

## NEGOTIATING CHINA'S LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN ZHANG YIMOU'S *HERO*

PHILIP SHEN

*B.A. Candidate in History, East Asian Languages and Cultures  
Columbia University, Class of 2023*

Zhang Yimou's 2002 martial arts film *Hero* has all the makings of the ideal film to usher Mainland Chinese blockbuster cinema onto the global stage: a famed director, an all-star international cast, stunningly composed and vibrantly colored cinematography, and fast-paced, gravity-defying action sequences. Set amidst the founding of China's first dynasty, the plot revolves around a warrior known as Nameless, played by Jet Li, who has vanquished three deadly assassins in order to be rewarded an audience with the Qin Emperor. His narrative is retold and contested multiple times during his audience with the emperor. Eventually, Nameless admits that he was born in the neighboring Zhao kingdom—which had been pillaged and conquered by the Qin army—and that he plotted to make his own assassination attempt to gain an audience with the emperor. Ultimately, Nameless spares the emperor and accepts his own execution under the principle that the unity and peace provided by the Qin Empire justified the murderous conquest of his home.<sup>1</sup> Despite *Hero's* innovative production, cinematography, and storytelling, the film's scholarly discussion has largely centered around the proto-nationalist, historicist plot based on the ancient Chinese Qin Empire's founding, and whether the film should be read as an allegorical endorsement of China's contemporary authoritarian rule. Critics disagree on the exact nature of this film's relationship to reality but largely agree that *Hero* provides commentary on the present day through political and cultural messaging. Despite this agreement, scholars have failed to extend the parallels between Zhang's depiction of the Qin Empire and the contemporaneous People's Republic of China beyond discussions about their comparable use of violence to suppress dissent; for example, the brutal pillaging of rival kingdoms under the Qin and the massacre of student protestors in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Rather than discussing the use of violence as a characteristic of both ancient Chinese proto-nationalism and contemporary Chinese nationalism, this essay will instead engage with the significance of the Chinese language in both the Qin Empire and the film's contemporary regime. In *Hero*, language standardization was a stated goal of the Qin Emperor upon the unification of rival kingdoms under his reign, but language also functions as a prominent motif and symbol of the Zhao Kingdom's autonomy. Likewise, at the time of *Hero's* production, China carried out the most far-reaching reforms to its language standardization policy in recent history, aiming to enforce the uniform use of Standard Mandarin and simplified Chinese characters

---

<sup>1</sup> Zhang Yimou, *Hero* (Beijing New Picture Film, 2002).

across a nation with tremendous linguistic diversity. If *Hero* expresses a likeness between the nation-building of the Qin Emperor and contemporary China, then interpreting the parallels between these language standardization measures can shed further light on the nature of *Hero*'s allegory for China in the early twenty-first-century. Rather than merely endorsing or subverting China's contemporary language standardization policies, Zhang Yimou's nuanced messaging about the role of the Chinese language in *Hero* negotiates the merits and challenges of unifying the Chinese language at the expense of the nation's linguistic and cultural diversity.

Before analyzing *Hero*'s language motif and the history of Chinese language standardization policy, it is necessary to justify the interpretation of the Qin Emperor's state-building as an allegory for early twenty-first-century Chinese politics. Loosely based on the history of the ancient Qin Empire's founding, *Hero* is set during the later years of the Qin Emperor's conquest of rival kingdoms, which have fought seemingly endless, bloody wars of domination. When faced with scenes of the Qin Emperor's murder of innocent civilians to vanquish his rivals, such as the massacre of dozens of calligraphy students in the Zhao kingdom, Nameless's final decision to spare the emperor is initially puzzling.<sup>2</sup> The assassin Broken Sword, like Nameless, experienced immense personal loss at the hands of the Qin Empire, but he ultimately convinces Nameless that the peace possible under Qin unification outweighs the costs of war. He promotes the Emperor's vision of *Tianxia*, translated to "Our Land" in the film's English version: "One person's pain is as nothing when compared to the suffering of all. The quarrel between our kingdoms is nothing when compared with peace for all."<sup>3</sup> *Tianxia*, then, signifies the strength and peace associated with pan-Chinese unity, even if sacrifices are incurred along the way. This proto-nationalist justification for political union may be sufficient to draw comparisons with modern China, but the ending credits make the allegorical connection to the present day even more unambiguous: "The King of Qin went on to conquer all of the six Kingdoms and unite the country. As China's first Emperor, he completed the Great Wall to protect his subjects. This was more than two thousand years ago. But even now when the Chinese speak of their country / They Call It / Our Land [*Tianxia*]."<sup>4</sup> The text narration draws an explicit continuity from the Qin Empire's founding to present-day China; in particular, it asserts that there is direct continuity in the Chinese nation, the Chinese people, and this distinctly Chinese vision of national unity.

