

### **LATE QING DYNASTY**

*The Good Earth* (1937) Stars Paul Muni and Luise Rainer. (B&W)

Based on Pearl Buck's novel. Very good film on the plight of the poor peasants, despite European actors passed off as Chinese.

*Fearless* (2006) Starring Jet Li

The story of famous wushu fighter, Huo Yuanjia, with much anti-foreign propaganda.

*55 Days in Peking* (1963) Starring Charlton Heston, David Niven & Ava Gardner

Hollywoodish and corny. Pro-foreigner film set during the Boxer siege of the foreign legations in Beijing in 1900.

Uses a mock-up of the Temple of Heaven as the Forbidden City. However, gives a good picture of the situation and how the Boxers looked. NB Robert Helpmann as Prince Tuan.

### **WARLORD ERA / EMERGENT GUOMINDANG 1915 - 1937**

*Inn of the 6<sup>th</sup> Happiness* (1958) Stars Ingrid Bergman and the dying Robert Donat.

The story of untrained missionary Gladys Aylward, in northern China. A good look at the GMD relationship with the former Qing officials and a great scene on footbinding.

*The Sand Pebbles* (1966) Starring Steve McQueen, Richard Crenna and Candice Bergen

An American gunboat patrolling the Yangtse River has to avoid conflict with emerging GMD and other anti-foreign groups.

Early in the film there is a great discussion on the role of foreign powers in China. Great river scenes.

*Raise the Red Lantern*

A slow but beautiful film about a distantly viewed old man and his several wives. Seen as an allegory of China's gerontocracy.

*The Painted Veil*

A romantic and beautifully photographed look at divided China, with a great scene between the GMD translator/minder and a jumped-up warlord.

*Ju Dou* (1989) Starring Gong Li Dir: Zhang Yimou

A young woman is betrothed to an old man who mistreats her until she bears him a son. She manages this by an affair which ends tragically. Another allegory for rule by a gerontocracy.

*Shanghai Triad*(1995) Dir: Zhang Yimou Starring: Gong Li

1930s gangster film. Tragic but creates a good picture of the times and triads in Shanghai.

*The Joy Luck Club* (1993) (MA 15+)

Four Chinese mothers deal with their daughters' problems in the US while flashbacks reveal their greater problems in 1930s China. A thematic mix of feudal practices, seduction, family conflict and war with Japan.

### **ANTI-JAPANESE WAR ERA 1937 –**

*Ip Man* (also *Yip Man*) Starring Donny Yen

Ip Man is a martial arts teacher who takes on other schools and then Japanese opponents. Unlike *Fearless* this is anti-Japanese in nature. Ip Man was the patriarch of Wing Chun wushu and the teacher of Bruce Lee.

*The Pavilion of Women* (2001) Starring Willem Dafoe. Based on the Pearl Buck novel.

Fictional story, set in 1938, of a priest who has an affair with a long-suffering wife of a debauched husband, whose son falls in love with a second wife arranged by the first. They run off to join the CCP. The Japanese attacks produce the priest's ultimate sacrifice.

*Flying Tigers* (1942) Stars: John Wayne

The story of American mercenaries flying inferior planes for China against the Japanese, the famous 'Flying Tigers'.

*Red Sorghum* (1987) Dir: Zhang Yimou Launched GongLi's career.

A romance during the Japanese invasion. Shows the Japanese as cruel. Brutal in parts. From the Chinese novel.

*Empire of the Sun* (1987) Dir: Steven Spielberg Based on John Ballard's semi-autobiographical novel

Pampered boy in the Foreign Concession of Shanghai learns to survive without his parents when Japan attacks the Allied quarters in 1941.

*Yellow Earth* (1984) Dir: Chen Kaige Cinematography: Zhang Yimou

A pioneer of Chinese New Wave cinema. Set in 1939 during the 2<sup>nd</sup> United Front, a CCP soldier comes to a remote Shanxi town to gather folk songs. His influence of a young girl creates conflict between the old ideas and the new, with tragic consequences for the girl.

*Bethune: The Making of a Hero* (1990) A French / Canadian / Chinese production. Starring: Donald Sutherland

True story of a Canadian socialist who fights fascism in Spain and is a surgeon for the 8<sup>th</sup> Route Army fighting the Japanese. Based on a true story. Best moment is his 'self-criticism' in good Maoist style.

*The Children of Huang Shi* (2008) Stars: Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Chow Yan-fat, Radha Mitchell

Starts with the Rape of Nanjing then tells the true story of George Hogg who saves abandoned children from the Japanese.

#### **EARLY COMMUNIST ERA 1949 –**

*The Blue Kite* (1993) Dir: Tian Zhuangzhuang

A child's view of the tumultuous 1950s and 1960s. Not liked by Chinese authorities at the time.

A woman challenges social mores by living with her lover and her returned, disabled husband.

#### **GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION 1966 – 1976**

*The Red Violin* (1998)

Multi-storied film about a cursed violin with the only relevant section in China during the GPCR where the family tries to protect the violin from destruction as a decadent Western instrument.

*Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* ( )

Light-hearted look at the GPCR when two sophisticated city lads are 'sent down' to the countryside. After initial tensions they blend in. Then a romantic triangle develops.

#### **EPIC FILMS THAT SPAN ERAS**

*The Last Emperor* (1987) Dir: Bertolucci Stars: John Lone, Joan Chen, Peter O'Toole

Story of last emperor, Puyi, from his enthronement in 1903 to just after his death. Starts when the Russians hand him over to the communists in 1950s and then follows his life from there with flashbacks to his years as emperor and playboy, and puppet emperor for Japan in Manzhouguo (Manchukuo). Actually filmed in the Forbidden City. A MUST for Chinese Revolutions.

*Farewell My Concubine* (1993) Dir: Chen Kaige Stars: Leslie Cheung, Gong Li, Zhang Fengyi

Long but sumptuous story spanning 52 years, begins in a Qing school for Beijing Opera where the weaker of two boys must take the female roles and becomes too fond of his protector. Covers the Warlord era and beyond the GPCR.

*To Live* (1994) Dir: Zhang Yimou Stars: Ge You and Gong Li

Covers 1940s, Civil War, Great Leap, Cultural Revolution and the beginning of the Deng era. A mix of tragedy but the power of the human spirit. Some great humour and some black humour. Very watchable and great history.

#### **MISCELLANY** (Look out for these, and many others, on TV, especially on SBS)

*The Last Eunuch*

*Old Well*

*China Sky*

*Six Girls and a Rope*

*The Last Empress*