

**The 13th Fukuoka Asian Culture Prizes 2002  
PUBLIC FORUM**

**Asian Film Seminar  
“Zhang Yimou Portrays Life and Hope of People”**

**ZHANG Yimou**

Date: 18:00 - 20:00 Friday, September 20, 2002

Place: ACROS Fukuoka Event Hall (Tenjin, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka City)

Program:

Outline of the Forum and Introduction of Laureate

Mr. Sato Tadao (Film Critic)

Talk

Mr. Zhang Yimou (Grand Prize Laureate)

Mr. Sato Tadao

Summary

Mr. Sato Tadao



## Talk by Mr. Zhang Yimou

**SATO TADAO:** Chinese cinema has a long history. Many superb films were made from the 1930s to 1940s, said to be the golden age of film in China. When China became a socialist country, however, ideology took precedence, and there was a continued trend of slighting visual and dramatic interest. Few films were made during the period of the Cultural Revolution in particular, and those that were made were not very interesting. No worthy films were made during the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, either. Suddenly, in the early 1980s, fresh films of excellent quality began appearing. The excellent films made by such young directors as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige attracted international attention. Today, Chinese films are widely acclaimed, and they are counted as among the finest films in the world.

Mr. Zhang Yimou has created numerous masterpieces, and each succeeding film breaks new ground. He has created rough, powerful films, films with a light touch that resemble fairy tales, ironic films, and films of bold frankness.

After graduating from the Beijing Film Academy, Mr. Zhang began his career as a cinematographer and director of cinematography. Could you tell us about the circumstances that led to your admission at the Film Academy?

**ZHANG YIMOU:** At that time, entering university was an opportunity to break free and change my destiny. Therefore, I would enter any university if I had the chance. I considered physical education universities, art schools, and agricultural universities. As I had taken photographs, a friend of mine told me that there was a photography course at a film school. It wasn't that I particularly liked movies; I just wanted to take a new step in my life.

The process through which I entered university was rather dramatic. I was five years over the age limit for admission, so I was told that I wouldn't be admitted to the Film Academy. I had begun to give up the idea. At the urging of a friend, however, I wrote a letter to the Culture Minister. The first buds of freedom were beginning to sprout at that time in China, and the leaders dealt directly with letters from the people. The minister authorized my admission to the school, perhaps because he could see my talent from the photographs I had enclosed. The film school was opposed because it was against the rules, but I was eventually admitted, and that changed my destiny.

One week after school started, however, it was revealed that the Culture Minister had ignored the procedures to allow me to enroll in school. The school hung a large poster on which it was written that my admission was an act detrimental to society, and that it was a bad precedent that would destroy the exam system. My pride was wounded, and I didn't feel like going to school anymore. Those days were really difficult for me. But I reconsidered, and thought that things would go well for me as long as I had a diploma. My attitude improved and I began to study. But, I was ready to quit any time.

The Culture Minister resigned two years later, and the school told me that because I was admitted on his authorization, I had to quit too. I really thought I might leave school. I heard that I might be allowed to work as a photojournalist for a magazine company in Shanxi Province. They told me I could work there, but my chances would be better if I had a degree. That's when I decided to get a degree. At the end of those negotiations, I wrote out my application, and the school finally allowed me to stay.

**SATO:** The Culture Minister is the equivalent of the Japanese Minister of Education, so that was really an extraordinary event. He must have really had a sharp eye for judging photographs. What sort of photographs did you send him?

**ZHANG:** I selected about 20 from shots of scenery that I had taken as a hobby. During the

Cultural Revolution, everyone took revolutionary photographs, so for that period, my photographs were artistic and did not have very strong political overtones. Now when I look at them, they seem perfectly ordinary.

**SATO:** People today still talk about the excellence of the students who overcame the intense competition for admission when the Film Academy reopened after the Cultural Revolution. I've heard that in contrast to the people in the Chinese film industry who bemoan the hardships they faced during the Cultural Revolution, the young people of the Beijing Film Academy were passionately committed to creating new films. Were there any indications of that among the students at that time?