The nature and purpose of the Qin Empire as an allegory for modern China in *Hero* is subject to intense debate in the film's English-language scholarly discussion. Hong Kong filmmaker Evans Chan interprets the film's ending as an overt endorsement of "fascist" rule in modern China: "it subliminally extols the current leadership, endowing it with a new messianic mission. It is also a rallying cry for the

---

<sup>2</sup> Zhang, *Hero*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

populace to mute dissent, and to accept the ruthless flogging of the authoritarian, post-socialist capitalist machine that is spinning in full force.”<sup>5</sup> In his scathing review, he invokes the critical portrayals of the Chinese Communist Policies in Zhang’s earlier movies to argue that Zhang himself has become a propaganda artist who aims to promote national unity through *Hero*’s creation myth.<sup>6</sup> Critics Shu-mei Shih and Mark Harrison come to a similar conclusion: that *Hero* is merely an innovative vehicle for disseminating party ideology and rationalizing authoritarianism through blockbuster cinema.<sup>7</sup> Multiple scholars have pointed out that *Hero* premiered at the Great Hall of the People in 2002, the central legislative center of the Chinese Communist Party, as further evidence that the film is party propaganda intended to espouse nationalist values.<sup>8</sup>

Media scholar Guan-Soon Khoo points out that this reading of *Hero* requires an overly literal interpretation of the film’s ending with little attention to the rest of the film. Khoo argues instead that the *Tianxia* principle should be understood as one of several orientalist elements in the film, intended to represent “Chineseness” in the global market.<sup>9</sup> Film scholar Stephen Teo questions the validity of drawing strongly polarized conclusions from a film with non-linear and inherently ambiguous storytelling.<sup>10</sup> The scholarship surrounding *Hero*, with the exception of Teo’s close textual reading, relies on a surface-level examination of the ending credits and comparisons between *Hero* and Zhang’s earlier films. For Chan, Shih, and Harrison, this cinema has a causal relationship with the reality of Chinese society, actively influencing the public as a form of propaganda, whereas Khoo and Teo argue that the film is an ambiguous reflection of Chinese culture.

Regardless of their view on whether *Hero* endorses or reflects the policies of China’s contemporary regime in 2002, these scholars universally center their discussion on authoritarianism and the violent repression of dissent. A close reading of the film’s language motif—and its relation to China’s contemporaneous language standardization policies—expands this violence-centered scholarly debate and supports a nuanced reading of *Hero*’s allegory for the present day. The next section of this essay will engage in a close textual analysis of the motif of the Chinese language in *Hero*, comparing the themes of language standardization with China’s watershed language reforms at the turn of the twenty-first century.

---

<sup>5</sup> Evans Chan, “Zhang Yimou’s *Hero* and the Temptations of Fascism,” *Film International* 2, no. 2 (2004): 20.

<sup>6</sup> Chan, “Zhang Yimou’s *Hero*,” 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 38; Mark Harrison, “Zhang Yimou’s *Hero* and the Globalisation of Propaganda,” *Millenium* 34, no. 2 (February 2006): 571.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Teo, *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Wuxia Tradition*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 193.

<sup>9</sup> Guan-Soon Khoo, “*Hero*,” *Offscreen* 11, no. 5 (May 2007), <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/hero/docview/2064782644/se-2?accountid=10226>.

<sup>10</sup> Teo, *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema*, 187.

