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Knowledge Development: Cinema in China prior to WWI

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Convention and Abbreviations

1. Chinese characters are provided for all Chinese names, terms, and titles in the main text when they first appear. Afterwards, characters are given only when I deem necessary for ease of reference or other reasons.
2. In this these I use cinematograph to refer to the general movie machines, including projector and camera. In the early stage, short films are also called title or views.
3. The following abbreviations are used in the text and notes:

A.D.C Amateur Dramatic Club

AM&B American Mutoscope and Biograph

MPW *Motion Picture World*

NCH *The English North China Herald* 字林星周刊

NYC *New York Clipper*

SB *Shenbao* 申報

SLADS Shanghai Literary and Debating Society

XWB *Xinwenbao* 新聞報

Y.M.C.A Young Men's Christian Association

ZDFZS Cheng Jihua, et al., eds. *Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi* 中國電影發展史

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Knowledge Development: Cinema in China prior to WWI

This dissertation delineates cinema in China prior to WWI into five periods and interprets this section of history under references of up-to-date early film theories. The spreading of cinema is treated as a continuation of the lantern tradition, and is contextualized and conventionalized in the late Qing sociopolitical milieu. It synchronizes with the colonial process and Manchu government's progressive reforms. The central argument here is that early cinema in China shows a developmental pattern, which bears a high similarity to Jean Piaget's knowledge development, and is characteristic of intermediality and internationality. From a mechanic novelty to a mass medium, to a profitable commodity, although cinema in China begins as an attachment to other existing entertainments, after about two decades' development its subjectivity has already been secured and an incipient film industry is formed in prewar era, featuring a strong foreign monopoly and regional imbalance.

Introduction

Cinema in China prior to WWI has long been ignored. Most Chinese film historians treat this period as cinema in its infancy and merely a starting point for the coming Chinese film industry. This evolutionary view heavily impedes the justification of pre-WWI cinema as a self-sufficient subject. A systematic account of early cinema on its own right is therefore missing. The history of two decades' late Qing cinema is abbreviated into three "firsts", i.e. "When was cinema first introduced to Chinese?" "What was the first Chinese film?" "How did Chinese film production begin?"¹ Accordingly, three standard answers were given in *Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi* 中國電影發展史 (ZDFZS, 1963), by far still the most authoritative and influential work in regard of Chinese film history.²

Along with the re-discovery of early cinema after the legendary 1978 Brighton Conference, this kind of abbreviation and concentration on "firsts" has become problematic. Cinema in its earliest years features an evident "attraction" and forms a sharp contrast to the later classical Hollywood cinema, which dominates the traditional film study for a considerable long period and as a rule has shaped the general film views, with an emphasis on "narration." From the viewpoint of film industry, it is film exhibition that ultimately defines the overall picture of early cinema. In this sense, early cinema forms a unique system of film institutions that requires special perspectives, methodologies and theories.

¹ Chen Shan 陳山, "Dianying shixue de jiangou: dui 'Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi' wenben de shixue yanjiu 電影史學的建構: 對《中國電影發展史》文本的史學研究," *Dianying yishu*, issue 6, 2008.

² According to ZDFZS, "On 11 August 1896, at 'Youyicun' teahouse in Shanghai-based Xu Garden, 'Western Shadowplay' was exhibited. It is the first cinematograph exhibition in China." In 1915, the proprietor of Fengtai Photography Studio 豐泰照相館, Ren Qingtai 任慶泰 shot the first Chinese film *Dingjunshan* 定軍山 (Conquer the Jun Mountain). This film is widely accepted as the starting point of Chinese film production. According to Li Shaobai 李少白's memoir, this assertion is presented by Wang Yue 王越, another member of the ZDFZS writing group. Wang interviews those who claim to have attended the shooting of *Dingjunshan*. See Cheng, *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi* 中國電影發展史, pp.13-14; Chen Mo 陳墨, "Zhongguo dianyingren koushu lishi xilie: Li Shaobai fangtanlu 中國電影人口述歷史系列:李少白訪談錄," *Contemporary Cinema* 10 (2009).

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In regarding cinema in China, the situation is more complicated. Given the colonial and imperial circumstances, China is mainly a recipient of the nascent cinema. The history of cinema in China is therefore strongly contextualized by the late Qing socio-political milieu. Designed initially as a form of entertainment exclusively for foreign residents in this part of world, the spreading of cinema in China synchronizes with the expansion of international settlements. In the eyes of Chinese, cinema is associated with “foreign devil” from the very beginning. Early film exhibition takes the form of itinerant shows, featuring mobility and intermediality. It enables cinema’s appearances on various occasions (e.g. illustrated lectures, magic shows, private banquets etc.). As the Boxer Rebellion and the following Russo-Japanese war disrupt film exhibitions, the focus of film activities in China turns to shooting practices. Dozens of foreign cameramen are dispatched to China for recording war scenes. Through the wars, allied forces increased their powers in China rapidly and a large number of concessions are ceded, which in turn creates a huge demand on popular entertainments. Consequently, film entrepreneurs from a wide variety of nationalities rush in, monopolize picture businesses and build an incipient film industry within a short period. At the beginning of the Republic of China 中華民國 (1911-1928), the government makes an obvious effort to nationalize film market, but the coming WWI soon put an end to it.

The aim of this study is twofold. The first is to fill the blank and present a systematic narration of early cinema in China prior to WWI. To better illustrate as well as to gain a profound understanding on this section of history, the time span of this study is purposely extended to include the pre-cinema stage, in which magic lantern, with half a century’s exhibition practices, paves the way for the arrival of cinema. The second aim is to interpret this part of history from the perspective of Jean Piaget’s knowledge development. Early cinema in China embodies an evident developmental pattern, showing how the nascent cinema progressively unfolds its potentials as a technological invention, a mass medium as well as a commodity, and successfully roots in the Chinese soil. Despite the conspicuous foreign monopoly and

the unilateral spreading pattern, the key element for cinema's development in China is Chinese audience per se.

When Was Film First Introduced to Chinese?

“On 11 August 1896, at ‘Youyicun 又一村’ teahouse in Shanghai-based Xu Garden 徐園, ‘Western Shadow play 西洋影戲’ was exhibited. It is the first cinematograph exhibition in China.”³

While Lumière Brothers' first public exhibition of cinema on Dec. 28, 1895 at Grand Café in Paris marks the official beginning of cinema, a “starting point” of Chinese cinema is also given in ZDFZS. According to it, the first cinematograph exhibition in China was given on Aug. 11, 1896 at Xu Garden in Shanghai. Although similar assertions can be found in earlier film monographs, none of them achieves the wide recognition as ZDFZS does.⁴ ZDFZS' success is mainly contributed by two facts. Firstly, as an official project, ZDFZS acquires an unprecedented amount of source materials. Secondly, in 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the writing group of ZDFZS energetically engages in a series of oversea cultural-exchange activities, which in turn increases its influences.⁵ Through the process, the assertion of Xu Garden becomes standardized. Nevertheless, the authority of ZDFZS has been challenged because of its “political correctness.” The Xu garden assertion is likely a reply to the political need, i.e. for the “face” of the nation. The date is therefore the earlier the better and the location is supposed to be a Chinese venue. Meanwhile, the Xu garden assertion is formed through a gradual process rather than a firm conclusion based on hard evidences.⁶

³ Cheng, ZDFZS, p.8.

⁴ To name but a few, Xu Chihen's *Zhongguo Yingxi Daguan* 中國影戲大觀, Cheng Shuren's *Zhonghua Yingyeshi* 中華影業史, Gu Jianchen's *Zhongguo Dianyingshi* 中國電影發展史 and Zheng Junli's *Xiandai Dianyingshi* 現代電影史.

⁵ For influential cultural exchanges of the ZDFZS team, see Cheng Jihua, “Bingzhong da ke wen”, *Dianyingshi* 1 (1996).

⁶ ZDFZS cites two advertisements about Xu garden screening as the argument for this assertion. Prior to ZDFZS' publication in 1963, the chief editor Cheng Jihua 程季華 published *Zhongguo dianying mengya shiqi jianshu: 1899-1921*” which was generally considered as the draft of the first chapter of ZDFZS. In this article, Cheng did not mention a single word about Xu Garden screening. According to the memoir of ZDFZS' writing group, Xu garden assertion was presented by Wang Yue, who himself left no records to clarify the issue. See Cheng,

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In the field of Chinese film study, there is a trend of rewriting film history since 1980s. Along with this trend, a number of film works are published and it enables a rethinking on this issue.⁷ Hong Kong film historian Yu Muyun 余慕雲 explores the spreading route of early cinema and holds the opinion that cinema is introduced to Chinese, via Hong Kong to Shanghai. According to his research, the first film screening in Hong Kong was given in January 1896.⁸ This fact puts the Xu garden assertion in question. Later, in an article titled *Dianying chudao Shanghai kao* 電影初到上海考 (A study of film's introduction to Shanghai), the writer Huang Dequan 黃德泉 argues that the Xu garden screening is de facto a lantern exhibition. The exhibition is mistaken as a film screening because at that time cinematograph and magic lantern share the same Chinese name “yingxi 影戲” (Shadow play).⁹ According to Huang, the first film screening in China was given at Astor House Hotel, Shanghai in May 1897.¹⁰ More recently, a complete investigation on this issue is conducted by Frank Bren in *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, in which he constructs two models to illustrate the initial introduction of cinema in China, viz. “Hong Kong vs. Shanghai” and “Cinematograph vs. Animatoscope.” In regard of film introduction into China, the year 1897 is significant. In April of this year, Maurice Charvet exhibited his Cinematograph at City Hall in Hong Kong, a British colony then. In May, Welby Cook exhibited his Animatoscope at Astor Hall in Shanghai. Under the coordination of Johnson Lewis, the manager of Astor Hotel, Charvet and Cook formed a trio-group in June and marched northwards to Tianjin and Beijing.

“Zhongguo dianying mengya shiqi Jianshu: 1899-1921 中國電影萌芽時期簡述: 1899-1921,” *Zhongguo dianying* 28 Oct. 1956.

⁷ Some of classic works on Chinese film history are as follows: Li Suyuan and Hujubin's *Zhongguo wusheng dianyingshi* (1996), Lu Hongshi and Shu Xiaoming's *Zhongguo dianyingshi 1905-1949* (1998), Yu Muyun's *Xianggang dianyingshihua* (1996), Du Yunzhi's *Zhongguo dianyingshi* (1972). Some Western film works about Chinese cinema history are like Jay Leyda's *Dianying-An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China* (1979) and Régis' *Le cinéma Chinois 1905-1949* (1997).

⁸ Cf. Yu, *Xianggang dianying shihua*.

⁹ Huang Dequan, “Dianyingchudao Shanghai kao 電影初到上海考,” *Dianying yishu* 3 (2007): 102-9.

¹⁰ Huang' conclusion is based on an advertisement in *Xinwenbao* 新聞報 (XWB). See “Huoxiaozhao 活小照,” XWB, May 30-Jun. 1, 1897.

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According to Frank Bren, this initial round of film exhibitions marks the real beginning of Chinese film history.¹¹

From the culture study perspective, film introduction in 1897 is no accident. Shortly before cinema appeared in China, *the Treaty of Shimonoseki* 馬關條約 was signed, marking the end of Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Although Manchu government has suffered a series of military defeats since the first Opium war (1842), it is the recent Sino-Japanese War that essentially shakes the Sino-centric view.¹² For the first time did Chinese awaken to the cruel reality that even Japan could trample China easily. The war exerts an enormous influence on the late Qing Chinese society. The conservative party (Qingliu 清流) began to loosen up the restriction of political reforms and many progressive Chinese devoted in westernizing and modernizing China. It hence created a friendly atmosphere for introducing foreign technological novelties, including cinema.

Re-write Chinese Film History and Re-discover Early Cinema

Political regulations in mainland China are loosened up since 1980s along with the policy of Reform and Opening up 改革開放政策. Given the circumstance, a large number of film works are translated into Chinese. Accordingly, a trend of “rewriting history” emerges in the field of Chinese film study. As the most authoritative but ideologically controversial film work, ZDFZS is challenged in the first place. The focus is nevertheless on Chinese films from 1930s and 1940s.¹³ As a rule, cinema in China prior to WWI remains untouched, with an exception of the aforementioned three “firsts.” Standard answers to these “firsts” are increasingly questioned and issues like public space and urbanization begin to attract broader attention.¹⁴ Native

¹¹ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, pp.6-8.

¹² Such as the Anglo-French invasion (1857-1860), Russian’s occupation of Ili in 1871 and Sino-French war (1883-1885),

¹³ To name but a few: Cheng jihua’s “Bingzhong da ke wen 病中答客文” and “Chang xiangsi 長相思”, Li Daoxin’s “Zhongguo dianyingshi yanjiu de fazhan qushi ji qianjing 中國電影史研究的發展趨勢及前景”, Chen Mo’s “Li Shaobai fangtanlu” and Chen Shan’s “Dianying shixue de goujian” etc.

¹⁴ Through the 1990s, many American Chinese film experts published their studies on Chinese films. Li Ou’fan 李歐梵 and Zhang Yingjin 張英進 are two representatives. Both start researches on literatures in 1920s and 1930s

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researchers make an evident effort to “rewrite” early Chinese cinema. One hot spot is the study of foreign films in Chinese market, especially the formation of American monopoly in China. With the onset of WWI, continental countries are in succession drawn in the war. It ends the heretofore European domination and the era of classical Hollywood cinema begins. One prominent example is Xiao Zhiwei and Yin Hong’s collaborative project “*Hollywood in China: 1897-1950.*” Meanwhile, Wang Chaoguang publishes several articles about film censorship in the Republic of China. Although these studies bear no direct connection to the prewar cinema in China, they provide some useful references and paradigms.

Retrospectively, the “re-writing” trend in China is an extension of the “re-discovery” of early cinema in English and French speaking countries, which emerges at the end of 1970s. While the “re-writing” Chinese film history only manages to push the study into 1920s and 1930s, the “re-discovery” focuses from the very beginning on the earliest years of cinema, i.e. the era of Thomas Edison, Lumière Brothers, Georges Méliès, W.R. Paul, Pathé and so on. In the field of film study, silent cinema has remained “silent” for a considerable long period. For many traditional film historians, cinema in its infancy is merely a preparatory stage for the coming classical Hollywood cinema. The academic interest in early cinema is mainly initiated after the legendary Brighton Conference in 1978.¹⁵ In the conference, nearly six hundred pre-1907 films are screened, of which many are newly rediscovered and made available in new viewing prints.¹⁶ The conference ignites researchers’ passion for cinema before 1906 with a new appreciation of the variety and fascination of early films. According to Thomas Elsaesser, the event itself is no accident but “opened up

and later expand to the field of early Chinese film study. They emphasize on cinema’s contributions on constructing a public sphere in Shanghai. They raise some issues like modernity and urbanization.

¹⁵ In 1978, as a salute to the Brighton School, the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF, or the International Federation of Film Archives) held its annual conference in Brighton, Britain.

¹⁶ The Brighton Conference and its tradition were carried on by the Cineteca de Friuli since 1982, with holding an annual festival of silent cinema, Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (The Days of Silent Cinema) in Pordenone and later Sacile, Italy as well as in special museum film series and workshops such as those held at Nederlands Filmmuseum. In 1987, an international organization “Domitor” was founded for early cinema study.

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by the revitalization of film theory during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and its subsequent (post-Saussurean, post-Lacanian, Post-modern) crises in the 1980s.¹⁷

Before Brighton Conference, early cinema is usually simplified as the starting point for the account of a classic film history.¹⁸ The study of early cinema is therefore characteristic of archival works.¹⁹ As a rule, relevant interpretations and methodologies are missing. After the Conference, silent cinema becomes one of the liveliest research areas of film history. André Gaudreault identifies three productive areas, which revitalize early cinema study immediately: the genesis of cinematic language, problems of narratology and the evolution of editing.²⁰ Film researchers also challenge and modify some general views regarding early cinema. They reach the consensus that early cinema should be treated as a “unique and distinct system from the ‘classical Hollywood’ cinema and other later cinemas.”²¹ In retrospect, Brighton Conference has nurtured the “re-discovery” of early cinema, which devotes full efforts to archivize, interpret and theorize cinema prior to WWI.

