



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Early Film Culture in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Republican China

Yeh, Emilie Yueh-yu

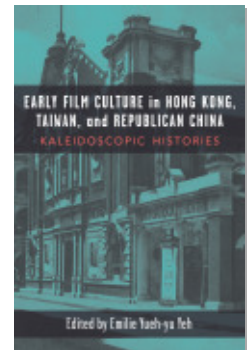
Published by University of Michigan Press

Yeh, Yueh-yu.

Early Film Culture in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Republican China: Kaleidoscopic Histories.

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/57846>

# Introduction

*Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh*

Studies on Chinese early cinema and its extended history in the Republican period (1911–1949) have trod a rocky path.<sup>1</sup> After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, film historiography developed into a guarded field, even until today. In the immediate postwar time the term “Republican” was tainted by its attachment to the defeated Nationalist Party and its associated autocratic capitalism, corrupt bureaucracy, and dependence on foreign imperialist powers. Because of these negative associations, the notion of Republican cinema became suspect and was subject to monitoring and constraint, in the 1950s and after. The formerly “infamous” epoch was acknowledged as pivotal to the development of Chinese modernity when the censorious treatment of the Republican period relaxed in the twenty-first century. Subsequently, Republican history was reconstructed by many scholars as Shanghai history, given the city's unrivaled position (so-called Paris of the Orient) in early twentieth-century China. “Shanghai cinema” was then upheld as a synecdoche for cinema of the entire era as the city was then the country's center of film production, distribution, and exhibition. The term “Shanghai,” despite its mythology (*qipao*, jazz, dance halls, intrigues, department stores, hippodrome, canidrome, dandies, motor cars, Ruan Lingyu, sultry Mandarin pop), risks reducing the scope of Republican history into a “looking glass” containing the most alluring facets. “Shanghai cinema,” too, when used as the overarching Republican cinema or Chinese cinema before 1949, entails a limited, partial approach to the vast terrains of cinema practices in many parts of China and colonies like Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao, and the Chinese diaspora generally.

Granted, Shanghai is central in the development of China's modernity

before 1949, including not just cinema, but other cultural formations. To quote Wen-hsin Yeh in her pioneering article: “Shanghai in the first half of the 20th century emerged to become China’s largest metropolis for trade, finance, manufacturing, publishing, higher education, journalism and many other important functions, performed by a growing population increasingly diversified into multiple classes of different incomes and interests.”<sup>2</sup> Major publications by Leo Ou-fan Lee (1999), Zhang Yingjin (ed., 1999), Andrew Jones (2001), Barbara Mittler (2004), Zhang Zhen (2005), Nicole Huang (2005), Wen-hsin Yeh (2008),<sup>3</sup> and many others fasten on Shanghai as the wellspring of modern China in consumer and media culture.<sup>4</sup> Through the concerted efforts of two generations of scholars, Shanghai was decisively crowned as the jewel of Chinese modernity and cosmopolitanism; film and media culture associated with the city—celebrities, advertising, magazines, popular fiction, theaters, and the urban space—also emerged to typify Chinese cinema in general. Hence the currency of “Shanghai cinema.” Further, in the course of rewriting Chinese film history, the cinema of Shanghai was useful in presenting alternatives to party-inflected hagiography of the national cinema, including those claimed by the Communist and Nationalist parties. Since the beginning of the new millennium, “Shanghai cinema” has returned with a vengeance with its voluptuous endowment. Resonance with historic sounds and sights of the International Settlement, recollections of China’s cosmopolitan glamour of the early twentieth century, and archival resources hidden in old magazines, diaries, and warehouses have turned Shanghai into a centerpiece, the one and only film capital in contemporary Chinese film studies.

“Shanghai cinema” may deserve its reputation for luminous glamour, but it may also obscure roads not taken. It is fair to say that the talisman of “Shanghai cinema” has eclipsed other sites and activities important to the makeup of an inclusive history. There are gaping holes and omissions when we pigeonhole Shanghai as the sole repository of Republican movie experience. To address this issue, we must adjust the existing binary of Communist-orthodox versus Shanghai-modern historiography by probing the cinema histories of less familiar sites located in different sociopolitical institutions. Republican China is too large, too diverse to be shackled to just one city, no matter Shanghai’s enchantment. In this book we focus on cities in addition to Shanghai—Hong Kong, Taipei, and Guangzhou—by identifying lesser-known practices beyond the dizzying and colliding reflections of early cinema as defined by Shanghai *moderne*. We present the notion of *yin-*

