



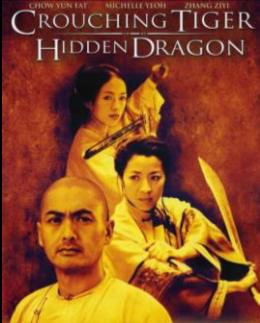
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**PLEASE SHARE:  
Have You Seen/Recognize Any of These Films?**



**If so:** you have an idea of what a **wuxia** film is






**If not:** No worries!  
We'll talk about it today!

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**Introducing the Wuxia Film:  
About the Terminology**



Come Drink With Me  
(King Hu [Hu Jinquan], 1966)

- No satisfactory English translation for *wuxia*
- Sometimes identified as "swordplay film"
- Derived from:
  - *Wu* = "Martial/Military Qualities"
  - *Xia* = "Chivalry, Qualities of Knighthood, Heroism"
- Originally coined by the Japanese in 1902
  - Wide usage in China starting in 1922
  - No longer used by the Japanese
- Often confused with *kungfu* or "martial arts" films
  - *Kungfu* evolved out of *wuxia*

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## Introducing the Wuxia Film: The “Warrior” Behind the Silver Screen

- *Xia* – type of male/female warrior figure found in the Warring States Period (403-221 BC)
  - “errant knights”
  - Historical tradition of sword-bearing warrior figures going from one state to another offering services
  - Comparable to *ronin* in Japanese historical tradition
- Known to take justice into own hands
  - No hesitation to use force
  - Disregard for the law
- Differing opinions on social origins as well as overall views of the *xia*

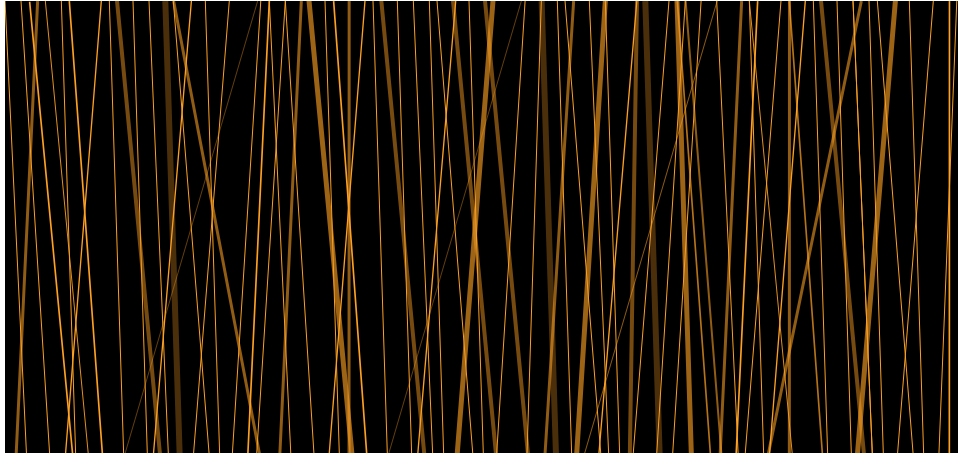


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## Introducing the Wuxia Film: History of the Genre

- *Wuxia*: Initially a literary genre
  - Originated in the Tang Dynasty (618-907)
  - Modern *wuxia* novels emerged post-1919
- Film genre developed out of “period costume” films – more drama-based
  - First recognized *wuxia* film in 1928
- 1930s: *Wuxia* films as “Negative Influence”
  - Government ban until 1980s
  - Moved to Hong Kong
- 1940s: *Kungfu* film genre in Hong Kong
- 1950s & 1960s: Hong Kong Cinema “Boom”
  - Renewed interest in *wuxia* films due to popularity of new *wuxia* novels
  - “New school” *wuxia* films
    - Start to emphasize more complex characters, more realistic violence,
    - More modeled after *kungfu* films
- 1970s: Rise of Bruce Lee
  - Jackie Chan & Yuen Woo-Ping [Yuan Huo-Pin]

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## Defining the Wuxia Film

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### Defining the Wuxia Film: Plot/Themes

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Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain  
(Tsui Hark [Xu Ke], 1983)

- Often a glorification of the past
  - Integrating modern ideas/concepts
- Complete mythical/fantastical version of Ancient China
  - *jianghu* – lit. “rivers and lakes”
  - Element of fantasy/supernatural powers
- *Wuxia* “heroes” often act as agents of history
  - Can involve more personal plots/themes such as revenge
- Conflict resolved through use of force

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## Defining the Wuxia Film: Characterization




Golden Swallow  
(Chang Cheh [Zhang Che], 1968)

- Often represented as outlaws
  - Non-conformists who fight for justice
- Value on individualism
  - Disregard for authority/tradition
  - Symbol of personal freedom
- Presence of the Female Warrior

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## Defining the Wuxia Film: Presence of Swordplay & “Flying” Action



Dragon Inn (King Hu [Hu Jinqun], 1967)

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**LET'S TRY:**  
**Taking a Closer Look at Wuxia vs. Kungfu Films**



**Swordsman II: Legend of the Swordsman (Ching Siu-tung, 1992)**

Swordsman II: Legend of the Swordsman (Ching Siu-tung, 1992)  
Jet Li

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**LET'S TRY:**  
**Taking a Closer Look at Wuxia vs. Kungfu Films**



Take this ointment for your men.  
Apply it to their wounds.