Around 1990, with the publication of a rich number of film works, there is a boom of early cinema study. These publications can be roughly categorized into two groups. The first group embodies the effort to rewrite, or rather, re-interpret early cinema. Two prominent examples are Charles Musser’s *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907* and Eilleen Bowser’s *The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915*.²² Based upon solid material sources, both works attempt to rethink early

¹⁷ Elsaesser, *Early cinema, Space Frame, Narrative*, p.5.

¹⁸ An example is Georges Sadoul’s famous *Histoire du cinéma mondial*, of which, one conspicuous character is its generality.

¹⁹ One representative work is Rachael Low’s *History of British Film*. Based upon the research of the History Committee of the British Film Institute, the work is, to some extent, a result of data collection. It contains two parts: industry and film. Rachael Low lists 17 film companies and their principal producers before 1906 and categorizes film productions under the heads of actualities, newsreels, documentary, etc. See Low, *History of British Film 1896-1906*, p.44.

²⁰ Elsaesser, *Early Cinema, Space, Frame, Narrative*, p.27.

²¹ Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of early Cinema*, p. xix.

²² Both continue the tradition of classic film study, however, compared with Raechel Low’s two volumes of *History of British Film*, some changes could be observed. As Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer write in their co-edited *The Silent Cinema Reader*, Musser’s work reflects “International efforts to present ever more life like images on big screens gathered pace in the nineteenth century, linked on the one hand to scientific endeavors and

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film history. The second group takes the form of essay collections.²³ Among them, the most significant are *Early Cinema, Space and Narrative* and *Film History: Theory and Practice*.²⁴ Both present a wide variety of perspectives and emphasize on the intermediality and internationality of early cinema. From 1990 onward, early cinema study expands into the fields of sociology and cultural studies. Douglas Gomery and Robert Allen, for instance, focus on early cinema's mechanic dynamisms and social interactions. The association with culture study provides some "anti-mainstream" angles, such as feminist and minority studies. They focus on the spectatorship and the sociopolitical and cultural backgrounds.²⁵ In this respect, an exemplary work is *The Silent Cinema Reader* (2004).²⁶ In 2005, Richard Abel (ed.) published *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*. This comprehensive work marks, to some extent, the maturity of early cinema study.

From the viewpoint of methodology, there are two most important models relevant to early cinema, i.e. Tom Gunning's "attractive vs. narrative" and Charles Musser's "screen practice." Because of their referential importance to the study of early cinema in China, in the following section I will give a short account on these two models.

According to Tom Gunning, cinema before 1906 is by nature a "cinema of attraction." Based on an analysis on early cinema's narrative skills, Gunning argues that it is problematic to treat Lumière and Méliès' films respectively as non-narrative and narrative since both have made efforts to show films in an "attractive" way. Early cinema is hence a cinema that bases itself on the quality/ability to show something. It

on the other to a thriving popular screen entertainment culture exemplified by magic lantern show". See Lee, *The Silent Cinema Reader*, p.2

²³ Some important essays were published briefly after the Brighton Conferenc, to name but a few, *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study*, John Fell's *Film before Griffith*, and André Gaudreault (ed.)'s two essay collections: *Ce que je vois de mon cin é* and *The American Federation of Arts' Before Hollywood*. At Pordenone Silent Fim Festival, Paolo Cherchi Usai edited a bibliography on those works. See Elsaesser, *Early Cinema, Space, Frame, Narrative*, p.5.

²⁴ See Elsaesser, *Early Cinema, Space, Frame, Narrative* and Lee, *The Silent Cinema Reader*.

²⁵ For instance, they pay attention on transformations of women's roles (and their impacts on female spectatorship) and the Russian Revolution (as well as its impacts on form and content of film in the Soviet Union). See Lee, *The Silent Cinema Reader*, p.5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6.

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differs essentially from the later montage-based Hollywood cinema that relies heavily on the voyeuristic aspect of narrative cinema.²⁷ Tom Gunning defines early cinema as “cinema of an attraction” which “directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle—a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest in itself.”²⁸ He also argues that a transitional period exists between “cinema as an attraction” and “cinema as a narration.” The transition, according to him, is completed in most countries around 1907. In regard of early cinema in China, this transition can also be observed. Along with the improvement of narrative techniques, in large cities and trade ports, makeshift teahouses and variety theatres are gradually abandoned and permanent cinemas appear. Film genres also diversify. Feature length dramas and multiple-reel newsreels replace single-shot actualit s. Trick films, short comedies and chase films become popular.

In contrast, Charles Musser intends to treat early cinema as a part of a broader “screen history.” According to him, “the practical use of screen technology was more important than the technology itself” and he redefines the subject of pre-cinema as a “screen practice.”²⁹ According to him, screen practice begins “when the observer of projected\reflected images became the historically constituted subject we now call spectator.”³⁰ The core of “screen practice” is “magic lantern tradition,” in which “showmen displayed images on a screen, accompanying them with voice, music, and sound effects.”³¹ Through the investigation on visual entertainments in the pre-cinema era, especially magic lantern, Musser argues that the invention of cinema is no accident but a result of several centuries’ screen practices. With the emphasis on the historical continuity of screen practices, the transformation from magic lantern to

²⁷ Elsaesser, *Early Cinema, Space, Frame, Narrative*, p.62.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.59.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

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cinema is therefore a “dialectical process” and cinema is treated as “the creation of a new form of expression.”³²

Musser’s “screen history” proves crucial for gaining a profound understanding on the beginning of film history. According to him, “Starting points always present problems for the historian”.³³ Film experts like Jean-Louis Comolli suggest that questions like “when cinema was invented?” should be “annihilated”. Charles Musser disagrees with the total “annihilation” but agrees that there should be more than one standard answer. In China, starting points also intrigue Chinese film researchers. While ZDFZS’ exploration on three “firsts” is unsatisfactory, Musser’s perspective is particularly inspiring in this regard. It enables an investigation on the lantern tradition in China. In Chinese society, magic lantern is de facto the forerunner of cinema and half-century’s lantern practices (ca. 1843-1897) have laid a solid foundation for the coming cinema.

Theories, Source Materials and Methodologies

“There is no one correct approach to film history, no one ‘superhistory’ that could be written if only this or that ‘correct’ perspective were taken and all the ‘facts’ of film history uncovered.”³⁴

This study relies heavily on the re-discovery of early cinema. As an ongoing process, the re-discovery continues to provide useful references and paradigms. Beside Tom Gunning and Charles Musser’s models, Richard Abel and Thomas Elsaesser’s researches in French and German film histories are also inspiring. Although film remains the essential part of the study, instead of film content, it is early cinema’s “intermediality” and “internationality” that we should pay special attention to. As a social phenomenon, the emergence of cinema is strongly contextualized and conventionalized. Regarding the introduction of cinema to Chinese in the pre-war era,

³² Elsaesser, *Early Cinema, Space, Frame, Narrative*, p. 59.

³³ Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907*, p. 15.

³⁴ Allen, *Film History: Theory and Practice*, p.iv.

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China is mainly a recipient and the spreading of cinema is unilateral. It is also consistent to John Fairbank's famous "impact-response" model.

However, the status quo of early cinema in China is more complicated. In this study, I therefore adopt a more practical methodology, i.e. historical analysis, with an emphasis on first-hand source materials. Concretely speaking, this study begins with rethinking three "firsts." The main challenge is to periodize the history of early cinema in the late Qing socio-political milieu. As a rule, pre-war cinema in China features a foreign monopoly, which also vividly embodies early cinema's "internationality." In traditional Chinese film study, as mentioned before, early cinema is compressed into a mere starting point and the narrative of film history is usually linear. Late Qing cinema's broad connections to Europe and North America are neglected. In contrast to this temporal thinking, I employ in study a spatial thinking, focusing on early cinema's trans-national interactions.

Due to the limited number of existent films, this research relays heavily on contemporary source materials, including newspapers, periodicals and trade press. Chinese newspapers are like *Shenbao* 申報, *Xinwenbao* 新聞報, *Youxibao* 遊戲報, *Dagongbao* 大公報 etc. English newspapers are like *the English North China Herald* 字林星期周刊, *Peking and Tientsin Times* 京津泰晤士報 and *the Hongkong Telegraph* 士蔑西報. Periodicals include publications relevant to Western learning (e.g. *the Chinese Scientific Magazine* 格致彙編) and Chinese film magazines from 1920s and 1930s, for instance, *Mingxing banyuekan* 明星半月刊.³⁵ Records on film-related activities will be collected and analyzed under reference of Harold Lasswell's 5W model (Who? Say what? In which channel? To whom? With what effect?)³⁶ I will then extract keywords from these records and carry out a cross search with early trade press in Europe and North America, to name but a few, *Motion Picture World*, *Variety*, *Monograph*, *New York Clipper*, *Der Kinematograph* etc. Facts and statistics will be analyzed, with a view of constructing an overall picture of

³⁵ Most early film essays are compiled in *Zhongguo wusheng dianying* 中國無聲電影.

³⁶ Lasswell, "Structure and Function of Society Communication." See Bryson (ed.), *The Communication of Ideas*, p.37.

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early cinema in China and gaining an in-depth understanding on this section of history.

Second-hand materials include monographs, essays, encyclopaedias and other related works in the field of early film study, especially those published after the Brighton Conference. Standard Chinese film works and articles will also be referenced. Important world film history works are like Georges Sadoul's *Histoire du cinema mondial*, Rachael Low's *History of British Film*, Charles Musser's *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907*, Richard Abel's *The Cin é Goes to Town*, and Thomas Elsaesser's *A Second Life: German Cinema's First Decades*. Chinese film history works are like Jay Leyda's *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, ZDFZS, Yu Muyun's *Xianggang dianying shihua* 香港電影史話, Law Kar and Frank Bren's *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View* and Cheng Baofei's *Taiwan dianyingshi* 台灣電影史. Significant essay collections and monographs include *The Silent Cinema Reader*, *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* and *Filmgeschichte und Frihes Kino* (Film history and early cinema). Besides that, Richard Abel (ed.)'s *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* has a special influence on this study. By systematizing and standardizing early cinema study, this work provides some basic terminologies and frames for this research. Due to the fact that cinema in China prior to WWI is rarely touched upon, there are only few Chinese papers directly related to this theme. Hung Dequan, Chen Shan 陳山 and Liu Xiaolei 劉小磊's researches will be referenced mainly for source materials. Zhang Yingjing 張英進, Wang Chaoguang and Xiao Zhiwei's studies on post-WWI films will be referenced for perspectives and paradigms.

A key question of this research is "how does cinema as a foreign novelty become accepted by Chinese audience?" In this respect, Jean Piaget's theory of knowledge development will be employed to analyze early cinema's localization strategies. According to Piaget, knowledge learning is a dynamic process that can be generally divided into three fundamental stages. In the earliest stage, the learning appears chaotic and unconscious, but through repetitions, it interacts with other existing knowledge and a primary structure is formed afterward. In the second stage, the

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structure becomes stabilized through the process of association and assimilation. At the final stage, the stabilized structure in turn helps construct and reinforce a fixed “identity” of the acquired learning.³⁷ From the viewpoints of ontology and epistemology, the introduction of early cinema to Chinese shares a similarity with this learning process. The first round of cinematograph exhibitions is sporadic and chaotic. Cinema comes into Celestials’ notice firstly as a technological invention and an embodiment of Western learning. The success of the exhibition relies heavily on cinema’s mechanic novelty. The machine-based view is extremely popular at that time. In the following years, although film exhibitions are severely disrupted by wars, cinema increasingly realizes its potential as a mass media, especially the propagandistic function. In the process, cinema associates with other existing entertainment and assimilates them. After 1906, cinema gradually forms the identity of being a commercial entertainment with an intrinsic artistic value, thus distinguishing itself from magic lantern and print media.

A Sociopolitical Account of Late Qing China (1842-1914)

Here is a big mansion which has lasted a thousand years.... It is still a magnificently big thing, but when wind and rain suddenly come up, its fall is foredoomed. Yet the people in the house are still happily playing or soundly sleeping... quite indifferent.³⁸

Jay Leyda thinks that cinema came to China in such an unlucky decade that Chinese audiences shunned anything untraditional.³⁹ He is right, to some extent. Although the history of cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries can be traced back to the era of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), due to the traditional seclusion policy, large-scale exchanges only began after the Opium wars (ca. 1840-1842). From then onward, late Qing China was increasingly forced to open up. Under such an alarming circumstance, the Manchu government launched the Self-strengthening Movement

³⁷ Piaget, *The Psychogenesis of Knowledge and Its Epistemological Significance*, pp. 377-384.

³⁸ It was originally Liang Qichao 梁啟超’s word. See Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China: volume 10, late Ch’ing 1800-1911*, p. 155.

³⁹ Leyda, *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, p. 1.

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(1861-1895) with the slogan of “learn Western technology to self-strengthen 師夷之長技以自強.” The movement was initiated by principle members of “Yangwu pai 洋務派” (pragmatic faction), with representatives like Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823-1901), Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811-1872) and Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909). Among them, Li Hongzhang was closely related to film activities. He is likely the first Chinese “moviegoer” as well as the first Chinese “movie star.”

The Treaty of Nanjing (1842) and *the Treaty of Tianjin* (1858) marked the end of Opium wars and a bunch of coastal cities was open to trades thereafter. As a direct consequence of the recent defeat in Opium wars, the Self-strengthening Movement initially focused on reforming superintendents of trade, maritime customs service and military modernization. The Imperial China thereafter enjoyed about thirty years’ diplomatic peacetime, which was later referred as “Tongzhi zhongxing 同治中興 (T’ung-Chih restoration) by Mary Wright.⁴⁰ Tongzhi zhongxing overlapped, for the most part, with the Self-strengthening Movement. In this period, the Manchu court maintained a friendly relationship with foreign countries. According to Mary Wright, this phase is crucial to China and to some extent it has “saved” the decayed Chinese civilization. With the efforts of pragmatic factions, the Manchu government won another sixty years.⁴¹ In 1870, the peaceful relationship with Western nations was soured by Tianjin jiao’an 天津教案.⁴² Although pragmatic faction had expanded the reform into commerce, industry and agriculture, the enthusiasm for reforms waned and the conflicts between pragmatic and conservative factions escalated. The coming Sino-Japanese War pronounced the failure of the movement and the conservative faction temporarily gained the upper hand.

Under such a complex circumstance, cinema was introduced to Chinese in 1897. At that time, the Chinese was still soaking in the bitter feeling of the recent defeat in Sino-Japanese war. The war challenged the Sino-Centric system and broke Celestials’

⁴⁰ Mary Calaugh Wright’s word in her *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: the T’ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874*.

⁴¹ Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: the T’ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874*, pp.7-8.

⁴² In 1870, a number of foreign missionaries were killed during the riots in Tianjin and the event was later referred as Tianjin jiao’an 天津教案 (Tianjin religious case).

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illusion of Tianchao shangguo 天朝上國 (Celestial Empire). In this sense, the year 1897 was a xenophobia year. Celestials blame foreigners and reject all things labelled “foreign.” Nevertheless, the defeat in turn catalyzes a new round of large-scale reforms. Through 1895 to 1898, the Chinese society brewed for dramatic changes. Many conservative gentries switched their political stances and became prone to constitutional reforms. Accordingly, the Manchu government launched two large reforms. The first was Hundred Days’ Reform in 1898, a failed 104-day national cultural, politic and educational reform movement. The principle initiators were Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927) and his disciple Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929). The reform is de facto a duel between the progressive young Guangxu Emperor 光緒皇帝 (1871-1908) and the conservative Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧太后 (1835-1908), in which the latter won. After the reform failed, xenophobic sentiments against foreigners increased rapidly and a “Chinese” national feeling emerged. Shortly thereafter, the Boxer Rebellion (ca. 1899-1901) broke out. Although it disrupted film exhibitions severely, dozens of foreign cameramen were dispatched into China for filming war scenes, which in turn helped cinema realize its potential as a mass media.