*ghua* (photo pictures), a common term for motion pictures used in Southern China, to critique *yingxi*, the Shanghai term for cinema, and its English translation, shadow play. The shadow play *yingxi* has been used as a protocol in defining early Chinese cinema against Western counterparts. This protocol needs to be exposed, revisited and revised. We delineate the long process of indigenizing cinema into a sustainable sociocultural institution in Hong Kong throughout the teens to the 1920s. Hong Kong was not just at the receiving end of showcasing Western musicals and motion pictures. The city developed a base of cinephilia culture before local production took off. In Taipei, we include magic lantern projection in the Japanese occupied areas to expand the frontier of early film historiography beyond the “first” screening events that took place in Xu Garden and other amusement venues in Shanghai. We cover the early film history of Taiwan by focusing on Japanese utilization of cinema for colonial governance. As hard as the Japanese administration tried to use film to propagate colonial policy, the effect was ambiguous. We introduce “Guangzhou film” and Cantophone cinema to complement and balance the overbearing resonance of “Shanghai cinema.”

Our attraction to early film practices in the treaty port of Guangzhou and colonial cities like Hong Kong and Taipei does not foreclose uncovering overlooked film histories of Shanghai. Several articles in this volume stay close to the orbit of Shanghai, offering fascinating historiographies on practices and institutions caught in historians’ peripheral vision. For instance, an extensive study on the Shanghai YMCA’s film program widens our scope in considering early film exhibition and shows us that film screening in early twentieth-century Shanghai was not exclusively a commercial transaction, available only in Western theaters located in the French concession. The investigation of the activities of foreign businessmen and itinerant cameramen illuminates the faded international veneers of the Shanghai filmscape. A treatment of “film literati” (traditional writers cum filmmakers) and cine-fiction (fiction adapted from screen stories) unveils the multilayered cross-over between film and literature in Republican cinema.

The idea of probing alternative film histories beyond Shanghai was first introduced by Poshek Fu, whose pioneering work in the bilateral relations between Shanghai and Hong Kong has led studies on Chinese-language film into not only “extra” but also critical dimensions.<sup>5</sup> Fu considered the liminality between art and politics, and his work on Shanghai cinema during wartime was the earliest work in resuscitating Shanghai filmmakers and writers who collaborated with the Japanese occupiers in maintaining the

life of Chinese cinema during the second Sino-Japanese War.<sup>6</sup> His take on the intertwined histories between Shanghai and Hong Kong reverses the Shanghai-centric view, situating Hong Kong as a comparable film capital of Chinese cinema. As historian, Fu wished to extend Chinese film research to cover different locales and to excavate new primary materials. In 2009 he initiated the research idea of “Beyond Shanghai” with me and mainland-based scholars Hui Liu and Xiaocai Feng. Together we began a research project entitled “Chinese Film Industry Beyond Shanghai: 1900–1950.” Given the rapid growth of Chinese film scholarship, we felt there was a need to look beyond Shanghai in order to come to a comprehensive, in-depth knowledge of the film industry as a whole, before it was nationalized under the People’s Republic of China in 1950. To fill the immense gap in the existing scholarship, our project set out to collect film advertisements, news items, and articles from early newspapers in Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, and Tianjin. From 2010 to 2013, our team read through eight newspapers from late Qing to the Republican era in the four cities and collected over twenty thousand useful items relating to our research objectives. Next, we categorized and summarized the collected data. In early 2015 we built an online database in collaboration with the Hong Kong Baptist University Library. This database made available a keyword index to allow easy search. Our hope is that the database will be of help for future research on regional film history.<sup>7</sup>

The importance of the local and (trans)regional histories against the grand narrative of the national cinema was previously advocated in Stephen Teo’s *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimension* (1997), Sheldon Lu’s *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (1997), and Zhang Yingjin’s *Screening China: Critical Interventions, Cinematic Reconfigurations, and the Transnational Imaginary in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (2002).<sup>8</sup> Jeremy Taylor’s book-length study on Amoy-dialect film is a valuable addition, while Weihong Bao’s *Fierce Cinema* offers challenging theoretical discussion on Chongqing cinema.<sup>9</sup> These are extraordinary milestones in the studies of Chinese cinema, but few have covered the early periods, between 1896 and the 1920s. This is where our present volume seeks to intervene. Our fieldwork, especially the data collected in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, uncovered eye-opening information in relation to the initial practices of exhibition, censorship, and reception of film. With these new materials, we have begun to form an alternative vision of the past. Meanwhile, there was a growing interest in early film culture in colonial Taiwan and in institutions