Chinese language and calligraphy play a major role in Zhang Yimou's *Hero*, both as a visual motif and as a central plot point. As a visual motif, intricate Chinese calligraphy dominates the frame during repeated scenes in the Zhao Kingdom's calligraphy academy. The assassin Broken Sword's massive, blood-red calligraphy dominates the frame in his hours-long composition during the Qin army's onslaught.<sup>11</sup> The prevalence of embellished Chinese script has led scholars like Guan-Soon Khoo to argue that calligraphy is included as a visually appealing orientalist element, aimed at boosting commercial appeal.<sup>12</sup> The trends towards self-orientalism in Chinese cinema with an international audience may well be a contributing factor to the inclusion of this motif, but the significant role of the Chinese language in *Hero*'s plot and its notable allegorical connections to the present-day casts doubt on the idea that the Chinese language in the film solely serves the purpose of orientalist eye-candy.

In addition to the conquest and political unification of surrounding kingdoms, language unification is a principal goal of the Qin Empire's nation-building project in *Hero*. In Nameless's first account of his plot to defeat the assassin Broken Sword, he claims to have asked the assassin to write the 20<sup>th</sup> form of the character for "sword" as a means of interpreting his swordplay and defeating him in combat. Upon hearing Nameless's account, the Qin Emperor interjects to protest the ridiculousness of superfluous characters with the same meaning, and sets forth his far-reaching proposal for language unification:

To think that one character can be written nineteen different ways! How can people communicate when they do not understand each other? Once I have conquered the Six Kingdoms and suppressed all other rebellious states, I shall rid the country of these hopeless confusions leaving one unified language for the whole land. Wouldn't that be something?<sup>13</sup>

He implies that a nation can hardly achieve his goals of peace and unity with the extreme language barriers brought about by linguistic diversity across his empire. If *Hero*'s concept of *Tianxia* functions as some sort of allegory for present-day China, then the prominent role of the Chinese language in this version of Qin proto-nationalism may suggest the importance of a unified Chinese language in contemporary Chinese state-building.

Ever since the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, language standardization has been a central policy focus for nationalist leaders from across the political spectrum. Although written and spoken language standardization policies had been in effect for almost one hundred years, the trend towards language unification intensified contemporaneously with *Hero*'s production. In 1913, scholars converged in Beijing to debate which form of the Chinese language should be used across the

---

<sup>11</sup> Zhang, *Hero*.

<sup>12</sup> Guan-Soon Khoo, "Hero."

<sup>13</sup> Zhang, *Hero*.

linguistically diverse, post-feudal nation-state.<sup>14</sup> China is home to as many as 298 distinct languages; many languages spoken by the Han-ethnic majority are classified as dialects, such as Mandarin and Cantonese, despite little mutual intelligibility.<sup>15</sup> The tongues of non-Han ethnic minority groups, such as Mongolian and Uyghur, are classified as distinct languages.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, Mandarin was adopted as the official language because it was the most widely spoken dialect across a broad swath of the nation.<sup>17</sup> Mandarin was the only practical choice, but its adoption implied that linguistic and ethnic minority populations would be forced to succumb to assimilation into the Han, Mandarin-speaking majority. Although linguistic diversity may have been acceptable for a feudal empire like the Qing Dynasty, twentieth-century nation-state rhetoric, whether espoused by Nationalist or Communist regimes, demanded the consolidation of a cohesive Chinese identity and a language to accompany it. China's rapid turn towards globalization in the 1990s and early 2000s, too, heightened internal migration and renewed the need for a universal language for the Chinese state.<sup>18</sup>

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, language standardization remained a principal goal of the Communist Party's national state-building project. Zhou Enlai proclaimed that Standard Mandarin, or Putonghua, would continue to be adopted as the national language.<sup>19</sup> In 1954, the party founded the Commission for the Reform of the Chinese Written Language, which by 1965 had approved 2,238 simplified characters. This became the basis for the simplified character system in use in present-day China, replacing the nation's older, more complex script in the name of increasing literacy.<sup>20</sup> The modern nation-state officially adopted a national written and spoken language to serve the people but without any uniform program of enforcement. After a lull in language policy advancements during the anti-rightist campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s, adoption was in actuality very low—by 1984, only 50% of the Chinese population could speak Putonghua, despite a 1982 constitutional amendment that solidified the status of Putonghua as the official language.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Gina Anne Tam, *Dialect and Nationalism in China, 1860–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 80.

