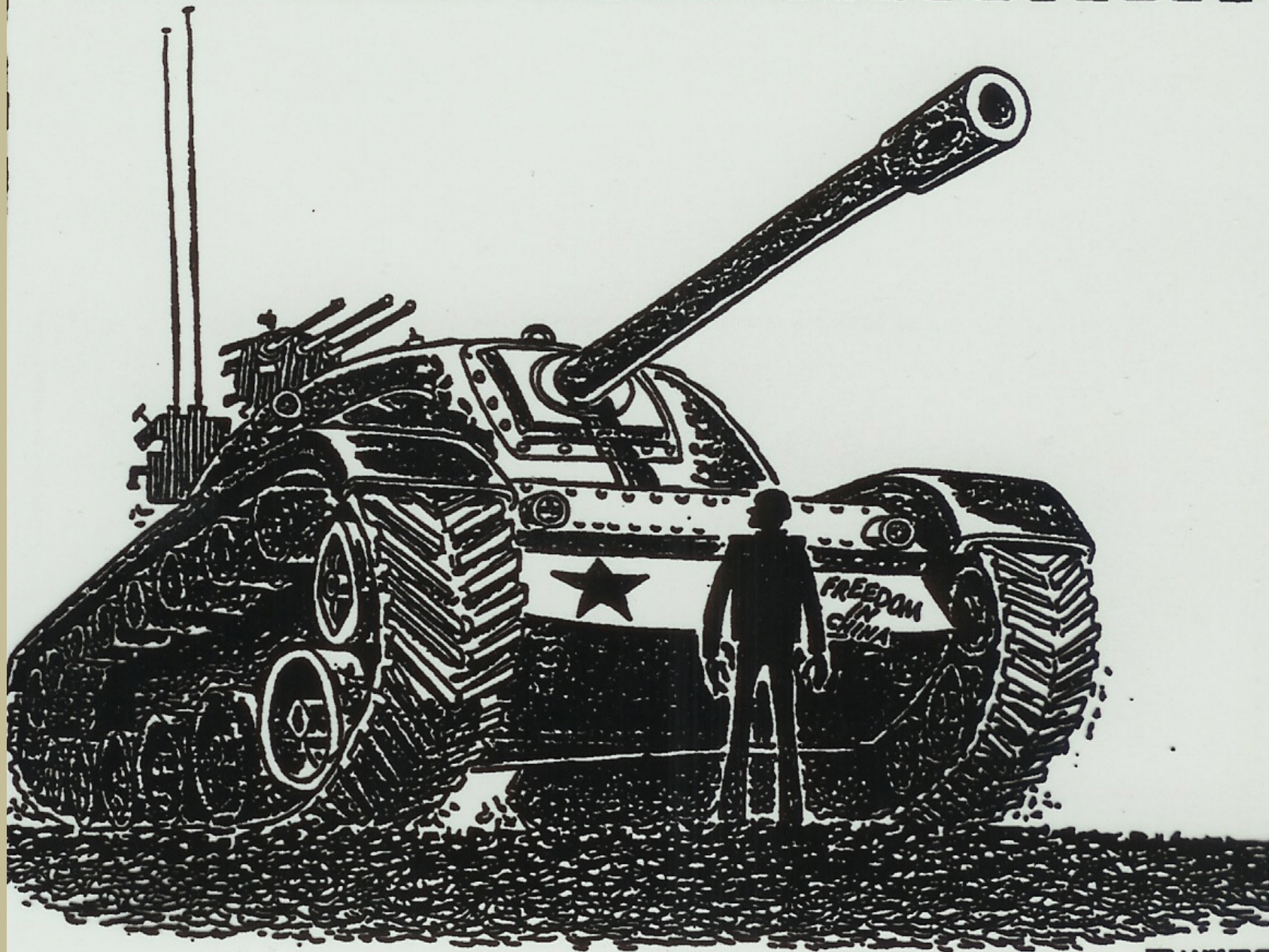
# AMERICAN VIEWS





***HUMAN HOPE AND COURAGE CHALLENGING THE  
REMORSELESS MACHINERY OF STATE POWER***





FRANK EVE  
*Courtesy New*

# *CHINA IS AWARDED THE OLYMPICS*





# ZHANG TAKES ON THE 2008 OLYMPICS





同一个世界 同一个梦想

One World One Dream





# *YAO MING*



# *STEP BY STEP IN FIREWORKS*





# *CHILDREN IN COSTUMES OF THE 56 MINORITIES CARRY THE FLAG*



越过高山 越过平原

(The children are all Han Chinese)







跨过奔腾的黄河长江



我们爱和平





胜利歌声多么响亮



歌唱我们亲爱的祖国

# *PRESIDENT HU JINTAO*









# BEAUTIFUL OLYMPICS CULTURAL PROGRAM





# THE DISCIPLES OF CONFUCIUS



































# CHINA'S GREAT INVENTION







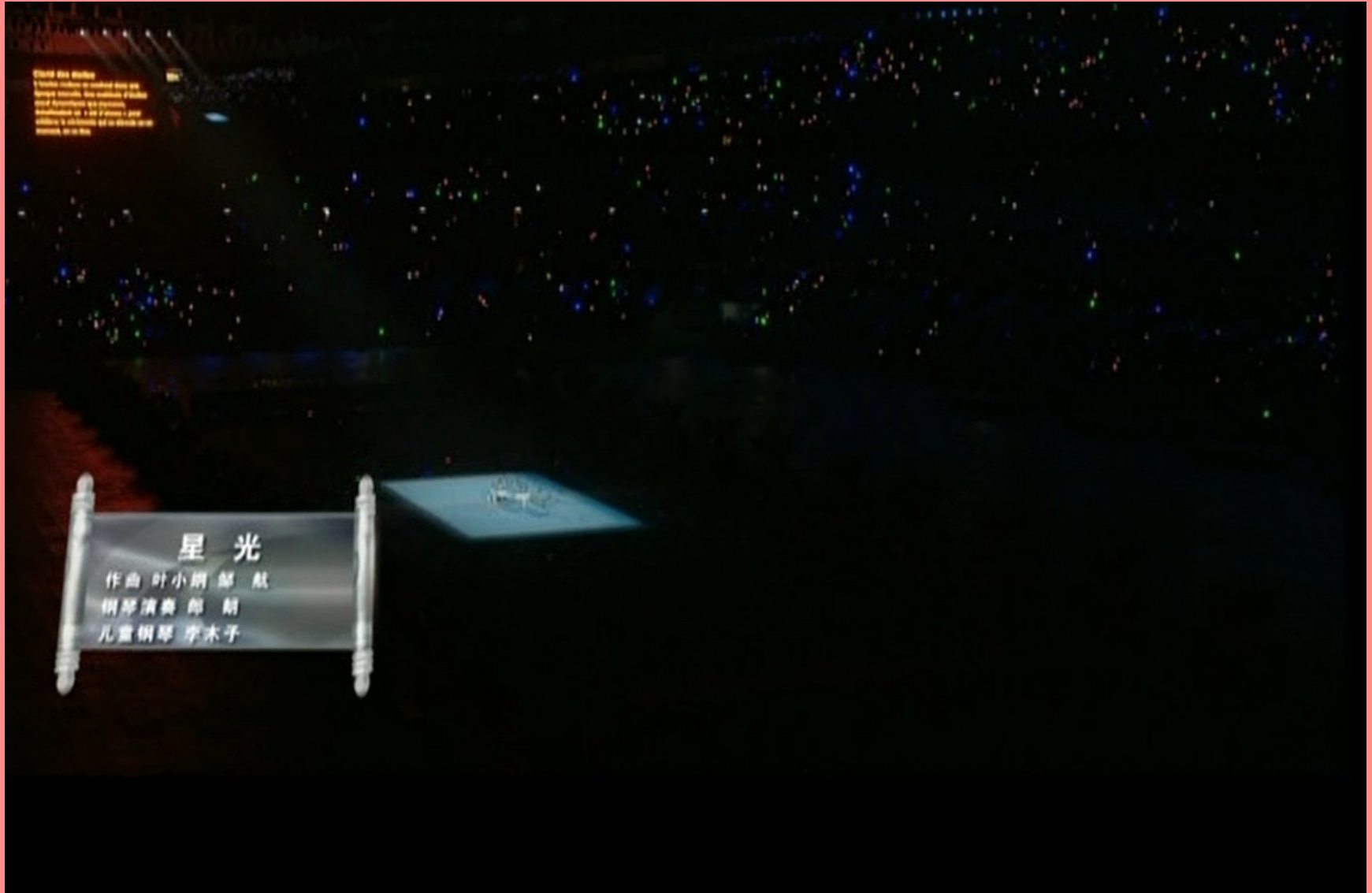








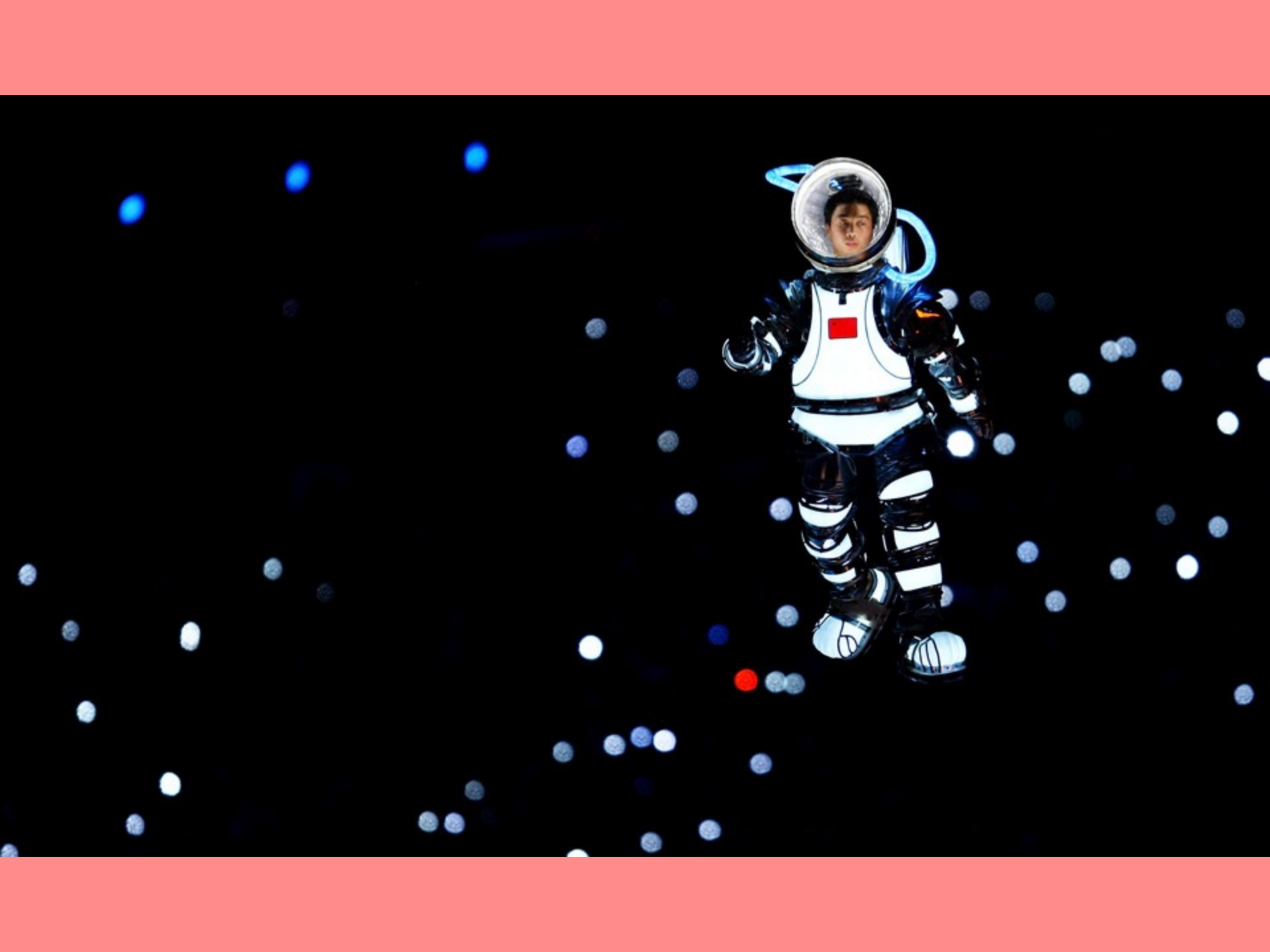
# Lang Lang















# MIGRANT WORKERS EMULATE THE DANCERS



*WHAT DOES THIS SHOW  
TELL US ABOUT HOW  
ZHANG SEES CHINA TODAY  
IN LIGHT OF HER HISTORY?*

*WHAT ARE THE COMPETING VIEWS?*



# *RED FLAG CANAL*

## *(1970)*

Mao Zedong Thought as Self Reliance

Overthrowing tradition or building on tradition?

