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### ***Red Cliff* and the Expediency of Culture**

The historical epic *Red Cliff* – the most expensive Chinese-language movie made to date – was released in two installments in Asia (in 2008 and 2009), where the full 280-minute two-part version had tremendous box-office success. However, *Red Cliff* has been exhibited outside Asia as a single truncated film, running just over half that length, compressed for Western audiences. Directed by John Woo in his ‘triumphant return’ to Asian film production after a decade and a half in Hollywood, *Red Cliff* is an exemplary instance of film as transnational text, as cross-cultural text that travels (that has clearly been *made* for travel, even as it travels light), which acquires different frames of significance and value as it moves.

The twenty-first century has been widely forecast to be the Chinese century. China can now be said to be engaged in a process of reimagining itself as a community both economically and culturally – the transnationalization of capital in China coincides with a transnationalization of culture. This paper will position *Red Cliff* as a filmic commodity that draws on culture as a resource and acts as a significant marker of the simultaneous economic and cultural transformations. By looking at how *Red Cliff* has been marketed and critically received in different regions, this paper explores a number of issues around the production, circulation, and reception of an Asian cinematic imaginary in the age of transnationalism.