**Iron Monkey (Yuen Woo-Ping [Yuan Huo-Pin], 1993)**

Iron Monkey (Yuen Woo-Ping [Yuan Huo-Pin], 1993)  
Yu Rongguang & Jean Wang

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# Defining the Wuxia Film: Wuxia vs. Kungfu Films

*Wuxia* Films                      *Kungfu* Films

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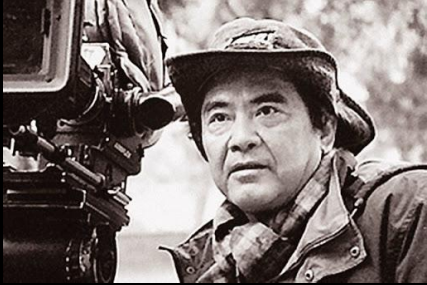
# Developing the Wuxia Film

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## Developing the Wuxia Film: The Founding Directors

- King Hu (Hu Jinqun)
  - Come Drink With Me (1966)
  - Dragon Inn (1967)
  - [A Touch of Zen \(1971\)](#)




(1932-1997)

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## Developing the Wuxia Film: The Female Warrior, “Flying” Action & Stylistic Imagery



**A Touch of Zen (King Hu [Hu Jinqun], 1971)**

A Touch of Zen (King Hu [Hu Jinqun], 1971)  
Hsu Feng



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## Developing the Wuxia Film: The Founding Directors

- King Hu (Hu Jinquan)
  - Come Drink With Me (1966)
  - Dragon Inn (1967)
  - [A Touch of Zen \(1971\)](#)
- Chang Cheh (Zhang Che)
  - [One-Armed Swordsman \(1967\)](#)
  - Golden Swallow (1968)



1924-2005

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## Developing the Wuxia Film: Use of Violence/Bloodshed & The Male Anti-Hero



**One-Armed Swordsman (Chang Cheh [Zhang Che], 1967)**

One-Armed Swordsman (Chang Cheh [Zhang Che], 1967)  
Jimmy Wang [Wang Yu]



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## Developing the Wuxia Film: The Founding Directors

- King Hu (Hu Jinquan)
  - Come Drink With Me (1966)
  - Dragon Inn (1967)
  - [A Touch of Zen \(1971\)](#)
- Chang Cheh (Zhang Che)
  - [One-Armed Swordsman \(1967\)](#)
  - Golden Swallow (1968)
- Tsui Hark (Xu Ke)
  - [Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain \(1983\)](#)
  - The Swordsman (1990)
  - The Blade (1995)



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## Developing the Wuxia Film: Element of Fantasy/Supernatural Powers



**Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain (Tsui Hark [Xu Ke], 1983)**

Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain (Tsui Hark [Xu Ke], 1983)  
Adam Cheng [Adam Cheng Siu-chow]



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## Developing the Wuxia Film: Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2002)




**Highest-grossing** foreign language film in US box office history to date

Directed by Ang Lee (1954-)  
Choreographed by Yuen Woo-Ping [Yuan Huo-Pin] (1945-)

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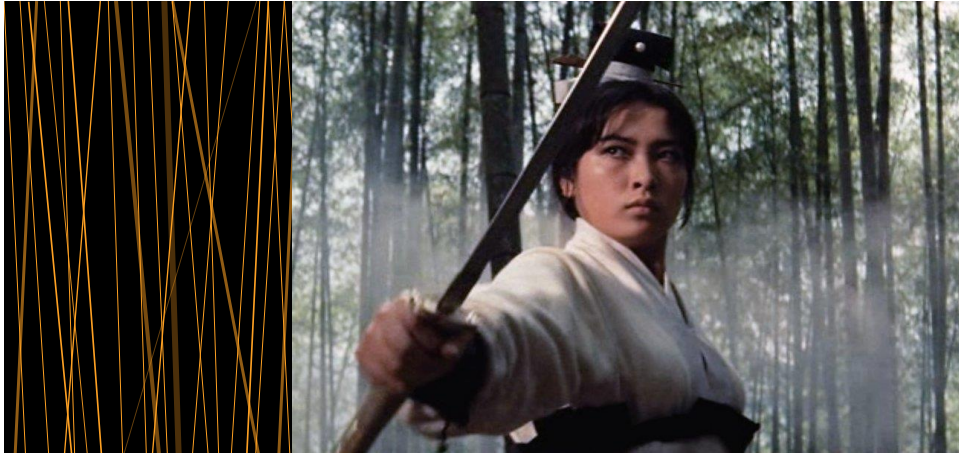
## Developing the Wuxia Film: World's Introduction to Wuxia



### Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (Ang Lee, 2000)

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (Ang Lee, 2000)  
Michelle Yeoh [Michelle Yeoh Choo-Kheng], Zhang Ziyi & Chow Yun-fat

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## Questions?

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For Class: [H13987-class@esp.mit.edu](mailto:H13987-class@esp.mit.edu)

A Touch of Zen (King Hu [Hu Jinquan], 1971)

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## THANK YOU FOR JOINING!

Next Week: Introducing the Muhyeop Film (Korea)

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For Class: [H13987-class@esp.mit.edu](mailto:H13987-class@esp.mit.edu)

Musa: The Warrior (Seong-soo Kim, 2001)

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