At the end of Boxer Rebellion, Russian and Japanese forces increased rapidly in China. They competed with each other in Northeast China, resulting the following Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). Although the war was fired in Chinese territory, the fatigued Manchu court took a neutral policy. It angered Celestials and the Nationalist Movement 民族主義運動 began to exert its influence. There were two major parties in the Movement, i.e. Liang Qichao’s Reformist party and Sun Zhongshan 孫中山 (1866-1925)’s Revolutionist party. While reformists sympathized with Guangxu Emperor and attempted to sustain the Manchurian ruling, revolutionists adopted a radical standing, intending to overthrow the Qing dynasty and to found the Republic of China.

In retrospect, after *the Treaty of 1901*, the fate of Imperial Qing dynasty is already doomed. The Manchu court nevertheless made its final efforts and launched a series

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of constitutional reforms called Qingmo xinzheng 清末新政 (the New Policies of the late Qing, ca. 1905). The reform was of particular importance to this study. In consistent to the Manchu court's reforms, two turning points can be observed regarding early cinema in China. The first appeared in 1897 when film was first time screened in China, thus marking the official beginning of Chinese film history. The second appeared at the end of Russo-Japanese war (ca. 1905), pronouncing the formation of an incipient film industry in China. These two turning points appear in a similar sociopolitical milieu. On one hand, the Manchu government was challenged by the recent defeat in war and China sunk further into the colonial position. On the other hand, as an answer to the crisis, the court initiated pro-Western reforms in large scale. The colonial context facilitated the importation of films and the governmental support on Western learning helped promote cinema.

Nevertheless, in late Qing China many Celestials considered foreign entertainments as a part of the commercial and cultural invasion. This view heavily impeded the expansion of cinema into Chinese society. To gain solid footing, lantern and cinema therefore packed themselves as an embodiment of Western technology. Through the association with pro-Western reforms like the Self-strengthening Movement, Hundred Day's reform and New Policies in late Qing, magic lantern and cinema became a part of Western-learning and it greatly facilitated their spreadings in China.

Chapters and Structures: Five Periods of Early Cinema in China

In regarding cinema in China prior to WWI, many issues need to be rethought. According to film exhibition activities, with a view of delineating this section of history I map out five major periods: magic lantern (1843-1897), itinerant exhibitors (1897-1899), cameramen (1900-1905), incipient film industry (1906-1911) and Chinese film production (1912-1914). Consequently, each period forms a chapter of this study.

Pre-cinema stage has been long ignored in the field of Chinese film study. Thanks to Charles Musser's "screen history", the lantern tradition becomes foregrounded. Magic lantern was brought into China by British explorers shortly after the first

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Opium war (ca. 1943). In the following four decades, with Methodist missionaries' efforts lantern exhibitions gradually expanded into Chinese society. Magic lantern was often employed by missionaries in illustrated lectures, with a view of enlightening Celestials. With the aid of the ongoing Self-strengthening Movement, magic lantern was strongly promoted as an embodiment of Western learning. In the process, lantern developed three basic functional models: educational, entertaining and miscellaneous. In this chapter, I will explore the lantern tradition in China and argue that the existing lantern practices pave the path for the coming cinema, by providing an exemplary spreading pattern and a system of localization strategies.

Cinema entered China as a modern technological invention. During the period of 1897-1899, film exhibitions were given sporadically. The first round of cinematograph exhibitions in China were given respectively by two itinerant exhibitors, with two different exhibition strategies: Maurice Charvet with his Cinematograph and Welby-Cook with Animatoscope. In spring of 1897, they toured several large cities in China, including Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tianjin, Hankou and Beijing.⁴³ In the following year, the famous magician Carl Hertz (1859-1924) toured Hong Kong and Shanghai with an "original" Lumière Cinématographe. In 1899, E.F.G. Hatch, a privileged council member of Great Britain, travelled to China and exhibited there his cinematograph. Among those film pioneers, the former three were revenue-oriented professional showmen. In contrast, E.F.G. Hatch was an amateur and he gave film screenings mainly for charity purposes. Retrospectively, in this period cinema is generally accepted as an advanced model of magic lantern and the sales point is the mechanic novelty. The machine-based view is therefore in popularity.

From 1900 onwards, due to Boxer Rebellion and the Russo-Japanese War, the number of cinematograph exhibitions reduced significantly. The focus was turned to shooting practices. Shortly after the Siege of Legation, a Boxer fever emerged in

⁴³ NCH records that after his Cinématographe exhibition in Tianjin, Charvet travelled to Hankou. See NCH, 09 July 1897, volume 76 issue 1562. Hong Kong was at that time already a British colony and strictly speaking, it was not a Chinese city. Nevertheless, I include Hong Kong here because it was still under Chinese influence.

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Western countries and Boxer films were in huge demand.⁴⁴ Due to its high degree of fidelity, cinema was considered an effective way of representing the reality. Dozens of foreign cameramen were hence dispatched to China to record Boxers and war scenes, to name but a few, C. Fred Ackerman, Robert Kates Bonnie, Joseph Rosenthal and Oscar Depue. They shot numerous war films and scenic views in China. Meanwhile, the wars provided an opportunity to realize the potential of cinema as a mass media. In this section, I will investigate foreign cameramen's shooting activities and analyze some prototypic films that engaged in constructing a negative "yellow peril" image of China at that time.

The years from 1906 to 1911 witnessed cinema becoming the dominant form of entertainment. Film exhibition resumed after Russo-Japanese war. Alongside the establishment of many new concessions, foreign populations increased rapidly, which in turn created a huge demand on popular entertainments. Under this circumstance, profit-oriented film entrepreneurs like A. Ramos, B. Brodsky, A. E. Lauro entered the picture. They started their businesses as travelling showmen. After several years' accumulation of capital and social resources, they monopolized film exhibitions and energetically participated in building a film industry in China. Ramos, for instance, founded the first permanent cinema in 1908 and shortly thereafter built a cinema chain in China. The moving picture business boomed. Foreign film companies branched in China. Among them, the most prominent was PathéChine. The company promptly built a comprehensive rental system and monopolized film distribution in this part of world.

From 1912 to 1914, along with the rising of Nationalist Movements cinema was employed by many nationalists for educating Chinese people. In the process, many new Chinese intellectuals turned from civilized drama (Wenming xi 文明戲) to filmmaking. At the same time, Brodsky accomplished vertical integration and began to produce films in China. His film-production experiments with Asia Film Co. (Shanghai) and later China-America Co. (Hong Kong) became the basis for the future

⁴⁴ Leyda, *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, p.4.

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Chinese film industry. In the transitional period from late Qing to the Republic of China, almost every trade ports boasted one or two permanent cinemas. At this point, a criss-cross pattern can be observed regarding the allocation of permanent cinemas, with Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tianjin forming a vertical line in the coastal part of China and a horizontal line along the Yangtze River with Shanghai, Nanjing and Hankou respectively as centres.

The above five periods constitute the main body of this study. Noteworthy is that different films are screened in each period. In the initial round of cinematograph exhibitions, most films were short actualities that rarely lasted one minute. As the novelty of cinematograph wore off, audiences soon got tired with those short views. In response to it, Charvet bought a batch of *Médiès* trick films, which were worldwide hits at that time. Around 1903, in Europe and North America, film genre greatly diversified, with comedy and chase film as representatives. In late Qing China, due to the Boxer movement and the following Russo-Japanese War, this stage was missing. At the end of the war, a wide variety of film genres rushed in China but the market was still flooded with outdated short films. Prior to the foundation of the Republic of China, despite the rapid growth of permanent cinemas, itinerant shows were still popular. Nevertheless, the up-to-date photoplay and newsreel already appeared in China.

Chapter 1. Magic Lantern, 1843-1897

The Chinese name for cinema is yingxi 影戲 a polysemy that literally means to play with shadow. The English translation is therefore shadow play. The origin of yingxi is witchcraft, that is, to recall or to represent the living image of a dead. As time goes by, the multi-meanings of yingxi are gradually developed. Broadly speaking, yingxi could be a rhetorical metaphor of illusion that relates directly to its witchery origin. In North Song dynasty, shadow puppetry (Piying xi 皮影戲), a form of storytelling and entertainment, is developed and since then yingxi has become a particular signifier for shadow puppetry. In fact, it was not until the first Opium War that yingxi becomes the Chinese name for magic lantern, a Western optic novelty exhibited for local audiences. In 1897 when cinema entered the picture, it was treated as an advanced modification of magic Lantern. It therefore shared the name “yingxi” with magic lantern.

To differ the recent arrived cinema from magic lantern, the first batch of Chinese film advertisers often put prefixes like “huodong 活動” (moving) or “huodong dianguang 活動電光” (moving electric) before the word “yingxi” to specify its cinematographic features. Along with the rapid spreading of cinema, magic lantern became outdated. It was gradually replaced by cinema in many treaty ports and large cities. The need to underline the prefix waned and yingxi became the popular signifier for cinema, although shadow puppetry and magic lantern did not entirely disappear. These three forms of entertainment coexisted under the same Chinese name “yingxi”. In an English context, it is relatively easy to discern them, however in Chinese source materials it remains a challenge. In contrast to cinema and magic lantern, by analyzing its context and rhetorical usages, it is not that difficult to recognize yingxi when it refers to shadow puppetry since the latter is a form of Chinese traditional entertainment. To discern cinema from magic lantern is extremely difficult because both are foreign novelties and optical devices with similar functional principles and spectatorships. In late Imperial China, many Chinese, even those most westernized, remained unable to distinct them from each other. The polysemy word yingxi hence

causes many mistakes and confusions in the field of Chinese film study. The writing group of ZDFZS, for instance, considers the show “on August 11, 1896 at *Xu* garden” as the first cinematograph exhibition in China.⁴⁵ This assertion is later challenged and recent studies indicate that the show at *Xu* garden is de facto a lantern exhibition.⁴⁶

To gain a profound understanding on “why yingxi was chosen to be the Chinese name for cinema,” a semantic investigation on the history of yingxi will be provided in this chapter, as well as a thorough exploration on lantern practices in China. The study of magic lantern has long been ignored. For most film researchers, magic lantern is irrelevant to film study because it is popular in the pre-cinema era. Recently, Charles Musser’s “screen practice” successfully diverts the academic interest to the lantern tradition.⁴⁷ According to him, magic lantern is more than a primitive optical toy, but an indispensable preparation for the coming cinema. He hence includes “lantern tradition” into a broader “screen history”, in which “cinema appears as a continuation and transformation of magic-lantern traditions.”⁴⁸

In this chapter, I will analyze early lanternists’ localization strategies and discuss the role magic lantern played in the process of modernizing and westernizing China. I will argue that half century’s lantern practices (ca. 1843-1897) have paved the way for the coming cinema by providing necessary knowledge preparation, exemplary spreading patterns and practical functional models. Magic lantern developed three major functions, i.e. educational, entertaining and miscellaneous. Based on these functions, magic lantern became associated with the trend of Xixue 西學 (Western learning) and peacefully coexisted with various forms of entertainments in China.

1.1 Yingxi: A Semantics Retrospect

Old people say that Yingxi originates from the death of Emperor Hanwu ’s concubine Li. At that time Shao Weng, an alchemist from Qi, claimed to be able to call Li’s ghost. Missing his dead lover so much that Emperor Hanwu summoned Weng. When night fell,

⁴⁵ Cheng, ZDFZS, p.8.

⁴⁶ Two important studies relevant to it are carried by Huang Dequan and Frank Bren respectively. See Huang, “Dianying chuanru Shanghai kao”; Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, pp.8-11.

⁴⁷ Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907*, pp. 15-17.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.15.

Weng constructed a tent and lighted a candle inside it. Emperor Hanwu, sitting inside another tent, watched at it, saw the phantom of Li but could not approach her. Since then Yingxi came into existence in the world.⁴⁹

Yingxi 影戲, as the word suggests, is to play with shadow 以影演戲. The history of yingxi can be traced back at least to Han dynasty. As the legend goes, yingxi originates from Emperor Han Wu 漢武帝's romantic love for his dead concubine Li. To relieve the Emperor's grief, an alchemist made a figurine of Li with cotton and silk, set it behind a curtain and lightened it up with candles with a view of summoning Li's ghost. The tale was recorded in *Hanshu* 漢書.⁵⁰ Although it was written in the official historical record, this romantic tale was not seriously treated.⁵¹ However, it is not difficult to draw the conclusion that yingxi originally had a close tie with witchcraft and religion.

The function of yingxi as a drama 戲 has not been emphasized until Northern Song 北宋 (960-1127). According to *Shiwu jiyuan* 事物紀原, yingxi emerged during the reign of Emperor Ren Zong 仁宗 (1022-1063): "at that time, there were citizens telling stories about Three Kingdoms 三國. Some of them made iconic figures for leading roles from the story and used them to illustrate the wars among three kingdoms."⁵² At the time of Southern Song 南宋, Nai Dewen 耐得翁 recorded in his *Ducheng jisheng* 都城紀勝 that yingxi had reached its maturity as a form of drama.⁵³ Yingxi was able to tell stories independently and possessed a certain degree of stylized-performances 程式化表演.⁵⁴ In a narrow sense, yingxi refers exclusively to Pi yingxi 皮影戲 (shadow puppetry), a form of storytelling or entertainment that uses flat articulated figures (shadow puppets) to create the impression of human movements and other three-dimensional objects. According to materials used for making puppets, there are leather shadow-puppetry and paper shadow-puppetry.

⁴⁹ Cheng, ZDFZS, p.4.

⁵⁰ See Ran, *Hanshu xuan* 漢書選, p.224.

⁵¹ Shushi 術士 (Alchemist) is also called Fangshi 方士. The history of shushi in China could be traced back to Qin dynasty 秦朝. Shushi claim to possess the recipe to transform copper to gold and they seek eternal life.

⁵² Three Kingdoms are Wei 魏, Shu 蜀 and Wu 吳 (ca.220-280).

⁵³ See Meng, *Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄, pp.8-11.

⁵⁴ Huang Dequan, "'Dianying' gujin ciyi kao" 電影古今詞義考, *Dangdai dianying* 6 (2009).

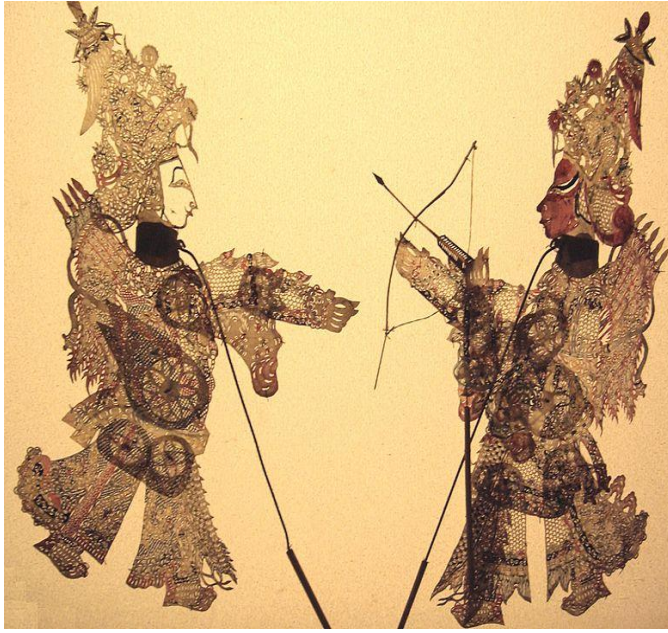


Fig. 1 Chinese Shadow Puppetry Figures: Two warriors (ca. 1788)⁵⁵

In contrast to magic lantern and cinema, the optical principle of shadow puppetry is extremely primitive. Cut-out figures are held between a source of light and a translucent screen or scrim. In the following three dynasties (Yuan, Ming, Qing), yingxi evolved into a general signifier for all shadow-puppetry-related performances or entertainments with similar optical principles. The heterogeneity of yingxi makes it a ready choice for magic lantern when it comes to China.