**ZHANG:** At that time in China, some overseas films were shown behind closed doors for internal reference. That activity was concentrated in Beijing. Since I worked for seven years in Xian Yang City in Xian, I didn't see any of them. That's why, after the Film Academy entrance ceremony, I was astonished when I saw automobiles and gunfights and beautiful women in bikinis in the internal films. The three students with whom I shared a room in the dormitory knew more names of films, stars, and directors than I did. I was very much behind them despite being 10 years older than they were, and I felt a lot of pressure. I thought I had to study and catch up with them somehow.

The atmosphere at the school was very good at that time, and everyone tended to study hard. All the students had experience in society, and had developed individual views. They were very dissatisfied with Chinese films of the time, so if the students found a scene poorly-done or a film with low quality, they hooted and veered in a loud voice. One day, several directors brought their films to be shown at the Film Academy. Many of the students harshly criticized the films while they were being screened, and some of the directors left in tears. The students resolved never to make such bad movies. I was influenced by this attitude, and upon receiving my diploma, I decided not to make a movie that people would abuse. I decided that I had to express myself in ways that hadn't been done before. That has been the source of my creative strength for many years.

**SATO:** In your first film, *One and Eight* as a cinematographer, a big impression was created by the visual effect of the light and shadow on the three-dimensional angularity of the characters' faces. The film *Yellow Earth* had a structure elegant in its simplicity, and there was a clear statement in the camerawork. I think this was an entirely new phenomenon in the history of Chinese film. The camerawork in *The Big Parade* was also truly skillful, such as those scenes of the troops who stood perfectly straight without moving for hours, filmed at a distance with a telephoto lens through shimmering heat waves.

**ZHANG:** I put thought into *Yellow Earth* and *The Big Parade* while I was making them, but *One and Eight* was the emergence of an emotion. Everyone wanted to stay in Beijing or Shanghai after graduation, but three other classmates and I were told to take jobs in Guangxi. The four of us felt as if we were treated coldly, and felt ill at ease. That made us angry, and our psychological condition was such that we wanted to start a fight with somebody. That's why, when the first chance came for me to make a film, I wanted to make something that was different and was very striking. I didn't spend a lot of time thinking about the style of film I would make. I looked for a method that wasn't taught in school, in other words, something incomplete. I purposely intended to do something incomplete, so only half of the actors' faces were shown, or they were distorted. The actors got angry and told me that it wouldn't be a drama if I filmed them that way, but I explained to them that this was a different direction. I argued with them throughout the film until I finished it.

That movie generated a huge reaction. It was like an explosion in the Chinese film industry. When it was screened, everyone in the hall, young and old alike, gave it a long, standing ovation. Many of my classmates showered me with praise for that film, and wanted

to shake my hand. While this different method was emotional and unstable, it brought about new change in a rigid time. When I look at it now, it seems very childish. The form surpasses the content, and it was rather smug. I didn't care about the story or the characters. For the time, it probably was strongly individualistic. It generated a powerful reaction. The film industry as a whole began to use my colleagues in an attempt to create a young film team like the one in Guangxi. I have heard that this film enabled everyone to gain the right to make films many years earlier than they normally would have.

I was not so angry during the days of *Yellow Earth* and *The Big Parade*. Rather, I had begun to think how I could blend form with the content. My plan for filming was that we had gone to an agricultural village and were in a big land under a wide sky. I wanted to show the land of China, the history of the farming people, and ideas about culture. It was the same with *The Big Parade*. I filmed that using a long focus with the sense that people would not live long. Also, I emphasized the question of the relationship between collectivist training and humanism.

**SATO:** I have heard that you said that you couldn't act freely in the traditional film studios of Beijing and Shanghai where many prominent people who were present, so that young filmmakers by common consent went to small studios in regional areas.