and figures that were historically viewed as marginal and problematic.<sup>10</sup> Seizing on the momentum and research energy on old colonial cities and on early moving image culture, the eleven articles here present a new historiography of Chinese-language cinema. These eleven chapters traverse a wide territory, from Shanghai to Guangzhou, connecting Hong Kong and Taipei, bringing topics specific to early cinema practices such as magic lantern shows, colonial film policy, missionary film, itinerant cameramen, and cine-fiction. Taken together, they recall a kaleidoscope, a proto-cinematic visual toy of optical seduction and pleasure. A kaleidoscopic view arises from the array of institutional and historiographic turns that produce intriguing patterns. These patterns shift and mutate; they converge and diverge according to the adjustments made by the historical agent. These adjustments eventuate in multiple and intertwined views out toward the cinematic histories of the sites the chapters of this volume navigate.

The first two turns of our kaleidoscopic survey are Hong Kong and Taipei, two Chinese colonial cities grown out of nineteenth-century imperialism. In these two cases, a newly arrived cinema is a colonial tool and technology par excellence. Motion pictures come from the West, from capitals like Paris, London, and New York; they carry novelty, a marvel that combines virtues of photography and projected imagery, of which we can choose phantasmagoria or magic lantern slides as prime examples. It prompts amazement and wonder, due to accurately reproduced motion of the subjects captured, and multiplied by the reaction of many others sitting nearby in the hall. Cinema, with a sensitive operator, could be a powerful collective reinscription of the senses for a new century. To fin de siècle colonial audiences in Hong Kong and Taipei, cinema was also a means of forging an imagined cosmopolitan identity for colonized subjects. To recipients in the colonies, cinema carried from the imperial centers news and views of technological advances; cinematic absorption was cast wide, along with incipient show business models purveyed by travelers from abroad. This was an important colonial function—affiliation via mechanical reproduction—also deployed, unevenly, in dynastic and Republican China. Cinema could function as a “civilizing” mission, a means to propagate metropolitan ideas (from West and East alike), and demonstrate leading-edge machines. It was sometimes hortatory, mixing ethical, modernizing and “wholesome” messages to young people in appropriate gatherings, like the YMCA. For Christian missionaries, motion pictures were important source material from the field, taken to advertise conversions and church planting, a way of raising funds at home.<sup>11</sup>

In Taiwan, there were government bodies circulating educational films for children and the public, but they also showed propaganda films to cultivate national spirit and promote the all-important concept of loyalty, identifying with the Japanese empire and nationalism. Evangelism and education were key functions of the new technology of motion pictures. But this was not all.

From the first, movies were commercialized by making them cognate with other popular art forms, such as musicals, comic repartee, illustrated lectures, and news announcements. The flickering pictures were staples of variety halls, sing-alongs, and comedy revues. Just as cinema could be mobilized on behalf of the church, school, and public health, it was most visible on the stage, where cinema inclined toward feature film entertainment. But this took quite some time, as full-length features did not become institutionalized until the teens. Even then they had overtures and live musical accompaniment to enhance the pictures. Until then, pictures shared the bill of fare with other kinds of live entertainment, which often followed well-established patterns. These patterns had roots in the nineteenth century, and many scholars have traced motion pictures' imbrications in stage, musical, and performance traditions.<sup>12</sup> In Hong Kong, there is clear evidence for the common settings of screen entertainment with vaudeville, cabaret, and musical revues. This followed British practices of live amusement, but given the locale, links with teahouse, opera, and Chinese entertainment venues were evident. Hong Kong was a British colony set in a Chinese community, so cinema moved on dual cultural tracks, while also progressing toward greater autonomy of exhibition and economic sustenance. Cosmopolitans like Spaniard Antonio Ramos helped propel cinema exhibition toward more opulent surroundings in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Macao, as well as treaty ports like Guangzhou.<sup>13</sup>