1.2 Magic Lantern

Magic lantern, generally referred as “yingxi,” is sometimes also called Yinghua 影畫, Huandeng 幻燈 or Yingxi deng 影戲燈, all featuring its ability to project images on a screen under a sort of light sources. The history of magic lantern can be traced back to *laterna magica* in middle Ages. To sustain the lustre of mystery, most mediaeval showmen concealed its optical principle from the audience. A rare exception is Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680), a German-born Jesuit priest and scientist. According to Charles Musser, Kircher “urged practitioners (exhibitors) to explain the actual

⁵⁵ Duetsches Ledermuseum, Offenbach (Germany). Photographer: Dr. Meierhofer, 14 Aug. 2006.

process to audiences so that these spectators would clearly understand that the show was a catoptric art (involving reflection and optics), not a magical one”.⁵⁶ Musser considers Kircher’s demystification as “a necessary condition of screen entertainment,” in which “the instrument of projection had to be made manifest within the model of production itself, so that projected images did not appear as magic but as ‘art’.”⁵⁷ Demystification was critical for establishing a trust relationship between exhibitor and audience, which “remained fundamentally unaltered and vital for modern magic lantern.”⁵⁸

In China, the systematical demystification of magic lantern to local audiences began in 1880s, about four decades after its initial introduction. In 1881, an article titled “Yingxi deng 影戲燈” (Magic lantern) was published in *The Chinese Scientific Magazine* (Gezhi huibian 格致彙編).⁵⁹ The article thoroughly explained lantern’s optical principles. According to it, “Yingxi deng is a Western toy, utilizing light to project images on wall or screen, and it is therefore named after “deng 燈” (light). Although there are several forms of Yingxi deng, most of them are made from tin plates.”⁶⁰ The article illustrated the demystification with a picture of a double lights magic lantern.

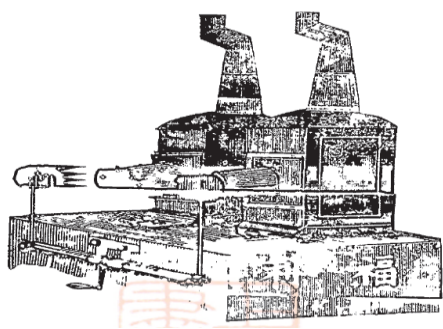


Fig. 2 Yingxi deng 影戲燈, *Gezhi huibian*, 1881.

In regard of lantern’s demystification in China, the chief editor of *The Chinese Scientific Magazine* John Fryer (1839-1928) played a key role. He not only introduced

⁵⁶ Musser, *History of the American Cinema: the Emergence of Cinema to 1907*, p.17.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.19

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ “Yingxi deng”, *Gezhi Huibian* 格致彙編, issue 10, volume 4, 1881, pp. 13-15.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

magic lantern to Chinese audience in print press, but also actively engaged in lantern exhibitions. For him and many other missionaries, magic lantern is primarily an effective tool for illustrating lectures. In the following sections, I will delineate the history of magic lantern in China before the arrival of cinema in 1897 and give a general picture of half a century's lantern practices, with a focus on lantern's three fundamental functional models in Chinese social milieu.

A statistic analysis of magic lantern in SB and NCH

From 1872 to 1897, there are in total about 95 yingxi-related articles in SB. Among them, 29 articles have the word “yingxi” directly in titles.⁶¹ The first yingxi-related article appeared in July 1873, mere a year after SB's foundation and was titled “*Kan gebi xi* 看隔壁戲” (Watching neighbour's show).⁶² In this article, the word “yingxi” had nothing to do with puppetry show or magic lantern. According to SB records, there were two rounds of large-scale lantern exhibitions in Chinese society in pre-cinema era. The first appeared around 1874. At that time, the famous magician Vanek toured Shanghai and gave lantern exhibitions as an integral part of his magic shows. It strongly promoted magic lantern in Chinese society and shortly thereafter lantern exhibitions appeared at Chinese teahouses. For instance, in 1875, a review titled “*Yingxi shulue* 影戲述略” (A brief account on shadow play) recorded a lantern exhibition at a teahouse in Hangzhou. The second round appeared in 1885 when the Chinese celebrity Yan Yongjing 顏永京 (1838-1898) gave a series of beneficial lantern exhibitions. Yan's “miscellaneous” lantern exhibitions were sensational back then.

In regard of lantern activities in foreign society in Shanghai, there were at least 81 records in NCH. Most records were about exhibitions, with an exception of George Richardson & Co.'s lantern advertisements. The company was an English manufacture, wholesale and retail dealers for model steam engines, magic lanterns

⁶¹ SB was established in 1872. I use the electronized SB from the database of Cross-asia.org. The statistic analysis is to give a general picture.

⁶² SB 26 July 1873: 3.

and slides, telescopes and other articles. The company published the first lantern advertisement on September 5, 1868.⁶³ According to it, the price for magic lanterns and sets of slides was as follows: “complete from 7s. 6d. to £22 each; pairs of lanterns for dissolving views, from £3 15s. to £33.”⁶⁴ The company also provided a product catalogue, with an inclusion of about 20 views of magic lanterns and slides, which “described upwards of 1500 varieties of slides, embracing every subject.”⁶⁵ It was likely that the first batch of magic lanterns in China was transacted through this company.



Fig. 3 Magic Lantern Advertisement of George Richardson & Co., NCH 5 September 1868, volume 19, issue 0072.

1.2.1 Lantern exhibitions: pre-screen stage

Lantern exhibitions in China before the arrival of cinematograph can be roughly divided into two periods, i.e. the “pre-screen” stage (1843-1881) and the booming stage (1881-1897).⁶⁶ The former is characterized by exhibitors’ conscious or

⁶³ The earliest date of this advertisement appeared on NCH 05 September 1868 (volume 19, issue 0072) and repeated during the following October, November and December till March of 1869.

⁶⁴ S is shilling and d is pence.

⁶⁵ NCH 05 September 1868, volume 19, issue 0072.

⁶⁶ Musser defines the time prior to Kirche as “pre-screen.” Before Kirche’s time, lantern exhibitors usually purposely conceal the optical principle of magic lantern from audiences. See Musser, *History of the American Cinema: the Emergence of Cinema to 1907*, p.18.

unconscious concealment of lantern's optical principle from native audiences. Three groups of lantern exhibitors can be observed during this period: adventurers, missionaries and magicians. As a rule, their lantern exhibitions were random, sporadic and auxiliary. Nevertheless, the pre-screen stage had paved a road for the coming lantern-exhibition boom in 1880s. Magic lantern's educational and entertaining functions also emerged in this period.

The initial round of lantern exhibitions in China

In 1843, Captain Sir Edward Belcher (1799-1877) was engaged in H.M.S. Samarang to survey the islands of the Eastern Archipelago. Governmental operations like this were common at that time. The battleship quitted Macao in November and arrived at Rykyu Islands in December.⁶⁷ In Patchuang San Island, Captain Edward amused native islanders by exhibiting magic lantern on shore. It is the earliest record on lantern exhibition in China. In Europe, after about two hundred years' demystification, magic lantern, like magnetic toys and conjuring tricks, was a popular optical toy and its functional principle had been a sort of general knowledge.⁶⁸ Captain Edward was evidently no stranger to this knowledge. Nevertheless, he made no efforts to explain to aboriginal inhabitants the scientific principle behind. For the captain, magic lantern was merely a toy to amuse natives in hope of establishing a certain communication, or better, to incite admiration and awe from them. Therefore, the mysterious magic lantern shall not be demystified.

About ten years after Captain Edward's lantern exhibition, in Ningbo Daniel Jerome Macgowan (1815-1893), an American Baptist medical missionary who came to Ningbo shortly after the first Opium War, held the second lantern exhibition in China.⁶⁹ Macgowan employed magic lantern as an illustration for his astronomical lectures at Moon Lake College. The show was supposed to be a private one but,

⁶⁷ NCH 2 Sep. 1865, volume 16, issue 0788.

⁶⁸ "Where all the toys come from?" NCH 14 Apr. 1860, volume 11, issue 0507.

⁶⁹ According to *The Nanking Treaty*, which marked the end of First Opium War, Ningbo together with Guangdong, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Shanghai (Ningpo, Canton, Amoy, Foochowfoo, Shanghai) were open to foreign trades. Macgowan first appeared on NCH on 3 August 1850, volume 1, issue 0001.

according to a report in NCH, the college-rooms were “as public as a market-place, and were soon filled with noisy crowds.”⁷⁰ It angered Macgowan and he complained that it was “impossible to exercise any control over the admittance of spectators, most of whom could hardly appreciate such instruction.”⁷¹ Macgowan failed to recognize the entertaining function of magic lantern and he loathed the crowd for lacking the elementary knowledge on this scientific instruction, which he obviously did not plan to explain.

Macgowan’s lantern exhibition did not achieve much attention. The first public lantern exhibition with admission charge was held in Fuzhou 福州, a treaty port where Methodist Episcopal Missionary stationed. Through December 1869 to November 1870, a series of lectures with lantern illustrations were given to native preachers and assistants.⁷² Compared with Macgowan’s private lectures in Ningbo, the lectures in Fuzhou were in large scale and more carefully planned. Among lecturers, Rev. Nathan Sites (薛承恩 1831-1895)’s expertise was on astronomy and Rev. Justus Doolittle (1824-1880) employed magic lantern for “showing a great variety of pictures illustrating Zoology, ornithology, Astronomy, and also Bible subjects and scenes.”⁷³ According to a report in NCH, these lantern exhibitions soon “attracted such a large number of native spectators that a charge was made.”⁷⁴

Methodist Episcopal Missionary’s lantern practice in Fuzhou was important for several reasons. Firstly, the lecturers had recognized lantern’s educational function and consciously employed it in illustrating lectures. In the process, the nature of magic lantern was gradually changed and it was no longer an optical toy but became an effective media, which functioned as an auxiliary for scientific lectures. Secondly, by charging an admission fee, lantern exhibition was transformed into a commercial

⁷⁰ NCH 30 Oct. 1852, volume 3, issue 0118.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² The first lecture with lantern illustration held in Fuzhou was no later than Dec. 1869. According to another record on NCH, a series of lectures were held from Nov. 10th to 20nd, 1870. See “Fung-Shuey 風水”, NCH 07 Dec. 1869, volume 20, issue 0136; NCH 4 Jan. 1871, issue 0192.

⁷³ NCH 4 Jan. 1871, volume 23, issue 0192.

⁷⁴ NCH 4 Jan. 1871, volume 23, issue 0192.

enterprise. Lectures with lantern illustrations in Fuzhou were, to some extent, also entertaining shows. Thirdly, through lantern practices, potential audience was recognized. On December 7, 1869, a letter signed by one E. M. S. was published in NCH. In the letter, the writer took the lantern exhibition in Fuzhou as an example and argued that there was “a readiness on the part of vast numbers of intelligent Chinese to receive just that sort of scientific instruction which will effectually dissipate the mental malaria”.⁷⁵ Illustrated lectures should therefore target this “vast number of intelligent Chinese,” especially young Chinese intellectuals and students who had received educations in Western-style schools. This suggestion was later firmly carried out by Methodist missionaries in Beijing and John Fryer in Shanghai in 1880s.⁷⁶ In sum, Methodist Missionary’s lantern exhibitions in Fuzhou had set an example for missionaries in the “booming stage,” with an emphasis on lantern’s educational function.

Lantern exhibitions in Fuzhou had become such a sensation that it drew public attention. It was not before long that local authority put an end to it. Rumor was that Daotai 道台 (magistrate) himself tried to buy it and intended to offer it to emperor as a tribute. Noteworthy is that, although missionaries in Fuzhou employed magic lantern in scientific lectures, they made no evident efforts to demystify this foreign novelty to the audience. In this regard, lantern exhibitions in Fuzhou still belonged to the pre-screen stage.

Joseph Vanek and entertaining lantern exhibitions

Joseph Vanek (1818-1889), a scientist and politician born in Hungary who later became professional magician and made several world tours, helped realize the entertaining function of magic lantern in China.⁷⁷ Vanek arrived at Shanghai on May

⁷⁵ NCH 7 Dec. 1869, volume 20, issue 0136.

⁷⁶ John Fryer 傅蘭雅 set an exemplary model for Yan Yongjing 顏永京’s lantern exhibition “*A Miscellany of World Sights* 世紀集錦” at Gezhi shuyuan 格致書院(Christian College) in 1885, a brilliant combination of magic-lantern and lecture. Lantern is a tool for education as well as a form of entertainment.

⁷⁷ The article on SB mistakes Vanek as an English magician. Vanek is actually born in Hungary.

9, 1874 from Japan per Str. Golden Age and performed here for about two months.⁷⁸ Allegedly, it was his second tour in Shanghai and the last one was seven years ago.⁷⁹ Vanek performed at Lyceum theatre, the only Western-style theatre then in Shanghai. The show began at 9 o'clock. Vanek's famous illusion was to take the head off an assistant and pass the decapitated head among the audience. Notable was that every night, at the end of the performance, Yinghua 影畫 (magic lantern) was exhibited. Magic lantern was likely an integral part of the show and the audience treated it with no difference to other programs.⁸⁰ Vanek obviously made no efforts to demystify magic lantern. He instead took advantage of Celestials' ignorance of this foreign novelty and purposely presented it as a "magic", rather than a scientific device. Vanek's magic show (incl. lantern exhibition) at Lyceum Theatre was an immediate success and became sensational in Shanghai. There were a number of newspaper reports and reviews about his shows. An article in NCH gave a detailed description on Vanek's lantern exhibition:

"...then music sounded, lights out and magic lantern began. Pictures showed the sun, moon, star, mountain, trees and their changes. The best was houses in fire. At first there were sparks, then fire spread and finally could not be controlled. Smoke heavily clouded above the fire. Slides presented the ongoing fire scenes. Another theme was a ship sailing on ocean in a storm. The ship wobbled with billows. Suddenly a lifeboat came. The figures were lifelike and their four limbs could move. One could hardly describe those scenes without seeing by his own eyes. The last pictures were like colourful brocade, blooming flowers or sunset glow".⁸¹

According to this article, the show was accompanied with music. Subjects of lantern slides were mostly entertaining and sensational, such as landscape, house in fire and ship in storm. It forms a sharp contrast with scientific lectures in Ningbo and Fuzhou. Meanwhile, Vanek's lantern exhibition already possesses some fidelity. The

⁷⁸ On 09 May 1874, Prof. Vanek arrived at Shanghai from Japan per Str. Golden Age and departed Shanghai for Hiogo on July 4, per S.s. Costa Rica. See NCH 9 May and 4 July 1874.

⁷⁹ "Yanshu xinqi 演術新奇" (A Novel Magic Show), SB 12 May 1872.

⁸⁰ "Sishi nian qian huanshu ji yingxi 四十年前幻術及影戲" (The Magic Show and Lantern Exhibition Fourty Years Ago), SB 6 Feb. 1917.

⁸¹ "Xishushi yanshu xiaoji 西術師演術小記" (A Brief Record On A Western Magician's Show), SB 18 May 1874:03

pictures are “lifelike”, the figures “could move”, and it explains why many Celestials mistook lantern exhibition for film screening. It is not before long that audiences got tired of the same views. Consequently, Vanek renewed the set of lantern slides. According to a report in SB, the scenes were different in the following shows. Instead of “house on fire” and “ship in storm”, the highlight of the second lantern exhibition was “a subtle visual effect achieved by moon reflecting on water.”⁸² Through the constant change of slides and views, Vanek managed to sustain audiences’ attention.

