

*The Romance of the Three  
Kingdoms*

An Introduction

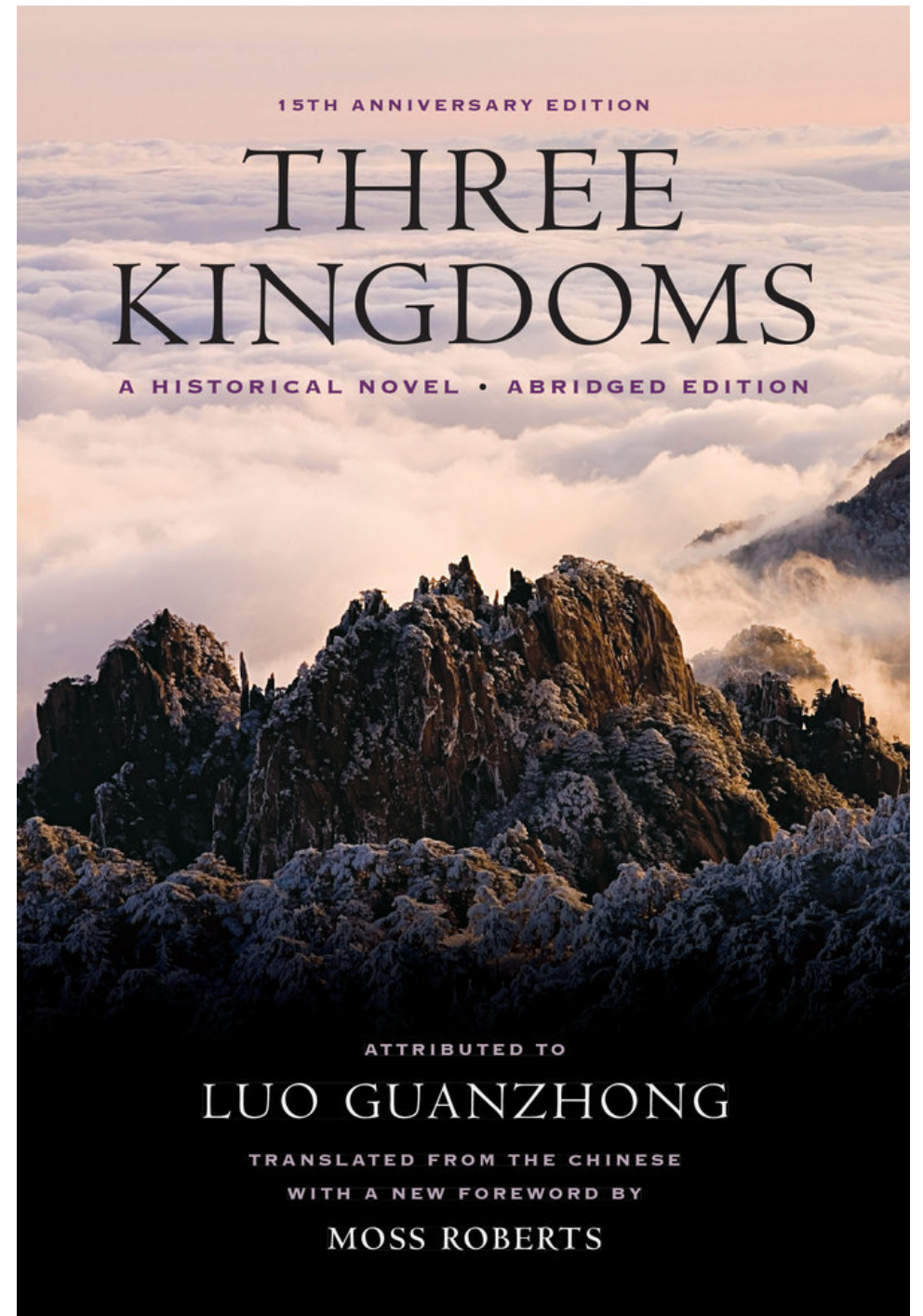
- first extant edition 1622
  - Preface 1594
- 120 Chapters, 240 sections
- Attributed to Luo Guanzhong (14<sup>th</sup> century)



*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*  
 (Wanjuan lou edition, 1591)