Entitled "Revising Historiography: Early Film Culture in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Guangzhou," the first part of this book features six chapters, and it begins with my "Translating *Yingxi*: Chinese Film Genealogy and Early Cinema in Hong Kong." This chapter targets concepts of *yingxi*, "shadow play," in prevailing histories of Chinese cinema and argues that the presumed links forged between early cinema and traditional art forms like opera or shadow play resulted from a problematic English rendition of the Chinese term *yingxi*. As a predominant term used to refer to motion pictures in the Republican period, we found little evidence supporting *yingxi* as a neologism, linking such art forms as shadow play or opera to motion pictures. Following this line of correction, I argue that *yingxi* should be un-

derstood as the Chinese term for “photoplay,” instead of, “shadow play.” In addition, based on the primary sources we recovered on early film exhibition in Hong Kong (1900–1916), we found an alternative term—*yinghua* (photo pictures)—was used more widely than *yingxi*, indicating the early reception of cinema was more fluid than that assumed by the *yingxi*, “shadow play” designation. Following the footsteps of *yinghua*, we traced the history of early film exhibition in Hong Kong and discovered that prior to 1924, cinema exhibition in Hong Kong was often held alongside other forms of amusements, including magic lantern shows, lectures, live performances, facilities, and services. In light of this manifold exhibition culture, movies were not the only attraction and screenings were not always commercially oriented. More often, audiences in the colonial Hong Kong of the 1910s and 1920s experienced a screening event of multiple stimuli, from visual attraction to religious indoctrination, from social reform to community building. Cinema’s multifaceted practices were fully embedded in colonial Hong Kong.

Following my revisiting of prevailing concepts of Chinese film historiography are three chapters that focus on the relationship between colonialism and cinema, including indigenous practice against the odds of colonial suppression. The colonial utilization of motion pictures was a salient feature in early film practices.<sup>14</sup> In Japanese-ruled Taiwan, the introduction of visual technology was managed to facilitate, if not fulfill, colonial mission building. Laura Jo-Han Wen’s “Magic Lantern Shows and Screen Modernity in Colonial Taiwan” investigates the “one and multiple” modernity mediated by the magic lantern shows in colonial Taiwan in the context of early cinema, media archaeology, modes of colonial edification, and the projection of empires. The magic lantern show (*gentō-kai*) appeared in Japanese textbooks in colonial Taiwan as early as 1897. By the 1910s, the show was among the frequent public events to project Japan’s ideas of news, hygiene, charity, and modern knowledge on the *benshi*-voiced, theatrical screen. In the 1940s, due to the pressing necessity of wartime propaganda, Japanese authorities restored magic lanterns as substitutes for the cinema in rural villages. The magic lantern might have been indeed an extension of colonial power; nonetheless, Wen argues the process of its projection and mediation also revealed the different stages of development between the colony and the imperial screen. To what extent did these shows do the magic for the colonial subjects? Did the Japanese screen truly function as a one-way mirror projecting the idealized empire? Wen’s chapter opens an important string of issues deserving our close attention.



In “From an Imported Novelty to an Indigenized Practice: Hong Kong Cinema in the 1920s,” Ting-yan Cheung and Pablo Sze-pang Tsoi unveil a key milestone in Hong Kong film history, arguing that the emergence of Hong Kong cinema was rooted in a specific economic and cultural context of the 1920s. In the prevailing film history, early cinema in Hong Kong (1897–1925) is considered uneventful and ineffectual. Within this historiographical framework, individual film pioneers and the activities they carried out were often marginalized, leading to an impression that the early film-related events mobilized by local filmmakers were of little significance. This chapter corrects this view and explores the early filmscape of Hong Kong in three evolutionary stages: first, the cinema as imported novelty and its popularization among local Chinese; second, the cinema as profitable investment and emergence of Chinese proprietors; third, the cinema as cultural text and the subsequent critical reception within Chinese communities. This evolution saw a growing variety of film-related activities that inadvertently nourished the growth of Hong Kong cinema in the decades to follow. Returning to colonial Taiwan, Daw-Ming Lee covers the dynamics between colonial machinery and cinema practice. His “Enlightenment, Propaganda, and Image Creation: A Descriptive Analysis of the Usage of Film by the Taiwan Education Society and the Colonial Government Before 1937” documents the use of motion pictures in the colony before the breakout of the second Sino-Japanese war in 1937, when heightened imperial indoctrination permeated every corner of the Japanese empire. Lee’s research shows that from very early on the colonial administration had seized on the novelty of motion pictures to propel its colonial rule and legitimacy. To achieve this, film was not used only as a pure propaganda machine but took on other functions such as “enlightenment,” (seeing the world), education, healthcare and so on. Lee also focuses on government organizations, such as the Taiwan Education Society and Taiwan Patriotic Women’s Association, to delineate the early stage of colonial film practice in Taiwan, its activities, agencies, audiences, and receptions. Lee’s chapter makes an important contribution to understanding the complexity of cinema’s place in empire building and colonial development.

