

A sacred heritage.
A rural community.
An unbroken tradition -
now changing.

打銅鼓

BANG THE DRUM

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PRESS KIT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Director's Statements

4 Film Synopsis

5 Film Crew

6 Technical Info

7-9 Cast Voices

10 Gallery

11-13 High Resolution Stills



28 MINUTES

SHORT LENGTH | DOCUMENTARY | 2020

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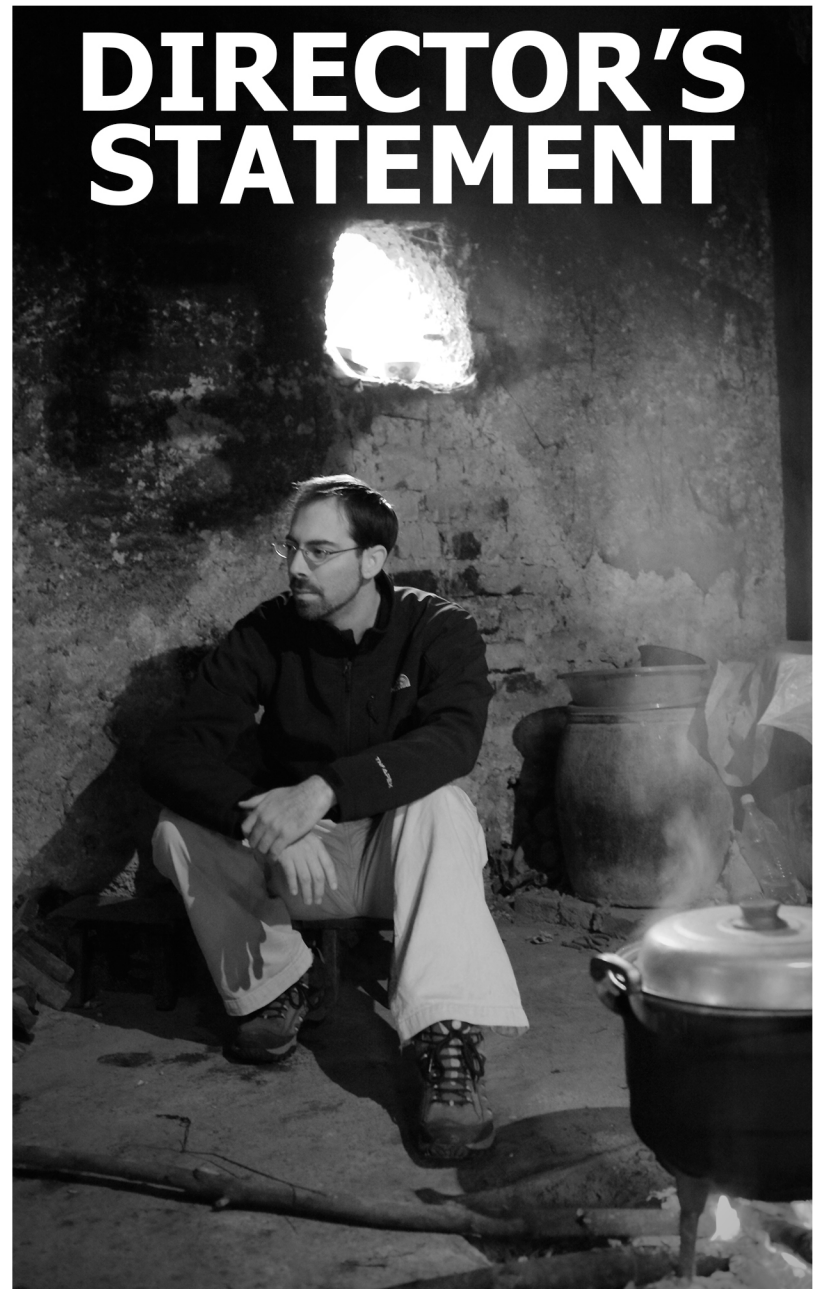
WWW.CSUCHICO.EDU/ALVA

Through an anthropological lens, heritage is seen to be very dynamic, deeply connected to people, place, and time. Understanding heritage to be present-centered, I have come to ask: What does heritage mean to individuals, communities and even nations?; Whose heritage are we speaking of?; How does meaning and expression of cultural heritage change over time?