**ZHANG:** I didn't really want to go at all, but after I started to become well known, I said that I had the chance to work because I had gone to a regional area. Actually, the head of the studio treated us very well. But at first, of course, he made us work as assistants or equipment operators. That is an old custom in the film industry. But we were very brave, so we resisted. One day, by common agreement, we told them that we would not work as assistants. We wanted to be directors or cinematographers on our own. Of course, the head of the studio told us that we couldn't.

At that time, the studio had the script for *One and Eight*, and we heard that the studio head liked it but didn't have a director for it. We got together in a room with that script, depicted how we would film it, assembled a lot of materials, and took our ideas to the studio head. He recognized our talent and allowed us to form the only film crew in China at that time made up of young people. It was an unprecedented step, but they could do it because it was a small studio. A group of about 40 young people, 20 to 30 years old, formed a film crew, and we shaved off our heads together and expressed our resolve to get it done. Later, we dickered with the head of the studio and they lent us Chen Kaige, who was working as an assistant in Beijing. We made his first film, *Yellow Earth* as a director in Guangxi.

**SATO:** Then you became an actor, and won the Best Actor Award at the Tokyo International Film Festival.

**ZHANG:** At that time, I was making a name for myself as a cinematographer, and at the request of film director, Wu Tianming, the head of the Xian film studio at that time, I did the cinematography for *The Old Well*. Wu Tianming said that he wanted to make a fresh movie, so he wanted to use somebody new instead of a star. For several months, he looked all around the country for an actor. I was thinner and darker in those days, and wherever I went, he brought up myself as an example, and said I was the kind of person he was looking for. We didn't find anyone by the time we only had three months to go, however, and people were joking with him, telling him that Yimou should do it. In the meantime, he also became more serious, and started asking me if I would do in the movie. I had no intention of doing it, because I had no acting ability, but in those days I was very brash, and I thought it might be fun, so I told him I would. It was a difficult job. I don't particularly like acting, and the love scenes were really hard. Even now, I don't think I'm cut out to be an actor. The reason I won an award was because the film and the director were so good.

**SATO:** After that, you made your debut as a director. Your first feature as a director, *Red Sorghum*, was a groundbreaking work in the new Chinese cinema. The villagers, who lived a perfect, free-spirited life in extremely harsh circumstances, were depicted on a scale different from that of ordinary life. Ancient Chinese literature, such as *Shui Hu Zhuan* (The Chinese Traditional Story) and *San Guo Zhi* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms), contained an extraordinary power of imagination and world of visualization. It was a literary tradition that magnified the depiction of characters from an ordinary scale. Today, however, it has become commonplace to show ordinary people on an ordinary scale, so we are very surprised at the sudden resuscitation in a film of a Chinese literary tradition that we had forgotten. I understand that film is a literary work in which the original itself revitalizes Chinese tradition. How did you get the idea to focus on that work and create a film on a scale that had never been done in Chinese cinema before?

**ZHANG:** Indeed, the characters of *Red Sorghum* are the hero of the same setting in *Shui Hu Zhuan*. The film's greatest success was in depicting these characters. The scenes, the colors, and the composition conveyed their fierce will to survive. After the Cultural Revolution, many Chinese films were just removed from the political framework, and most of the works were very heavy, depicting hardships and the oppression of humanity. Then, it was a bold stroke for a work to suddenly appear that depicted a hero of the type in *Shui Hu Zhuan*. It provided a jolt to the Chinese film industry. It was my first work as a director, so I incorporated in the work all the strength I had built up by then. It came out with a surging feeling, as if I was shouting in a loud voice. This feeling hasn't returned in the movies I've made since then, so maybe it was unique to my first film. That is my favorite aspect of *Red Sorghum*.