Is tradition “power to the people”?

Is tradition poverty and submission to nature?

Local organization, not centralized or globalized

# BEFORE LIBERATION

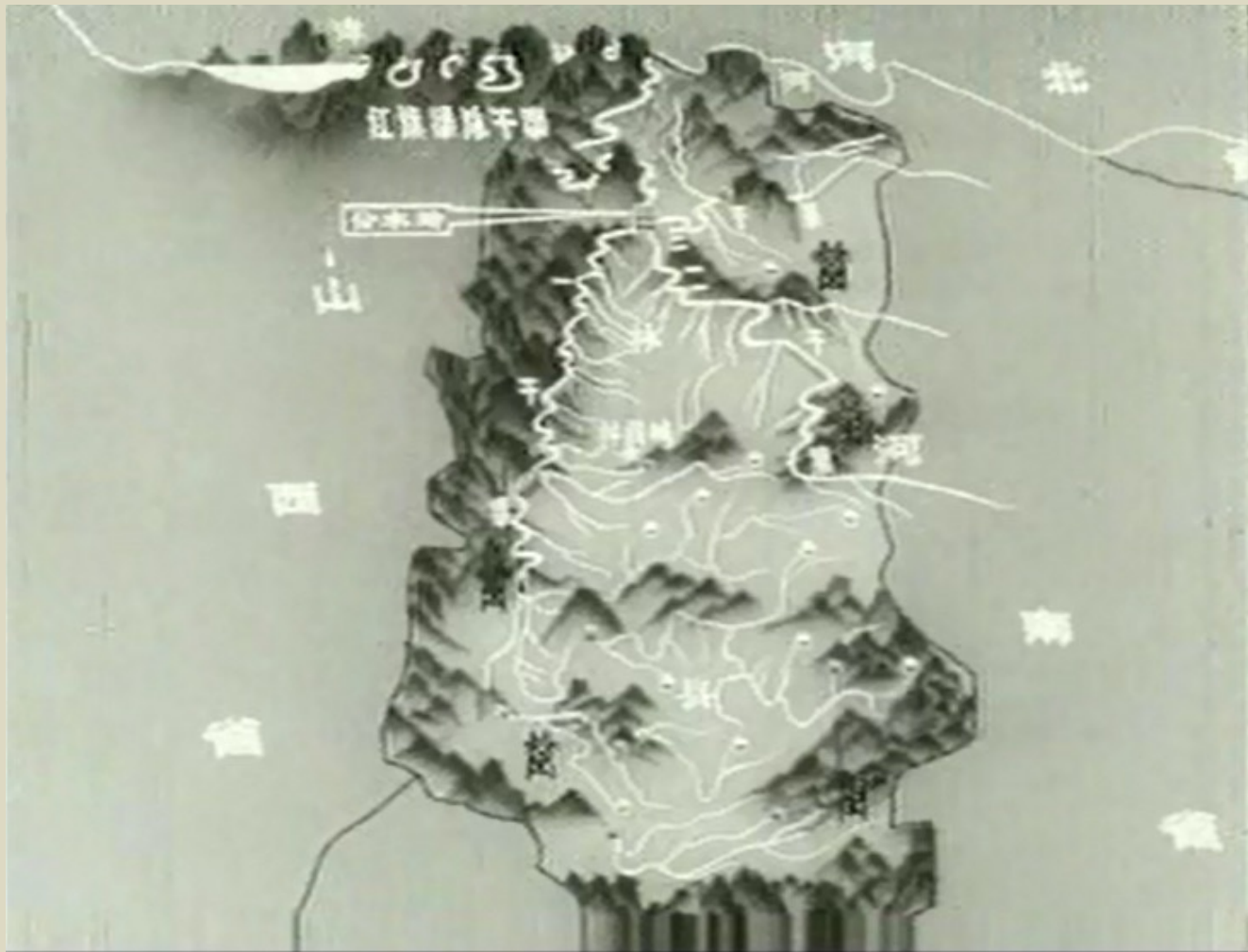








# *THE SOLUTION*



*Wan Sui!! Wan sui!! HAIL!! Hail!!*







This is the water that Chairman Mao has provided

MAC  
DOWN  
GANG



coll. SRL

坚决打倒王张江姚反党集团!

鲁迅美术学院 编印 1976.12.24

*DENG  
XIAOPING  
TO GET  
RICH IS  
SOCIALIST*





# *OPENING AND REFORM BIGGEST ECONOMIC CREATION IN HISTORY!*

- *STATE CAPITALISM*
- *POLITICAL CONTROL*
- *GLOBALIZATION*
- *URBAN/ RURAL SPLIT*
- *SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SPLIT*

# *FIFTH GENERATION CINEMA*

- *SENT DOWN YOUTH*
- *FIRST CLASS AT REOPENED FILM SCHOOL*
- *THE REVOLUTION IS NOT A BREAK WITH THE PAST*
- *CONTINUATION OF FEUDAL PATRIARCHY*
- *RURAL BACKWARDNESS*

# *YELLOW EARTH 1985*



*CHEN KAIGE  
Cinematography:  
Zhang Yimou*



# ZHANG YIMOU

1950



*TO LIVE*  
*ZHANG YIMOU*  
*1996*



# GAMBLING AWAY THE FAMILY FORTUNE





# THE RED ARMY COMES



# OLD ART FOR THE NEW ORDER





# FOOD FOR ALL?





# FOOD AS A WEAPON



# *LEAVING THE FAMILY TO CARRY IT ON?*



# *MAO AND LOVE*





# *FAMILY CARRIES ON*



# *FADED MAO, NEW YOUTH*



# *FAMILY AND DINNER*



-I'll make dinner.

-I'll help.

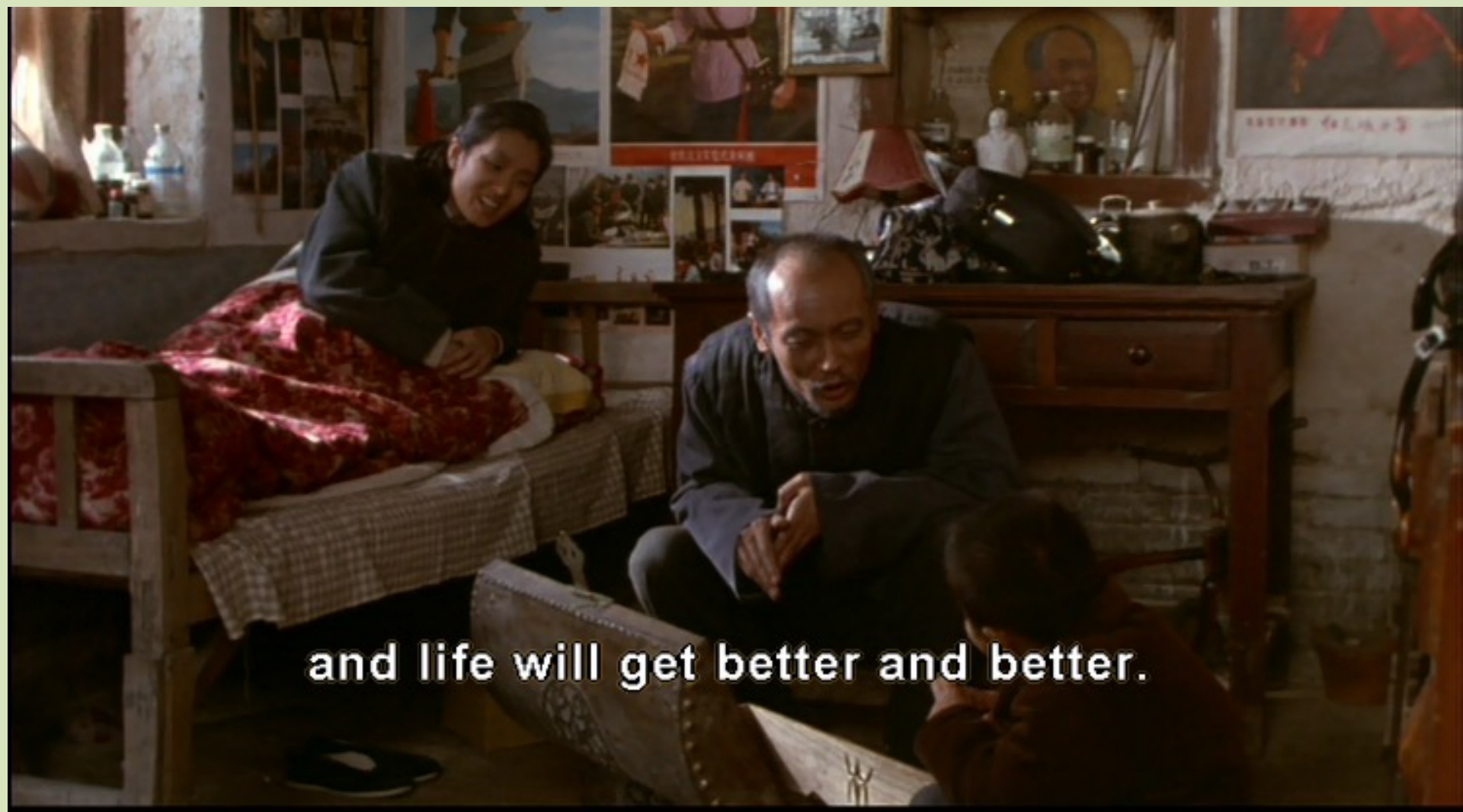




Little Bun won't ride on an ox...



he'll ride trains and planes...



and life will get better and better.



# HAPPY ENDING?



運

輸

李文亮

熊緒峰

杜建國

王新虎

馬駿

梁雲國

石永

夏仲水

葉光浩

策劃製作統籌

年代公司(香港)

梁宗柱

後期製作統籌

年代公司(日本)

高秀蘭

洗

印：東京現像所

小尾隆二

福島省行

內海邦男

高橋榮一

郎逸聰

混

音：日活

錄音中心

神保小四郎

中山義廣

伊藤進一

山方浩

楊曉丹  
胡斌





- *Qin shi Huangdi didn't kill enough scholars....*



# HERO 2002



念苍生 忘生死  
杀一人 救万民  
十步之内 英雄现身

英雄

HERO

张艺谋第一部豪情武侠巨构

李连杰 · 梁朝伟 · 张曼玉 · 陈道明 · 章子怡 · 甄子丹

北京新画面影业有限公司 / 银都机构有限公司 / 精英娱乐有限公司联合出品 中国电影合作制片公司协助摄制 张艺谋作品“英雄”  
主演 李连杰 / 梁朝伟 / 张曼玉 / 陈道明 / 章子怡 / 甄子丹 编剧 李连杰 导演 张艺谋 监制 李连杰 / 梁朝伟 / 张曼玉 / 陈道明 / 章子怡 / 甄子丹  
配乐 李连杰 / 梁朝伟 / 张曼玉 / 陈道明 / 章子怡 / 甄子丹 剪辑 李连杰 / 梁朝伟 / 张曼玉 / 陈道明 / 章子怡 / 甄子丹  
执行制片人 李连杰 / 梁朝伟 / 张曼玉 / 陈道明 / 章子怡 / 甄子丹 制片人 李连杰 / 梁朝伟 / 张曼玉 / 陈道明 / 章子怡 / 甄子丹  
北京新画面影业有限公司 / 银都机构有限公司 / 精英娱乐有限公司 中国内地总发行 北京新画面影业有限公司