Initially, Vanek’s shows in Shanghai targeted exclusively foreign residents. As the shows became sensational, many Chinese followed suit and they soon outnumbered foreign audiences. In spite of the large number, Chinese audience was discriminated at Lyceum theatre. They paid same ticket fee but were “expelled to the third floor, a disadvantage position for watching the show”.⁸³ Many Chinese complained and Vanek was forced to publish a statement to clarify the situation. According to the statement, a Chinese cashier at Lyceum mistakenly thought that Chinese should be isolated from foreigners and first-rate seats were exclusively reserved for foreigners. Vanek apologized for the misunderstanding and assured Chinese audience “to feel free to take any seat in the future shows”.⁸⁴ In a colonial context, with the Foreigner-Chinese-Separation policy 華洋分治, this kind of conflict was, to some extent, unavoidable. Apart from this unpleasant interlude, Chinese audience also felt uneasy to be surrounded by foreigners. A report in NCH revealed that during the show foreign audiences were observing and laughing at Chinese audiences.⁸⁵

A month later, almost every foreigner in Shanghai had watched Vanek’s performances. In contrast, numerous Chinese expressed their wish to attend the shows. To suit Chinese audience’s taste, Vanek moved to Dangui teahouse 丹桂茶園 in June. His shows at Dangui teahouse attracted broad public attention and helped magic lantern adopt “yingxi” as its Chinese name. Dangui teahouse was one of the most

⁸² “Xishushi yanshu zaiji 西術師演術再記” (A Record On the Magician’s Another Show), SB 21 May 1874:2

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ “Xishushi yanshu xiaoji 西術師演術小記” (A Brief Record On A Western Magician’s Show), SB 18 May 1874:03

⁸⁵ NCH 4 Jul. 1874, volume 30, issue 0374.

important teahouses in Shanghai at that time. The house could accommodate a thousand spectators and was more spacious than Lyceum theatre.⁸⁶ According to a review in SB, Vanek's show at Dangui began at 10 o'clock every night. The programme featured sensory stimulations. Western beauties were hired to attract Chinese spectators and lantern slides were constantly renewed.

Although Vanek only performed about ten days at Dangui, his shows were sensational in Chinese society. Celebrated gentries like Wang Tao 王韜 and Ge Yuanxi 葛元熙 left records on this event.⁸⁷ Although lantern exhibition was only a supplementary part, Vanek's shows, especially those at Dangui teahouse, had greatly promoted lantern exhibition as a form of entertainment. Several months after Vanek's magic shows, lantern exhibition appeared as an independent form of entertainment at a teahouse in Hangzhou, a nearby city from Shanghai. The owner of the teahouse borrowed "the new arrived foreign Yingxi (magic lantern) for one night" and exhibited "lifelike and colorful" views. Pictures were about "duck floating on water, fish swimming with waves, mouse jumping above deck and horse eating grasses" and "ship broken, house on fire, two men sailing, foreign women performing acrobatic, snow flying and moon shining".⁸⁸ Retrospectively, it can be treated as a repercussion of Vanek's shows at Dangui teahouse in June.

To sum up, Vanek employed lantern exhibition as an integral part of magic shows, which in turn helped realize lantern's potential of being an entertainment. Vanek's model was emulated by the Webb Company of Marionette as well as by the Japanese magician Syokyokusai Tenyiki 松旭齋藤天一 a decade later.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ NCH 4 Jul. 1874, volume 30, issue 0374.

⁸⁷ See Wang Tao, *Yinghuan zazhi* 瀛寰雜誌; Ge Yuanxun, *Huyou zaji* 滬遊雜記, p. 35.

⁸⁸ "Yingxi shulue 影戲述略" (A Account on lantern exhibition), SB 28 Dec. 1874: 3

⁸⁹ This tradition is inherited by The Webb Company of Marionette 衛珀劇團 in April 1887 and the Japanese magician Syokyokusai Tenyiki 松旭齋藤天一 in August of 1889. See "Guanxi yiyang 觀戲邑言" (A Review On A Show), SB 12 May 1887: 3; "Guan riben fubu songxu zhaitianyi yanji ji 觀日本服部松旭齋天一演技記" (A Review on Syokyokusai Tenyiki's Magic Show), SB 27 Dec. 1889: 3.

1.2.2 Lantern exhibitions: booming stage

The year 1881 marked the beginning of the booming stage of lantern exhibitions for several reasons. Firstly, as mentioned before, in this year “*Yingxi deng*” was published. This article thoroughly explained lantern’s optical principles and thence presented an initial effort on demystification. Secondly, a series of lectures with lantern illustrations was given in Beijing and Shanghai. The scale of these lantern exhibitions was unprecedented. Thirdly, lantern’s educational and entertaining functions further developed and they reached, to some extent, their maturities.

Methodist missionary’s scientific lectures in Beijing

In 1880s, missionaries continued to employ magic lantern as an auxiliary for their scientific lectures. From 1882 to 1884, a group of Methodist missionaries in Beijing gave a series of illustrated lectures. Most lectures were given in Chinese language and by doing so they had “drawn large outside audiences and did much good”.⁹⁰

Time and Place	Lecturer	Subject
Jan. 1882, Beijing	American Methodist Mission, Dr. Edkins, Dr. Dudgeon	Astronomy and Blood circulation
Feb. 1882 Beijing	Methodist Mission, Rev. G. S. Owen	Geology
Mar. 1882 Methodist School, Beijing	Rev. J. Wherry	On Sun
Mar. 1882 Methodist Chapel, Beijing	Rev. L. W. Pilcher	Palestine
Dec. 1882	Dr. Dudgeon	Physiology of the Five

⁹⁰ NCH 24 Jan. 1882.

CHAPTER ONE

American M.E.M Chapel		Senses
Jan. 1883 Methodist Mission, Beijing	Dr. Edkins	Rotundity of Earth and Cognate subjects
Feb. 1883 Beijing	Mr. Owen	Geographical subjects
Dec. 1883 E.M. Mission, Beijing	Dr. Edkins, Mr. Wherry	Divination, Astronomy
Dec. 1883 Methodist Chapel, Beijing	Mr. Owen, Dr. Dudgeon	Rain, Wind, Thunder and Lightening; physiological subjects
Jan. 1884 Beijing	Mr. Happer	Discovery of America by Columbus
Mar. 1884 Methodist Chapel	Dr. Martin	On foreign cities, Photographic views of London, Paris, Venice etc.

Chart 1 Methodist Missionary Lectures with Lantern Illustrations, 1882-1884

Scientific subjects like geology, astronomy and medicine formed the main body of those lectures. Among them, only one lecture was on religious topic, i.e. Dr. Edkins' lecture of "*Divination*" in December. It was rare that missionaries preached on science rather than religion itself. Evidences indicated that Methodist missionaries purposely adopted this scheme. One Dr. Dudgeon, a key figure in exhibiting magic lantern in Beijing, explained in an article that "the use of electricity, photography and a hundred different Western scientific appliances, regarding which the Chinese are most curious, would prove most useful as an introduction to these very classes, whose absence is so much deplored by the preaching missionaries."⁹¹ Dudgeon then

⁹¹ Dr.Dudgeon was a Scottish physician who spent nearly 40 years in China as doctor, surgeon, translator and medical missionary. In 1863, he was appointed by the Medical Mission of the London Missionary Society to serve at the hospital in Beijing established by William Lockhart. He arrived in China in December and was appointed

specified “these very classes” as “the high officials and emperor” and he considered it the primary task of Methodist missionary to catch their attention. It was obvious not Dudgeon’s original idea. About two decades ago, an article about the lantern exhibitions in Fuzhou was published in NCH, in which a similar view was expressed. According to it, “a class among the Chinese to appreciate such Lectures” was developing.⁹²

A retrospect on the history of Methodist missionary might shed light on their preference of science. Methodist missionary had been in China more than 30 years since the first Opium War. Despite their efforts in missionary work, the result was disappointing. On one hand, they were confined inside few treaty ports. On the other hand, due to Foreigner-Chinese-Separation policy and Chinese gentries’ cultural conservatism in general, most of their preaching failed. The number of converted Chinese was miserable. Most Chinese Christians came from a lower social ladder and many of them converted for mere material benefits. Missionaries had been working hard to reach the higher class and lectures on scientific subjects proved an effective tool. In the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China at Shanghai on May 10-24, 1877, Calvin Wilson Matter 狄考文 (1836-1908) explained the necessity for missionary to control or shoulder the responsibility of promoting knowledge of science and technology:

“No matter China is willing or not, the trend of modernization is coming and it is irresistible...There are two reasons necessary why missionaries should nurture the intellectuals: first, the trend is itself a good thing. It will enormously benefit China on society, materials, politic...etc. and help eliminate superstitions. If correctly instructed, the trend would open a road for missionary’s future religious success, which also leads to the second reason, that is, if the pious people and missionaries do not control and instruct this trend, it would be in heretic people’s hands and be used as an obstacle for missionary work...”⁹³

Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at the Tongwen Guan 同文館 (Imperial College) through 1870s and 1880s. See NCH 19 Mar. 1884, volume 49, issue 0870.

⁹² NCH 7 Dec. 1869, volume 20, issue 0136.

⁹³ Calvin W. Mateer, “The Relation of Protestant Missions to Education.” See Yates, *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held at Shanghai, May 10-24, 1877*, p. 177.

The other reason why missionaries were fond of scientific lectures was that many missionaries came from an academic background and they themselves were experts in scientific field. For example, Rev. Nathan Site, who exhibited magic lantern in Fuzhou in 1869, graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University. Many Methodist lecturers, who played an important role in 1880s (e.g. Dr. Edkins, Dr. Dudgeon and Dr. Martin), had doctor titles and they were qualified to give this kind of lectures from every sense. This scheme had proved a huge success. According to an article in NCH, “the students of the Imperial College turned out in large numbers to these lectures, drawn perhaps by the attractions of the magic lantern.”⁹⁴

John Fryer’s lantern exhibitions in Shanghai

In Shanghai, lectures with lantern illustrations were mainly given by John Fryer 傅蘭雅 (1839-1928). Fryer was born at Hythe, County of Kent, England. He was chosen by the Lord Bishop of Victoria as principal of St. Paul’s College in Hong Kong after his graduation in 1860 from the college. Fryer was “a curious observer, an extensive traveller, and a diligent writer who recorded many of his experiences in China.”⁹⁵ He actively engaged in the field of education and publication in China (esp. Beijing and Shanghai) since 1860s.⁹⁶ In 1872, the Chinese imperial court honored him with a “jinshi 進士” degree and twenty years later, a “Zhuangyuan 狀元” degree.⁹⁷ In 1880s, John Fryer moved most of his work from Beijing to Shanghai. In 1884, he founded the Chinese Scientific Book Depot 格致書室 in Shanghai and published the *Scientific and Industrial Magazine*, with a view of bringing information of modern science, arts and manufacturing in the West to the Chinese.⁹⁸ It was during this period that he gave a series of lectures with lantern illustrations.

⁹⁴ NCH 24 Jan. 1882, volume 44, issue 0759.

⁹⁵ Doris Sze Chun, “John Fryer, the first Agassiz professor of oriental languages and literature, Berkeley”, <http://www.cshe.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/shared/publications/chronicle/Fryer.pdf>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Zhuangyuan 狀元 is first rank of the third degree of the Chinese order of the double dragon.

⁹⁸ The magazine *Gewu Huibian* 格物彙編, in which the article “Yingxi deng” was published, was established by John Fryer in this period.

John Fryer's lantern exhibitions in Shanghai can be roughly divided into two periods. From 1882 to 1884, he gave "miscellany" exhibitions mainly for children from Sunday school. From 1885 to 1887, he expanded his lantern exhibitions and gave lectures for Shanghai Literary and Debating Society (SLADS) and Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A), introducing Chinese culture exclusively to foreign residents as well as showing Western landscapes to Chinese Christians. In general, Fryer's lantern exhibition was characteristic of "custom-designed."

On December 27, 1882, John Fryer exhibited a miscellaneous collection of lantern pictures at Temperance Hall for the annual festival of the Hongkou 虹口 Sunday School. Several days later, he gave another exhibition for the annual festival of Trinity Cathedral Sunday School. According to the reports in NCH, it was the same set of slides.⁹⁹ The collection consisted of "some comic and natural history slides" like "chromatopes, animals, and sea", and pictures "representing places" in United Kingdom and Europe, such as "the Houses of Parliament, St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, the Bank of England and Royal Exchange".¹⁰⁰ The exhibitions "found great favour with the juveniles" and "the older children."¹⁰¹ As a matter of fact, Fryer's exhibitions for Sunday schools were such a success that they, as a regular program of entertainments for local Sunday school children, were annually held at Temperance Hall in the following two years.

Fryer's miscellaneous lantern exhibitions differed from Methodist missionary's illustrated scientific lectures and Vanek's magic shows. His miscellaneous collection of pictures functioned both educationally and entertainingly. The scientific lectures in Beijing were, to some extent, stabilized because they were well organized and often given at the same spot. For Methodist missionaries, magic lantern was an effective illustration and its function was purely educational. In this sense, Fryer's exhibition was more flexible and entertaining. It seemed that his exhibitions were sponsored and cooperated by different organizations and featured an evident "team work". They

⁹⁹ NCH 23 Jan. 1884, volume 49, issue 0864; NCH 21 Jan. 1885, volume 51, issue 0915.

¹⁰⁰ NCH 03 Jan. 1883, volume 47, issue 0810.

¹⁰¹ NCH 03 Jan. 1883, volume 47, issue 0810.

were more entertaining than missionary' scientific lectures but not that entertaining as Vanek's magic shows. While Vanek's show was public, Fryer's exhibition served exclusively for children and juveniles. Compared with Vanek's show, Fryer's was more educational. In this sense, Fryer was de facto the founder of the miscellaneous model of lantern exhibition. Two years later, Chinese celebrity Yan Yongjing inherited this model and sponsored a fever of miscellaneous lantern exhibition in Shanghai.

After his initial miscellaneous lantern exhibitions, John Fryer cooperated with SLADS and gave two travelogues lectures, i.e. "*A trip to the Chinese purgatory*" and "*A trip from Shanghai to Great Wall.*"¹⁰² The first lecture, also known as "*Chinese Popular Notions of Purgatory*" was given at SLADS' half-yearly general meeting in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society in June 1885. The subject was illustrated with lantern views prepared by a Chinese artist.¹⁰³ The second lecture was held in the following year and was also "well illustrated by a series of seventy photographic magic-lantern views thrown on a screen eleven feet square".¹⁰⁴ The views were carefully chosen to represent "the objects seen at the different places passed through on the journey and each was accompanied by a short description."¹⁰⁵ In his introductory remarks, John Fryer compared his two lectures from a religious viewpoint and said that the previous one was a trip to purgatory and the latter was de facto a trip to heaven:

"To see the Great Wall one had to cross the 'Fords of Heaven' as the name Tientsin implies; and then pass through the Capital of the Celestial Empire where dwells the so called 'Son of Heaven,' in all his grandeur in the midst of his Court. Every aspirant to civil or military honors or position regards a journey to Peking and an interview with the Emperor as the summon bonum of happiness."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² "The Shanghai Literary and Debating Society," NCH 17 Apr. 1886, volume 53, issue 0982.

¹⁰³ NCH 12 Jun. 1885, volume 51, issue 0935.

¹⁰⁴ "The Shanghai Literary and Debating Society," NCH 17 Apr. 1886, volume 53, issue 0982.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

In this regard, Fryer's two lectures formed an interesting contrast. The visit to Beijing on some honorable errands was the highest happiness to be desired while a journey through purgatory if of all things was to be avoided after death.¹⁰⁷

These two lectures were so successful that SLADS invited Fryer to lecture again. In 1887, Fryer delivered a lecture "*Chinese Ideas of Morality*".¹⁰⁸ The lecture achieved an enormous success and became a social event. Even General Kennedy, the U.S. Consul-general gave a general introduction of *Wulun* 五倫 before the lecture began. Fryer illustrated the theme with a number of lantern views and most of them were about "popular Chinese stories of individuals famous for the practice of one or other of the virtues referred to in the lecture."¹⁰⁹ Lantern slides were probably painted by the same Chinese artist who had prepared slides for Fryer's previous lectures. In spite of the huge success, there were minor critiques. According to the report in NCH, the execution was inferior and it was particularly uncomfortable for those sit too near the screen.¹¹⁰ Owing to the heat of the over-crowded room and want of proper ventilation, it was alike distressing to the lecturer and hearers.