I did not want to film the war with Japan. I wanted to film the spirit of the farmers that sought love and freedom. There were political standards for Chinese films, so if I depicted the war, I thought I wouldn't be able to break out of the shell of Chinese cinema. But, permission to film wouldn't have been granted to a film if it didn't have a political theme. At that time, Mo Yan's novel, *Red Sorghum* had appeared and had gotten a great response. When I decided to make this novel into a film, many letters had been sent to director Wu Tienming, head of the Xian film studio. The novel was criticized as piracy, prostitution, salacious, and violent, and people were opposed to filming it, wondering why I had chosen to make a movie of it. Wu Tienming told me that I had to include a positive concept, so I told him that I would make the war a backdrop and create a story of opposition to the invasion, as Chinese films had been made until that time. That's how the depiction of the war was included. But, even for this content, there is a completely new feel in the scenes, the composition, and the colors. The manner of depicting war in particular was completely different than anything that had gone before. There was the spirit of the dynamic hero, who was not afraid of anything.

**SATO:** The scene depicting how urinating in the fermenting liquor created fragrant liquor was indeed art. I was very impressed. When they left to attack the Japanese army, they drank that liquor and sang together. Had that been a Japanese *yakuza* movie, that would have been a sentimental song, but with that song, the feeling really emerged of just putting everything into an attack, as if it were the fight song for a sports team. This controlled strength really brought home to me the immense tradition of Chinese culture. The use of color tones in that work was also noteworthy. How did you get the idea to turn the entire scene at the end red?

**ZHANG:** The part about urinating into the liquor was in Mo Yan's novel. We left that part in because we thought it depicted strong opposition with the sense of black humor. But there was a strong reaction to that scene. Young people said it was interesting, and older people complained about it. It's been 10 or 20 years, but many people still talk about that scene.

I decided on the color and the scenes I wanted at the start. For the song, I used a traditional folk song from Shanxi Province, where I'm from, with a shouted feel. I like the strength of northerners - you can't tell if they're singing or shouting. I also used that shouting power in *To Live*. I thought with that kind of singing, you could break out your internal feelings.

The music for the *Yellow Earth* spread the popular songs in the genre known as the Northwestern style in China at the time. These songs tell of the big skies and fertile earth of the Northwestern part of the country, and later they became very popular with *Red Sorghum*. They stayed popular for seven or eight years. I still enjoy today the songs created at that time by the Chinese people, and which became popular. Chinese popular songs today are influenced by Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, and there aren't very many that are distinctively Chinese.

**SATO:** Once they have a major hit, quite a few directors continue to make similar kinds of movies. But, it you seem to make works in a completely different style. For example, in *The Story of Qiu Ju*, you depicted in fine detail the speech and actions of ordinary people, and this was very innovative. How did that change come about?

**ZHANG:** After *Red Sorghum*, many people thought I was a northwesterner, and my image became associated with that. So, I changed my course and made movies as if they were detailed, lyrical prose, such as *The Story of Qiu Ju*, *Not One Less*, and *The Road Home*. Apparently, many people think of me as a stereo-typical stout northerner, and tell me they wouldn't expect me do make such romantic movies. I don't like to repeat myself, so to avoid getting into ruts I look for completely different possibilities and try to make movies with different moods. I take a lot of impossible risks, so some of my works are unsuccessful, but I still want to do it that way. I directed the opera, *The Turandot* as well as a ballet opera. I think these different subjects and styles create a fresh sensation. This is also a challenge that I have presented myself. The new movies after that, such as the period dramas or the action dramas, were created from that way of thinking.

**SATO:** With *Red Sorghum*, I think the director had a strong image, and utilized all his talent to create a condensed work. In contrast, in *The Story of Qiu Ju*, the actress Gong Li freely released what she had internally, and the film was made by following that with the camera.

