

“SILK DRAGON”
Screenplay Treatment

In 1390, almost 100 years before Columbus discovered America, an Italian friar read "The Book of Marco Polo" and it changed his life forever. Within months this obscure cleric, who went by the name Odoric, was following the Silk Road to China. It was the beginning of a journey that would lead to a lifelong friendship and enable him to chronicle one of the most amazing stories in Chinese history.

“Silk Dragon” is the story of San Bao Taijian, a brave young lad who overcame incredible odds to become the greatest explorer the world has ever known. It is an epic tale of sweeping adventure on the high seas, fiercely violent battles with hostile kings and behind-the-scenes political intrigue within the royal court. It provides a rare and intimate look at the devious competition among the royal concubines, the ruthless accumulation of fabulous riches by ambitious men and brutal justice delivered by the sword.

THE FILM BEGINS... with a nightmarish sequence of chaos and conflict. A vicious battle rages as the Ceylonese army savagely attacks a contingent of Chinese explorers in a narrow rugged valley. San Bao, leader of the Chinese, asks Friar Odoric to protect the defenseless maiden Morning Sun at all costs. But during the raging battle, San Bao is cornered by the advancing Ceylonese warriors. Seeing that San Bao is in immediate danger, Odoric momentarily abandons Morning Sun to protect his friend. He leaps into the path of danger and takes an arrow in the chest.

Odoric awakens abruptly from his “fever dream”... sweating profusely, gasping for breath. It is *YEARS LATER (1433)*. A young Friar attends him, wiping his brow. His wound aches and seeps blood. Odoric explains to the young Friar that it is a very old injury, but it suddenly pains him greatly. It is fiery hot and is bleeding for the first time since he received the wound many years ago. And now, he feels something else is dreadfully wrong.

The young Friar asks him how he got the wound. Odoric patiently explains that this wound goes deep and its story begins long before the day he received it.

As he relates his tale, we *FLASHBACK* to San Bao and Morning Sun as young teenagers in their Hunan province village. This Muslim boy is clearly in love with the lovely young girl. They run excitedly through the forest to their secret place, where they pledge eternal love and dedication to one another.

Nearby, Mongol warriors led by Chief Chi Li Bu Hua prepare to attack General Ho's much larger Chinese force. San Bao and Morning Sun are captured by the Mongols and taken to Chi Li Bu Hua. He is intrigued by these feisty youngsters.

Suddenly General Ho's huge army appears. They are an overwhelming force; much bigger than he expected. The Chief proclaims they have only two choices. "We either fight and die... or we surrender." San Bao blurts out, "There is a third choice." Amused by this brash youth, the Mongol Chief asks what that choice might be. "Demand peace," San Bao explains. The Chief laughs heartily and draws his sword. "Thank you, my young idealist. But today, I think we will fight and die."

During the chaos of battle, Chief Chi Li Bu Hua escapes with a few of his men. Many others are taken prisoner, including the helpless teenagers, San Bao and Morning Sun.

We return to 1433 as the young Friar asks Odoric with excited curiosity, "And you were there?" "No," Odoric explains. "But I was nearby."

In *FLASHBACK*, we see Odoric on his journey from Nepal and his encounter with the royal caravan of the Chinese Prince, Zhu Di. Impressed by this Italian cleric's daring journey into unfamiliar territory, Prince Zhu Di allows him to join them.

General Ho's army encounters the caravan. As is custom, Zhu Di gets his pick of the prisoners. When he selects San Bao, Morning Sun becomes upset. Odoric consoles the young girl, trying to calm her. And then, he bravely defies protocol by approaching the captive San Bao, giving him Morning Sun's necklace. Zhu Di takes little notice of Morning Sun's emotional outburst, but he is made curious by Friar Odoric's bold gesture.

In Beijing, Odoric tries to convince Prince Zhu Di to release San Bao. Zhu Di calls for the young captive. As San Bao appears before the Prince, a messenger tells Zhu Di that the contingent of General Ho's soldiers escorting the prisoners was attacked again by the Mongol Chief and all of the prisoners were freed to rejoin him.