Following Hong Kong and Taiwan, we travel to Republican-era Guangzhou (Canton) and examine the nexus between the city’s development and the flourishing movie business. The Republican era is a major transition in modern China, marked by extremes. This was the first republic in Chinese history, followed by optimism in anticipation of sovereignty and democ-

racy. But such hopes brought despair because of incessant civil wars that tore the country apart for decades. Warfare, internal rivalries, ideological rifts, and intensified contact with the outside world made the Republican a highly conflicted time in modern China. Guangzhou is the birthplace of the 1911 revolution and military capital of the Republican administration. And given its importance as staging ground for Qing dynasty trade with the West, Guangzhou is elder or even avuncular to the upstart Hong Kong. The city of Guangzhou, even more than Shanghai, may signify the Republican ethos and its centrifugal forces of disunity, contradiction, and ambivalence. Film activities in Guangzhou can be traced through advertisements and stories published in local newspapers; these outline the features of a distinct Guangzhou cinema mode, which has close ties to its colonial cousin across the Pearl River Delta.

The distinct Guangzhou cinema is illustrated in “‘Guangzhou Film’ and Guangzhou Urban Culture: An Overview,” co-written by Hui Liu, Shi-Yan Chao, and Richard Xiaying Xu. The chapter identifies “Guangzhou film” as a term of departure from the Shanghai-centered historiography that dominated the writing of cinema history in China. Based on news materials collected from the *Guangzhou Republican Daily* (*Guangzhou minguo ribao*) and secondary sources on the urban development of Guangzhou, the historical overview of “Guangzhou film” provides an alternative history of urban cinema. By aligning local film consumption and production with the development of Guangzhou’s urban space, the chapter allows the identity of the city and specificities of local practices to surface. The authors caution against a narrow view of Guangzhou as a city of enclosed, unique boundaries. Guangzhou’s historical tie with Hong Kong was key to the formation of the Cantonese cinema as a sphere of linguistic and cultural convergence. The term “Guangzhou film” cannot operate independently outside Hong Kong and its colonial dimension. Tracking “Guangzhou film,” Kenny K. Ng presents a compelling study on Cantophone cinema as a site of cultural and linguistic struggle. Ng’s “The Way of *The Platinum Dragon*: Xue Juexian and the Sound of Politics in 1930s Cantonese Cinema” argues that the advent of sound film technology in the 1930s facilitated the formation of the Hong Kong–Guangdong region as the largest production center of Cantonese talkies, or Cantophone cinema, servicing not only Cantonese-speaking communities in South China, but also the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, Australia, and North America. Ng’s analysis illuminates two important methods of Chinese film studies: national identity and

craftsmanship. The struggle for a place in national cinema has been an issue to non-Mandarin, or so-called dialect, films. In this context, Cantonese film is similar to Shanghainese, Taiwanese/Amoy, and Teochew films in terms of their historical marginality, and tenacity in demanding their voices be heard, instead of being dubbed, on screen. Cantonese filmmakers' negotiation and efforts in carving a space of "national belonging" has always been a trying journey in the centennial development of Chinese-language cinema. Ng's examination of the production history of *The Platinum Dragon* pinpoints an inherent cultural politics in regional cinema. Occupying the center of the struggle is craftsmanship at its best—resources of traditional performing arts, including its flexible creativity and transformative energy in alignment with modern media like cinema. Ng's article offers readers a riveting account on the dissonant Cantophone film history and how individual talents played pivotal roles in balancing market need, national politics, and a regional identity in need of reinforcement.