**ZHANG:** *The Story of Qiu Ju* was a work of realism. At that time, I wanted to make a movie with the feel of a documentary. That's why I had Gong Li speak in the Xian dialect. Many people opposed using the star Gong Li in this film. They claimed that using a new actress would give the film a touch of realism for a documentary. But I had a deep understanding of Gong Li. First, she spoke good Xian dialect. During the filming of *Red Sorghum*, every film crew was from Xian, and Gong Li argued with the film crew in the Xian dialect. Also, I also cast her as a pregnant woman in *The Story of Qiu Ju* because that during the filming of *Red Sorghum*, she pretended to be pregnant to tease everyone. I used that experience. When you wrapped her face in a dirty muffler, she didn't look like a star at all. I hid the cameras and the microphones in the town at night. When people came out on the streets at dawn, Gong Li also appeared, and I was able to film her speech and actions in secret as we had worked out ahead of time. None of us showed up at the location, and even the actors didn't know where the cameras were, so they performed as they wished. With this performance, I knew that she had exceptionally good qualities as an actress. Even today, I think *The Story of Qiu Ju* was her most successful role.

**SATO:** While having a big star to give a documentary-like performance, you appointed a sheer amateur to give a splendid performance in *Not One Less*.

**ZHANG:** First, I wanted to shoot the *Not One Less* in a documentary style, but then I changed the idea and tried to do it thoroughly than *The Story of Qiu Ju*. I wanted all the roles to be played by real people -- the village chief was really a village chief, the head of the television station was the head of a television station, students were students, and teachers were teachers. Most children in farming villages hadn't seen movies or television, so I started by looking for children that could act. I drove to a school. More than 1,000 students came out and surrounded me. I looked at all their faces, selected children who seemed to have potential, made them come forward to sing and dance. It takes a lot of courage for a child in a farming village to perform in front of others. After four months, I had visited all the junior high schools in a province and selected 50 children from among more than 40,000. Among them was Wei Minzhi. She had a lot of courage, and it didn't bother her to sing and dance in front of 1,000 people.

It was very difficult to select amateur actors, but shooting was easy because they would do anything without getting nervous. One problem was that the film had to be shot in sequence. You usually spend two hours to film scenes for five days and splice it together, but with this movie, what happened every day was depicted in the story. Therefore, after filming today's part, we had to film in sequence for the following day and the day after that. But, their performance was what they actually did in their daily lives, so as they got used to the camera, they forgot where it was. That's why children's performance was superb.

**SATO:** Recently, *The Road Home* has won a lot of acclaim in Japan. It is really a well-done film in the film sense. Do you like films like this?

**ZHANG:** Yes, I really like this film. I like all films that are well done.

**SATO:** If you could tell several of your masterpieces, which you think depicting your world or idea well, what would they be? *To Live* might be one of them.

**ZHANG:** I like most of my work, but there are some I don't like very much. For example, *Code Name Cougar* did not turn out well. I don't care for *Shanghai Triad*, either. But some of my major works like *Red Sorghum*, *The Story of Qiu Ju*, *Not One Less*, *To Live*, and *The Road Home* are my favorites. I am proud of these works.

**SATO:** Consistent in all your works, people notice the powerful individuality of the masses, or the general public. Each film has human strength, humor and ability to overcome difficulties well, and I believe these factors create good films. Does your new work *Hero* go in another direction?

**ZHANG:** In my earlier movies, I depicted people struggling against their fate. I like these stories of these people. The smooth fate of the characters makes the story uninteresting. The stories that move people are those in which there are many hardships to confront and in which it is difficult just to survive. The most important aspect is depicting people at the time they either surmount or succumb to their difficulties.

*Hero* is my first period drama. I've liked novels about heroism or championing the underdog. It has been my dream for many years to make a film about heroism. Heroism will be an eternal topic of fiction in China, I think. As with the *samurai* in Japanese culture, it is a culture and tradition that conveys emotions relevant today, despite being from the distant past. They have the strength to confront their fate. They are very bold, and very romantic. Also, they are very mysterious, special people. I love movies filled with that sort of creativity. People nowadays live under a lot of pressure, and they can't do what they want. It excites them when they see a heroic drama in which a man quickly draws his sword and starts fighting. If things go well, you'll be able to see it in Japan in the first half of 2003. The actors include Jet Li, Tony Leung, Maggie Cheung, Zhang Ziyi, and Chen Daoming.