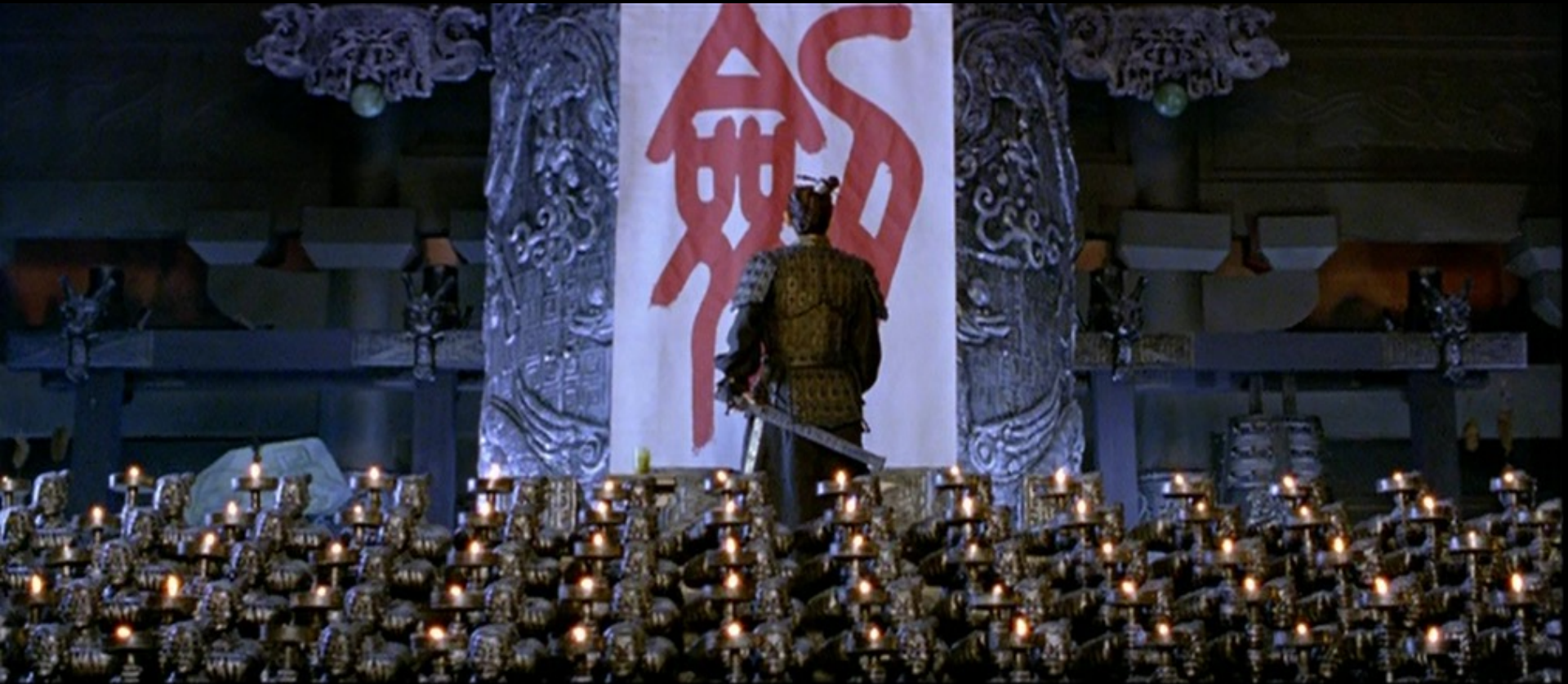
# *WHO IS THE HERO?*

- *Qin Shi Huangdi = First Emperor of Qin*
- *“Nameless”: Assassinate the Despot*
- *“Broken Sword: From revenge to “Tianxia” (All Under Heaven)”*





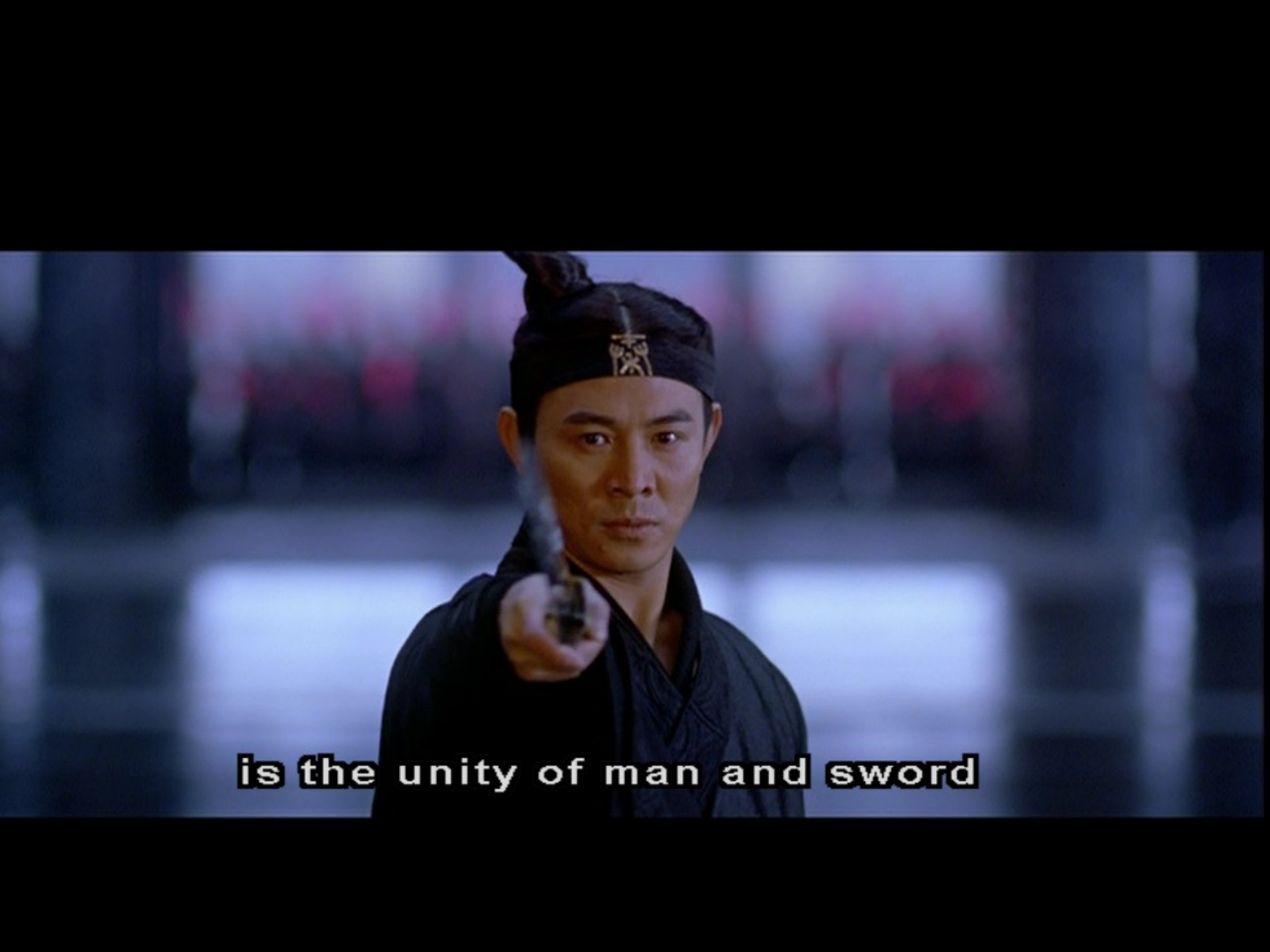
*THE MAN WHO WROTE THIS IS NO  
ASSASSIN*









A man in traditional Chinese attire, including a black robe and a black headband with a gold emblem, is shown from the chest up. He is holding a sword pointed directly at the viewer. The background is blurred, showing a crowd of people in a traditional setting.


is the unity of man and sword







**Your Majesty,  
your visions have convinced me**

A close-up shot of a hand gripping the hilt of a sword. The hand is positioned in the center-right of the frame. The sword's blade is visible on the left, pointing towards the left edge. The hilt has a textured, possibly stone or wood, grip. The background is dark and heavily textured, resembling a rough wall or a piece of fabric. In the lower right, there are some metallic, riveted elements, possibly part of armor or a structure. The overall lighting is low, creating a dramatic and somber atmosphere.

Therefore I cannot kill you















A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white shirt, is shown in profile, looking towards the left. She is standing in a desert-like environment with large, light-colored rock formations in the background. The lighting is warm, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The text "He could not have missed" is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

**He could not have missed**



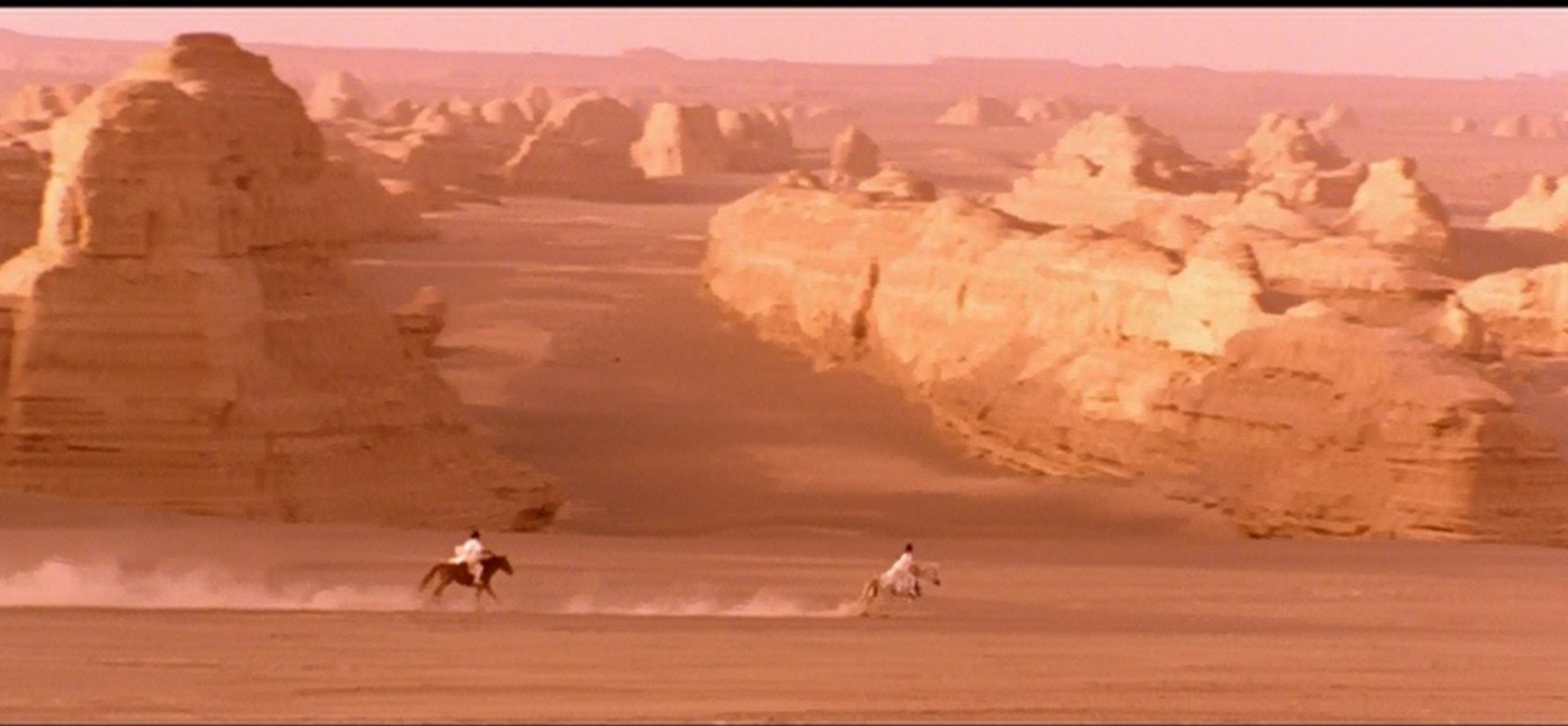
**What did you say to him?**



"All under Heaven."

*Tianxia*





















**Permission to execute?**



This is the law of Qin!