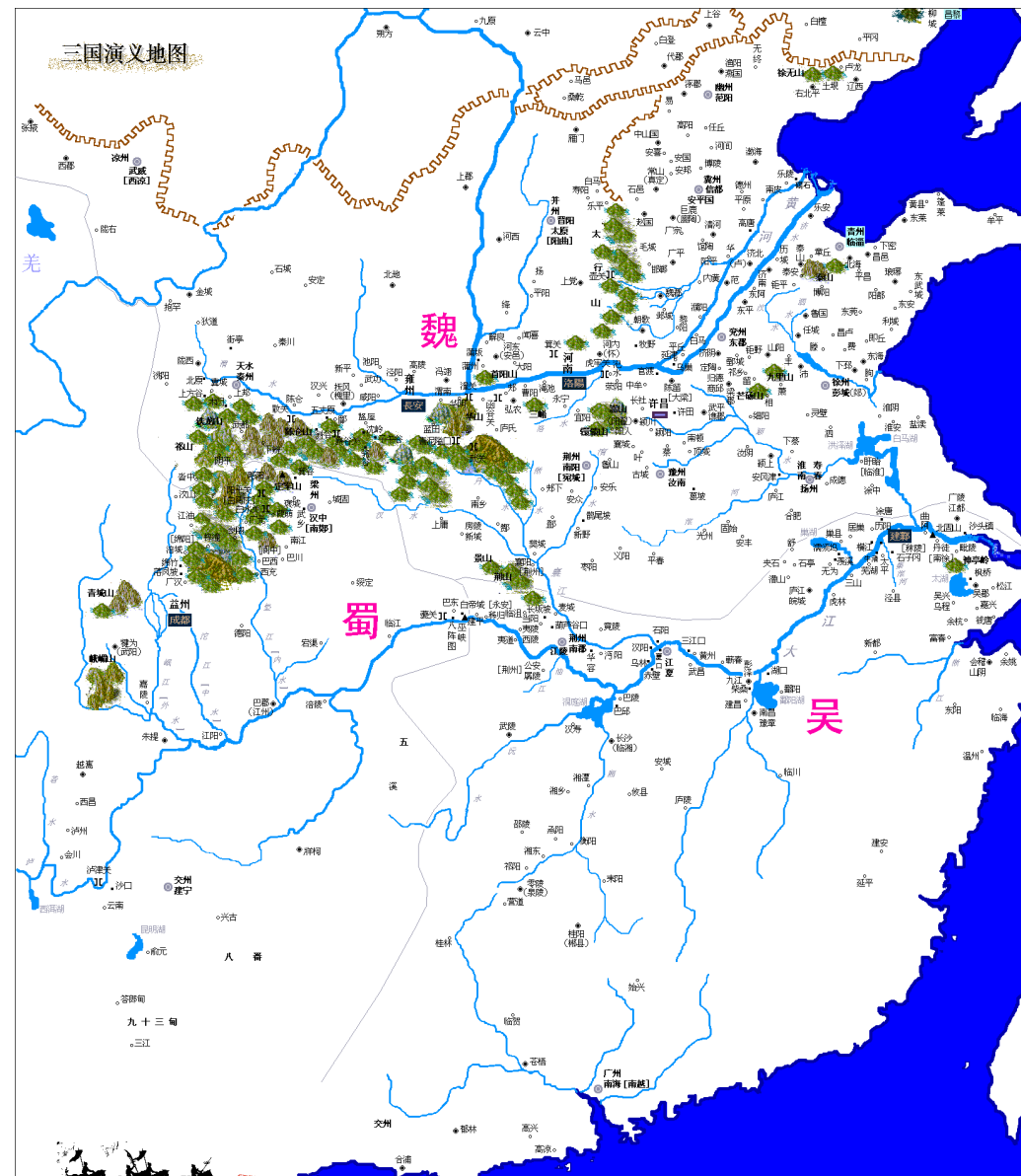
# A Historical Novel (When):

- Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)
- Three Kingdoms (184/220 CE-280 CE)
- Jin Dynasty (265-420)