Upon hearing this news, San Bao boldly comments, "Anyone can be triumphant one day and defeated the next." He quickly adds, "We are all made vulnerable by pride." Impressed by San Bao's spunk and wisdom, Zhu Di selects San Bao to join his royal court as a servant. San Bao is thrilled by this honor.

Once they are alone, Friar Odoric attempts to caution San Bao about the strict requirement that accompanies being selected for the royal household; each new servant must be made a "eunuch" to ensure the fidelity of the Prince's many concubines. But San Bao is too excited by this great opportunity and pays no attention to the warning. However, when the giggling eunuchs inform San Bao of what actually awaits him, he quickly panics. He knows this will clearly destroy his relationship with Morning Sun. The eunuchs simply laugh and begin preparing him for the cruel ceremony, forcefully holding him down while they apply the restrictive bindings.

San Bao is brought in to ch'ang tau outside of Tau Chin Palace. As the eunuchs hold him down firmly, he grows more frightened. The tao tau chiang (specialist) approaches with a blade. As is custom, the specialist asks, "Will you regret it or not?" Before San Bao can answer, the door bursts open with a crash and Zhu Di enters, yelling "Stop!"

He orders all observers to leave, including Odoric. He announces that he will personally perform the ceremony. He tells the eunuchs to secure San Bao's arms and legs and then leave. The specialist suggests, "Your majesty, perhaps I should give you instructions..." But as Zhu Di picks up the blade, he insists he has seen it done many times. "I am well aware of how to separate a man from his manhood." The specialist is ordered out as well.

Zhu Di raises the blade. San Bao gasps. "I trust you San Bao. I trust your instincts and I trust your loyalty." He brings the blade down suddenly to within an inch of San Bao's genitals. The boy gasps. The blade remains there, hovering. Zhu Di smiles. "Do you... trust me?" San Bao exhales in relief. He can barely squeeze a sound from his constricted throat. "Yes."

We return to 1433. The young Friar is wide eyed! Odoric tells him that the word quickly spread through the palace like a harsh wind; the Prince had spared San Bao from the blade! He then became Zhu Di's most trusted and loyal servant. Trembling, the young Friar asks, "Did the Prince really trust San Bao so much that he would spare him?" Odoric considers this with a wry expression. "Was it truth or was it legend? Or merely a rumor concocted by the other eunuchs?" Odoric shrugs. "We were never certain."

Odoric explains that he then ran a small mission in Beijing and didn't see San Bao for several years. San Bao remained in the service of the Prince, while Zhu Di's radical young nephew, Hui-Ti, was named Emperor by public proclamation.

In *FLASHBACK*, we see Odoric and San Bao as they meet again after many years. Odoric carefully observes him... commenting that he walks well. San Bao asks, "Why shouldn't I?" But Odoric is reluctant to come out and ask him bluntly. He searches for signs of San Bao being a eunuch, but doesn't see them. San Bao is tall and strong, while most of the eunuchs remain small and effeminate.

Odoric sees that San Bao still wears Morning Sun's necklace. He comments on it. San Bao is saddened by the reminder. He doesn't know what happened to Morning Sun and he misses her greatly.

San Bao begins to exert great influence over the decisions made by Zhu Di. But the ambitious High Administrator Wong and Zhu Di's envious son, Prince Han, resent San Bao and his influential position with Zhu Di. They'd like to be rid of him and secretly conspire to find a way.

When word comes that the renegade Mongol Chief Chi Li Bu Hua has returned and is preparing to attack the Great Wall, San Bao requests that Zhu Di take him along when he goes to confront the warrior. Secretly, he hopes to learn more about his beloved Morning Sun and what fate has befallen her.