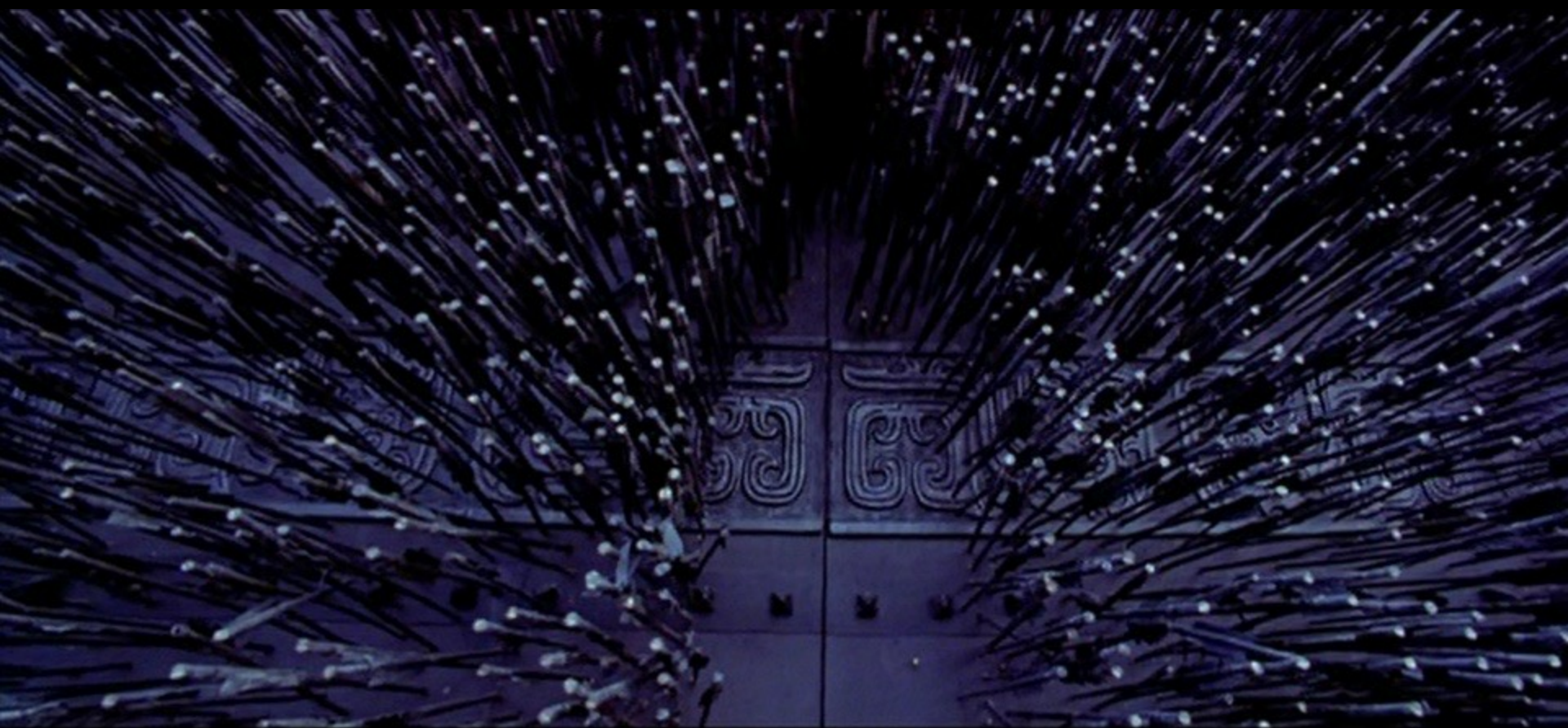
**This is the law of Qin!**



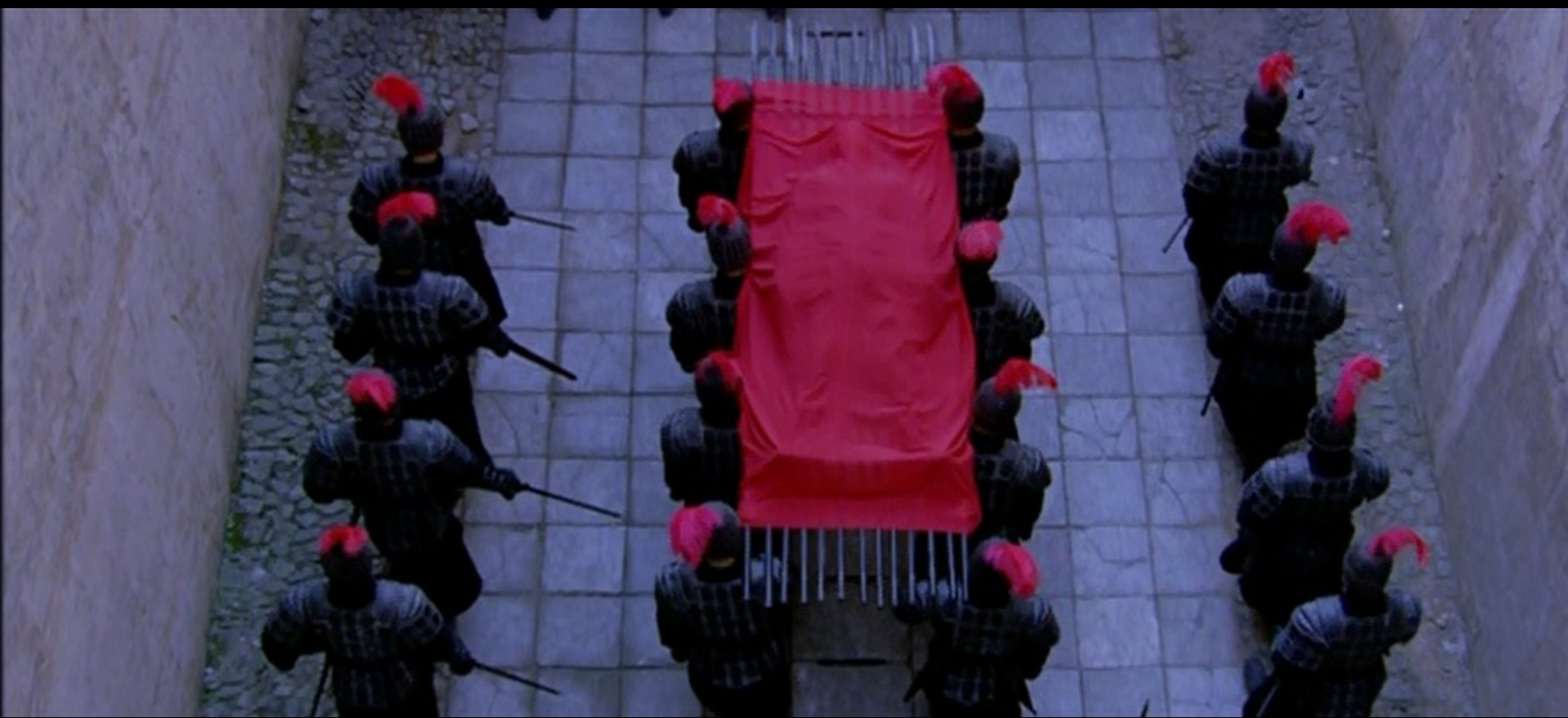














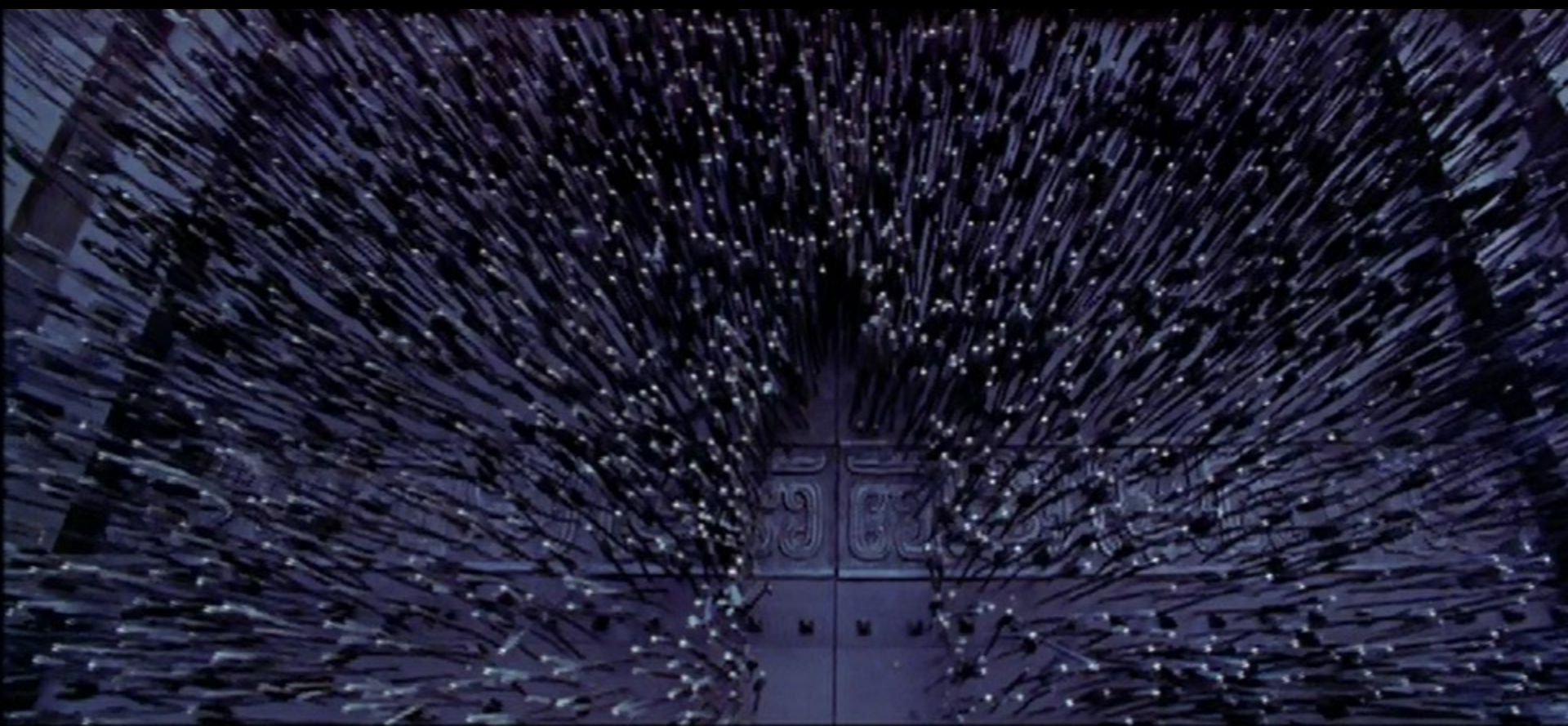
**Hail! Hail! Hail!**



**Hail! Hail! Hail!**



















# WHICH



A revolution is not  
or writing an essay,  
picture, or doing emb  
be so refined, so lei  
so temperate, kind, c  
ed and magnanimous

is an insurrection, an act of violence  
class overthrows another.

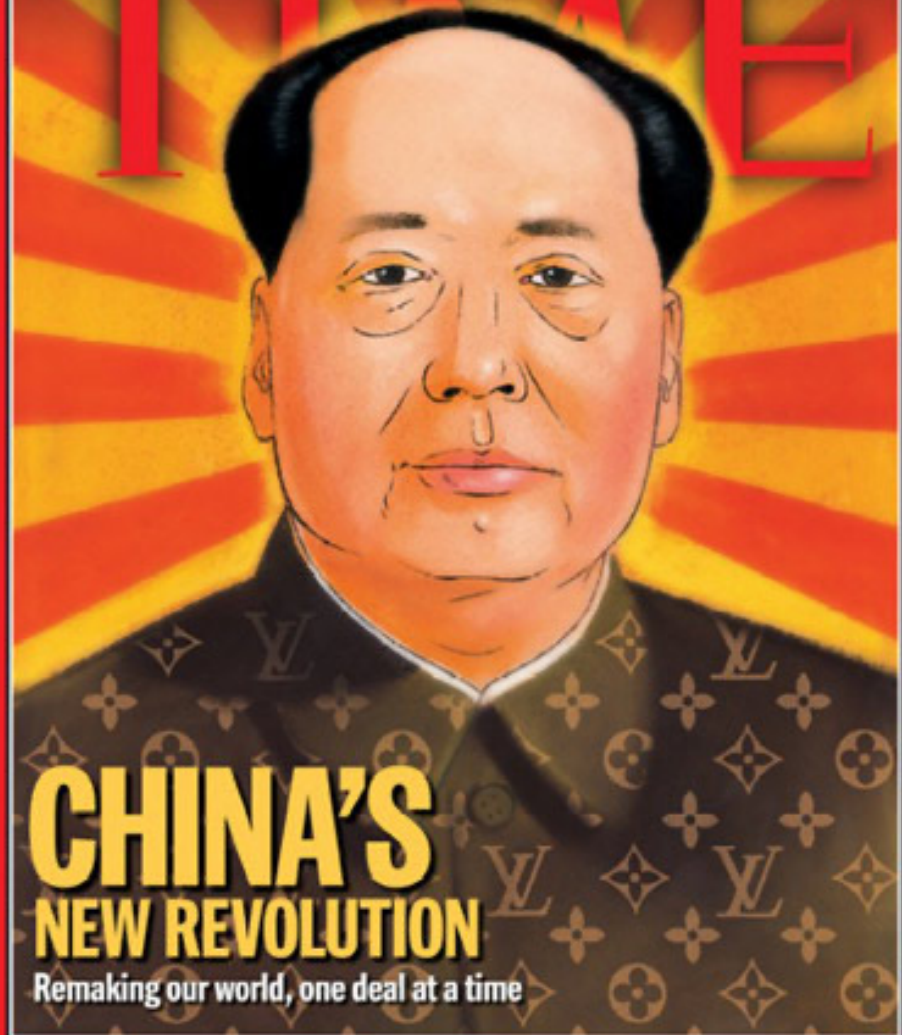
## MAO T

JUNE 27, 2005

www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME

# SPECIAL REPORT

# TIME



## CHINA'S NEW REVOLUTION

Remaking our world, one deal at a time



**"That's  
all  
folks!"**



ASIAN EDUCATIONAL MEDIA SERVICE PROUDLY PRESENTS

## TEACHING CHINESE HISTORY THROUGH FILM

Historical films – films set in an earlier period than their own – blur the line between primary and secondary sources. They are documents of the time in which they were made and also a genre of history. Historical film is a different genre from the academic historian's monograph or footnoted article but is "history" nonetheless. We should be careful, however. As "popular history" films condense, distort, and filter events, and rely more on emotion than clearly constructed argument. They generally tell only one story and do not dwell on alternatives. The sentimentality, anachronism, and simplification of a good story sell more tickets and popcorn than analysis of systems, structures, uncertainty, and contingency. But films can be valid representations of the past interpreted for the present. Chinese films are primary sources about how some Chinese perceive issues and they reflect serious (but not always obvious) debates more often than Hollywood films do. We can access films more directly and see what Chinese audiences saw with less selection and translation than other sources, at least if we can read the subtitles fast enough. And many of the films we discuss are just great films – compelling, startling, and memorable.