Following Guangzhou cinema and specifically Cantonese talkies, we extend our historiographical expedition to Republican Shanghai. The return journey to Shanghai begins with new pages on filmmakers and institutions germane to the making of early Chinese cinema. Part II focuses on filmmakers and writers who were hitherto marginalized in the standard history of Chinese cinema. We call these overlooked practitioners "intermediaries, cinephiles, and film literati," addressing the heterogeneous kaleidoscope of culture and practice in the Republican period. Here we introduce lesser-known figures that mediated cinema as a new invention from abroad and facilitated its local practice, forecasting its eventual Chinese indigenization. A rare study on the Shanghai YMCA's film programs adds an extra dimension to cinema's complicity with evangelism, along with its promotion of an enlightened, hygienic, modern entertainment. Yoshino Sugawara's "Toward the Opposite of 'Vulgarity': The Birth of Cinema as a 'Healthful Entertainment' and the Shanghai YMCA" explores alternative, Christian movie activities, exemplified by the movie shows held at the Shanghai YMCA. Sugawara suggests that among the prevailing modes of exhibition, the noncommercial shows organized by the Shanghai YMCA in the teens contributed to the improvement of cinema's social standing. She argues that Christian uses of cinema not only helped forge the cinema's institutional structure, but also had an impact on changing the public perception of motion pictures. The YMCA's movie program, with its state-of-the-art facilities and equipment and its uplifting repertoires, was the benchmark for Shanghai's exhibition

industry in the next decades. YMCA members He Tingran and Bao Qingjia were crucial in building the thriving film history in Shanghai. He and Bao were groomed at the YMCA via its various physical education and language programs as exemplary young Chinese Christians. He Tingran then emerged as a film mogul in late 1920s Shanghai: he controlled Shanghai United Amusements and later Asia Theaters, two foreign-registered companies whose major business was film exhibition and distribution.<sup>15</sup> He's business philosophy was not merely commercial, but aimed to "modernize" film exhibition and showcase "noble," affordable movies for Shanghai audiences.<sup>16</sup> He's vision of using cinema for social reform was inherited from the YMCA's film mission, although all of his theaters showed Hollywood pictures, leading to the dominance of Hollywood on China's screens before the outbreak of the Pacific War.<sup>17</sup> He's fellow Christian Bao Qingjia was also a key player in early Shanghai film industry. Bao set up one of the initial motion picture production units of what was then the city's largest publishing firm, the Commercial Press.

Following the investigation on foreign power in shaping Shanghai film industry, Yongchun Fu's chapter, "Movie Matchmakers: The Intermediaries between Hollywood and China in the Early Twentieth Century," examines the interchange between China and Hollywood in the formation of the Chinese film industry in its early years. Fu calls the foreign filmmakers and go-betweens in Shanghai "intermediaries" in crediting their contribution. He looks into the role these go-betweens played between Hollywood and China, against the background of the ethnocentric writing of Chinese film history of the 1920s and 1930s, which tended to, understandably, only privilege Chinese players. Fu's two major representatives are the American cinematographer William H. Lynch from Los Angeles and Hong Kong-based movie mogul Lo Kan (Lo Gun, Lu Gen). Lynch was the cameraman for the first narrative pictures made by the film forerunners Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu in 1913, while Lo Kan branched out of his exhibition empire to production, anxious to get ahead in the emerging market in talkies. These figures and their ambition, though previously neglected, were instrumental in shaping China's national cinema in the decades to come.

Cinema's connection to other arts and media has been a major concern in film historiography. In my chapter, I raise the problem of an ethnocentric tendency in aligning cinema with such vernacular performing arts as shadow play and opera. But in literature, astoundingly, we see a keen inter-

est in engaging cinema and vice versa. Using the keyword *wenyi* (letters and art) and the unique “fields” of film and literature, two chapters study the film activities of leading authors of the popular Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies fiction. These authors crossed over to the emergent film field by writing scripts, handbills, and advertisements, translating title cards, and crafting a new genre called cine-fiction. Their activities and their versatility qualify them as the earliest generation of cinephiles. Their enthusiasm for the new medium and its mode of storytelling set the stage for film criticism to flourish in the subsequent decade. Enoch Yee-lok Tam’s “The Silver Star Group: A First Attempt at Theorizing *Wenyi* in the 1920s” analyzes the generic concept of *wenyi*, “literature and art,” as it relates to Chinese cinema. Building on my previous work on *wenyi*,<sup>18</sup> Tam offers a discourse analysis of the evolution of *wenyi*, focusing on the midpoint in its development, from 1926 to 1928. In presenting the work of the journal *Silver Screen*, he locates evidence of foreign literary criticism in *wenyi*’s formation, from France (Romain Rolland) and Japan (Kuriyagawa Hakuson, by way of Lu Xun). Well before the advertising copy of the 1930s that utilized the *wenyi* label to sell certain kinds of pictures (literary adaptation, romance and art film), *wenyi* was discussed and debated as a cognate for artistic prestige and edifying screen works. My coauthored chapter with Tam, “Forming the Movie Field: Film Literati in Republican China” identifies several key Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies authors instrumental in making the film industry in Republican China. We call these writers “film literati,” focusing on their negotiation between traditional and emergent forms of narrative, and their crossover from the literary to the cinematic field. We also examine closely the term *yingxi xiaoshuo*—“cine-fiction”—a common practice among the film literati for their adaptation of foreign films into fiction. The investigation of the dual career of the film literati permits a more finessed account of the synergy between letters and images and the dynamics between film and literary fields.