Zhu Di's forces march to the Great Wall, greatly outnumbering Chi Li Bu Hua's smaller band of fighters. "This is a disturbingly familiar situation," Chi Li Bu Hua comments upon seeing what he's up against. Before a tragic battle ensues, he requests a conference with Zhu Di.

When Chi Li Bu Hua meets with Zhu Di, he notices San Bao... recognizing him. Zhu Di says "You are very wise to recognize the futility of your position." But Chi Li Bu Hua tells him he has a demand. Zhu Di is surprised. "You are not in a position to make demands. A fool's tongue will lead you to destruction. But by all means, speak." Chi Li Bu Hua says, "I demand... peace."

This stops Zhu Di cold. He considers this unusual demand from a rebel warrior. Chi Li Bu Hua gives San Bao a glance and slight nod... a gesture of sincere thanks. Zhu Di considers this, finally telling him, "I accept." But as sign of good faith Zhu Di also demands that Chi Li Bu Hua provide him with a large number of male and female servants.

In a battlefield ceremony, Chi Li Bu Hua turns over many servants, both male and female. San Bao is breathless when he sees a familiar face among the Chief's servants. It is Morning Sun. Chi Li Bu Hua sees their response to each other and makes a point of including her in those turned over. The Chief and San Bao exchange knowing looks. Now it is San Bao's turn to nod in thanks to the Mongol warrior.

Back in Beijing, Odoric arranges a secret meeting between San Bao and Morning Sun. It is a happily tearful and emotional rendezvous in Zhu Di's garden. Their love is still strong... but it must remain secret. San Bao explains the politics of the palace to Morning Sun... and why they must never be seen alone together.

Emperor Hui-ti is angered by Prince Zhu Di's moral victory. He seeks vengeance by dispatching his senior generals to Beijing to kill Commander Tan, Zhu Di's top military officer. But Zhu Di learns of the plot and sets a trap. At a crucial moment during a banquet, Zhu Di's men rush into the room and slay the assassins before they can execute their devious plan.

When he hears what happened, Emperor Hui-ti orders General Ho to take a force of six hundred thousand imperial troops and crush Zhu Di's army.

Zhu Di sends San Bao as emissary to solicit help from Chi Li Bu Hua, who owes him a favor. But the Chief is reluctant. He doesn't think that Zhu Di can possibly

win such an unequal conflict. And he doesn't want to get himself in the middle of a family feud.

Desperate for help, Zhu Di meets with his cowardly brother, Ning. But Ning doesn't want to cooperate either. "It's your fight alone." Ning tells him. "Not mine." But Zhu Di cleverly "threatens" him with an offer that Ning can't refuse.

Meanwhile, San Bao convinces Chi Li Bu Hua to join the conflict by impressing him with brilliant military strategy that he learned from his father and grandfather who fought for Ghengis Kahn using unique guerrilla tactics and warfare.

This strategy allows the three small armies cobbled together by Zhu Di, Chi Li Bu Hua and Ning to defeat the General's larger forces. They triumphantly march on the palace in Nanking, burning it to the ground, killing Emperor Hui-ti. But when they don't find Hui-ti's body in the charred ruins, Zhu Di fears that he might have escaped.

Zhu Di grows obsessed with his power as China's new Emperor. When he comes upon San Bao meeting secretly with Morning Sun in the garden, he is awed by the young maiden's beauty. He had paid little attention to her until now. He curtly dismisses San Bao and then attempts to seduce Morning Sun himself. But she is shy and demure, refusing his advances.

Emperor Zhu Di instructs San Bao to place Morning Sun's name on the list to serve in his new court as a lady-in-waiting... and as a potential concubine. San Bao is made miserable by this. He knows this will require Morning Sun to be available to Zhu Di for sexual intimacy whenever he pleases. When San Bao warns Morning Sun about what is happening, she vows to remain faithful to him.

The royal entourage moves to the palace in Nanking. It remains a still-blackened symbol of Hui-ti's defeat. Many officials, especially Wong and Prince Han, are not supportive of Zhu Di since he has taken over by force. Behind closed doors, they heatedly debate their options for dealing with Zhu Di and San Bao.