- **China's History: Foundation or Millstone?**

Reformers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century wanted to build on Confucian tradition to seek wealth and power, but New Culture iconoclasts dumped Confucianism as feudal and imported science and democracy from the West. Mao's revolutionary agenda promised Liberation from the twin evils of feudalism and imperialism to build a wealthy and powerful nation without reliance on outside powers. Were the Great Leap, the Famine, and Cultural Revolution mistakes or an inevitable consequence of Mao's strategy? Did Mao's Revolution create a strong and wealthy nation?

- **Beijing 2008 – The Grand United March to the Present: *Opening Ceremonies* (Zhang Yimou)**

Chinese welcomed the Beijing Olympics as the end of centuries of humiliation and the acceptance of China's rise. The appearance of Confucius, Buddha, and Yao Ming as heroes in the opening ceremonies reflect a newly confident acceptance of Chinese tradition and global interaction. This spirit moved beyond the New Culture view that tradition had to be destroyed in order to build a nation as well as leaving behind the Maoist emphasis on isolation and self-reliance.

- **Mao: The People Make History: *Red Flag Canal* (40 minute; 1970)**

When mountain villagers built Red Flag Canal to bring water to their impoverished fields, they became Cultural Revolution heroes for representing Mao's strategy of self-reliance to conquer nature, building China from the village up, not from the capital down, and depending on local initiative, not professionals or bureaucrats.

- **Revolution and "Survival": *To Live* (Zhang Yimou, 1996)**

Zhang's film reflects post-1989 questions and strategies. The title in Chinese – *Huozhe* – can mean either "to live" or "to survive." Like Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1996) and Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Blue Kite* (1992), this commanding and beautifully shot film chronicles a family from the 1940s through the 1980s. Although no villains are indicted, the two children in Zhang's film each are killed by Maoist policies. These three "Fifth Generation" films each imply that the 1949 Revolution was not a sharp break with the past but the survival of feudal patriarchy, political frustration, and cultural dead end. The families are heroes because they survive.

- **Who's the Hero: The Emperor, the Assassin, or Those Who Preserve Culture? *Hero* (Zhang Yimou 2004)**

Zhang's beautiful martial arts film is one of three great films depicting assassination attempts on Qin Shihuangdi (First Emperor of China), to whom Mao Zedong often compared himself as founder of a dynasty which used violence to unify the country for the benefit of the people. The other films are Chen Kaige's *The Emperor and the Assassin* (1999) and Zhou Xiaowen's *The Emperor's Shadow* (1996). Is the film critical, merely patriotic, or fascist?

## Mao Zedong and His Friends and Rivals On Chinese History and Revolution

Mao was conflicted: proud of China's history and of his ability to write poetry in classical Chinese forms, but full of hate for the "traditional" Confucian culture which by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had left China weak, divided, and poor. In the 1920s, Revolution seemed the only tool capable of forging a modern nation and destroying everything old – "feudalism" and the landlord class. But in the 1930s, defending the nation against Japanese imperialism meant uniting all patriots regardless of class. Mao wrote his poem "Snow" in 1937 but did not make it public until 1945, after the surrender of Japan, at the start of the Civil War which brought him to power in 1949. It is a vision of China as a nation with long roots in time, neglecting the fact that the territory of the modern Chinese nation was assembled by the Manchus to form the Qing Empire. In the right column are scattered observations as problems and strategies changed.

### SNOW

This is the scene in that northern land;  
A hundred leagues are sealed with ice,  
A thousand leagues of whirling snow.  
On either side of the Great Wall  
One vastness is all you see.  
From end to end of the great river  
The rushing torrent is frozen and lost.  
The mountains dance like silver snakes,  
The highlands roll like waxen elephants,  
As if they sought to vie with heaven in their height.  
And on a sunny day  
You will see a red dress thrown over the white,  
Enchantingly lovely!

Such great beauty like this in all our landscape  
Has caused unnumbered heroes to bow in homage.  
But alas, Qin Shihuangdi and Han Wudi  
Were rather lacking in culture.  
Rather lacking in literary talent were  
Tang Taizu and Song Taizu,  
and Chinghis Khan,  
The favorite Son of Heaven for a day,  
Knew only how to bend his bow and shoot great vultures.

Now they are all past and gone.  
To find heroes in the grand manner  
We must look here in the present.

Mao Tse-tung (1937) 1945

In a very short time..., several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back. They will ... rush forward along the road to liberation. They will sweep all the imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local bullies and evil gentry into their graves....

A revolution is not a dinner party."

Mao Zedong, 1927

Power grows from the barrel of a gun.

Mao 1937

China has stood up.

Mao 1949

Bombard the headquarters....

To rebel is justified...

No destruction, no construction [i.e. There can be no construction without destruction, or, "you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."]

Red Guards quotes from early Mao, 1966

It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice.. .

Get rich first.

Poverty is not socialism.

Deng Xiaoping 1978

What is democracy? Nike shoes and time to talk with my girlfriend.

Tiananmen demonstrator, 1989

Democracy is chaos (*luan*). ..

It doesn't matter how many we kill as long as the economy grows...

Deng 1989



Adapted from WIKIPEDIA

## Olympic Opening Ceremony Order of Events

- 2,008 Fou drummers; lit their drums to form giant digits (in both Arabic and Chinese numerals) to countdown the final seconds to opening time 8:08 p.m., 8/08/08 opening date.
- 29 fireworks, another of the great Chinese inventions, in the shape of footprints marching along Beijing city's central axis into the national stadium, represented the 29 Olympiads.
- 20 Buddhist apsaras of the Mogao Caves hover near giant Olympic rings, each holding 45,000 beads.
- 56 children representing 56 ethnic groups (each was Han Chinese in ethnic costume), carrying the flag of the PRC; 9-year-old Lin Miaoke sang Ode to the Motherland (listeners heard the voice of Yang Peiyi); flag handed over to eight People's Liberation Army soldiers who carried the flag in goose-stepping march to the podium and the Chinese national anthem March of the Volunteers sung.

### Artistic section

- Prelude: Film: "The Making of Paper" Four Great Inventions; performance of black-costumed dancers whose hands hid brushes dipped in ink, leaving trails on the block of white paper; accompanied by *guqin* (7-string zither). The LED scroll showed painting by Wang Ximeng.
- Fluid array of 897 movable type blocks that formed three variations of the character *He* (harmony), representing the third great Chinese invention: the movable type press. Shown in Bronze inscription, Seal script and Modern Chinese Script. 810 Zhou-era performers representing the 3000 Disciples of Confucius, carrying bamboo slips, recited excerpts from the Analects: "Isn't it great to have friends coming from afar?" and "All men are brothers within the four seas." The blocks changed into a small version of the Great Wall, then sprouted plum blossoms, Chinese symbol for openness. The tops of the blocks come off to reveal 897 performers, who waved vigorously, indicating that the blocks were not computer controlled.
- Terracotta soldiers; Chinese opera; Beijing opera puppetry performance.
- Dancers in Tang dynasty clothing carried by hundreds of performers; LED screen depicts Silk Road.
- Procession of men with oars; junks show expeditions of Zheng He; another Chinese invention, the compass, in its ancient form a metal spoon floating in a fluid.
- *Kunqu*, one of the oldest extant Chinese operas, accompanied on a *guzheng*.
- Modern segment:: pianist Lang Lang and five-year-old Li Muzi; melody from the Yellow River Cantata.
- A Tàijíquán performance by 2,008 masters showed harmony with nature.
- Schoolchildren drawing and coloring on the paper scroll and chanting poetry; the same children representing the 56 ethnic groups of China. They symbolized a Green Olympics (to protect the world).
- Celestial show, arrival of astronauts symbolizing Chinese space exploration; 60-foot, 16-ton ball structure representing the earth.
- The Chinese singer Liu Huan and British singer Sarah Brightman sang 2008 Olympic theme song: You and Me.
- 2,008 performers raise parasols with smiling faces of young children; red and orange fireworks in the form of smiley faces; 56 ethnic groups danced a vigorous folk dance.

## CHINESE CULTURE SHINES AT DAZZLING OLYMPICS OPENING CEREMONY

BEIJING, Aug. 8 (Xinhua) -- Five thousand years of Chinese civilization rolled out on a painting scroll on Friday as the Beijing Olympics opened with resounding fireworks, dazzling lights and merrymaking crowds.

The National Stadium, or Bird's Nest, in northern Beijing basked in glory and excitement as icons of traditional Chinese culture paraded onto the central stage. The Great Wall, Confucius, Kunqu and Taiji. Revered Chinese film director Zhang Yimou has kept icons of traditional Chinese culture on his scroll, which opened to become a 147-meter long stage for a dreamlike world of light, shadow and pictures.

An audience of 91,000 gasped as fairies gracefully fell from the sky to scoop the falling stars that had formed the Olympic rings on the stage after a session of welcoming fireworks.

"How happy we are, to meet friends from afar", a crowd of 2,008 performers began chanting lines of Confucius -- a great Chinese scholar and teacher of all teachers -- accompanied by the percussion rhythms of 2,008 fous, a primitive instrument made of clay or bronze.

Chinese culture shone at Beijing's Olympic opening epic, in which primitive musical instruments found harmony with modern piano, ancient culture was brought to life through high technologies and Chinese athletes joined worldwide players.

The performances began with a black and white Chinese ink and wash painting, drawn by the unique body language of the performers.

At the end of the opening gala, the work became a colorful painting with green trees and blue water, by worldwide athletes parading into the stadium as well as children and artists.

"That's a pretty aesthetic way of doing it," said Debbie Bowen from Chicago, the United States, of the scroll performance. "It's not easy for me to understand Chinese culture, but the information conveyed through body language and behavioral arts is pretty clear."

Valkerie Mangnall, Associated Press reporter from Australia, said the performances were "beautiful".

"Even without the explanation on the screen, I think they are easy to understand. The part of the writing is a little abstract, but the opera, the music, the nature part are pretty obvious with the theme of the harmony."

### FOUR INVENTIONS<sup>1</sup>

Zhang Yimou said his team had planned to use the four inventions as a main thread throughout the opening ceremony. "We chose the painting scroll instead because the four inventions are still not enough to represent the entire Chinese civilization."

He wove the four inventions into the scroll instead.

The unrolling scroll that started Friday's performances and the wash and ink painting that in the center represented the Chinese invention of papermaking, one of China's special contributions to the spread and development of world cultures.

Elements of papermaking, movable-type printing, compass and gunpowder were carefully woven into the opening performances as highlights of Chinese civilization.

Movable-type printing appeared in the "Writing" part of the performances and took an image of both ancient character case and modern computer keyboard. A performer trod the "Silk Road" holding an ancient compass and gunpowder was represented in the dazzling displays of fireworks.

### HARMONY

Harmony was a key word in Friday's performances, with three versions of the same Chinese character "He" -- meaning harmony -- in different historical periods to express man's common pursuit of harmony and peace.

Harmony was found also in Taiji, meaning the supreme ultimate, which was believed to be the origin of the universe. Ancient Chinese philosophers believed that people and all things were constituted by the interaction of the two poles (yin and yang) and the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth).

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<sup>1</sup>[Wikipedia [Four Great Inventions of Ancient China](#)]

Friday's performances demonstrated the Eight Diagrams of Taiji, symbolizing eight natural phenomena, including heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountain and swamp and bringing out the changes of all things on the earth.