<sup>15</sup> Matt Schiavenza, "On Saving China's Dying Languages," *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/06/on-saving-chinas-dying-languages/276971/>.

<sup>16</sup> Ming Lang Zhou and Hong Kai Sun, eds., *Language Policy in the People's Republic of China: Theory and Practice Since 1949* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> Schiavenza, "On Saving China's Dying Languages."

<sup>18</sup> Gulbahar H. Bennet and Gerard A. Postiglione, eds., *China's Assimilationist Language Policy: The Impact on Indigenous/Minority Literacy and Social Harmony* (London: Routledge, 2012), 25.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Weng, "What Is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language Standardization in Early Republican China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 77, no. 3 (2018): 617-619.

<sup>20</sup> Bernard Spolsky, "Language Management in the People's Republic of China," *Language and Public Policy* 90, no. 4 (2014): 166.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 167; David Moser, *A Billion Voices: China's Search for a Common Language* (Scorsby, Victoria, Australia: Penguin Books, 2016), 8.

During the time of *Hero*'s production in the late 1990s and early 2000s, stated goals of language reform finally took shape in substantive policy. At the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000, the "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language" was born.<sup>22</sup> This law, frequently referred to as the 2001 Language law, aims to promote "the normalization and standardization of the standard spoken and written Chinese language and its sound development, making it play a better role in public activities, and promoting economic and cultural exchange among all the Chinese nationalities and regions."<sup>23</sup> This policy mandates the use of Standard Mandarin speech and simplified characters in not just government settings, but in education, television and film, advertisements, business names, and any public signs. Exceptions would require governmental approval.<sup>24</sup> Even though Putonghua and simplified characters had been promoted since the nation's founding, this landmark policy finally laid the governmental groundwork for the widespread enforcement of a common Chinese language in private and public life. The early twenty-first century thus represented a dramatic shift in China's language policy; even the thick Sichuanese accent publicly used by former head-of-state Deng Xiaoping himself was now banned from the air only a few years after his death in 1997.<sup>25</sup>

In light of evidence that the Qin Emperor's state building is an allegory for modern China, the Qin Emperor's speech on the importance of language standardization may be understood as an allegory for the contemporary push to enforce the use of Simplified Characters and Standard Mandarin. The value of a common language for communication in the Qin Empire's newly united territory parallels the 2001 Language Law's stated goal of promoting "economic and cultural exchange," and both measures seem to be well-intentioned efforts to promote a more interconnected and cohesive nation. Yet, the parallel between the Qin Emperor's vision of language unity in *Hero* does not align perfectly with the exact policy of the 2001 Language Law: while the 2001 law's most pronounced effect was the enforcement of uniform spoken language, the Qin Emperor only mentions the unification of Chinese written language. The characters all speak Standard Mandarin, and the film makes no mention of spoken linguistic diversity. Shu-mei Shih compares the monolingual speech of *Hero* to the multi-accented and multi-lingual speech in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, a 2000 martial arts blockbuster with much of the same transnational cast and crew. Shih argues that, unlike *Crouching Tiger*'s explicit inclusion

---

<sup>22</sup> "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language," The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, accessed October 17, 2022, [http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/11/content\\_1383540.htm](http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/11/content_1383540.htm).

<sup>23</sup> "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language."  
<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Vincent Ni, "Chinese Dialects in Decline as Government Enforces Mandarin," *The Guardian*, January 16, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/16/chinese-dialects-in-decline-as-government-enforces-mandarin>.

of China's linguistically diverse history, *Hero's* monolingual speech is in itself an anachronistic decision that promotes the film's central message about the instability of a disunified China.<sup>26</sup> However, it is important to remember that, unlike *Crouching Tiger's* primarily international audience, *Hero* was meant primarily for a Chinese audience, and was not released internationally until two years after its domestic release.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the accessibility of Standard Mandarin would have had the greatest commercial appeal at home. Secondly, it is unfair to describe the use of Mandarin as a propagandist statement when the use of different Chinese dialects would require deliberate governmental approval under the 2001 Language Law. For a Mainland Chinese film, the use of multiple dialects in itself would be a political statement in opposition to government policy. The commercial and regulatory reasons for Standard Mandarin's exclusive use do not preclude Zhang's complex negotiation with the costs of language standardization in the present day through his commentary on the elimination of written language diversity in *Hero*.