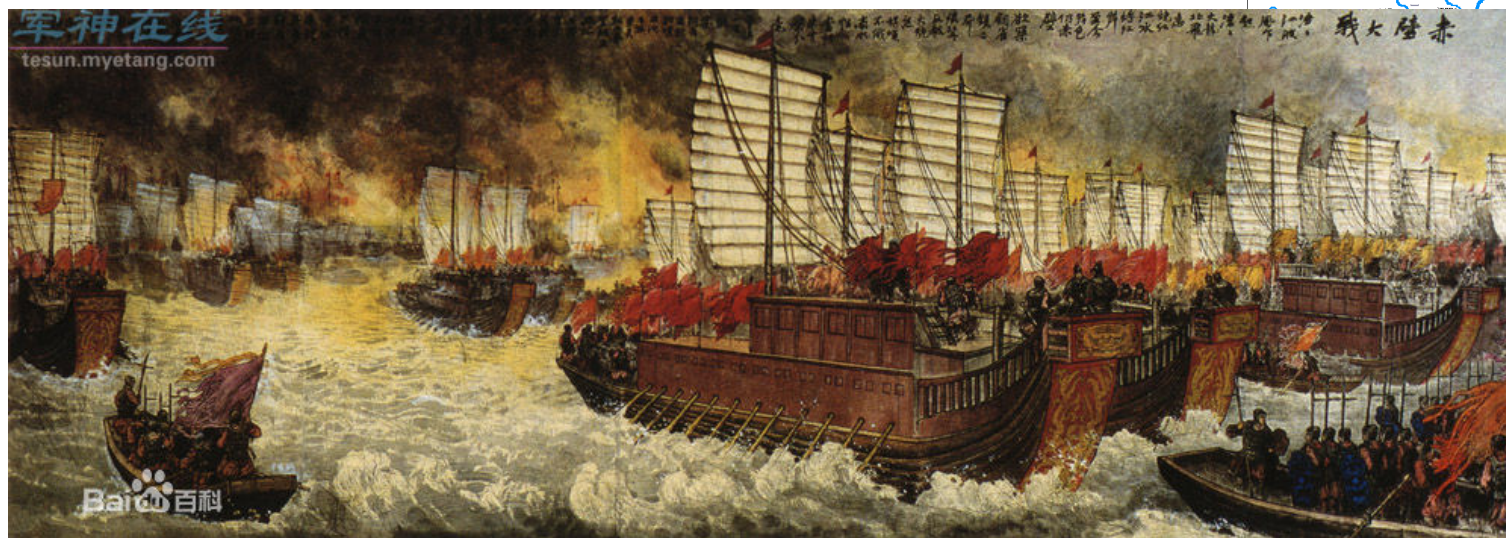
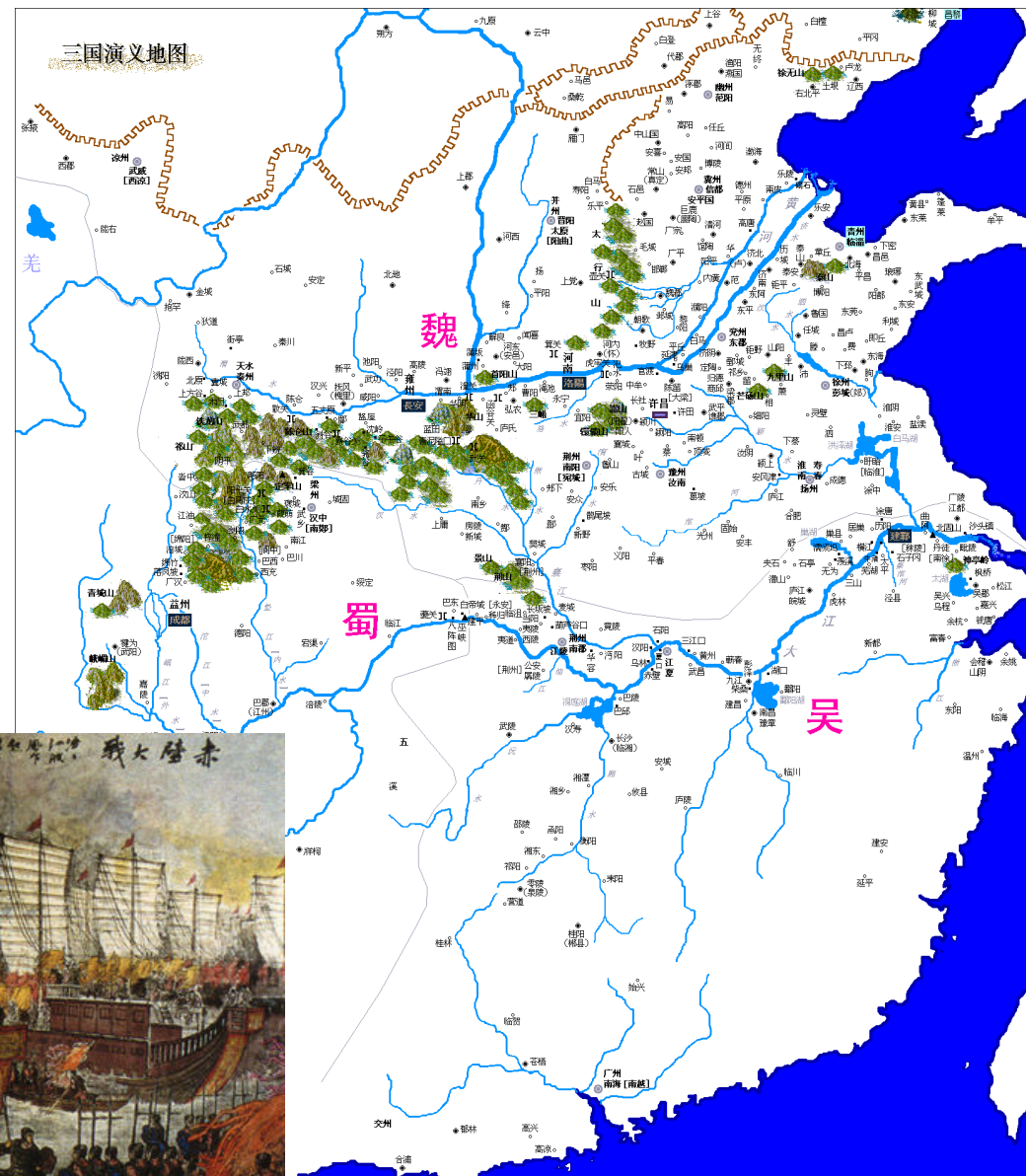




# “All Under Heaven”



# “All Under Heaven”



A Novel of Men  
(Who):

Cao Cao (155-220)

Ruler of Wei



A Novel of Men:

Cao Cao (155-220)

Ruler of Wei

“Speak of Cao Cao...”