During the performances, children read in unison and colored the ancient Chinese paintings of nature green, expressing the idea of environmental protection which is also the key concept of Taiji -- unity of man and nature.

Ancient Chinese music, represented by percussion instrument *fou* and stringed instrument *Guqin*, struke a chord with modern piano played by renowned Chinese pianist Lang Lang and a five-year-old girl.

## **WITH CONFIDENCE, BEIJING EMBRACES WORLD**

When Zhang Yimou's scroll opened on Friday night, Beijing opened arms to the world.

The scroll has kept showing up at the Beijing Games: in the Olympic torch and in the placards indicating names of countries during the athletes parade.

Beijing embraced the world when British singer Sarah Brightman and Chinese singer Liu Huan sang from the top of an elevated globe, "You and me, from one world; heart to heart, we are one family". Smiling faces of children from across the world beamed from the rim of the round, tank-like stadium and from 2,008 umbrellas fanning out on the central stage.

The entire audience roared when Chinese President Hu Jintao announced the opening of the Beijing Games.

"A prime mission of the Beijing Olympic Games is to enhance cultural exchanges between peoples in the world," said International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge at the opening ceremony. "We sincerely hope that the time-honored Chinese civilization, the vibrant palette of urban and rural lives in China and the hospitality of the Chinese people, will leave you all with warm and indelible memories of the country."

The whole world marveled at the glories of the opening ceremony, watched live by 91,000 audience and an estimated 4 billion TV viewers across the globe.



**2008 BEIJING OLYMPIC EVENTS**



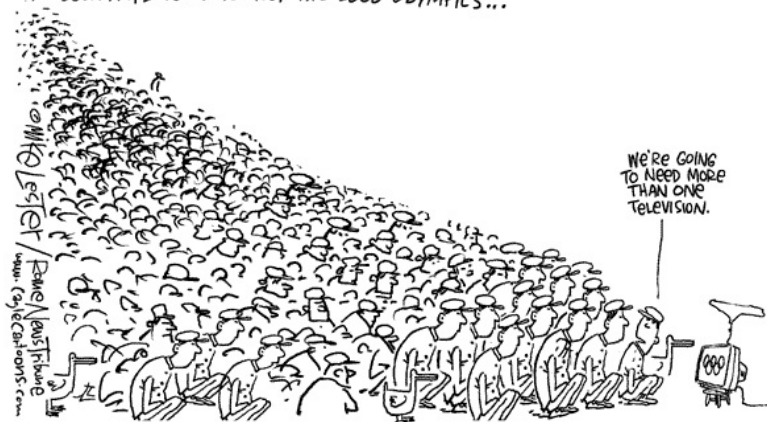
## HURDLES

## GYMNASTICS

## WRESTLING

## MARATHON

CHINESE PRIDE AND ANTICIPATION  
BEGIN TO BUILD AS THEY AWAIT THEIR  
COUNTRY'S TURN TO HOST THE 2008 OLYMPICS...



02001 CREDITORS SYNDICATE INC.  
AOL KEYWORD: BOB GORRELL  
GORRELL



IN THESE TIMES 1/21-29/67



CHRISTIAN PRESS

# RED FLAG CANAL: WISE OR FOOLISH?

## RED FLAG CANAL (40 minute; 1970)

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The film tells the story of the The Red Flag Canal, built by an impoverished village in Henan province, bordering Shanxi, was started late in the Great Leap Forward of the 1950s and finished in 1965. The project brought water through a mountain in forty two channels. Local leaders organized labor teams, not machines, and local planning, not state funding. Therefore it represents Mao's "do it yourself" *zili gengsheng* strategy to harness nature, building China from the village up, not from the capital down, and depending on local initiative, not professionals or bureaucrats. The 1970 film reflects the strengths of the Cultural Revolution, not its excesses and mistakes. The scenery and the faces of the villagers in the film are very much the same as those in the early Fifth Generation films such as *Yellow Earth*.

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## QUESTIONS

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- David Davies in the third piece reports a changed situation and a different view. What has changed and why does he see things differently? What does he point to as evidence? Who are his authorities? How is his tone different?
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- Who are the people portrayed in the film and the articles? Men? Women? Old? Children? Officials? Do they play different roles in the film? In the articles?
- What is the tone and style of each piece? What is the audience?
- Can you make arguments both for and against Red Flag Canal as a heroic piece of work?

# THE FOOLISH OLD MAN WHO REMOVED THE MOUNTAINS

Mao Zedong

In 1945, before the Communists came to power, Mao Zedong addressed a Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Many party members were discouraged because the enemy had more weapons and money. Mao encouraged them with this argument and this story.

Our aim in propagating the line of the congress is to build up the confidence of the whole Party and the entire people in the certain triumph of the revolution. We must first raise the political consciousness of the vanguard so that, resolute and unafraid of sacrifice, they will surmount every difficulty to win victory. But this is not enough; we must also arouse the political consciousness of the entire people so that they may willingly and gladly fight together with us for victory. We should fire the whole people with the conviction that China belongs not to the reactionaries but to the Chinese people.

There is an ancient Chinese fable called “The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains.” It tells of an old man who lived in northern China long, long ago and was known as the Foolish Old Man of North Mountain. His house faced south and beyond his doorway stood the two great peaks, Taihang and Wangwu,<sup>1</sup> obstructing the way. He called his sons, and hoe in hand they began to dig up these mountains with great determination.

Another graybeard, known as the Wise Old Man, saw them and said derisively, “How silly of you to do this! It is quite impossible for you few to dig up those two huge mountains.” The Foolish Old Man replied, “When I die, my sons will carry on; when they die, there will be my grandsons, and then their sons and grandsons, and so on to infinity. High as they are, the mountains cannot grow any higher and with every bit we dig, they will be that much lower. Why can't we clear them away?” Having refuted the Wise Old Man's wrong view, he went on digging every day, unshaken in his conviction. God was moved by this, and he sent down two angels, who carried the mountains away on their backs.

Today, two big mountains lie like a dead weight on the Chinese people. One is imperialism, the other is feudalism. The Chinese Communist Party has long made up its mind to dig them up. We must persevere and work unceasingly, and we, too, will touch God's heart. Our God is none other than the masses of the Chinese people. If they stand up and dig together with us, why can't these two mountains be cleared away?

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In 1965, Mao felt that his revolution had decayed into bureaucracy and that so-called “experts” had denied the initiative of the people in much the same way that the Wise Old Man denied the initiative of the Foolish Old Man. The Little Red Book, the selection of Mao's thoughts which circulated in millions of copies, included this fable. Mao and his supporters saw The Red Flag Canal as carrying on the spirit of the Foolish Old Man who turned out to be the wise one by relying on the people.

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## **RED FLAG CANAL- THE TOTEM OF CHINA**

*This recent report (2009) from a semi-official website summarizes the appeal of the project without mentioning problems or changing political climate.*

On the road to Lin County, there is a big sign reading 'Welcome to the Hometown of the Red Flag Canal'. In the streets, the products labeled with 'Red Flag Canal' can be seen everywhere, from liquors to smoke. The name of the Red Flag Canal has been closely connected with Lin County. Locally, the Red Flag Canal is also called the canal of life or the canal with happiness.

It is August now. The weather is pleasant. Along the way, Tanghang Mountain extends long and wide, and was all covered with green trees. The Red Flag Canal then has become a scenic spot, welcoming tourists all over the country. The ticket is 61 yuan. At the village of Zhenshuihe of Yao village, some fish pond and fruit forest built by local villagers can still be seen. According to villager Sang Huanrong, when there was no Red Flag Canal a few decades ago, it was a naked mountain. Villagers had to carry water from places far away. Raising a fish pond was just unpractical....

The Linzhou is in ... a mountainous area with droughts in almost all seasons. Lin County [history records] about 100 natural disasters, 30 droughts and man-eating phenomenon between 1436 and 1949.... The bodies were piled like a hill. In all, the matter of water bewildered the 100, 000 people in Lin County.

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The only method was to find water from outside. Yang Gui was the county mayor at that time. Under his leadership, the committee put forward a crazy idea, even to nowadays people – that was to build a river on the rock purely by manpower, to draw the water to the county from Zhanghe River.

The canal was indeed a miracle to everyone at that time. The main canal was 70.6 kilometers. From the starting point in Shanxi province to the end in Lin County, there was only 8.8 m fall in altitude. If there were any mistake, the canal, with such a long distance, would fail to draw water to the county. In addition, there were hardly tools or machines to help dig the hard rock stones of the Taihang Mountain....

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In the 70s, Premier [Zhou Enlai] said to international friends proudly, 'there are two miracles in China, one is the Nanjing Yangtze River Bridge, and the other is the Red Flag Canal in Lin County.'

The canal has improved the living conditions of people in Lin County. They received a great harvest. The plowland could yield 50 kilograms of crop originally, but now it is about 10 times of that. And villagers started to plan their own fish pond and fruits.

The canal has even brought more changes. It is set as an example for the rest of the country, and attracted many overseas experts to visit. To date, the brand of the Red Flag Canal has generated great commercial values, such as liquors and cigarettes. ...

The spirit of that time, hard work and struggle, has been built as a totem for the county and the whole country.

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The spirit is still of great importance today when China's is building a well-off society in an all-round way, said the official.

China is now at the primary stage of socialism, and the socialist modernization will only be achieved after arduous efforts of many generations.

Li said the “red flag canal spirit” should be closely combined with today's situation, so that it will become a strong spiritual power to encourage cadres and the public in the socialist construction.

Li said the display was very meaningful, adding that it is an effective way to educate the people, especially the youth.

More high school and college students should be organized to visit the display so as to remember and pass on the precious spirit, said Li.

## FINDING RED FLAG CANAL (Excerpts)

David Davies

*Davies is a traveler with experience in China, but not a specialist in economics or politics. But here he gives a sharp eyed report on what he saw and heard on his visit in 2010*

While in China last month I found myself with a bit of extra time and thought I would visit the canal to see it for myself. It is located near contemporary Linzhou, Henan and is most easily reached from Anyang, which is about four hours by express train from Beijing. I had initially hoped to join a Chinese tour group leaving Anyang, but there were no groups departing the weekend that I was in town. At the suggestion of the local branch of CITS, I cut a deal with a local taxi driver for a day and had him drive me out to the canal and surrounding areas.

### From Revolutionary to Entrepreneurial

The Red Flag Canal Museum has the familiar 1960's Communist-era architecture, slogans and design that suggests it once received—or had planned on receiving—many more tourists than it currently does. At the same time, however, the healthy amount of souvenirs for sale in the parking lot and the sights and sounds of fresh renovation suggests it is still a reasonably busy destination even in 21st century China. Indeed, as I walked into the museum I was surprised to see quite a few groups of middle-aged tourists chatting excitedly and snapping photos. The museum is built alongside a large branch of the canal at a point where it is diverted into smaller canals—so visitors move alongside and cross over the canal while visiting the museum.

When it was built in the late 1960's the museum was intended to communicate the history of the canal's construction to commemorate and propagate its "revolutionary spirit" across the generations. It is a spirit of "self-reliance and arduous struggle" that depends on collective action for collective gain. The museum tells the story beginning with the pre-canal conditions in the region around Linzhou, previously called Linxian. The area was dry with unpredictable rainfall and frequent droughts that brought suffering to local people. The construction of the canal was intended to take water from the Chang River and divert it though the Taihang Mountains....

During his visit [President Jiang Zemin] presented his own gift of calligraphy ... with an interesting twist that says much more about the attempt to rewrite the canal's meanings. Replacing Mao's emphasis on "self reliance and arduous struggle, Jiang wrote, "Develop the Red Flag Canal's Spirit of Self-Reliance and Arduous Undertaking!" Replacing "struggle" *fendou* with a different word, *chuangye*. While the word might be loosely translated as "undertaking" or "business"... the term is more commonly used these days to describe "entrepreneurial activity"—by a person, for example, who creates something of value from nothing—a "startup". By replacing one character Jiang appears to have made a symbolic attempt to push the meaning of the Red Flag Canal away from collective struggle toward more individual creativity....

Where Mao was the foundational inspiration for the masses who, we are told in the older section of the museum, relied on themselves to build the canal. In the updated sections of the museum visitors are reminded numerous times that it was the party who provided the organization for the locals to create the canal. In fact, it was only within the safe confines of party leadership that the locals could successfully engage in their entrepreneurial activity....

