Hu, King (April 29, 1931–January 14, 1997)

King Hu (Hu Jinquan) was an important Chinese film director centered in Hong Kong who helped shape the martial arts film and introduce Chinese-language cinema abroad. Born near Beijing, he attended the Beijing National Art Institute but was stuck in Hong Kong in 1949 when the Communist Revolution took place. Doing various jobs, including acting and art direction, he eventually became a film director in the early 1960s working for the Shaw Brothers, Hong Kong’s most prolific studio. Influenced by Peking opera and working from his experience in art, Hu moved away from the simple focus on action in the *wuxia* or “chivalric martial hero” genre, to focus in films like Dai zui xia (*Come Drink with Me*, 1966) on character centered narratives grounded in history and a philosophical outlook. He moved to Taiwan to make Longmen Kezhan (*The Dragon Gate Inn*, 1967) and Xia nu(*A Touch of Zen*, 1970), the latter of which became one of the first Chinese films to win an award at a European festival (a technical award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1975). While the latter continued the narrative of power struggles deciding the fate of China of the former, it added a spiritual dimension that has rarely been equaled, even as its fight choreography influenced later martial arts cinema.

Further reading:

Bordwell, D. (2000) “Richness Through Imperfection: King Hu and the Glimpse”, in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, eds. Poshek Fu and David Desser, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bordwell, D. (2000) *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Antertainment*, Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2000.

Teo, S. (2007) *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Wuxia Tradition*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press.  
Teo, S. (2009) *King Hu’s A Touch of Zen*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

List of works:

### Dai zui xia (*Come Drink with Me*, 1966)

### Longmen Kezhan (*The Dragon Gate Inn*, 1967)

### Xia nu (*A Touch of Zen*, 1970)

### Ying chun ge de feng bo (*The Fate of Lee Khan*, 1973)

### Zhonglie Tu (*The Valiant Ones*, 1975)

Paratextual materials:

I could provide clips and frame grabs from *Come Drink with Me*

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