To deflect growing criticism, Zhu Di announces an ambitious plan to build a huge fleet of ships and send them out to foreign countries. He wants to carry on his father's efforts to expand trade, only with more and bigger ships. He has greater plans for expanding the empire than anyone before him had even imagined.

Prince Han feels that he should be in charge of building the ships. But after San Bao does remarkably well on his examinations, Zhu Di puts him in charge of the fleet's construction. Prince Han is filled with rage at this insult. Wong and other officials are furious! A eunuch in charge! A common servant! And a Muslim too, not a follower of Lord Buddha! They feel that Zhu Di has made an unforgivable mistake. They also worry that the eunuchs will soon become too powerful and influential.

As the controversy becomes public, Morning Sun is shocked and saddened to learn that San Bao is actually a eunuch. This means their love can never be consummated. Seeing that Morning Sun is miserable, one of the women reveals to her the commonly held belief that San Bao was secretly spared by Zhu Di and is really not a eunuch... that he is only pretending so that he can continue in Zhu Di's service. As proof of this, she points out that when San Bao took his exams and was promoted, Zhu Di did not require him to present his pao (treasure)... his private parts in a jar... as proof of being a eunuch. This is normally required of all eunuchs being promoted. Therefore, the rumor of San Bao being spared must surely be true. This gives Morning Sun renewed hope.

While San Bao is away supervising the ship building, Zhu Di invites Morning Sun to spend her first evening alone with him. She discretely keeps him at arms length, avoiding any intimacy. But then he becomes demanding. He is about to take her by force, when she breaks down and begins to cry. Though he's not happy with her refusal, he releases her. He believes that in time she will relent and succumb to his charm and influence.

Zhu Di makes a major public announcement, revealing who will lead the fleet on its first expedition. Since he was slighted before, Han believes it will most surely be him this time. But it turns out to be San Bao. Everyone is shocked. Han believes that putting San Bao in charge of building the ships was already political suicide. Now Zhu Di has added serious injury to his initial insult.

Zhu Di is warned by a devious Wong that court officials are unhappy with his choice of San Bao and that he is risking rebellion from within his own court. But Zhu Di remains firmly behind his decision.

The massive armada of ships is finally ready to set sail on the first expedition. It is a scene of impressive size and scope, with 28,000 sailors on 300 ships. The largest vessels are 400 feet long, more than four times the size of the Santa Maria that would later be sailed by Columbus.

As a way of calming criticism from unhappy court officials, Zhu Di gives High Administrator Wong the title of Deputy Envoy and allows him to go along on the expedition as second-in-command to San Bao

Zhu Di tells San Bao in secret that he suspects Hui-ti may have survived the fire in the Nanking palace and might still be alive. He hopes that launching these expeditions may draw him out of hiding and he can be dealt with once and for all.

A vengeful and angry Prince Han secretly orders Wong to disrupt and destroy the expedition however he can. He wants San Bao to be thoroughly disgraced so that his father will choose him to lead all future expeditions.

Emperor Zhu Di and Empress Xu calmly discuss the protocol of the royal court. She accepts his dalliances with many concubines as a necessary custom. With sly irony, she even predicts which lady-in-waiting her husband will select for his pleasure each evening. But when he makes an unexpected choice to spite her, Empress Xu grows cold and sarcastic, taking the side of the spurned concubine.

Before the fleet sails, San Bao and Morning Sun meet in secret. She wants to make love with him. She refuses to reveal anything about the time she spent living with the Mongols, but indicates that she always remained faithful to San Bao. Even though Morning Sun is more than willing to be intimate, San Bao remains hesitant, elusive and sullen. She is deeply troubled by his hesitancy. But she is reluctant to ask him why he refuses, afraid that it may be because his love for her has faded. Their parting is filled with sadness and melancholy.