The score was written by Tan Dun, who won the Academy Award for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The music was performed by the world-famous maestro, Itzhak Perlman. Also, Japanese taiko drummers played the taiko. I asked Emi Wada, who worked with Akira Kurosawa on *Ran*, to do the costumes. There are many talented people working on this film, and I think they all did a good job. I used all the best things from my previous films in this movie.

**SATO:** I am very glad to hear that Emi Wada is involved. Were there any problems with giving a Japanese responsibility for period costumes from China?

**ZHANG:** There was no problem at all. Chinese and Japanese culture flow from the same source, so they resemble each other. I respect Wada a lot; she has ability and she is very serious. I like the color red, and I wanted to use red in this film. I didn't specifically explain to Wada the kind of red I wanted, but I described the feel of it. This is a period film, and you can't find the exact kind or touch of cloth now. But Wada brought dye from England and Japan, and she began dying cloth by hand at a small factory she discovered in the suburbs of Beijing. The dye smells awful during the hot summer, but she kept dying for several months. I wanted only one kind of red, but she dyed 100 kinds of red and had me choose. I was really impressed. She also dyed by hand every one of the colors used in this film. All the colors were great -- red, blue, white, black, and green. We Chinese have to learn from the good traits of the Japanese. When I talked with her on the telephone yesterday, I told her she had to get ready to receive the Academy Award for costume design.

**SATO:** Let's take some questions from the audience. "There are many Chinese students and businesspeople in Japan. Have you ever thought of making a movie about them?"

**ZHANG:** People often ask me this question when I go overseas. I say, yes, if I get the chance. If there is really good material, and I can skillfully depict the students or the businesspeople, it will become a movie. If I wanted to make a movie like that, I'd have to live there for a while and get a clear understanding of what moves me. The problem is that I don't like living overseas.

**SATO:** The next question. "What do you think is the biggest problem with the Chinese film industry today? How can that problem be solved? How are Chinese movies superior or inferior to those of Hong Kong and Taiwan and other regions?"

**ZHANG:** The biggest problem is the decline in the number of viewers. There are many reasons for this, but the biggest is the social has development and the entertainment style has diversified. Another is the influence of American movies. The issue of pirate version movies is also serious. I don't know how to solve these problems. As a director, what I can do is to make films that are both artistic and appealing to audience. If audience don't like the produce no matter how artistic it is, you then will fail to have any sponsors. That's one of the reasons I made a heroic movie. My objective for the past several years has been to be the box office leader in Chinese movies. It's not to win awards.

**SATO:** "*To Live* was finally screened in Japan recently, and it was highly acclaimed. That movie was made some time ago, but why wasn't it shown in China?"

**ZHANG:** Of all my films, *To Live* is the only one not shown in China. The several political movements that occurred over the years, particularly the Cultural Revolution, serve as the backdrop to the film. The government has regulations, and films that depict political movements do not seem to obtain permission to be screened. No one tells me the specific reasons, so I can only guess. But there are many pirate versions in China, so everyone who

wants to see has already seen them.

**SATO:** "A younger generation of filmmakers is appearing in China following Zhang Yimou. How do you view the work of the new generation?"

**ZHANG:** People call me a master and accord me great status overseas, but that's not the case in China. Young people make films and television programs with the idea that this is their era. Most of the young directors make films underground. They secretly film on the cheap and sell the films that do not have to pass the government's screening. They are relatively free in the subjects they address, and they can make some subtle films. If they were to win an award at a foreign film festival, they would find backers for a second film right away. There are also people like me, who make normal movies for viewing by the general public in movie theaters. The new filmmakers have a lot of individuality, and they make films expressing their own thoughts. At the same time they have a strong self-awareness, but I also think they should value the commercial elements of film. That is my hope for younger directors. It's not us but the younger directors to support Chinese cinema.