Fryer's lectures for SLADS differed from most missionary's lectures. Rather than introducing Western learning to Chinese, in this case magic lantern was employed in introducing Chinese culture to foreign audiences. The lectures were therefore confined in the foreign society in Shanghai. For foreign audiences, magic lantern itself was not novel and they were mostly attracted by the content of the lecture rather than by the machine. Noteworthy is that Fryer's slides included both artificially painted images and photographic views. Compared to Methodist missionary's scientific lectures in Beijing, Fryer's lantern exhibitions for SLADS were full of cultural and symbolic meanings.

In 1887, Fryer launched a new round of lectures for Shanghai Y.M.C.A. The first lecture was "*A Tour through the Highlands of Scotland*." There was a technique

¹⁰⁷ "The Shanghai Literary and Debating Society", NCH 17 Apr. 1886, volume 53, issue 0982.

¹⁰⁸ Mainly about *Wu Lun* 五倫 (Five social relationships, including the governmental, the paternal, the conjugal, the fraternal and the amicable between friends and associates).

¹⁰⁹ NCH 22 Apr. 1887, volume 55, issue 1030.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

progress in regarding lantern illustrations. The slides were mostly photographic views and the lighting source was lime light prepared by one Rev. S. C. Partridge.¹¹¹ In the April, Fryer's famous lecture on "*Chinese Ideas of Morality*" was given again at Temperance Hall.¹¹²

Yan Yongjing and his "Miscellany" exhibition for fundraising

Yan Yongjing 顏永京 (1838-1898) was born in Shanghai. He received missionary school education early and attended later the college founded by Bishop William Jones Boone 文惠廉 (1811-1864). He was chosen by Episcopal Church to study in America at the age of 15.¹¹³ After he graduated from Keyens College in 1861, he returned to China and focused on translation and missionary work.¹¹⁴ Yan Yongjing serviced as the president of Saint John's College for eight years, teaching psychology. He was also a social celebrity. In 1885, he actively participated in the petition to Shanghai Municipal Council for admitting Chinese into public gardens. Five years later, he joined the movement of persuading Western governments to forbid the opium exportation to China.¹¹⁵ His Western-style education enabled his association with missionaries' lantern exhibitions on various occasions. In addition, the Christian College 格致書院, where Yan gave his first lantern exhibition, was founded by John Fryer. In this regard, Yan had indeed inherited Fryer's miscellaneous lantern exhibitions.

In November 1885, there were heavy floods in Guangdong and Guangxi. Yan Yongjing, the president of Saint John's College at that time, therefore gave two

¹¹¹ NCH 29 Apr. 1887, volume 55, issue 1031.

¹¹² NCH 03 Jun. 1887, volume 55, issue 1036.

¹¹³ He was one of the first Chinese students that were sent overseas for study.

¹¹⁴ He was a pathfinder of independently translating western humanities and social works such as Joseph Haven's *Mental Philosophy* and Herbert Spencer's *Education*.

¹¹⁵ "Lun huashang hanzhi gongbuju qingzhun huaren de gongyou gongjia huayuan shi 論華商函致工部局請準華人得共遊公家花園事" (About Chinese Merchants' Suggestion on Opening Public Parks to Chinese), SB 8 Dec. 1885: 1; "Chaolu shang daying yiyuan jinzhi yangyan ru zhongguo gongbing 抄錄上大英議院禁止洋煙如中國工稟" (A Transcribe Manuscript of British House of Lord's Prohibition of Opium Exportation to China), SB 11 Jun. 1890: 02, 03.

beneficial lantern exhibitions titled “*A Miscellany of World Sights* 世紀集錦” at the hall of Christian College, respectively on November 15 and 17.¹¹⁶ Yan’s exhibitions were well responded and under the sponsor of Cowies Mansion 高易公館, a famous private charity organization in Shanghai, he then gave a series of public lantern exhibitions for fundraising in Fuzhou Road 四馬路.¹¹⁷ Yan’s exhibitions continued in December. The beneficial public exhibitions in Fuzhou road were sensational in Shanghai. In total, there were about 11 exhibitions and it made Yan the first Chinese giving public lantern exhibitions. His “miscellany” lantern exhibition was the most influential lantern shows in Chinese society. The exhibitions targeted exclusively Chinese audiences and they had modified many Chinese intellectuals’ views on magic lantern.¹¹⁸

By then, yingxi as the Chinese name of magic lantern had widely spread. Yan’s two “yingxi” exhibitions at the hall of Christian College were experimental and in small-scale. Huang Shiquan 黃式權 (1853-1924), the chief editor of SB, attended the exhibitions and wrote a detailed report “*Postscript after watching yingxi* 觀影戲後記.”¹¹⁹ Huang firstly agreed that magic lantern was “only a game” and “pleasure for eyes”. He then pointed out that Yan’s exhibitions nevertheless differed from others and were particularly important. According to him, Yan’s exhibitions provided a good opportunity for “those who are determined to enrich their knowledge” as well as for the disaster relief.¹²⁰ Huang recorded that the exhibition was from 7 P.M. to 9 P.M. and the charge was five Jiao 五角洋錢 (foreign money flat silver) per person. The

¹¹⁶ “Yingxi zhuzhen 影戲助賑” (A Beneficial Lantern Exhibition), SB 23 Nov. 1885: 3; “Yingxi fanxin 影戲翻新” (The Renewed Lantern Slides), SB 3 Dec. 1885: 2.

¹¹⁷ Gaoyi Gongguan 高易公館 was one of three most famous fundraising organizations in Shanghai then. It was founded by English lawyer G.T. Wabster Cowies. It was first a legal consulting agency. Later it got involved in social activities, specializing on fundraising for disaster relief.

¹¹⁸ In total there were about 11 lantern exhibitions. According to SB records, there were two exhibitions (Nov. 15 & 17) at the Hall of Christian College. Thereafter there were exhibitions at Zhengyuan jiuzhi 震源舊址 (respectively on 22 Nov., 3 Dec., 8, 9, 11 Dec. and three exhibitions around 20 December).

¹¹⁹ Mengwansheng 夢畹生 is the pseudonym of Huang Shiquan, the chief editor of SB. He received traditional Confucius education but was familiar with Western culture and foreign trades. See Ge Yuanxun, *Huyou zaji* 滬游雜記, p. 91.

¹²⁰ “Guan yingxi houji 觀影戲後記” (A Review after a Lantern Exhibition), SB 25 Nov. 1885: 1.

machine was “a square form, about three or four feet 尺”, with a chimney above and a small lamp inside. It was set on a small square table toward a folding screen 屏風 covered by a white cloth and Yan stood next to the machine as operator. In total, there were about a hundred views. Most of them were pictures that Yan collected during his oversea trips. Allegedly, it had taken Yan ten years to travel around the world and paint foreign landscapes and customs down.

In regard of the exhibition, Yan put those pictures on the machine and lighted it with lime light. The show began with “the beauty and the Celestial official 美人天官”, two slides specially made for this exhibition. According to the report, as the light was out and the hall sunk into darkness, suddenly a shining dot appeared on the screen and it transformed to a beauty, holding a square plate with four words “Qunxian biji 群賢畢集” (all wisers gathering here) on it. The beauty was smiling and lifelike. Following the picture of the beauty, appeared a Celestial official, wearing red clothes and a dark hat. He was also holding a plate with four words “Zhongwai tongqing 中外同慶” (Chinese and foreigner celebrating together).¹²¹ In this way, the slides cleverly greeted the audience, created a jubilant mood and invited audiences to join this visual journey with Yan.

Yan started the journey by introducing some general geographical knowledge that was illustrated with a picture of earth. The show continued with three views, respectively of Hongkou public garden, Pujiang and the sunset. Following that were four views of Gelaba Island 格拉巴, six views of India, and eight pictures of Egypt. Crossing the Suez Canal, the journey continued with seven views of Algeria and then a number of views of London, Paris, Spain, Berlin, Vienna, New York, St. Petersburg, Tokyo and Beijing. The journey ended with views of Shanghai, which echoed the beginning of the journey. Retrospectively, this travel route was classic and carefully arranged.

After Yan gave two experimental exhibitions at Christian College, Cowies Residence invited Yan to continue the exhibitions at Fuzhou Road for the purpose of

¹²¹ “Guan yingxi houji 觀影戲後記” (A Review after a Lantern Exhibition), SB 25 Nov. 1885: 1.

yizhen 義賑 (disaster relief). As a significant public service activity, yizhen occupied a special position in the late Imperial China. Members of yizhen organizations were mostly rich merchants and influential gentries. Yizhen became an effective tool for fundraising in times of famines, floods and other natural disasters. Compared with Yan's initial exhibitions at Christian College, the exhibitions under the cooperation of Cowies Residence were characteristic of commercial business. Cowies Residence paid great attention to audiences and made many efforts in marketing the exhibitions. Announcements appeared in SB several days before the exhibition and on the opening day, Western women were hired to play music. Slides were also renewed. Comic pictures were chosen to amuse audiences and, instead of plain explanations, Yan was arranged to tell stories about his journey.

In spite of Cowie and Yan's joint efforts, audiences soon got bored with those exhibitions. The admission fee was hence reduced to three Jiao and slides were further renewed. Nevertheless, the boredom was so obvious that Huang Shiquan intentionally mentioned this issue in "*Yingxi ji yu* 影戲紀餘".¹²² In the article, Huang assumed an imaginary conversation with one friend who complained that he had already attended the same exhibition for several times and it was wearing. Huang then suggest his friend, or rather readers, that although the exhibition was repetitive, disaster relief was social beneficial and one should attend the exhibitions for serving the public. This article was de facto a clever advertisement and it ended with announcing that five pictures with auspicious words on them would be added in the next exhibition.

To hold public attention, Cowies Residence and Yan initiated a new round of marketing. They distributed picture cards painted by artists at the close of the exhibition. Yan's oversea journey was compressed into an integral part of the programme. Sensational views like capitulation, exotic scenes like cobbler and gypsy fortune-teller, as well as pictures of current events were added. The highlight of the show was to tell foreign stories with the aid of lantern slides. For instance, there were

¹²² "Yingxi jiyu 影戲紀餘" (A Review on a Lantern Exhibition), SB 9 Dec. 1885: 02, 03.

twelve pictures telling the Persian story and pictures depicting the resurrection of a dead dog.¹²³ In sum, Yan's miscellaneous lantern exhibition was gradually modified into a public entertainment, with the purpose of fundraising.

Notable was Yan and Cowies Residence's efforts to localize magic lantern in Chinese social milieu. Firstly, Chinese translations and interpretations for foreign views and dialogues were provided. Yan also improvised and interpreted foreign scenes in a way that Chinese audience could easily understand. For example, Spain was called "da lüsong 大呂宋", an ancient Chinese name for Spain. The aboriginal dance in Bali islands was conveniently called "dragon dance 龍王舞," a traditional folk dance in China. Secondly, to suit Chinese audience's taste (esp. fondness of noisy), music and other traditional programs were arranged alongside exhibitions to create a festival mood. Last but not the least, lantern exhibition was modified to tell stories, which bore an obvious similarity to the traditional form of entertainment "pingshu 評書" (Drum storytelling).

Lantern exhibition as a partial entertainment

In the booming stage, following Vanek's path, the Webb Marionette Company employed lantern exhibition as an integral part of their variety shows. The company arrived at Shanghai in April 1887 and gave two performances at Lyceum theatre.¹²⁴ Although the highlight of their performances at Lyceums was clown and parpaloon, magic lantern was also employed.¹²⁵ Like Vanek, the company later moved from Lyceum theatre to the old Dangui teahouse. Records in SB confirmed that Webb Company's performances at Dangui teahouse included lantern exhibitions with lime light as light source and the shows were successful.¹²⁶ Compared with Vanek's show,

¹²³ "Xizi zhuzhen 戲資助賑" (Beneficial Lantern Exhibition for Charity), SB 28 Dec. 1885: 3.

¹²⁴ "The Webb Company of Mrionettes," NCH, Apr. 22, 1887.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ "Kuilei xuzhi 傀儡續志" (A Review on A Marionette Show), SB 9 May 1887; "Guanxi yiyuan 觀戲邑言" (A Word on a show), SB 12 May 1887; "Guan kuileixi ouzhi 觀傀儡戲偶志" (A Review on Marionette Drama) SB 7 May 1887; "Mu'ou dengchang 木偶登場" (The Marionette Show Begins) SB 6 May 1887; "Mu'ou qiguan 木偶奇觀" (A Spectacular Marionette Show), SB 4 May 1887.

Webb Company's was more of a team work, with a larger scale and various slides available. At Dangui, the screen for lantern exhibition was colorfully decorated and it achieved many appreciations among the audience. By then, magic lantern was already common in large cities like Shanghai and Webb Company's exhibitions drew no special attention. As variety shows became popular in China, more and more magicians toured Shanghai. In 1889, the Japanese magician Tenyiki Syokyokusai 松旭齋藤天一 (1853-1912) arrived in Shanghai and gave several performances there. Lantern exhibition was a regular programme of Tenyiki's magic shows. Later the other Japanese magician Juggler Soichi 安達操一 (1858-1924) also gave lantern exhibitions in his show. One record in SB depicted Juggler Soichi's lantern exhibition as "magnificent and magical, with figures suddenly big, suddenly small, some from heaven, some disappearing beneath earth."¹²⁷

1.2.3 Lantern's three functional models

Through the investigation on the history of lantern practices in China, I draw Chart 2 and summarize three functional models of magic lantern, i.e. educational, entertaining and miscellaneous.

Model	Exhibitor	Locality	Exhibition context	Audience	Localization Strategy
educational	Methodist missionaries	School, church	Illustrated scientific lecture	Student, convertor, official, outsider	Association with Western learning
entertaining	magician	Theatre, teahouse, temple fair	As filler or integral part of program	Urban citizen	Fill in during State funeral

¹²⁷ "Dongxi bazhi 東戲八志" (A Review on Japanese Magic Shows), SB 16 Aug. 1892.

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miscellaneous	celebrity	College, charity organization	Illustrated miscellaneous lectures	publicum	Association with disaster relief
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Chart 2 Three Models of Lantern Exhibitions before 1897

The educational model shows that magic lantern was employed mainly as an illustration for scientific lectures. This model was created by Methodist missionary in Fuzhou around 1869 and was inherited by Methodist missionary in Beijing in 1880s. After Methodist missionaries gave regular illustrated scientific lectures in Beijing for about two years, magic lantern as an education tool spread rapidly into treaty ports and later also into the interior part of China. The educational model was closely tied to missionary's work in China since they acted as both lecturer and lantern exhibitor.

The entertaining model can be traced back to Captain Edward's exploration in Eastern Islands in 1843. The captain accidentally exhibited magic lantern to amuse aboriginal inhabitants. Magic lantern as a form of entertainment achieved significant developments in 1874 when the magician Joseph Vanek toured China. Magic lantern was employed as an integral part of Vanek's magic shows. Vanek's performance at Dangui teahouse had broadened the spectrum of audiences by including illiterates and those from a lower social ladder. Magic lantern as a form of entertainment thereafter penetrated into the Chinese society.

The miscellaneous model originated from John Fryer and Yan Yongjing's "miscellany" exhibitions in Shanghai. It was de facto a variant of missionary's scientific lectures. To make it appealing to the public, in miscellaneous exhibitions many entertaining ingredients were added. A typical example was Yan and Cowies Residence's fundraising exhibition. In contrast to the former two models, in miscellaneous exhibitions, magic lantern was legitimized as an independent exhibition, rather than an illustration for lectures or a dependent part of variety programme. The miscellaneous exhibition therefore bore a high similarity to Burton Holmes' travelogue, which featured "a trip". While lantern exhibition evolved into a

show, audience was no more attracted by the novelty of the machine but mainly by views and storytellings.

1.2.4 Lantern's localization strategies

The investigation on lantern practices is of particular importance because the spreading of magic lantern bore a high resemblance to the initial spreading of cinema in China. From 1843 onward, magic lantern had evolved from an auxiliary to lectures and variety shows into an independent form of entertainment in China. In the process, lantern exhibitors adopted a localization strategy and magic lantern became associated with Western learning, State funeral 國制 and disaster relief. Lantern exhibitions in China began almost synchronously with the emergence of Western learning. Magic lantern associated with the Self-strengthening movement and the educational model of lantern was formed gradually. While other traditional entertainments were banned because of the state funeral, lantern exhibition filled the blank as a form of entertainment. As to the miscellaneous model, magic lantern allied with disaster relief and transformed from a resque "game" into a respectful means for fundraising and enlightening people.