A Novel of Men:

Liu Bei

Ruler of Shu-Han

“Imperial Uncle”



A Novel of Men:

Sun Quan (182-252)

Ruler of (Dong) Wu



# And the Occasional Woman

- Name: Diaochan
- Weapon of Choice: Whip
- Height: 166 cms



# 三国机器人幻想

Robot Fantasy of Three Kingdoms

三国机器人设定集

王玥祎  
ARTHUR WONG



咖啡狗动漫工作室

中国民族摄影艺术出版社

# 三国机甲幻想

Robot Fantasy of T  
三国机器人

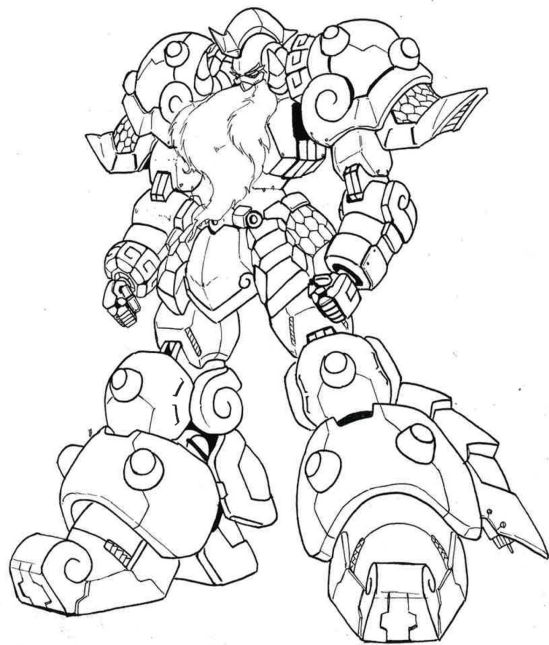
王玥  
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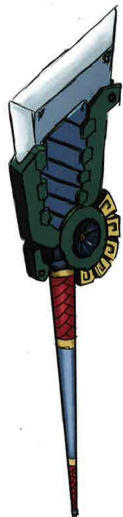
咖啡狗动漫

中国民族出版社

## Guan Yu



关羽站姿(线稿图)



青龙偃月刀



关羽站姿(效果图)

# 关羽

Guan Yu

关羽的制作理念来源于当年的关云长关二爷，继承了关帝的傲气和霸气。它是一部基于白刃战和近战为主设计的机体，并未配备任何射击系武器以及盾牌。关羽机的主要特点就是以不输给轻量化装备的高机动力和近身攻击的高破坏力。它的主要武器青龙偃月刀能将能量集中于刀头的一点对敌人造成极大的破坏。  
机体颜色参考关羽的绿袍，以绿色为主，保留了关羽的长髯、赤面这些主要元素，另外在机体的视觉上运用了一些中国化的元素，比如肩部中国风的花纹，侧裙甲运用的古时锁甲的形式。它是一部体型较大的机体，腿部的内构外露，使机体更加有机械感，也能看出大型机体减震的重要性。

## History



Guan Yu,  
Guan Yunchang (courtesy name),  
Lord Guan (deity name),  
Emperor Guan (deity name),  
Marquis Zhuangmou (posthumous name),  
General of the Vanguard (rank/title),  
Lord of the Magnificent Beard (moniker),  
Second Brother Guan (in relationship to  
'family'),  
etc. etc. etc.