In 2008, I began a research project with the Baiku Yao (locally called the Dounuo), who live deep in the karst mountains of southwest China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Over the summers, I heard the sound of their bronze drums echoing across the mountains, calling villagers to honor deceased elders during elaborate funeral ceremonies. Over the years working in the village of Huaili, villagers and shamans explained to me that bronze drum was not merely an instrument, but a living spirit that communicated with the heavens to open the path to the ancestral land for the deceased soul to travel to. Over the course of my fieldwork, I witnessed changes to bronze drum culture in how it was identified as heritage worth preserving and protecting by scholars and the Chinese government and as a cultural symbol of the Baiku Yao that could be exploited as an asset of tourism development. In 2016, Tanner Hansen (cinematographer and editor) and I ventured to China, traveling from Beijing to Guangxi, to capture the multiple perspectives of Chinese officials, scholars, drum manufacturers and sellers, and village residents on the changing life of the bronze drum. Documenting different claims over bronze drum heritage, we found that the bronze drum symbolizes how the Baiku Yao people are negotiating their place in a rapidly changing China. The film *Bang the Drum* speaks not only to the heritage of the Baiku Yao of China, but, moreover, to how cultural heritage shapes our lives.

Will Nitzky,
Director and Producer

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



SYNOPSIS

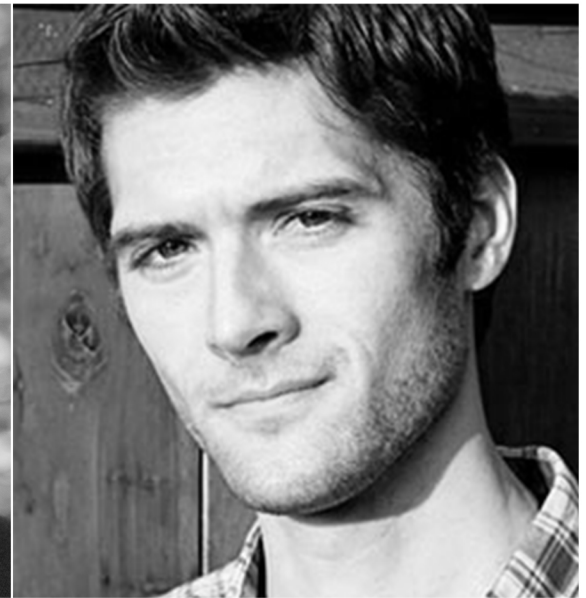


Short Description

For the Yao minority of rural southwest China, the bronze drum is a sacred heritage. Its sound aids the souls of deceased elders to reach the ancestral land. When the Chinese government steps in to protect heritage, the life of the bronze drum takes on new meaning and becomes an icon for tourist performances. Bang the Drum traces the path heritage takes in a changing China.

Expanded Description

In the remote ethnic Yao village of Huaili, deep in southwest China, large bronze drums are alive. They produce a sound that speaks to the heavens, opening the path for the souls of deceased villagers to reach the ancestral land. Beyond the funeral, bronze drums are valued by the Yao for their anthropomorphic role as a protector of the household. When the Chinese government steps in to protect this sacred heritage, the life of the bronze drum takes a new turn. Huaili and the ethnic culture of the Yao fall under the tourist gaze and the bronze drum transforms into an icon for tourist performances. The Yao are forced to navigate the pressures of the government and the tourist market to uphold an unbroken tradition. Bang the Drum traces the path heritage takes in a changing China.



TANNER HANSEN
CINEMATOGRAPHER
& EDITOR

Tanner is a writer and student filmmaker. He is the editor of the documentary “Potter’s Field.” He is a senior at California State University Chico, pursuing a double major in English and anthropology.

WILLIAM NITZKY
DIRECTOR &
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

As an anthropologist and museum professional, Will Nitzky has spent the last two decades studying the interplay of ethnic relations, tourism development, and heritage management among rural communities in southwest China. In addition to leading the curation of two museum exhibits, he also produced the PBS aired documentary *Stories in Thread*.

DANIEL BRUNS
POST-PRODUCTION
SUPERVISOR

Daniel Bruns works at CSU, Chico in the Advanced Laboratory for Visual Anthropology as the Laboratory Technician. He has directed, filmed, and edited many award-winning documentaries and commercials including winning two Emmy awards in the past few years.



TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Of the 2400 bronze drums worldwide, the majority are found in China.

Wu 2009

Total Running Time - 28 minutes

MPAA - Not rated

Aspect Ratio - 16x9, pixel size 4K

3840x2160p

Year - 2020

Website - www.csuchico.edu/alva/bang-the-drum.shtml

Production Company - The CSU, Chico

Advanced Laboratory for Visual Anthropology

Television Standard - NTSC

Shooting Format - R3D

Sound Format - Stereo

Framerate - 23.976fps

Subtitles - English

Closed Captions - English (Open)

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



“For the Baiku Yao, the bronze drum is a treasure. It protects the spirit of the family. Every drum has a name. It is like a member of the family.”

LU CHAOJIN
BAI KU YAO
TOWN MAYOR



“When we play the bronze drum, the path is opened. The sound of the bronze drum and the pig-skin drum are transmitted up to the heavens. The ancestors hear it and say, “Oh, down there, an elder is coming up!””