For residents of the Qin's rival Zhao Kingdom, such as the assassin Broken Sword and the calligraphy academy's disciples, their unique form of the Chinese language is a symbol of autonomy, resilience, and military strength. Broken Sword admits to Nameless the merits of his unique calligraphy practice, claiming that "Calligraphy and swordplay share the same source and principles. So we practiced calligraphy every day in the hope that it would refine our skills and increase our power."<sup>28</sup> The repeated calligraphy motif equates language ability with might on the battlefield, demonstrated through Broken Sword's expert composition of unique characters and his deft swordplay. The dramatic scene at the Zhao calligraphy school suggests that this kingdom's indigenous language practices are a symbol of their regional autonomy and resilience. As the Qin army, numbering in what appears to be the tens of thousands, marches towards the school, the grandmaster instructs his students to follow his example as he defiantly sits down and continues composing his calligraphy amidst a rain of arrows. Although students who attempt to flee are shot down, those who remain and practice the Zhao's calligraphic craft are miraculously spared from the barrage.<sup>29</sup> This powerful scene forges the Zhao written language as not just a representation of this community's resilience, but also a tool for retaining their autonomy in and of itself. Though the Qin Emperor's speech about the need for a unified language is delivered without any objection from Nameless, the film implicitly conveys the costs of the forcible assimilation of diverse language systems. While universal communication would allow for national cohesion, the distinct culture associated with the local language, in this case, the Zhao kingdom and its calligraphy tradition, would be lost.

---

<sup>26</sup> Shih, *Visuality and Identity*, 38.

<sup>27</sup> Shih, *Visuality and Identity*, 37.

<sup>28</sup> Zhang, *Hero*.

<sup>29</sup> Zhang, *Hero*.

Language standardization policy in early twenty-first-century China, like in *Hero's* ancient Chinese founding myth, has come at the expense of China's regional and indigenous cultures and has been met with resistance. In non-Mandarin-speaking regions, schools were unprepared to suddenly conduct instruction in Standard Mandarin; adequately trained teachers were scarce, and drop-out rates increased.<sup>30</sup> Even in regions like the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which nominally maintains legal protections for bilingual education, governance and education have become increasingly Mandarin-dominant.<sup>31</sup> Longstanding accusations about China's assimilationist policies towards Xinjiang and other majority-ethnic minority regions are magnified through the implementation of language policies that have actually worsened educational metrics while inhibiting the continued practice of indigenous languages. Even the continued use of prominent "prestige dialects" practiced by the prosperous Han ethnic majority, such as Beijing dialect, Wu, and Cantonese, are under threat from the Mandarin standardization policy, leading speakers of these languages to begin locally promoting the continued practice of their tongues to prevent their extinction.<sup>32</sup> From China's marginalized autonomous regions to its wealthiest cities, the 2001 Language Law ushered in a distinct sense of anxiety over the forcible extinction of not only local language but also local culture.

By practicing their indigenous languages, language minorities like the Zhao people in *Hero* and Cantonese speakers in contemporary China resist the assimilationist policies that would superimpose the majority language on their own. Whether it is through a defiant display of calligraphy that functions as a mystical defense against foreign invasion, or the deliberate dissemination of Cantonese-language television and radio, Chinese language minorities in the film and in reality have mobilized in response to assaults on their cultural and regional autonomy. In Zhang Yimou's ancient Chinese allegory for his contemporary reality, the Chinese language is both a tool for national unification, with broad-reaching positive impacts, as well as a weapon for resistance against tyranny. Zhang clearly does not use his cinematic allegory as a blanket endorsement of Chinese rule; any witness to the Qin army's cruel warfare would be unlikely to wholeheartedly endorse the emperor's methods. Through a close examination of *Hero's* language motif, it becomes clear that the film is in fact a negotiation with the realities of the present day, whether it is the pros and cons of language standardization, or the use of occasional force to maintain order and peace.