**SATO:** Here is a question: "What Japanese films and directors interest you?"

**ZHANG:** I was greatly influenced by Japanese films. There was a course to study Japanese films at the Film Academy, and we saw all films produced by great Japanese directors like Akira Kurosawa, Yasujiro Ozu, and Kenji Mizoguchi. I respect the Japanese masters very much. Also, the sense of freshness coming from the works of the younger directors over the past few years has been a big influence on young Chinese directors.

**SATO:** "Compared to your earlier works like *Red Sorghum*, your recent works of *The Road Home* and others have dealt with more everyday themes. Are you aware of this change? Will you return to the tumult of your early works?"

**ZHANG:** No. The emotions in *Hero* are just as strong as those in *Red Sorghum*. The feeling I had when I filmed *Hero* was the same as I filmed *Red Sorghum*. I filmed a dream that I had had since childhood, so everything was fresh. I hope this film has a powerful impact.

**SATO:** *Happy Time* is very light and filled with happiness. It may mark another new step for you.

**ZHANG:** *Happy Time* was done with a concise theme, and it was like a tragicomedy. It was my first work with a comic touch. There was a lot of laughter, but in the end, I return to a theme I'm interested in -- ordinary people facing a life of hardship. There are also a few tears. I like stories that don't end with a laugh, but by making people think instead.

**SATO:** It's interesting that the individuality of Hong Kong and Taiwanese films have a subtle difference due to differences in social structure, despite being Chinese films. What is your view?

**ZHANG:** Many Hong Kong and Taiwanese directors are my friends, and I am very interested in their work. I think they make good films. The style of films made in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese mainland is completely different, and each region has its unique characteristics. Hong Kong is the originator of heroic movies such as *Hero*, but many of them are made in Taiwan, too. So upon shooting *Hero*, I wanted to make it different from Hong Kong or Taiwan movies and accentuate the difference. I wanted my heroic movie to be distinctive so that people understand it be from Chinese mainland. That's

why I put a lot of my own personality in it and incorporated many themes that I wanted to express. I think it's different from a Hong Kong kung-fu movie.

**SATO:** We have this question: "I belong to the drama club in junior high school. What is important in performing a role?"

**ZHANG:** From my viewpoint as director, confidence is most important. You have to believe that you yourself are the same person you are performing. If you have extraneous thoughts, you cannot give good performance. That's why you have to completely become the role and enter into a different world. I think that is the most important thing.

**SATO:** In conclusion, I'd like to ask you for a message to the people of Fukuoka.

**ZHANG:** This is my first visit to Fukuoka. I like this town very much -- it's quiet, comfortable, and the people are friendly. Hakata *ramen* (noodle) is tasty, too. Among all the good things of Fukuoka, the Asian-Pacific Festival left a particularly deep impression on me. Only Fukuoka uses Asian culture as a theme in its major events. It is very significant, and not often seen anywhere else. Nowadays, powerful cultures in the advanced countries exert an influence on the people around the world. Young people in both China and Japan are eager to take in Western culture and fashion as their goal. But, as is suggested by the expression, "Japan learns from the U.S., Hong Kong learns from Japan, and China learns from Hong Kong," we should learn each other. I appreciate the people of Fukuoka for their efforts to continue these exchange activities and to treasure our culture and traditions. The important thing is not who won the prize. The important thing is we become aware of Asian culture and know ourselves through these activities. I hope all of you take pride in what you do in these precious activities. Thank you very much.

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\* The above text summarizes the dialogue between Mr. Zhang Yimou, the Grand Prize Laureate of the 13th Fukuoka Asian Culture Prizes 2002 and Mr. Sato Tadao (film critic) as a coordinator.