LI FANGCAI
BAI KU YAO
CULTURAL INHERITOR

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



“Nowadays, the bronze drum is protected under Chinese cultural heritage law. If there is no protection, the bronze drum could disappear.”

JIANG TINGYU
DIRECTOR
CHINA BRONZE DRUM SOCIETY



“Destruction has led to the protection of our heritage.”

MA SHENGDE
NATIONAL DEPARTMENT
OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



“Intangible heritage is not mine, it’s not yours. It belongs to the community.”

LIAO MINJUN
GUANGXI ETHNIC
FOLKLORE RESEARCH CENTER



“At the performance there is no feeling. In your heart, there is this sense of being fake.”

LU WENXUE
BAI KU YAO
PERFORMER

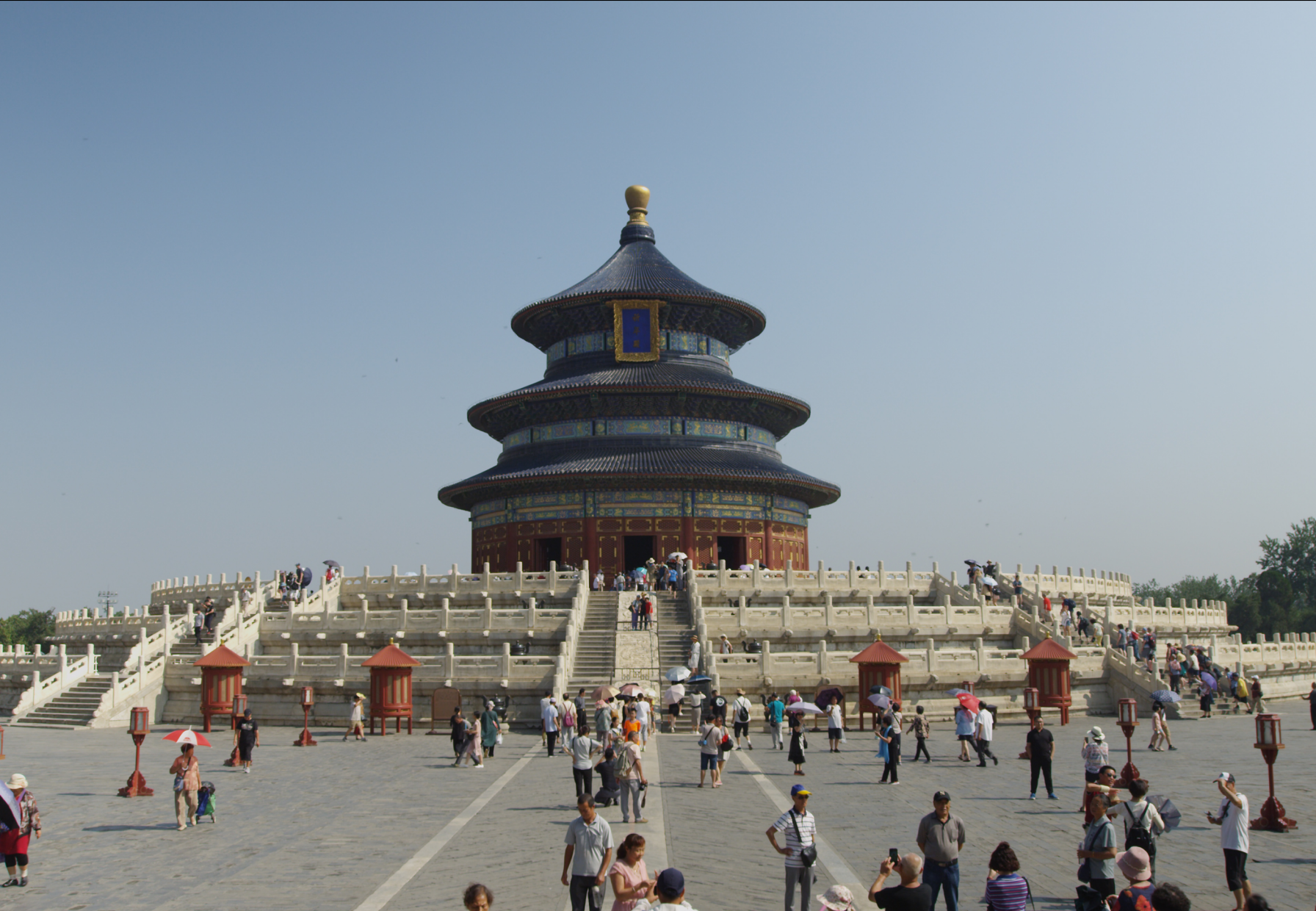
GALLERY



HIGH RESOLUTION STILL




HIGH RESOLUTION STILL



HIGH RESOLUTION STILLS





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LABORATORY for
VISUAL
ANTHROPOLOGY

AN ALVA PRODUCTION 2020

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