The fleet sails to Champa and Java, then sets course for India, where they meet the rulers of other countries and initiate trade. On the surface things seem to be going smoothly. But Wong is planting the seeds of dissension among the crew.

Back in Nanking, Prince Han stirs up trouble among various court officials as Emperor Zhu Di becomes deeply absorbed in his elaborate plans to build a magnificent palace in Beijing that he will call the Forbidden City.

Morning Sun seeks out Friar Odoric and hesitantly inquires about San Bao. She doesn't understand why he will not make love to her. Odoric makes excuses for San Bao but is beginning to have doubts himself. He knows that San Bao loves Morning Sun and he also believes that San Bao is not really a eunuch. He gives her unconvincing political excuses, saying that perhaps San Bao is simply trying to maintain his loyalty and fidelity to the Emperor by not breaking palace protocol involving the servants and ladies-in-waiting. But this weak response does not satisfy Morning Sun.

At sea, Wong is turning the crew against San Bao. During a terrible storm, San Bao leaves his sickbed to take the helm. The expedition's historian, Ma Huan, cleverly uses a large lantern to reflect light on the sails, tricking the crew into believing it is a message from the Goddess of the Sea. Filled with awe by this experience, the crew pledges its undying loyalty to San Bao.

When Wong sees that San Bao has now regained the crew's confidence, he enlists some of his conspirators to destroy the ship's only piece of navigational equipment. But San Bao catches the conspirators and throws them in the brig. Fearing the wrath of San Bao, they quickly betray Wong.

Meanwhile, in Nanking, Morning Sun is forced to surrender sexually to Zhu Di. As he ravages her, a tear runs down her cheek. Then, torn by conflicting feelings of sadness, loss and anger, she chooses to punish San Bao for not saving her from this terrible fate. She turns her anger at him into bitter passion, writhing in

wild ecstasy, allowing the Emperor to falsely believe that she is overwhelmed by his ardor.

From this point on she is addressed formally as Honorable Lady, indicating that she is Zhu Di's principal concubine. Her spirit and heart are broken.

A jealous eunuch reveals to Prince Han that San Bao and Morning Sun are in love with each other. They have been observed together many times in the Emperor's garden. Han is pleased to learn this. He can use this information to undermine San Bao.

The fleet arrives in Africa and San Bao meets with the African ruler. The Africans stage an elaborate celebration and present the Chinese with a special gift... an African giraffe.

Back in Nanking, a drunken Prince Han gets into an argument with Emperor Zhu Di, revealing that his favorite Honorable Lady, Morning Sun, is not really in love with him... but with San Bao. Zhu Di is furious with Han and throws him out. But now he has troubling doubts.

The fleet returns to Nanking and there is a spectacular celebration and parade. Hundreds of African warriors pass before the Emperor, all bearing unique and exotic gifts. But it is the African giraffe that attract the most attention, becoming wildly popular with the Chinese because it resembles one of their own mythical creatures.

Zhu Di is surprised to see that his old friend, Wong, is wrapped in chains. San Bao explains that Wong tried to destroy the expedition. Zhu Di orders Wong to be immediately executed. But Wong claims he was under direct orders of Zhu Di's son, Prince Han. "If a head must fall, it must be Han's!" he screams.

Without hesitation, Emperor Zhu Di ruthlessly has Wong executed and throws Han into prison, unable to bring himself to execute his own son.

Seeing San Bao again creates a maelstrom of conflicting emotions for Morning Sun. She still loves him desperately. When they are alone, she endeavors to entice San Bao by presenting herself naked to him. But he remains strangely unresponsive to this unexpected attempt at seduction. When he provides no explanation for his behavior, she leaves... filled with anger, hurt and shame.

Zhu Di is in misery over his son, Prince Han. Empress Xu begs San Bao and Commander Tan to go to the prison and talk to Han. But Han remains defiant. Things grow worse when Commander Tan threatens Han, telling him that when he sees his father, he must get down on his knees and beg Zhu Di's forgiveness.