Lantern's alliance with Self-strengthening Movement and Western learning

In this section, I will analyze the connection between magic lantern and Western learning and argue that it is no accident that Methodist missionaries choose lectures with lantern illustrations to promote Western learning. In 1880s when missionaries gave scientific lectures in Beijing, Western learning was already popular in Chinese society. The Self-strengthening movement had laid a solid foundation for introducing Western learning to Chinese. The progressive faction in the Manchu court established a system of incentive institutions for promoting Western learning. Under such a circumstance, missionaries catered to progressive officials' demand by giving scientific and technological lectures.

Western learning is a term rich of historical meanings. It can be roughly referred to the process of an extensional body of knowledge introduced into China from the late

Ming dynasty to Modern China. The history of Western learning in China can be generally divided into two phases: from late Ming to early Qing and from late Qing to early Republic of China. An outstanding representative of the former phase is Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592-1666). Methodist missionaries' lantern exhibitions in Ningbo, Fuzhou, Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing, belong to the latter phase. As a rule, Western learning is unilateral, viz. from the West to the East.¹²⁸ According to Roman Malek, knowledge introduced to China includes Western technology, science and Christianity.¹²⁹ After the defeats in Opium Wars, the Manchu court began to realize the necessity of a broader Western learning. For this purpose, the progressive faction initiated the Self-Strengthening movement.

The movement includes a series of institutional reforms consulting the model of Western countries. There had been constant struggles between the progressive faction and the rivalry conservative faction since the beginning of the movement. It was in the period of the Self-strengthening movement that the orthodoxy Confucian worldview was challenged. The movement can be generally divided into three phases. The first phase was from 1861 to 1872, with an emphasis on the adoption of Western firearms, machines, scientific knowledge and the training of technical and diplomatic personnel through the establishment of a diplomatic office and a college. The second phase was from 1872 to 1885. During this phase, commerce, industry, and agriculture received increasing attention and a series of confrontations (esp. on religious issues) emerged. From 1885 to 1895, the reforms had slowed down to a crawl.

As mentioned above, the first lecture with lantern illustration was given by D. J. Macgowan in Ningbo in 1852. The second was given by Methodist missionaries in Fuzhou in 1869. According to *the Nanjing Treaty*, Ningbo and Fuzhou were both open to foreign trade at the end of the first Opium War. These lectures would be impossible if the ports were not open to foreigners. As a rule, lantern's educational

¹²⁸ Rong Hong 容闳 (1828-1912) was the first returned student from America. In 1915, *the English Memoirs of Rong Hong*, was translated by Yun Tiejiao 恽铁樵 and Xu Fengshi 徐凤石 as *Xi Xue Dong Jian Ji* 西學東漸記. "Dong Jian" means "saturating to the East".

¹²⁹ Malek, *Western learning and Christianity in China*, pp.1165-1188.

model was developed alongside the growing number of concessions as well as the spreading of Western learning. In 1880s, Methodist missionaries gave a series of lectures on science and technology themes in facilities founded by supporters of Self-Strengthening movement (e.g. Jingshi tongwen guan 京師同文館). In Beijing, lectures with lantern illustration soon became a regular program and achieved some popularity among Chinese officials and students.

State Funeral and Prohibit Entertainment Policy

When a privileged member of royal family, especially the emperor, dies, the whole country must mourn for one hundred days 百日 to show respect and condolence. In the period of one hundred days, entertainments like Chinese opera and plays are strictly banned due to an *Entertainment prohibition policy*. This policy is also called State funeral 國制 (or national institution). State funeral has a long tradition and it was highly praised by Chinese gentries as an embodiment of Confucian piety.¹³⁰ In an article published in SB in 1875, the conservative writer looked back the history of state funeral in Qing dynasty and complained about the poor policy execution these days in the capital. According to him, the conventional “*Entertainment prohibition policy*” began in 1850 when the Emperor Daoguang 道光皇帝 (1821-1850) died. The policy was strictly executed at that time. In 1861, when the Emperor Xianfeng 咸豐 (1831-1861) died, it became loose but was still generally respected. In 1875 when the Emperor Tongzhi 同治 (1856-1875) died, the policy was executed but there was no respect.¹³¹

According to the policy, in 1875 all traditional entertainments like Chinese opera 京劇, storytelling 評書 and shadow puppetry were banned until the coming spring. Suddenly, all teahouses and other entertainment venues sunk into quietness. To stay in business, proprietors had to find a legal entertainment that could bypass the policy.

¹³⁰ According to Fairbank’s opinion in his *The Cambridge history of China, Sangang* 三綱 (Three Disciplines) is the core of Confucius learning and the foundation of Chinese dynasties’ governments. Xiao 孝 (Piety) is the practice of *Sangang*. Piety is also the essence of *Confucius Analects* 論語.

¹³¹ Tongzhi died on 12 January 1875. “Zaishu jingshi yanxi qingxing 再述京師演戲情形” (Another Review on Entertainments in Beijing), SB 20 Nov. 1875.

Before the hundred days' mourning began at the end of 1874, there were already few experimental lantern exhibitions at teahouses, but they were by no means a strong competitor to traditional entertainments.

In March 1875, an English Yingxi Company 英國影戲班 arrived in Shanghai and planned to exhibit magic lantern at Dangui teahouse.¹³² It was before long that a French merchant Maixi 麥西 came and planned to borrow Jinguixuan teahouse 金桂軒戲院 for a month's lantern exhibition.¹³³ Fuchun teahouse 富春茶園 soon followed suit. The teahouses therefore carried out a round of intense competitions regarding magic lantern exhibitions. In the process, the light source became crucial. Fuchun teahouse obviously surpassed the rivals in this respect. The lantern exhibitions at Fuchun teahouse featured electricity lightening which provided "extraordinary brightness" for the facility.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, in a SB review titled "*Kaiyan yingxi* 開演影戲" (Yingxi begins), the writer pointed out that lantern exhibition was booming these days at teahouses only because traditional Chinese entertainments were temporarily banned. He doubted if lantern exhibition could restore the previous prosperity of these teahouses.

This series of lantern exhibitions in Shanghai notwithstanding caught the public attention. One writer named Pingzhou yizhong 萍洲逸中 published a review in SB, in which he gave a detailed account on lantern exhibitions that he attended during State funeral.¹³⁵ The first exhibition was at Dangui teahouse in January 1875. The exhibition was generally a failure. It lasted "not long before the light almost burned" and "the scenes of mountain, pavilion, birds, animals and plants are blurry". The writer was disappointed. In March, he attended another exhibition. This time the lightening was "twice brighter than the last" and there was music accompaniment.¹³⁶ The pictures were mainly about natural scenes like moon, flower, grasses, etc. Notable was that Pingzhou yizhong made an effort to demystify magic lantern. A

¹³² "*Kaiyan yingxi* 開演影戲" (The Lantern exhibition Begins), SB 18 Mar. 1875.

¹³³ "*Xindao waiguoxi* 新到外國戲" (The Newly Arrived Foreign Shows), SB 19 Mar. 1875.

¹³⁴ "*Dieyan yingxi* 疊演影戲" (A Series of Lantern Exhibitions), SB 25 Mar. 1875.

¹³⁵ Pingzhou yizhong's another pseudonym is Yingxiao yinhuangshi 吟嘯隱篁士.

¹³⁶ "*Guanyan yingxi ji* 觀演影戲記" (A Review on a Lantern Exhibition), SB 26 Mar. 1895.

friend of Pingzhou yizhong, who claimed a profound understanding about the machine, told him that magic lantern was “in fact a kaleidoscope 萬花筒 and there were 64 doors inside the machine and with electricity light, pictures appeared one by one.” After the conversation with his friend, Pingzhou yizhong then commented:

“Although magic lantern is a minor skill, one could not easily see through it. To know the thing, one needs to be an observant. There were plenty of wise persons in the world and a lot of them can be successful, but many will be disposed by the unfortunate fate. If they only emphasize on his certain expertise and ignore all other qualities, those with other kind of expertise would be useless and their talents will be wasted. This was examiners’ fault. I thought about it, felt sultry and wrote down these thoughts”¹³⁷

This kind of sultry feelings is not rare among late Qing gentries. Magic lantern, due to its low statue as a “minor skill” 小技, aroused sympathy among frustrated gentries and therefore achieved a popularity among those who failed to pass the state examine system.

In short, although the entertaining model of magic lantern began with Vanek’s magic shows in 1874, it was thanks to the opportunity of *Entertainment prohibition policy* that it expanded rapidly into Chinese society. Between December 1874 and March 1875, lantern exhibitions dominated Chinese teahouses. Although it was Vanek’s sensational magic shows in June 1874 that brought magic lantern to the Chinese’s notice, it was during the State funeral that magic lantern became an independent form of entertainment in Shanghai and nearby cities (e.g. Hangzhou). Although the State funeral lasted only a hundred days, magic lantern had made a deep impression on Chinese spectators (esp. the frustrated gentries like Pingzhou yizhong and Wang Tao 王韜).¹³⁸ Local gentries already noticed the “lifelike” and “magical” features of this foreign novelty. They interpreted the “magic” feature as “instant changes 變幻莫測”, which in turn reminded these gentries of their own misfortunes in the unstable social milieu of late Imperial China.

¹³⁷ “Guanyan yingxi ji 觀演影戲記” (A Review on a Lantern Exhibition), SB 26 Mar. 1895.

¹³⁸ Huazhao ri 花朝日 is March.

YanYongjing and Disaster Relief

The word yizhen 義賑 (philanthropy or disaster relief) appeared prior to the reign of Emperor Kang Xi 康熙 (1662-1722).¹³⁹ Yizhen, as a form of modern fundraising, served as an efficient implement to the governmental disaster relief. Yizhen developed rapidly in China due to Manchu government's decentralization management, official corruption and large-scale famines. During the famine between 1877 and 1878 (Dingwu qi huang 丁戊奇荒), this form of fundraising became common and popular.¹⁴⁰ According to Zhu Hu's study, yizhen in late Qing China was characteristic of "cross-regional" and "unofficial".¹⁴¹ Yizhen was trans-regional because most funds were raised not for local disasters but for other districts or provinces. In 1880s, yizhen had become the most efficient and popular way of fundraising. A number of influential charity organizations (會館/義賑所) were built exclusively for the purpose of Yizhen. According to Zhu, yizhen even gained "legitimacy recognition" from the Manchu court as a necessary supplement for governmental fundraising.¹⁴² In practice, yizhen constructed a system of "reward discourse 福報話語", which fit well to the Chinese tradition.¹⁴³

Among various forms of yizhen, yiyan 義演 (Benefit Performance) was closely related to lantern exhibitions. Yiyan, as the word suggests, is to give charity performances. Although performing for fundraising is not new, it is not clear if there are any modern charity performance before 1870s. Yiyan in late Qing China is likely a mimic deed of Western beneficial performances. According to an editorial article in SB titled "*Drama performance for disaster relief*", Western-style beneficial

¹³⁹ Zhu hu, *Difangxing liudong jiqi chaoyue* 地方性流動及其超越, p.24.

¹⁴⁰ Dingwu qihuang 丁戊奇荒 was a severe drought in 1876-1878. According to Chinese calendar, 1877 is Dingchou 丁丑 and 1878 is Wuyin 戊寅. The drought famine is therefore called Dingwu qihuang. Shanxi and Henan provinces suffered most heavily. The famine was also called "Jinyu qihuang 晉豫奇荒."

¹⁴¹ Zhu Hu, *Difangxing liudong jiqi chaoyue*, p. 27.

¹⁴² *Yizhen* is a necessary supplement for governmental fundraising, many local officials confirmed the necessity and importance of *yizhen*. Some of them even considered that *yizhen* was more important than official fundraising. See *ibid.* pp. 408-411.

¹⁴³ Zhu hu, *Difangxing liudong jiqi chaoyue*, p396.

performances were introduced to Chinese no later than 1876.¹⁴⁴ In this article, the writer accidentally mentioned a piece of news that he read while browsing magazines: “an English warship sunk and someone performed dramas to raise funds for victims’ families.”¹⁴⁵ This news reminded him a similar event in last winter. For a famine in France, French residents in Shanghai organized beneficial performances for two days. By the time the writer wrote this article, there was a serious famine in Shandong province. The writer thence strongly recommended *yiyan* to Chinese.¹⁴⁶ Two months later, Shanghai Heming Theater 鶴鳴戲園 announced that it would host beneficial performances. It is difficult to draw a direct connection between the editorial article and the benefit performance given at Heming theatre, but a trend of *yiyan* in Shanghai and other parts of China emerged shortly thereafter. The trend reached its climax at the beginning of the 20th century when civilized drama boomed.¹⁴⁷

In 1885, Yan Yongjing joined this trend and gave a series of miscellaneous lantern exhibitions in Shanghai. This series of beneficial lantern exhibitions were cooperated by Cowies Residence, the well-known private charity organization in Shanghai. Under the management of Cowies Residence, Yan’s exhibitions were commercialized. Cowie was originally a foreign trade company in Shanghai. As trades prospered, to achieve a further development as well as to maintain a good public image the company decided to take part in charity activities. Cowie Trade Company hence founded a special department i.e. Cowies Residence to take charge of social activities, with Li Qiuping 李秋坪 (?-1888) as the chief manager.¹⁴⁸ Li was proficient in foreign languages and he maintained a good connection with both foreigners and local gentries.¹⁴⁹ Before he joined Cowie, Li was already a successful businessman with a good social reputation and rich experiences in disaster relief activities. According to

¹⁴⁴ “Lun yanxi jiuzai shi 論演戲救災事” (A Comment on Beneficial Entertainments), SB 8 Feb. 1877.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Zhu hu, *Difangxing liudong jiqi chaoyue*, pp. 364-370.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 364.

¹⁴⁸ “Shanghai simalu gaoyi gongguannei chouzhen suo tongren gongshi 上海四馬路高易公館內籌賑所同人公示” (An Announcement to the Members of Shanghai Cowie Resident), SB 22 Mar. 1888.

¹⁴⁹ For instance, there was a SB record that Li donated 1 Yuan to a French church in Shanghai. See “Xishang zhenkuan 西商賑款” (Western Merchants donate), SB 15 Jul. 1878.

records in SB, Li was involved in charity activities prior to 1878.¹⁵⁰ In 1880s, he had been widely acknowledged as an influential philanthropist.¹⁵¹ As a Cantonese, he paid special attention to famines in his hometown.

In August 1885, there were severe floods in Guangdong and Guangxi. Li and Cowies Residence therefore decided to launch a series of fundraisings in mass scale. At that time, there were already some influential charity organizations in Shanghai such as Silk League 陈与昌丝栈筹赈公所 and Datagram Bureau 上海文报局筹赈公所.¹⁵² Compared to them, Cowies Residence was a late comer and had no experience in organizing large-scale fundraisings. To compete with them, Li decided to employ beneficial performances, which was also a novel way of fundraising back then. Thanks to his good connections with entertainment venues like teahouses and theatres in Shanghai, Li successfully organized several beneficial performances.¹⁵³ He persuaded Yan Yongjing to move from the Christian College to Cowies Residence in Fuzhou road, which was more spacious and could accommodate a large number of spectators. Cowies Residence also actively engaged in modifying Yan's miscellaneous exhibition into a commercial show. With Cowies Residence's help, Yan's "*Century miscellany*" exhibition was epoch-making and set a good example for future beneficial performances.

¹⁵⁰ "Xishang zhenkuan 西商赈款" (Western Merchants donate), SB 15 Jul. 1878.

¹⁵¹ In regards Li's philanthropic activities, there were more than thirteen records published on SB since 1878. Prior to 1882, he was already highly praised for "philanthropic and admirable 好善可风". See SB 24 Nov. 1882.