## Religious Iconography



# Character in a Novel

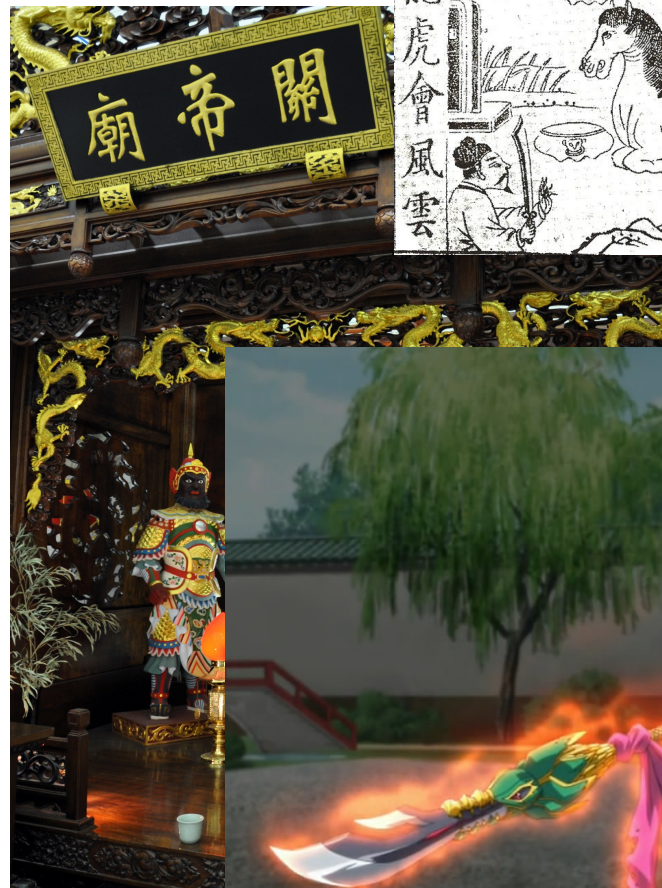




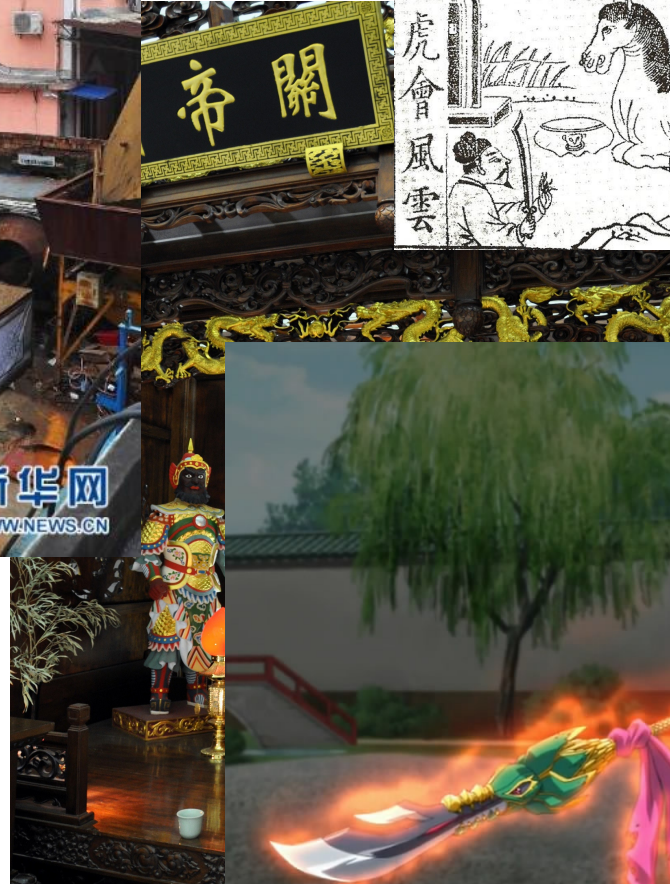
Japanese Ukiyo-e



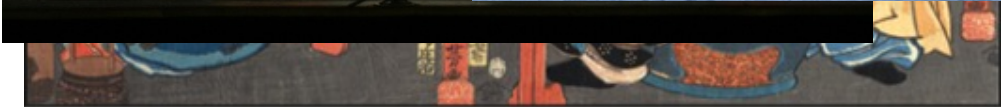
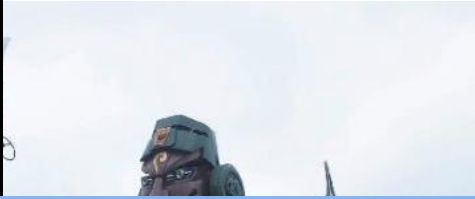
# Japanese Manga/Anime



# Giant Robot







# A ubiquitous story

## Regionally:

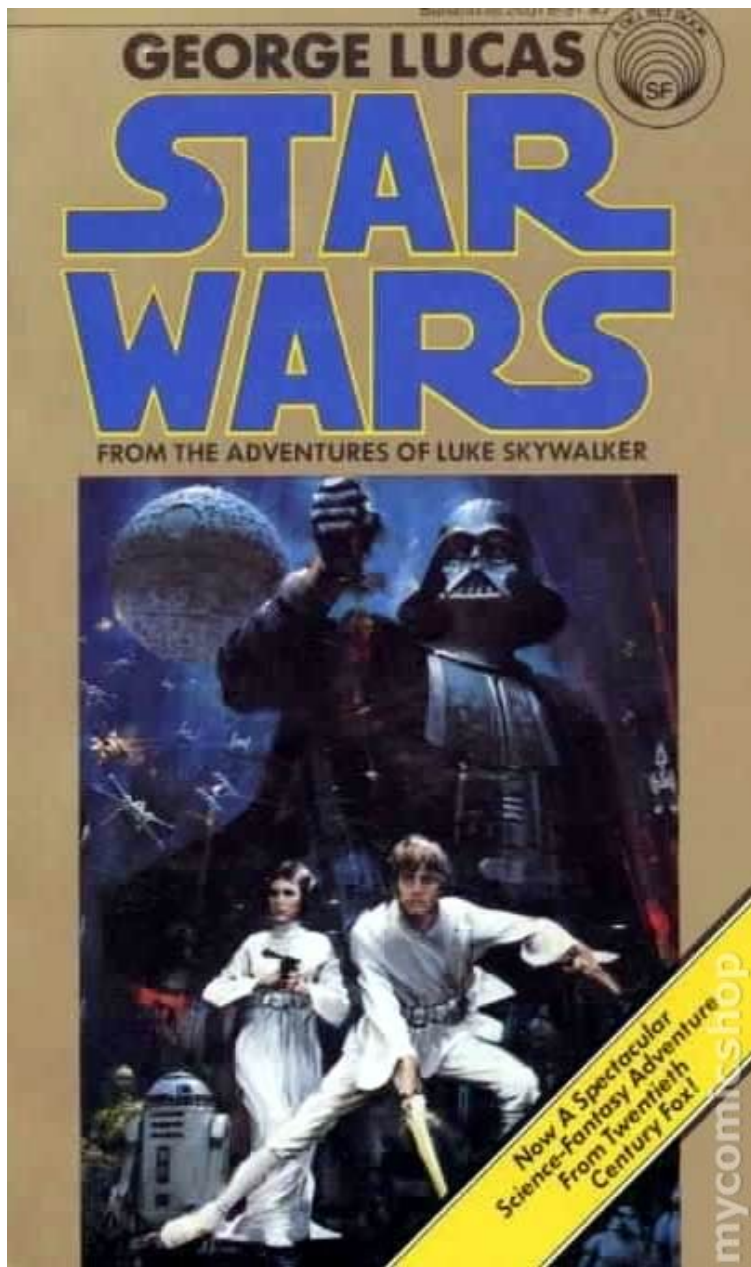
- China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, (US, France, Germany, etc.)