### Try the Proletarian Hammer and Leave a Smoke For Mao

At the conclusion of the walking route, just before I heading down the mountainside to the parking area where I planned to meet the driver, I passed a group of local women dressed-up as a women's brigade straight out of the "classic" Red Flag Canal film. Complete with woven rattan hats and period clothing, they hammered steel bars like the film depicted. Visitors gasped at the women demonstrating the way the hammers and steel bars were used to drill holes in the rock, and found the crude tools funny. The actors were happy to take photos with tourists and welcomed visitors to try welding the their proletarian hammers. It was an opportunity for tourists to play-act being a worker on the Red Flag canal. Of course, like others I could not miss an opportunity to re-enact a scene from the film—so I gave it a try.



## Mao's FootPrint

Michael Buckley

### **Revolutionary Red China or revolutionary Green China—which is the way forward?**

The Mao Zedong mentality from the 1950s is that Mother Nature can (and should) be defeated and overcome—and that Red China will surely achieve this. The slogan 'Humans must conquer nature' was widespread under Chairman Mao. Mao's arrogant legacy lingers today with the leadership of the military-industrial-complex that rules China. Over 60 percent of China's current leaders have engineering backgrounds—and vested interests in large engineering companies that need mega-projects to keep going.

There is a contrary viewpoint being spearheaded by the educated elite of Chinese society. This viewpoint is that trying to take on Mother Nature can lead to disaster. This is a Green China movement...

#### **Red Flag Canal**

In the early days of the Mao era, taking on Mother Nature had mixed results.... The Great Sparrow Campaign, initiated by Mao Zedong in the late 1950s, was launched because sparrows ate grain seeds and were thought to be detrimental to agriculture. It was decided that all peasants in China would bang pots and pans and run around to make sparrows fly away in fear. Sparrows were killed with slingshots, nests were destroyed, nestlings were killed.... With no sparrows to eat them,

the locust population ballooned, swarming the country and compounding the problems already caused by the Great Leap Forward....

But on to the engineering experiments. At the height of Maoist revolutionary fervour in the 1960s, a colossal project called Red Flag Canal was launched by peasants using the most rudimentary of tools. Between 1960 and 1969, more than 100,000 'volunteer' labourers tunnelled through hundreds of kilometres of mountain to divert drinking water from Shanxi province to the parched valleys of Lin County in northern Henan province. This was touted by Mao's propaganda people as a marvel of engineering, and is still held up by the Party as a patriotic model of the Communist spirit.

Red Flag Canal has not fared well with the passage of time. Today, it is little more than a tourist attraction: the water level has dropped as the source river dwindles, much of Lin County has dried up again, and upstream pollution makes the water unpotable. There are bitter disputes between Lin County farmers and those upstream who had their water stolen through diversion (and who now receive compensation from the Lin County government)...

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When it was built in the late 1960's the museum was intended to communicate the history of the canal's construction to commemorate and propagate its "revolutionary spirit" across the generations. It is a spirit of "self-reliance and arduous struggle" that depends on collective action for collective gain. The museum tells the story beginning with the pre-canal conditions in the region around Linzhou, previously called Linxian. The area was dry with unpredictable rainfall and frequent droughts that brought suffering to local people. The construction of the canal was intended to take water from the Chang River and divert it though the Taihang Mountains....

During his visit [President Jiang Zemin] presented his own gift of calligraphy ... with an interesting twist that says much more about the attempt to rewrite the canal's meanings. Replacing Mao's emphasis on "self reliance and arduous struggle, Jiang wrote, "Develop the Red Flag Canal's Spirit of Self-Reliance and Arduous Undertaking!" Replacing "struggle" *fendou* with a different word, *chuangye*. While the word might be loosely translated as "undertaking" or "business"... the term is more commonly used these days to describe "entrepreneurial activity"—by a person, for example, who creates something of value from nothing—a "startup". By replacing one character Jiang appears to have made a symbolic attempt to push the meaning of the Red Flag Canal away from collective struggle toward more individual creativity....

Where Mao was the foundational inspiration for the masses who, we are told in the older section of the museum, relied on themselves to build the canal. In the updated sections of the museum visitors are reminded numerous times that it was the party who provided the organization for the locals to create the canal. In fact, it was only within the safe confines of party leadership that the locals could successfully engage in their entrepreneurial activity....

### Try the Proletarian Hammer and Leave a Smoke For Mao

At the conclusion of the walking route, just before I heading down the mountainside to the parking area where I planned to meet the driver, I passed a group of local women dressed-up as a women's brigade straight out of the "classic" Red Flag Canal film. Complete with woven rattan hats and period clothing, they hammered steel bars like the film depicted. Visitors gasped at the women demonstrating the way the hammers and steel bars were used to drill holes in the rock, and found the crude tools funny. The actors were happy to take photos with tourists and welcomed visitors to try welding the their proletarian hammers. It was an opportunity for tourists to play-act being a worker on the Red Flag canal. Of course, like others I could not miss an opportunity to re-enact a scene from the film—so I gave it a try.



## Mao's FootPrint

Michael Buckley

### **Revolutionary Red China or revolutionary Green China—which is the way forward?**

The Mao Zedong mentality from the 1950s is that Mother Nature can (and should) be defeated and overcome—and that Red China will surely achieve this. The slogan 'Humans must conquer nature' was widespread under Chairman Mao. Mao's arrogant legacy lingers today with the leadership of the military-industrial-complex that rules China. Over 60 percent of China's current leaders have engineering backgrounds—and vested interests in large engineering companies that need mega-projects to keep going.

There is a contrary viewpoint being spearheaded by the educated elite of Chinese society. This viewpoint is that trying to take on Mother Nature can lead to disaster. This is a Green China movement...

#### **Red Flag Canal**

In the early days of the Mao era, taking on Mother Nature had mixed results.... The Great Sparrow Campaign, initiated by Mao Zedong in the late 1950s, was launched because sparrows ate grain seeds and were thought to be detrimental to agriculture. It was decided that all peasants in China would bang pots and pans and run around to make sparrows fly away in fear. Sparrows were killed with slingshots, nests were destroyed, nestlings were killed.... With no sparrows to eat them,

the locust population ballooned, swarming the country and compounding the problems already caused by the Great Leap Forward....

But on to the engineering experiments. At the height of Maoist revolutionary fervour in the 1960s, a colossal project called Red Flag Canal was launched by peasants using the most rudimentary of tools. Between 1960 and 1969, more than 100,000 'volunteer' labourers tunnelled through hundreds of kilometres of mountain to divert drinking water from Shanxi province to the parched valleys of Lin County in northern Henan province. This was touted by Mao's propaganda people as a marvel of engineering, and is still held up by the Party as a patriotic model of the Communist spirit.

Red Flag Canal has not fared well with the passage of time. Today, it is little more than a tourist attraction: the water level has dropped as the source river dwindles, much of Lin County has dried up again, and upstream pollution makes the water unpotable. There are bitter disputes between Lin County farmers and those upstream who had their water stolen through diversion (and who now receive compensation from the Lin County government)...

# TO LIVE (HUOZHE)

1994 Dir. ZHANG Yimou. Screenplay by YU Hua and LU Wei.

Based on *To Live: A Novel* by YU Hua (1993; Tr. Michael Berry. NY: Anchor-Random House, 2003).

## CHARACTERS

### *XU Family*

- *Fugui* (Shoo Foo-gway: family name: Xu)
- *Jiazhen* (Jya-zhen) wife of Fugui
- *Fengxia* (Fung-shya) daughter of Fugui, Jiazhen
- *Youqing* (Yoe-ching) son of Fugui, Jiazhen

- *Long'er*: teahouse owner; a gambler
- *Chunsheng* (Chwun-shung) tea house waiter, then puppet troupe, Party official.
- “*Mayor*” *NIU*: Party (Cadre)/ head of the municipality.
- *WAN Erxi*, worker; marries Fengxia
- “*Little Bun*”: their son

## PLOT SUMMARY: FOUR DECADES

**OLD SOCIETY 1940s** Fugui gambles away the family home at Long'er's tea house; Jiazhen leaves, taking Fengxia; Fugui's father dies of rage. Jiazhen returns to Fugui, explaining she wants only a peaceful life with her family: *huozhe*, “to live” or “survive.” Fugui asks Long'er for a loan, but Long'er gives him the trunk of shadow-puppets. Fugui's puppet-troupe, including Chunsheng, are conscripted into Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist army then Mao's People's Liberation Army.

**LIBERATION 1949-** Fugui returns home with a PLA certificate showing he “participated in Revolution”; Chunsheng drives trucks; Jiazhen delivers hot water; Fengxia is mute; Long'er executed as a landlord.

**GREAT LEAP FORWARD 1958-61** “Mayor” Niu collects iron for backyard furnaces. Youqing volunteers puppets, Niu says they cheer workers; Commune “big pot” meals are free; Fugui explains progression to Socialism; Youqing defends Fengxia, dumps spiced noodles on bully's head; Fugui scolds Youqing; Jiazhen/ Youqing deliver vinegar-tea to Fugui; Fugui carries sleep-deprived Youqing to school; new district chief (Chunshen), drives jeep into wall, kills Youqing.

**CULTURAL REVOLUTION 1966-76:** Mayor Niu finds Fengxia a husband; Wan Erxi lame but from “good class background.” Fengxia agrees; Niu and Chunsheng attacked as “capitalist roaders”; Fengxia taken to hospital, but no doctors, only students armed with the Thought of Mao Zedong; Dr. Wang imprisoned as “counter-revolutionary,” eats too many buns; Fengxia bleeds to death giving birth to Little Bun.

**DENG XIAOPING REFORMS 1976-** Erxi, Fugui, Jiazhen, Little Bun visit graves; simple family meal; Fugui again explains progression to Socialism.

## QUESTIONS AND THEMES

- Films reflect the time in which they are made, not the period in which they are set. When was this film made (not just the year, but the political period)? Is the film critical or supportive of *Deng Xiaoping* and the Reforms?
- The 1949 Revolution was known as “Liberation,” a complete break with China's feudal history and the establishment of a powerful nation – liberation from feudalism and imperialism. Does this film portray revolution in this way?
- Zhang Yimou's education was interrupted by Mao's Cultural Revolution and he was sent to the countryside. Is this film sympathetic to Mao's goals? Would you expect Zhang to give a neutral and/or reliable account of the period?
- Party officials -- Mayor Niu, Chunshen -- are they portrayed as Bad Guys?
- Mao Zedong is scarcely mentioned, but watch for his pictures. Where are they? What shape are they in?
- Food: What do people eat? Where? Who do they eat with? What do they use food for and what does the food do? Does food always do good?
- Who is the film about? Who is protagonist? Fugui? Jiazhen? The Family? Who is it that “lives”? What “survives”
  - Who financed this film? Who was the primary audience? What is most important in a film – to be accurate history? To entertain? To sell tickets?
- Next Step: Yu Hua's novel, *To Live* is a good short read, and differs from the film in interesting ways.

- Kelly Long, “Teacher's Guide to *To Live*” (Asian Educational Media Service): [http://www.aems.illinois.edu/downloads/To\\_Live.pdf](http://www.aems.illinois.edu/downloads/To_Live.pdf)

Adapted in part from Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hero\\_\(2002\\_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hero_(2002_film))

## HERO (2002)

Directed by Zhang Yimou   Cinematography by Christopher Doyle

Wuming "Nameless"	Jet LI	Can Jian "Broken Sword"	Tony LEUNG	King of Qin/ Ying Zhen, the future Qin Shi Huangdi	CHEN Daoming
Fei Xue "Flying Snow"	Maggie CHEUNG	Chang Kong "Long Sky"	Donnie YEN	Ru Yue "Moon"	ZHANG Ziyi.

### THE FILM

The action is set during the Warring States Period (circa 225 BC), shortly before the unification of the empire. It tells the story of assassination attempts on the king of Qin by legendary warriors who seek revenge for his subjugation of their kingdoms. The king justifies his actions as necessary for the unification of *tianxia*, pointing to the convoluted Chinese written language as illustration. Ying Zheng in 221 BC did indeed defeat the local kingdoms and become the first emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi (lived 259-210 BC; reigned 221-210 BC).

This was Zhang's first attempt at the *wuxia* (martial arts) genre, and he uses a highly unusual structure. Conflicting versions of the events are recounted by different characters, reminiscent of Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950). Each section uses a different color scheme depending on the narrator's point of view.

As more versions of the same story are presented, the characters of the narration grow more intelligent, insightful, and thoughtful. At the start of the film, during the first story told by the Nameless, Broken Sword is portrayed as a mere brawler and Flying Snow seems ruled by her thoughts of the past and her hatred/love of Broken Sword; at the conclusion of the film, in the final story and the scenes after the death of Nameless, Broken Sword is presented as a deeply contemplative and forward-thinking warrior and Flying Snow is a woman who feels the weight of their entire civilization resting upon her shoulders in addition to her own feelings. They grapple with complex issues that force them to think rather than fight, and they must weigh their own lives against their entire nation.