Friar Odoric advises San Bao that he must rectify the situation with Morning Sun or risk losing her forever.

San Bao struggles to talk with Morning Sun, but she is now aloof and distant... wracked by her anger with San Bao and guilt over yielding to Zhu Di. San Bao doesn't understand, but begins to suspect that it's something more than just her knowledge that he is a eunuch that troubles her so.

But then, at a banquet, San Bao witnesses Morning Sun being introduced as the Emperor's Honorable Lady. Zhu Di surreptitiously observes San Bao's troubled reaction as this occurs, realizing that their reported love may, in fact, be real.

Zhu Di summons Morning Sun and questions her about San Bao. She says she has known him for a very long time... but does not love him. She claims that she is loyal only to her Emperor. But he knows she is lying.

Zhu Di then questions San Bao about Morning Sun. San Bao swears his loyal allegiance to Zhu Di, telling him that he would never break protocol or become involved with one of the Emperor's ladies. He knows that San Bao is lying as well. "I am your servant," San Bao declares. "But you are also Admiral of my fleet," Zhu Di retorts. San Bao replies, "But always your loyal servant, majesty."

A visiting Korean dignitary present Zhu Di with a gift... a woman named Quan. At first the Emperor is polite but indifferent to her. But when he experiences her untamed and inventive ways in bed, he becomes consumed by her, making her an official concubine of his royal court.

Morning Sun walks in on Zhu Di making love with Quan. He sees her. She runs off, shocked and hurt. Empress Xu comforts her... explaining that "we are all beautiful flowers... but we are his flowers. He plucks us from the garden when he pleases. We do not have the privilege of jealousy or anger. We can only be beautiful."

Zhu Di announces that he will launch a second expedition, this time to Arabia and Ceylon. San Bao is thrilled. Morning Sun, however, is extremely unhappy. She fears that Zhu Di is just trying to get rid of San Bao so that he can have her, along with all his other concubines, at his disposal.

Zhu Di travels to the prison to set things right with his son. Surprisingly, Prince Han drops to his knees, groveling, and begs for forgiveness. Now able to save face, Zhu Di releases the falsely repentant Prince Han from prison.

As the fleet prepares to set sail, Zhu Di makes two surprising announcements. His son has been granted forgiveness and will sail with the fleet as a special envoy under San Bao. And, he is giving a gift to San Bao. Morning Sun will become his very own lady-in-waiting. San Bao and Morning Sun are shocked.

The departure from the harbor is once again a spectacular event, with even greater ships. Prince Han stands beside San Bao on the bridge of the lead ship, gazing down arrogantly at all those who thought he'd lost his position of power.

At sea, San Bao and Morning Sun are alone together for the first time in years. They are initially at each other's throats, throwing accusations back and forth. When Morning Sun vents her anger at San Bao for never making love to her, he proclaims "You know why I can't." But she tells him she knows the real truth. She knows that he is not a eunuch... that he's just hiding behind that excuse because he doesn't really love her. It all becomes clear to him now. San Bao calmly tells her that she doesn't know the "real" truth at all.

He then describes what actually happened. We SEE the castration sequence once again, now being described by San Bao. Only this time, when Zhu Di holds the sharp blade over San Bao genitals and asks, "Do you trust me?"... and San Bao answers "Yes"... there is a suspenseful pause. Then Zhu Di swiftly swings the blade down. Whack! As San Bao freezes in open-mouthed shock, no sound able to escape his lips, Zhu Di calmly tells him... "Never trust anyone."

Morning Sun is shocked, sympathetic. She caresses him lovingly, tears rolling down her face. She tells him, it doesn't matter... she still loves him. That she always loved him. Tenderly she touches him and says... "While most women only know one kind of love... you can love me in more ways than there are stars in heaven." They make love, tenderly, then passionately.