## Media:

- history, poetry, storytelling, novel, opera, religious iconography, (film, comic, video-game, giant robot action figures, cosplay costuming)

# Universal Brandname Recognition, Zero Copyright Protection





A Classic is something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read.





# It's Complicated

- Lots of names:
  - Roughly 1500
  - Titles, terms of address, courtesy names, style names, posthumous names, nicknames
- Lots of places:
  - People refuse to count (but we have plenty of maps)
- Lots of chapters:
  - 120; (that is once they invented chapters (before that 240 "sections"))
- Lots of cunning plots:
  - "No one," he said to Xu Chu, "questions your bravery. But the possibilities of intrigue must also be considered..... I have an idea, though, which I'll call 'Two Tigers Fight for Food.'"
- Lots of shifting alliances:
  - Lü Bu is allied with whom again? Ding Yuan? Dong Zhuo? Wang Yun? Yuan Shu? Yuan Shao? Zhang Yang? Liu Bei?
- Lots of historical references:
  - "More than eight hundred years ago," Xun Wenruo said, "Lord-Patriarch Wen of the state of Jin protected King Xiang of the failing Zhou dynasty....."

# An Introduction to the “Novel”

- The story goes that the empire, long divided, must unite and, long united, must divide. This is the inevitable way of things.
  - 話說：天下大勢，分久必合，合久必分。

# A Ming-Dynasty Aesthetics of Complexity



# The Novel that is not Really a Novel (at least not in the Western 19<sup>th</sup> century Sense)

- no psychological depth or development
- no extended descriptions of battle scenes
- no story that tells us something that we did not know
- lots of poetry
- lots of repetition
- lots of complexity
- **Pattern Recognition**

II.

Luo Guanzhong's *Three Kingdoms*:

A novel that is not a novel, an author who is  
not an author

# Who's who, what's what, When's when

- Date: 1494, 1522, 1679
- Author: Luo Guanzhong
- Genre: Novel/History/Yan'yi

# Novel/History/Yan'yi

- That day, [Liu Bei] saw the edict [calling for valiant man to serve the empire] and could not help but deeply sigh. Behind him a man spoke up in a loud voice, “Why sigh so deeply? Should valiant men not volunteer to aid the state?” Xuande turned round to look at the man: he was eight feet tall with a panther-like head and round eyes, his jowl resembled those of a swallow and his beard bristled like tiger’s whiskers. His voice rang like a huge bell and he gave off the energy of a wild horse. When Xuande perceived the extraordinary appearance of this man, he asked his name. The man answer: “I am named Zhang Fei. My courtesy name is Yide.”
- 當日見了榜文，慨然長歎。隨後一人厲聲言曰：「大丈夫不與國家出力，何故長歎？」玄德回視其人：身長八尺，豹頭環眼，燕頷虎鬚，聲若巨雷，勢如奔馬。玄德見他形貌異常，問其姓名。其人曰：「某姓張，名飛，字翼德。」

# Novel/History/Yan'yi

- Zhang Fei's style name was Yide and was a man from Zhuo county. From an early age he served our former lord [Liu Bei]. Guan Yu was a few years older than Zhang Fei and so Zhang Fei served him like an older brother.
- 張飛字益德，涿郡人也。少與關羽俱事先主。羽年長數歲，飛兄事之。



# Novel/History/Yanyi

- The story goes that there was a man named Zhang Fei, with the courtesy name Yide, who hailed from Fanyang in Zhuo Commandery, in the principedom of Yan. He had the head of a panther and round eyes, the jowls of a swallow, and the whiskers of a tiger. His body was over nine feet tall. His voice carried like a huge bell.
- 卻說有一人，姓張名飛，字翼德，乃燕邦涿郡范陽人也；生得豹頭環眼，燕頷虎鬚，身長九尺餘，聲若巨鐘。

# History/Novel/Yanyi

*"The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* consists of seventy per cent fact, thirty per cent fiction and in this manner deludes those who read it. For seventy per cent it describes reality, but for thirty per cent it is fabrication, this causes the reader to be perplexed, causing him not to know what is true and what is false."

三國演義七實三虛，惑亂觀者。七分寫實，三分虛構，讓讀者迷惑，不知何者為真，何者為假。

Zhang Xuecheng 樟學誠 (1738-1801)

III.

Participating in the Scene of History:

[The Oath of the Peach Garden](#)

## What do we See (and Hear)?

That day, [Liu Bei] **saw** the edict [calling for valiant man to serve the empire] and could not help but deeply sigh. Behind him a man spoke up in a **loud voice**, “Why sigh so deeply? Should valiant men not volunteer to aid the state?” Xuande turned round **to look at** the man: he was eight feet tall with a panther-like head and round eyes, his jowl resembled those of a swallow and his beard bristled like tiger’s whiskers.

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# What do we feel?