Because Zhang Yimou's *Hero* is first and foremost an action film, and because of Nameless's dramatic decision to spare the brutal Qin Emperor, critical discussion of the film has hardly extended beyond the question of whether or not it is an endorsement of authoritarian violence. The prominent visual motif and plot points of

---

<sup>30</sup> Bennet and Postiglione, *China's Assimilationist Language Policy: The Impact on Indigenous/Minority Literacy and Social Harmony*, 28.

<sup>31</sup> Zhou and Sun, *Language Policy in the People's Republic of China*, 85.

<sup>32</sup> Wing Wong, "The Slow Death of China's Dialects," February 21, 2019, <https://www.mironline.ca/the-slow-death-of-chinas-dialects/>.



the Chinese language have likely been dismissed as merely an orientalist element because there has been so little attention paid to the film's subtler messaging. Scholars agree that *Hero* functions as some sort of allegory for present-day China, but a close reading of Zhang's commentary on the standardization of the Chinese language clarifies exactly what type of relationship this allegory bears with reality. Rather than issuing a broad endorsement of early twenty-first-century Chinese politics, his commentary on language demonstrates a negotiation with the realities of the present.

*Hero* portrays language standardization as a positive measure to achieve national unity, while implicitly conveying that language assimilation comes at the cost of local culture. His commentary parallels trends and challenges towards language standardization during the time of *Hero*'s production. While the widespread uniformity of the Chinese language has undeniably positive effects on the integration of Chinese society and its economy, the loss of minority languages is associated with the loss of local culture. The film wisely conveys that nation-building necessitates sacrifice on either the individual or national level, a principle that applies to the loss of minority languages for the supposed benefit of China as a whole. By distancing himself from challenging political discussions through the use of historical allegory and ambiguous storytelling, Zhang Yimou's *Hero* weighs the pros and cons of China's language standardization trends and allows the viewer to form their own relationship to these issues.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chan, Evans. "Zhang Yimou's *Hero* and the Temptations of Fascism." *Film International* 2, no. 2 (2004): 1–31.

*China's Assimilationist Language Policy: The Impact on Indigenous/Minority Literacy and Social Harmony*. Edited by Gulbahar H. Bennet and Gerard A. Postiglione. London: Routledge, 2012.

Guan-Soon Khoo. "Hero." *Offscreen* 11, no. 5 (May 2007).  
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/hero/docview/2064782644/se-2?accountid=10226>.

Harrison, Mark. "Zhang Yimou's *Hero* and the Globalisation of Propaganda." *Millennium* 34, no. 2 (February 2006): 569–72.

*Hero*. Directed by Zhang Yimou. Beijing New Picture Film, 2002.

*Language Policy in the People's Republic of China: Theory and Practice Since 1949*. Edited by Ming Lang Zhou and Hong Kai Sun. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004.

- “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language.” *The National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China*. Accessed October 17, 2022.  
[http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/11/content\\_1383540.htm](http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/11/content_1383540.htm).
- Moser, David. *A Billion Voices: China’s Search for a Common Language*. Scorsby, Victoria, Australia: Penguin Books, 2016.
- Ni, Vincent. “Chinese Dialects in Decline as Government Enforces Mandarin.” *The Guardian*, January 16, 2022.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/16/chinese-dialects-in-decline-as-government-enforces-mandarin>.
- Schiavenza, Matt. “On Saving China’s Dying Languages.” *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2013. <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/06/on-saving-chinas-dying-languages/276971/>.
- Shu-mei Shih. *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Spolsky, Bernard. “Language Management in the People’s Republic of China.” *Language and Public Policy* 90, no. 4 (2014): 165–79.
- Tam, Gina Anne. *Dialect and Nationalism in China, 1860–1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Teo, Stephen. *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Wuxia Tradition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.
- Weng, Jeffrey. “What Is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language Standardization in Early Republican China.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 77, no. 3 (2018): 611–33.
- Wong, Wing. “The Slow Death of China’s Dialects,” February 21, 2019.  
<https://www.mironline.ca/the-slow-death-of-chinas-dialects/>.