The film has a tragic structure; its six main characters come to realize that unity depends on their own decisions and actions. Their patriotic responsibility conflicts with their personal desires for revenge, and with their relationships to each other.

### POLITICAL OVERTONES

The film was inspired in part by a desire to match Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* with a film made in the People's Republic. The film failed to be as successful as its makers hoped, in part because some overseas perceived it as

pro-totalitarian and pro-Chinese reunification. Critics cited the approval given to the film by the government. These critics argue that the ulterior meaning of the film is the triumph of security and stability over liberty and human rights and that the concept of "all under heaven" (translated in the American release as "Our Land") is used anachronistically to mean "China" even though the Qin Empire was different in structure and extent. At least in the eyes of some critics this might justify the incorporation of areas such Tibet and Xinjiang and promote the reunification of Taiwan with China. Zhang Yimou maintained he had no political intentions and that he could have chosen a different time in history.

The future first Emperor of China is portrayed in a sympathetic light. For centuries Confucians castigated Qin Shi Huang as a tyrant who buried scholars and burned books (ironically, historians now agree that these particular charges were brought by Han dynasty Confucians who found it safer to criticize brutality in a dead emperor than a live one). A more traditional portrait of Qin Shi Huang is found in Chen Kaige's *The Emperor and the Assassin* (1999), while Zhou Xiaowen's 1996 *QinSong* (The Emperor's Shadow), portrays the conflict between the Emperor and his childhood companion who refuses to perform his music in service of the empire. Mao Zedong compared himself with Qin Shi Huang as a unifying founder of a state which replaced an older political system. Qin Shi Huang's reign, while brutal, effectively unified the writing system, weights and measures, currency, and national transport.

### CROSS-CULTURAL TRANSLATIONS

Some criticized the translation in the American-release of one of the central ideas in the film, *tiānxià*, which literally means "all under heaven," that is, "the empire," or "all that is Chinese." It is also used in the Neo-Confucian proverb "To suffer when all under heaven suffer, to enjoy only when all under heaven enjoy." Miramax chose to translate it as "our land," probably to avoid a cultural tangle. In addition, cries from the soldiers were changed from "Hail!" to "storm," in order to avoid a Nazi/fascist connotation.



## ZHANG YIMOU AND STATE AESTHETICS (Excerpts)

1) "Zhang Yimou and Fascist Aesthetics" By Cui Weiping, Professor of Beijing Academy of Film:

Some people use the term "violence aesthetics" to describe the visual effects of the film *Hero* directed by Zhang Yimou. However, I think it is more exact to categorize it as fascist aesthetics. Just to beautify violence is not fascist aesthetics. The effect of fascist aesthetics is to make an individual succumb to some mysterious, heavenly and invincible power. An individual feels awed and humbled in the face of power. ...

The impression of supremacy comes also from the high level of uniformity emphasized by the director. He got rid of all noises in order to exhibit the existence of an overwhelming power. The film didn't show a single face of the common people. We could not see any old men, women, children, or craftsmen in it. Besides the Emperor of Qin and the assassins, there were not any other characters in between. It seemed that the director regarded secular lives as dross, whose existence could only foul the lofty ambitions of the heroes.

Some people have questioned whether the gigantic soldier formations in *Hero* looked more like those in ancient Rome than in China. Actually it was not in the Roman style either. It just came from an imagined image of something invincible. The soldiers in the formations were in the same uniform, wore the same rigid expressions and executed the same actions. They surged up from a vast and unpeopled background as if they were controlled by the will of a mysterious power. They gathered and scattered swiftly and disappeared within a second. The huge number of ant-like people was not used to exhibit any military strategy. The accumulation of them was merely to showcase the magnitude of the power controlling them...

2) Zhu Dake (*China News Week*)

Zhang Yimou is a master at directing totalitarian group calisthenics. The visual impact of his art is built on it. Images of uniform soldiers, forests of arms and flags, and huge waves of dust are all used by him to show off the great power of an empire and the strength of unified will. The aesthetics of mass games is a form of fascist aesthetics, which existed during the Nazi movement. The unity it advocates seems lovely: all people are subject to a supreme will and they break into deafening cheers for it.

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## I DISAPPROVE OF MAKING UNDERGROUND FILMS <sup>1</sup>

ZHANG YIMOU

*In 1999, Zhang Yimou faced a number of challenges. US-China tension heated when the US bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. The breakup of the state supported studio system also meant that Chinese filmmakers had to find international funding and new markets. The state continued to control what could be shown and restricted imports. Younger directors of the so-called "Sixth Generation" turned to "underground" films, which used new lightweight and cheap digital technology and could circulate in pirated versions. Wang Xiaoshuai and Jia Zhangke became favorites of the international art house crowd and won many prizes in the West.*

Hollywood movies are infiltrating the whole world, together with American culture, and China may be holding the last defensible position. The situation with Chinese-made films is quite parlous and in a state of overall decline. Times are hard for everybody, and I do not have any special prescription. Only remember one thing: Our personal destinies are bound up together with the interests of the state.

As far as directors are concerned, we should take the lead in conscientiously and responsibly doing a good job of making every film. If everyone did this, the situation would be much better. However, the good and the bad are mixed together in the ranks of our cinema professionals. Many of them fail to reach any standard of quality, and many impostors have become directors or film stars, so there is no way to conduct any unified assessment of them. Consequently, a great many fake and defective products have been turned out, ruining the reputation of films made in China. The fact is that the percentage of trash among American films may be much higher than that among our films, but the majority of their films that are chosen for import are of high quality. It is therefore not surprising that people feel that films made in China are of a comparatively low standard. In the interests of protecting Chinese-made cinema, I very much approve of the state using administrative means to place restrictions on imports of major films.

As far as young directors are concerned, they should face up to the market more than ever, instead of letting themselves be carried away by despair. I disapprove of making underground films. Everyone has the ability to survive. If there are difficulties, we should devise ways and means of extricating ourselves from them. It is obviously unwise to opt for underground films-which is simply a way of giving up on movie theaters and abandoning moviegoers. Such an attitude is one of escaping from reality and in three or five years you will probably have lost even the basic ability to adapt to circumstances.

A director should, of course, maintain his own personality, but it is impossible not to compromise. Realities are powerful and cannot be changed by the individual alone. I myself have been compromising constantly, starting from the time I made *Red Sorghum* right up to the present. There is nothing shameful in doing so. Do you think American directors do not have to compromise? They too must yield to the exigencies of economic profit and audience preferences. American producers frequently force directors to change the endings of their films to conform with moviegoers' comments. It is my impression that only Steven Spielberg has little use for compromise: he has just about reached the stage where he can do anything he pleases. However, I have not yet had a chance to talk with him face-to-face. Quite possibly, he too has a bellyful of grievances!

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<sup>1</sup>Translation from Zhang Yimou, "Wo bu zancheng pai dixia dianying," *Qingnian bao* (Youth daily) (Saturday, May 8, 1999): 11.

## IS *HERO* A PAEAN TO AUTHORITARIANISM? (Excerpts)

ROBERT Y. ENG, UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS

... I have felt that not only is it not a paean to authoritarianism, it is a sharp rejection of it. One should not accept at face value what the protagonists say in the film as representative of the intentions of the auteur (or for that matter, even Zhang Yimou's public utterances about *Hero*). I first saw the Qin army in *Hero* as a faceless fascist war machine, ruthless in its discipline, its mandated unanimity, and its disregard for human life. The Qin army's unison cry of "Feng! Feng!" is chillingly similar to the Nazi salute "Sieg Heil!" The aerial assault of arrows at the beginning of the Qin invasion of the kingdom of Zhao is reminiscent of modern bombardments raining death at a distance.

Contradicting his own claim that his conquests were to end war and bring peace to the Chinese world divided by the Warring States for four and a half centuries, the Qin king Ying Zheng boasts that the six states he sets out to conquer amount to nothing, and that there is a wider world outside for him to conquer. Throughout the film there is not a single concrete indication that Qin unification will bring about peace, justice and benevolent rule. All we have is the word of the Qin king and the hope of the assassin Broken Sword. What we actually see of the Qin state is its relentless war machine and pitiless and faceless bureaucrats. Except for the ominously red plumes on the helmets of the soldiers, both warriors and officials are dressed uniformly in black. The drab blackness of the Qin personnel contrasts starkly with vibrant colors of the costumes of the assassins and their individual scenes. At the end of the film the Qin king himself is helpless to make an independent judgment to save the assassin Nameless despite his own personal feelings and supposed supreme power, since the impersonal and relentless Qin bureaucratic-legal machinery demands the execution of Nameless....

Jet Li, one of the film's stars, perceptively observes: "Zhang Yimou wanted to explore what kind of person can become [a] Hero within the framework of fighting, politics, romance and jealousy. Is it the conquering king? The assassins? The killer of the assassins?" Perhaps all of them can be considered Heroes, if highly misguided.

The vision of "all under heaven" (*tianxia*) is contradicted both by the cinematic representation of the Qin state in *Hero* and by actual historical events. With our historical perspective, can we say that the Qin machine as portrayed in *Hero* is one of national regeneration rather than ruthless expansionism? .... In the case of the Qin king who went on to become First Emperor of China, his imperial regime (221-207 B.C.E.) proved no more durable than the Third Reich. Instead of bringing peace and prosperity to the Chinese people, the Qin state caused great human suffering through oppressive tax and labor demands and endless public construction projects and military campaigns against border peoples. The dynasty went down in the flames of rebellions provoked by its cruelty, and the Chinese people did not enjoy any measure of economic security and peace until the first emperors of the succeeding Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) instituted Daoist policies of light taxes, minimal interference with lives of the people, and a foreign policy centered on diplomacy and defense rather than offense. This historical outcome, which in my view is presaged by the film's grim and relentless imagery of the Qin, contradicts the statement at the close of *Hero* that the First Emperor is protective of the country and the people.



## ***ABSENCE AS SPECTACLE: ZHANG YIMOU'S HERO*** ***(Excerpts)***

Shelley Kraicer

Spectacle, rather than storytelling, teaches *Hero's* philosophy. It is difficult to overstate the magnitude of the filmmaker's aesthetic achievement: the set-pieces crafted by Zhang Yimou, Christopher Doyle, and Ching Siu-tung are as ecstatically kinetic and as rapturously beautiful as any I've seen in a wuxia pian. The fight among the leaves; Nameless and Broken Sword's pure crystalline standoff, suspended above a lake; Nameless and Flying Snow versus a blizzard of Qin arrows; Broken Sword and Flying Snow's astonishingly convincing battle against 10,000 Qin soldiers guarding the King's palace: all of these have the power and the beauty to thrill all but the most jaded filmgoer. But they also serve a specific function. They progress, more or less systematically, from closely pictured combat through abstracted jousting to ethereal non-combat, from the ground to the air, from physical conflict to spiritual opposition. As more and more of the material content of the fights/flights is pared away, absence, silence, space, and peace begin to predominate. The film's most insistent visual motif is the empty circle; a zone of complete emptiness that a hero creates around him or herself, a zone whose authority leaves the hero, invulnerable, isolated, and, at least temporarily at peace.

These ideas emerge in the dialogue, as Broken Sword, then Nameless, learn to articulate the power of renunciation explicitly. In this they are apparently accompanied by the King, who justifies his yearning for absolute power, for control of "all under heaven," by explaining that this is the necessary condition for peace, defined as an absence of

fearful chaos. This is where *Hero* gets into serious trouble with almost all Chinese critics, who jump all over Zhang Yimou for purportedly building an ideological justification for absolute power, for tyranny as a necessary means to a peaceful end. This is nothing new: the director's careful balancing act – presenting films that seem to offer enough to win mainstream (and censor board) approval while maintaining their moral autonomy, richness, and provocative ambiguity vis-à-vis power – is always vulnerable to being (sometimes deliberately, by now automatically) misread by all sides.

Viewers who want to align themselves with the world view of the King of Qin will find a paean to Chinese unity and totalitarian brutality, a reading there for the taking (perhaps present for censors looking for an excuse to greenlight *Hero's* ideological approval-worthiness). But such an argument is not only circular, it fails to take into account the film's clear strategy of distributing – hence undermining – the limited authority of any single character, and of the idea of narrative closure itself. *Hero* celebrates absence as spectacle; it glorifies absolute renunciation and perfect non-violence as preconditions for peace. Like *Nameless*, it addresses authority, undermining power's grip on narrativity. As filmed philosophy, it is both historically apt and disquietingly contemporary, challenging any state or empire that strives for total power – both ancient and modern, Chinese and otherwise – with a force and a beauty impossible to ignore.