That day, [Liu Bei] saw the edict [calling for valiant man to serve the empire] **and could not help but deeply sigh**. Behind him a man spoke up in a loud voice, “Why sigh so deeply? Should valiant men not volunteer to aid the state?” Xuande turned round to look at the man: he was eight feet tall with a panther-like head and round eyes, his jowl resembled those of a swallow and his beard bristled like tiger’s whiskers. His voice rang like a huge bell and he gave off the energy of a wild horse. When Xuande perceived the **extraordinary appearance** of this man, he asked his name. The man answer: **“I am named Zhang Fei. My courtesy name is Yide.”**

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# Historical Participation



# Historical Participation



# Luo Guanzhong, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Chapter 1, p. 9

We three, though of separate ancestry, join in brotherhood here, combining strength and purpose, to relieve the present crisis. We will perform our duty to the Emperor and protect the common folk of the land. We dare not hope to be born the same day, but vow to die the selfsame day. Let shining Heaven above and the fruitful land below bear witness to our resolve. May Heaven and man scourge whosoever fails this vow.





## Historical Participation (Who's In?)

Guan, Zhang, and Liu Bei became sworn brothers. In the temple of Jiang Ziya they made an oath with Heaven as their witness. They slaughtered a white horse in sacrifice to Heaven and killed a black ox in sacrifice to Earth. They only sought to die on the same day; they did not wish to be born on the same day. If the elder brother would be in trouble, the younger brother would rescue him, and if a younger brother was involved in a fight, the elder brother would side with him. If they did not act according to this vow, Heaven would not cover them and Earth would not carry them.

*The Tale of Hua Guan Suo (14<sup>th</sup> Century)*

# Historical Participation (Who's Out?)

Liu Bei said, "I am single, but you two have parents and children who weigh on your mind, so I am afraid that you may have regrets." Lord Guan said, "I will kill my parents and children and then follow you." Zhang Fei said, "Who could you do such a thing, killing your own parents and children?....."

*The Tale of Hua Guan Suo (14<sup>th</sup> Century)*

# Historical Participation (Who's Out?)

”..... You, elder brother, will kill my parents and children, and I will kill yours.”

And Liu Bei said, “Right!”

*The Tale of Hua Guan Suo (14<sup>th</sup> Century)*

III.

Elliptic and Iconic Prose



Alan Mak and Felix Chong,  
*The Lost Bladesman*, 2011.

DONNIE YEN

THE  
BLADE

12

"GLORIOUS MARTIAL ARTS"  
VARIOUS



## Sound not Sight

Cao Cao ordered a cup of hot wine to be served and offered it to Lord Guan as he set out to mount his horse. Lord Guan said, "For now, pour the wine. I will return before long." He left the tent, grabbed his blade, and leapt onto his horse. The assembled lords heard how, out on the battlefield, the deafening drums thundered and the roar of voices swelled. It felt like Heaven came crashing down and Earth was split asunder, as if mountains were toppled and cliffs were crushed. All held their breath in shock and just as they were about to send someone to find out how things were going, they heard the ringing of the bells on the horse's bridle as Lord Guan, holding the severed head of Hua Xiong, rode back into camp and tossed it to the ground, his wine still warm.

操教釀熱酒一盃，與關公飲了上馬。關公曰：「酒且斟下，某去便來。」出帳提刀，飛身上馬。眾諸侯聽得關外鼓聲大振，喊聲大舉，如天摧地塌，岳撼山崩，眾皆失驚。正欲探聽，鸞鈴響處，馬到中軍，雲長提華雄之頭，擲於地上，其酒當溫。

## Staccato Four Beat Phrases

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操教釀<sup>3</sup>熱酒一盃<sup>4</sup>，與關公<sup>3</sup>飲了上馬<sup>4</sup>。關公曰<sup>3</sup>：「酒且斟下<sup>4</sup>，某去便來<sup>4</sup>。」出帳提刀<sup>4</sup>，飛身上馬<sup>4</sup>。眾諸侯<sup>3</sup>聽得關外<sup>4</sup>鼓聲大振<sup>4</sup>，喊聲大舉<sup>4</sup>，如天摧地塌<sup>4</sup>，岳撼山崩<sup>4</sup>，眾皆失驚<sup>4</sup>。正欲探聽<sup>4</sup>，鸞鈴響處<sup>4</sup>，馬到中軍<sup>4</sup>，雲長提<sup>3</sup>華雄之頭<sup>4</sup>，擲於地上<sup>4</sup>，其酒當溫<sup>4</sup>。



## Focus on a Single Object/Man/Action

Cao Cao ordered a cup of hot wine to be served and offered it to Lord Guan as he set out to mount his horse. Lord Guan said, “For now, pour the wine. I will return before long.” He left the tent, grabbed his blade, and leapt onto his horse. The assembled lords heard how, out on the battlefield, the deafening drums thundered and the roar of voices swelled. It felt like Heaven came crashing down and Earth was split asunder, as if mountains were toppled and cliffs were crushed. All held their breath in shock and just as they were about to send someone to find out how things were going, they heard the ringing of the bells on the horse’s bridle as Lord Guan, holding the severed head of Hua Xiong, rode back into camp and tossed it to the ground, his wine still warm.

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Complexity Born from a Few Simple Words

# Repetition as Virtue, not Vice

All of a sudden there was a scout **who reported**, “Hua Xiong has led his heavy cavalry down from the pass. He has hung the red headdress of commander Sun Jian from a long pole and is now taunting us right in front of our encampment, challenging us to **battle.**”

Shao said, “Who dares to go forth and do **battle?**” From behind Yuan Shu a cavalry commander named Yu She stepped forward and said, “I am willing to go forth.” Pleased, Shao ordered Yu She to go out on horse. Almost immediately there came the **report**, “Before Yu She and Hua Xiong had done **battle** for three rounds, Hua Xiong **cut him down.** The gathered [commanders] were stunned.