Liu Na’ou, the controversial, tragic figure among modern film literati, is the ultimate cinephile of the late Republican era. Given the films he made and debates he sparked on cinema’s autonomy and its future, it is no wonder that Liu was a marked man, and was assassinated in a darkening Shanghai in 1938. Yet his contributions were prescient, and a thorough study of his work and thought illuminates the plurality of both Shanghai and Republican cinema. While Liu slips easily into clichés about Shanghai cinema (effete, sensual, decadent, “yellow”), his work has a richness that indicates the

complexity of Republican cinematic culture. Ling Zhang's chapter is an important addition to the growing literature on Liu. In her "Rhythmic Movement, Metaphoric Sound, and Transcultural Transmediality: Liu Na'ou and *The Man Who Has a Camera* (1933)," Zhang reappraises Liu's works, including his documentary and writing, in the context of transcultural and transmedial practices. Through a close analysis of Liu's famous travelogue, Zhang reconnects Liu's film practice with the international avant-garde, both in cinema (à la Soviet montage) and literature (Japanese neosensationalism). Zhang's rigorous reading warrants a new understanding of the cinema culture in the Republican period that moves beyond the normative model of the national cinema characterized by the usual directors, studios, stars, and genres.

Peeping through a kaleidoscope, we exercise our vision in motion, mobilizing our voyeur curiosity. Astonishing sights of moving images from the past appear as a result. This volume introduces three new cities besides Shanghai, resuscitating the missing pieces from historiography informed by national cinema and the precepts of modernity. Here we try to broaden the scope of film development beyond the regulated geographic, ideological, and conceptual bounds. We foreground the cinema's relationships with imperialism and colonialism and emphasize the potency of cinema as a sociocultural institution. We look deeply into the activities, agents, and events beyond the Shanghai silver screens. These vectors intersect in productive ways, with colonial, ideological, and technological dimensions working in tandem, and sometimes off balance. As with most fields, Chinese film history is overdetermined with unexpected, surprising findings and discoveries, like turning and adjusting views from inside of a kaleidoscope. It is high time to embark on the expedition into new movie horizons, and to scope out the opulent reflections, distortions, and refractions of early film culture.

### Notes

1. The idea for this volume grew from a special issue published in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* I guest-edited. The current introduction is an expanded version of the introduction to the special issue. See Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "New Takes on Film Historiography: Republican Cinema Redux, an Introduction," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 9, no. 1 (2015): 1–7. Four chapters from this special issue were revised and included in this current volume. They include Yongchun Fu, "Movie Matchmakers: The Intermediaries between Hollywood and China in the Early Twentieth Century" (8–22); Ling Zhang, "Rhythmic Movement: The City Symphony and Transcultural Transmediality:

Liu Na'ou and *The Man Who Has a Camera* (1933)" (42–61); Enoch Yee-lok Tam, "The Silver Star Group: A First Attempt at Theorizing Wenyi in the 1920s" (62–75); and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "Translating *Yingxi*: Chinese Film Genealogy and Early Cinema in Hong Kong" (76–107).

2. Wen-hsin Yeh, "Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City," *China Quarterly* 150 (1997): 378.

3. See, for example, Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Yingjin Zhang, ed., *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922–1943* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Barbara Mittler, *A Newspaper for China: Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's News Media, 1872–1912* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004); Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896–1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Nicole Huang, *Women, War, Domesticity: Shanghai Literature and Popular Culture of the 1940s* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); and Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: A Cultural History, 1843–1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

4. See, for instance, Jason C. Kuo, ed., *Visual Culture in Shanghai, 1850s–1930s* (Washington, DC: New Academic Publishing, 2007); Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Paul Pickowicz, Kuiyi Shen, and Yingjin Zhang, eds., *Liangyou: Kaleidoscopic Modernity and the Shanghai Global Metropolis, 1926–1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). For a long list of publications on Shanghai as the birthplace of Chinese modernity, please see Pickowicz, Shen, and Zhang, "Introduction: *Liangyou*, Popular Print Media, and Visual Culture in Republican Shanghai," in *Liangyou*, 12 nn. 5–11.

5. Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003). See also Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas," review of *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas*, by Poshek Fu, *Film Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2006): 64–65.

6. Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937–1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

7. Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, Feng Xiaocai, Liu Hui, and Poshek Fu, eds., *Early Chinese Film Database*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Baptist University Library, 2015. <http://digital.lib.hkbu.edu.hk/chinesefilms/>

8. Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimension* (London: BFI Publishing, 1997); Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, ed., *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997); Yingjin Zhang, *Screening China: Critical Interventions, Cinematic Reconfigurations and the Transnational Imaginary in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, 2002).

9. Jeremy E. Taylor, *Rethinking Transnational Chinese Cinemas: The Amoy-Dialect Film Industry in Cold War Asia* (London: Routledge, 2011); Weihong Bao, *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915–1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

10. Misawa Mamie, *Zai “digu” yu “zuguo” de jiafeng jian: Rizhi shiqi Taiwan dianyingren de jiaoshe yu kuajing* [Sandwiched between the “Empire” and the “Motherland”: Taiwan Film Workers’ Negotiation and Border-Crossing during Japanese Occupation], trans. Li Wenqing and Hsu Shijia (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2012).

11. For an excellent overview of missionary evangelism and early cinema, please see Terry Lindvall, introduction to *Sanctuary Cinema: Origins of Christian Film Industry* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 1–12. See also Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University of Press, 1992), 1–12; and Maria Francesca Piredda, “Cinema and Popular Preaching: The Italian Missionary Film and *Fiamm*,” in *Italian Popular Cinema*, ed. Louis Bayman and Sergio Rigoletto (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 214–225.

12. See, for example, Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Aaron Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship, 1895–1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Zhang, *Amorous History*; Hideaki Fujiki, *Making Personas: Transnational Film Stardom in Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asian Center, 2013); and Daisuke Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

13. Antonio Ramos began as a Spanish soldier based in Manila, and was said to have shot the first shorts in the Philippines, using a Lumière Cinematograph. He was a key film exhibitor in Shanghai, Macao, Hong Kong, and Manila in the early twentieth century. Ramos built some of the earliest formal film theaters in the region, such as Victoria Cinematograph in Hong Kong (1907) and Hongkew Cinema in Shanghai (1908). By the teens, he had set up a transnational network of film distribution and exhibition across cities like Shanghai, Macao, Tianjin, Hong Kong, and Manila. In Shanghai alone, Ramos owned seven major theaters: Hongkew, Victoria, Olympic, Embassy, Empire, National, and Carter. Historians have yet to uncover a thorough account of Ramos’s film enterprises in China, South China, and Southeast Asia, but there are some useful references available in English and Spanish. See Nick Deocampo, *Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines* (Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2003), 45–72; and Juan Ignacio Toro Escudero, “España y los españoles en el Shanghai de entreguerras (1918–1939)” [Spain and Spaniards in Shanghai between the Wars] (master’s thesis, East China Normal University, 2012). I thank Yongchun Fu for providing me a copy of the thesis.

14. Nadine Chan illustrates a compelling study of how the mobile film exhibition in rural Malaya was carefully managed, programmed, and controlled by the colonial state;



see Nadine Chan, "Making 'Ahmad Problem Conscious': Educational Film and the Rural Lecture Caravan in 1930s British Malaya," *Cinema Journal* 55, no. 4 (2016): 84–107.

15. Yoshino Sugawara, "Beyond the Boundary between China and the West: Changing Identities of Foreign-Registered Film Theatre Companies in Republican Shanghai," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 9, no. 1 (2015): 23–41.

16. Sugawara, "Beyond the Boundary," 34–35.

17. Sugawara, "Beyond the Boundary," 28.

18. Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "Pitfalls of Cross-Cultural Analysis: Chinese *Wenyi* Film and Melodrama," *Asian Journal of Communication* 19, no. 4 (2009): 438–452; Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "Wenyi and the Branding of Early Chinese Film," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 6, no. 1 (2012): 65–94; Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "A Small History of *Wenyi*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, ed. Carlos Rojas and Eileen Chow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 225–249.