The armada visits Ceylon. The ships are inspected by the King of Ceylon, Yala Kumi-Orh and his men. But Friar Odoric is suspicious of this leader, sensing that something is not right. Prince Han volunteers to remain behind and continue diplomatic discussions with the King.

San Bao and the fleet sail on to Arabia. They confront the ill-tempered leader, Juddah Bin Juddah, who plans to squash these invading "Chinese insects." But then San Bao shows up with an overwhelming contingent of men, intimidating Juddah Bin Juddah. The Arab leader grows very friendly when he learns that San Bao is actually Muslim. Suddenly cooperative and convivial, he agrees to sail back to China with them, taking along some of his men.

They anchor in the harbor in Ceylon to pick up Prince Han, but are invited first to attend a lavish celebration at the King's mountain retreat. But then, during the banquet, King Yala and each of his court officials gradually slip away. San Bao notices this and begins to grow suspicious.

Meanwhile, the ships are suddenly attacked in the harbor. Han has set them up, conspiring with the Ceylonese ruler to kill San Bao and his men and seize the riches carried by the armada.

Word comes to San Bao of the attack in the harbor. He immediately recognizes what is happening and quickly rallies his men. They rush toward the harbor. But they are ambushed by the Ceylonese army, alerted by Han that they are coming. They fight valiantly amid the violent chaos. We see San Bao telling Friar Odoric to protect Morning Sun, as in Odoric's dream at the beginning of our story.

But in the heat of battle, when San Bao is in danger of being killed by an enemy arrow, Odoric leaves Morning Sun and throws himself in harms way to protect San Bao... taking an arrow to the chest.

But then, as San Bao's would-be attackers are quickly dispatched by General Tan and his men, a huge contingent of Ceylonese soldiers appears on the ridge. They fire their arrows at Morning Sun. A dozen arrows find their target and she falls. San Bao picks up her arrow-riddled body and carries her to edge of the gorge, above the harbor filled with burning ships, crying out in anguish to Allah.

Enraged, San Bao and a small group, including General Tan and Juddah Bin Juddah, charge into the Ceylonese palace, interrupting Yala's premature victory celebration. Yala is shocked to see that San Bao is still alive. San Bao puts a knife to his throat, demanding that he withdraw his troops. Unafraid, King Yala brazenly warns San Bao that if he is harmed, his men will instantly slaughter San Bao and his men. But San Bao responds, "You have already destroyed all that I love... everything that I live for. I would welcome death." Realizing that San Bao is serious, Yala calls off his troops.

Prince Han bursts in, savagely charging San Bao in one final attempt to destroy the man who has denied him an easy path to wealth and power. But San Bao whirls to face his enemy, driving the dagger home. Han slides off the crimson blade, collapsing at San Bao's feet.

We see San Bao on board his battered ship as the armada sails the open sea. Odoric tells us that the fleet returned to China, but then launched several more far reaching expeditions led by San Bao.

We return to Odoric... as he finishes telling his story to the young Friar. He winces in anguish. His wound pains him horribly. Why, after all these years should it do this now? He doesn't understand.

But then the answer comes. A messenger arrives with news from Nanking that San Bao has died while on his seventh and final voyage. Yet there is no word of what caused his untimely death. But Friar Odoric says he knows what it was. "San Bao has died of a broken heart."

We see a beautiful shot of San Bao and Morning Sun standing on the deck of the treasure ship, looking out over the vast ocean. After a moment... Morning Sun fades away, leaving only San Bao, watching the ocean alone.

Ordoric's voiceover informs us: "All records and histories of San Bao's voyages were destroyed and all further expeditions by China were stopped forever."

San Bao slowly fades and disappears. Then the treasure ship slowly vanishes, leaving a vast empty sea.

Over this scene we SEE THE WORDS:

"Sixty years later, Vasco de Gama and Christopher Columbus set sail for the New World".

"Asia's retreat into relative isolation after the incredible expeditions of San Bao amounted to a catastrophic missed opportunity. Ironically, it laid the groundwork for the rise of Europe... and, eventually, America."