忽探子來**報**：「華雄引鐵騎下關，用長竿挑著孫太守赤幘，來寨前大罵搦**戰**。」紹曰：「誰敢去**戰**？」袁術背後轉出驍將俞涉曰：「小將願往。」紹喜，便著俞涉出馬。即時**報**來：「俞涉與華雄**戰**不三合，被華雄**斬**了。」眾大驚。

# Repetition as Virtue, not Vice

“I have a highly ranked general Pan Feng who can **cut down** Hua Xiong,” said Imperial Protector Han Fu. Yuan Shao hastily ordered the man out to do **battle**. Pan Feng grabbed his battle axe and jumped on his horse. Not long after he had left, a messenger on horseback arrived who **reported**, “Pan Feng was **cut down** by Hua Xiong.” The gathered commanders paled with worry.

太守韓馥曰：「吾有上將潘鳳，可**斬**華雄。」紹急令出**戰**。潘鳳手提大斧上馬。去不多時，飛馬來**報**：「潘鳳又被華雄**斬**了。」眾皆失色。

# Optical Character Recognition

Yuan Shao spoke, “How unfortunate that my own commanding officers Yan Liang and Wen Chou are not present! With even a single one of them here I would have nothing to fear from Hua Xiong!” Even before he had finished speaking, from the bottom of the steps leading up to the commander’s tent a man bellowed, “I humbly volunteer to ride out and decapitate Hua Xiong and present his head before you!”

紹曰：「可惜吾上將顏良、文醜未至！得一人在此，何懼華雄？」言未畢，階下一人大呼出曰：「小將軍願往斬華雄頭，獻於帳下！」

# Optical Character Recognition

All eyes turned to look at the man standing at the foot of the tent. He was a full nine feet tall, with a lush, two-pronged long beard, the eyes of a phoenix and bushy eye-brows, a ruddy complexion the color of jujube, his voice ringing out like a large bell. Yuan Shao asked who the man was. Gongsun Zan stated, "This is the younger brother of Liu Bei, Guan Yu."

眾視之，見其人身長九尺，髯長二尺；丹鳳眼，臥蠶眉；面如重棗，聲如巨鐘；立於帳前。

紹問何人。

公孫瓚曰：「此劉玄德之弟關羽也。」

IV.

Poetry as an Escape from the Flow of Time



# Red Cliff

- John Woo
- 2008
- 2 parts



# A BIG BATTLE



# A Big Cliff

"A Picture of Red Cliff Mountain"

Completed Collection of Graphs and Writings of  
Ancient and Modern Times, Imperial Edition  
(1726)



# The Battle of Red Cliff (winter of 208)

## A Battle of Epic Scale

- the fate of an entire “nations”
- armies of one million (well 800.000,  
well 230,000)
- larger than life heroes
  - the genius of Zhuge Liang
  - the hubris of Cao Cao
  - the jaw muscles of Zhang Fei
  - the huge blade of Guan Yu



## Remembered Through Poetry

Buried in the sand, the broken halberd not yet fully rusted.  
I wash and polish it and so discern the previous age.  
What if the east wind had not favored Master Zhou Yu?  
By spring, the two Qiao sisters would have been locked deep in the Copper Tower.

折戟沉沙鐵未消。自將磨洗認錢潮。東風不與周郎便。銅雀春深鎖二喬。

Du Mu 杜牧 (803-852)

## Brought to Life Through Prose

Cao Cao finished speaking and laughed loudly. The Tang poet Du Mu has a poem that reads: 言罷大笑。唐人杜牧之有詩曰。

Buried in the sand, the broken halberd not yet fully rusted.

I wash and polish it and so discern the previous age.

What if the east wind had not favored Master Zhou Yu?

By spring, the two Qiao sisters would have been locked deep in the Copper Tower.

折戟沉沙鐵未消。自將磨洗認錢潮。東風不與周郎便。銅雀春深鎖二喬。

Just as Cao Cao was laughing and chatting, he suddenly heard the sound of a crow cawing as it flew southward. 曹操正笑談間，忽聞鴉聲望南飛鳴而去。

VI.

Conclusion

## To the Tune of "Immortal Facing the River 臨江仙"

Wave after wave, the waters of the Yangtze flow east  
Its white-topped crests washing away every last trace of heroism  
In an instant, victory and defeat, right and wrong dissolve into emptiness  
Only the dark mountains still remain as of old  
Painted red countless times by the setting sun

On an isle in the river, the hoary fisherman and woodcutter  
Are used to observing the autumn moon and spring breeze  
Over a single jar of homebrewed wine, they joyously meet.  
And all the countless tales of past and present  
Accompany their laughter and conversation.

滾滾長江東逝水，浪花淘盡英雄。  
是非成敗轉頭空。  
青山依舊在，幾度夕陽紅。  
白髮漁樵江渚上，慣看秋月春風。  
一壺濁酒喜相逢。  
古今多少事，都付笑談中。