¹⁵² In Shanghai there were three important charity organizations dedicated to yizhen activities at that time: Wang Sensong 王松森's Shanghai wenbaoju chouzen gongsuo 上海文报局筹赈公所, Chen Zhuping 陈竹坪's Chenyuchang sizhan chouzen gongsuo 陈与昌丝栈筹赈公所 and Li Qiuping 李秋坪's Gaoyi gongguan chouzen gongsuo 高易公馆筹赈公所.

¹⁵³ SB records show that Li maintained a good relationship with entertainment venues in Shanghai. He was also well connected to foreign society. See "Jieji Shanghai qiri chuliu zhi shiwuri zhenjuan shoushu 接记上海七月初六至十五日赈捐收数" (A Record on Donations of Seven Days in Shanghai) in SB 22 Aug. 1878 and "Li Qiuping taishou shilue 李秋坪太守事略" (Some Records on the Prefect Li Qiuping) in SB 24 Mar. 1888.

1.3 Lantern and Cinema

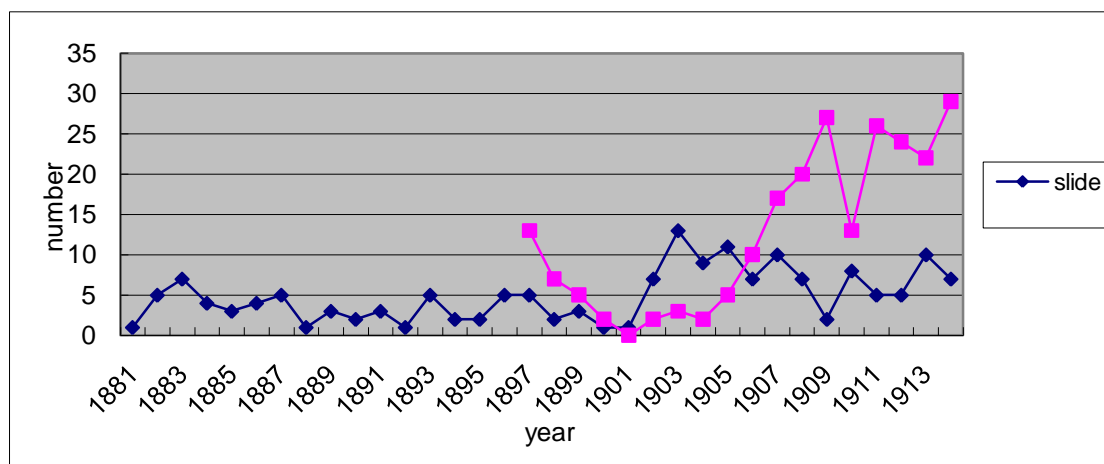


Chart 3 Lantern Exhibitions and Film screenings, 1881-1913

To give a clear view on lantern and cinematograph exhibitions in the pre-WWI era, based on records in SB and NCH, I draw the above chart. As the chart indicates, the number of lantern exhibitions in pre-cinema stage remains relatively stable. The number decreases slightly when cinema is first introduced. With the onset of Boxer Rebellion around 1899, the number of cinematograph exhibitions decreases sharply. In contrast, the number of lantern exhibitions increases. A reasonable explanation is that film exhibition, due to its cumbersome cinematographic equipment, is demanding on localities. On contrary, magic lantern is portable and lantern exhibition is more flexible. Magic lantern therefore has an evident advantage in the time of wars and social upheavals.

The relation between magic lantern and cinema was nevertheless more complicated. As mentioned before, lantern practice in China can be generally deemed as a preparatory stage for the coming cinema. It helps change Celestials' negative attitude toward foreign entertainments. Celestials generally consider foreign popular entertainments demoralizing and indecency. Thanks to the association with missionaries' illustrated scientific lectures, visual entertainments like lantern and cinema become accepted by many Chinese intellectuals, as effective tools for educating people. Magic lantern also functions as a necessary alternative of cinema. When movie machine falls into malfunction, in case of delay or hitch in the working,

some other scenes can be at once thrown on the screen by magic lantern.¹⁵⁴ In the following section, I will introduce the dissolving view to illustrate lantern's technique preparation for cinema.

Dissolving Views and James Ricalton (1844-1929)

On one hand, cinema and magic lantern compete with each other for audiences. On the other hand, like ecological symbiosis, they implement each other. As a rule, magic lantern has laid a solid foundation for the coming cinema era by preparing necessary screen knowledge for cinema. Notable is that magic lantern already possesses a certain measure of "cinematic." Vanek's lantern exhibitions in 1874, for instance, already showed some fidelity. The pictures were "lifelike" and the figures "could move". It explains why many reviews in print press mistake Vanek's lantern exhibition for cinematograph screening. According to Frank Bren's study, magic lantern "emerged in Europe as early as the 15th century, had prefigured certain 'cinematic' technique such as 'fades', 'dissolves,' and even limited 'animation' via multiple projectors."¹⁵⁵ In Hong Kong, in 1850s and 1860s "local people had seen 'dissolving views' projected a developed form of the 'magic lantern'".¹⁵⁶

On prominent figure in introducing dissolving views to Chinese is Geo. Henry Alfred. Alfred gave an exhibition of "dissolving views" in the New Theatre, Hong Kong in August 1859 but "a heavy gale 'utterly destroyed' the theatre on August 17.¹⁵⁷ After this unfortunate incident, Alfred headed northwards to Shanghai where he planned to give a public exhibition of "dissolving views". However, on January 4, 1860, Alfred published a notice in NCH, announcing the cancellation of the exhibition because he found "it impracticable to procure a suitable locality, (chiefly

¹⁵⁴ NCH 10 Feb. 1911, volume 1115, issue 2271.

¹⁵⁵ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.7.

¹⁵⁷ Besides Alfred, Frank also mentioned another exhibition of dissolving views in Hong Kong on 23 Nov. 1866.

It was a stereopticon exhibition at the Oriental Hall. The Stereopticon was described as "something between a series of dissolving views and an ordinary diorama." Ibid.

on account of *Fire Insurance*)”.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, in 1868 there were advertisements for dissolving views published in NCH.¹⁵⁹ In June 1877, the Imperial Customs outdoor staff invited the foreign community and a large number of Chinese to an entertainment “consisting of dissolving views.”¹⁶⁰ “The exhibition lasted over two hours, during which period a large number of instructive and amusing views were shown.”¹⁶¹ Noteworthy was the spectatorship, “the Celestial element, judging from the remarks and ejaculations of delight they let fall, especially appreciated the display.”¹⁶² In 1880s, dissolving views appeared in many variety shows.¹⁶³

In regard of lantern practices in China after the arrival of cinema, a key figure was James Ricalton. Ricalton was de facto a photographer rather than a cinematographer. In Chinese film history, James Ricalton has long been mistaken as the second film exhibitor who screened films in China after the famous *Xu* garden exhibition in 1896. It nevertheless contradicted with historical facts. In total, Ricalton visited China three times. The first trip (1888-1889) was before the invention of cinema, the second during the Boxer time and the third during the Russo-Japanese War. Ricalton worked mainly for Underwood and Underwood Company. His photographing activities in China before and during the Boxer events were recorded in his *China through the Stereoscope*. Ricalton was important because, by making stereophotographs, he continued the lantern tradition. In contrast to the still photograph, stereophotograph had already some three-dimensional features. Some of Ricalton’s stereophotographs were later made into dissolving views. His stereoscopic slides on Boxer Rebellion and Russo-Japanese War were popular in market at that time.

¹⁵⁸ “Notice”, NCH 07 Jan. 1860, volume 11, issue 0493.

¹⁵⁹ George Richardson & Co.’s advertisements mentioned “Dissolving views”. The advertisements were published on NCH from Sep. 1868 to Mar. 1869. See George Richardson & Co. advertiments, NCH 5 Sep. 1868, volume 19, issue 0072.

¹⁶⁰ “Pakhoi”, NCH 9 Jun. 1877, volume 35, issue 0526.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ NCH 18 Aug. 1882, volume 46, issue 0791.

1.3.1 Cinema as an advanced modification of lantern

By “films,” “movies,” and “motion pictures” we mean the technology ultimately defined by Auguste and Louis Lumière, who on December 28, 1895, transformed the exhibition of moving pictures into a mass medium and thus gave birth to “cinema.”¹⁶⁴

The invention of cinema is by no means a sudden event but predestined by a long accumulation of technical progresses. In 1820s, the “Phi phenomenon,” an optical illusion of perceiving continuous motion between separate objects viewed rapidly in succession, was widely used. A large number of apparatuses based on “phi phenomenon” were invented, to name but a few, Thaumatrope (1825), Pneakisticope (1832) and Zootrope (1834). Beside the efforts in making pictures moveable, the progresses of photographic techniques also contributed to the invention of cinema by providing “fidelity” images. In 1820s, the earliest daguerreotype was successfully attempted. To 1870s, the problem of photographing in film was already solved and recording moving pictures with camera had made remarkable progresses. For example, in 1878, English photographer Edward Muybridge had successfully photographed a horse at a trot. In 1888, Edison invented the first Kinetograph, a camera for shooting one-minute films.

In 1894, William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson and Thomas Edison invented Kinetoscope, an electrical-driven peepshow machine for films produced with Kinetograph camera. Edison commercialized it with a huge success. In April 1894, the first Kinetoscope parlour was open in New York and at the end of the year, news of this invention had spread throughout the world. In America and Britain, there was an obvious Kinetoscope-parlour stage before the real cinema entered the picture. Nevertheless, in China, this transitional stage was missing. Although in China many early source materials mentioned Edison and his famous Kinetoscope, there was only one minor record on Kinetoscope exhibition in print media. Unlike America and Britain, it seemed that in China, instead of a transitional period, cinema appeared directly after magic lantern. Edison’s strict patent regulation for Kinetoscope probably limited the exportation of Kinetoscope to China.

¹⁶⁴ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 3.

The novelty of Kinetoscope did not last long. At the end of 1895, it became clear that, instead of the one-man-one-time peephole show, the future was in projecting film on a large screen for a large audience. In this regard, Lumière Brothers' public screening of Cinématographe at Salon Indien du Grand Café on December 28, 1895 marked the beginning of cinema. Cinématographe was a combined camera, projector and printer. In 1896, there were more than hundred patented machines with similar working principle, structures or functions. Among them, some were also mentioned in Chinese print press. A statistic analysis based on reports in NCH indicates that in 1897, the frequently mentioned machines were Animatoscope and Cinematograph. It was mainly due to Maurice Charvet and Welby Cook's exhibitions at that time. In 1898, "Cinematograph", the English translation for Lumière Brother's Cinématographe appeared. In 1899, the cinematographic machine Kinematograph also appeared. By 1900, various movie machines appeared in NCH, such as Bioscope, Biograph and Mutoscope.

Notable is that most records were about "cinematograph", originally a machine name but evolved into a general signifier for cinema machines after 1900. Cinematograph became a broad and comprehensive signifier for all cinema-related items and activities, including film, camera, projector, theatre, film industry, etc. For instance, in the list of *Licensed Taverns*, published in *The Municipal Gazette* in 1910s, two permanent cinemas were mentioned, i.e. Victoria Cinematograph and American Cinematograph.¹⁶⁵ Here, cinematograph equalled movie theatre. Retrospectively, the issue of cinematographic machines was particularly important and the machine-based view was critical in regarding the initial introduction of cinema to China.

Cinema in China as an advanced modification of magic lantern

In 1897 when cinematograph was first exhibited in China, there were dozens of Chinese names for this foreign invention, such as Jiqi dianguang yingxi 機器電光影戲 (Mechanic electrical lightening magic lantern)、Dianguang yingxi 電光影戲

¹⁶⁵ "The Municipal Gazette," NCH 27 Apr. 1911 and NCH 4 Apr. 1912.

(Electricity-lightening magic lantern)、Linghuo yinghuaxi 靈活影畫戲 (Movable magic lantern)、Dianji yingxi 電機影戲 (Electricity-mechanic magic lantern)、Meiguo Yingxi 美國影戲 (American yingxi) and so on.¹⁶⁶ To sum up, there were two general translation strategies, i.e. sound translation and semantic translation. An example for sound translation was that, according to its Chinese pronunciation, Animatoscope was directly translated into Aiweimei dashi gupu 愛尾美大師谷浦 or Aini meitai sigupu 愛泥每太司谷浦.¹⁶⁷ Sound translation was mostly machine-based and the Chinese sound translations of cinema had neither meaning nor taste. For the public, sound translation was difficult to understand and it was soon abandoned. The press instead adopted semantic translation. In this category, cinema was translated as Mechanic electrical lightening magic lantern or Movable magic lantern.

As a rule, the newly arrived cinema was in association with the existing magic lantern and various prefixes were added to magic lantern to refer cinema. It was a logical choice because magic lantern had been in China for more than half a century and was already widely spread. The association with lantern would help readers understand what cinematograph was. This fact also reveals that, for most Chinese at that time, cinematograph is only a modified magic lantern. The only difference between cinema and magic lantern is that the former is mechanically powered and electrically lightened. In most cases, cinema projectors used electric arc illumination and lantern exhibitions still used limelight as light source.

¹⁶⁶ Jiqi dianguang Yingxi 機器電光影戲 (Mechanic electrical lightening magic lantern). See “Tianhua chayuan guanggao 天華茶園廣告” (The advertisement of Tianhua Teahouse), XWB 2 Aug. 1897; Dianguang Yingxi 電光影戲/愛尾美大師谷浦 (electricity-lightening magic lantern). See “Weichunyuan-dianguang yingxi guanggao 味蕪園—電光影戲廣告” (the Advertisement of Electricity-lightening Magic Lantern Exhibition at Weichun Garden, XWB 2-4, Jun. 1897; Linghuo yinghua xi 靈活影畫戲 (movable magic lantern), See “Linghuo yinghuaxi 靈活影畫戲” (Movable Magic Lantern), SB 8 Jun. 1897; Dianji yingxi 電機影戲 (electricity-mechanic magic lantern). See “Weichunyuan guan yingxi ji 味蕪園觀影戲記” (A Review on the Show at Arcade Hall), XWB 11, 13 Jun. 1897; “Meiguo Yingxi 美國影戲” (American yingxi). See “Tinhua chayuan guan waiyang xifa guisu suojian 天華茶園觀外洋戲法歸述所見” (A Review on Foreign Performances at Tianhua Teahouse), *Youxibao* 遊戲報 16 Aug. 1897: 54.

¹⁶⁷ “Huoxiao zhao 活小照” (Living Photographs), XWB 30 May-1 Jun. 1897.

Cinema reviews written by Chinese usually began with a comparison between cinema and magic lantern. Regarding Welby Cook's Animatoscope exhibition in May 1897 in Shanghai, articles in NCH directly pointed out that "the Animatoscope as it is called in the present instance is a marvelous advance upon the familiar optical lantern".¹⁶⁸ A systematic account on the transition from lantern to cinema can be found in Guan Ji'an's "*Yingxi shuru zhongguo hou de bianqian* 影戲輸入中國后的變遷" (The Development after shadow play was imported into China, published in 1922):

"When did yingxi (here referred to cinema) come to China could I not affirm, but it should be about twenty or thirty years before. However, at the beginning there were only still views 死片 that we now called magic lantern. Nowadays it was outdated but back that time it was a foreign toy, novel and delicate, and viewers rushed for it. Soon came the Huodong yingxi 活動影戲 (Moveable magic lantern) and Chinese then found magic lantern boring. They diverted their enthusiasm soon to the movies".¹⁶⁹

Here, cinema was mixed with magic lantern and the writer considers cinema as an advanced variant of magic lantern that soon put an end to lantern's popularity. At that time, Guan's opinion is representative and similar views can be found in other contemporary records. The major difference between cinema and lantern is that the former is moveable and the latter is still. In contrast to the "disconnected" lantern slides, moving pictures provide more truths by "the slow unwinding of a continuous story, each picture advancing on its predecessor, and preparing for its successor".¹⁷⁰

Cinema: photo or magic lantern?

In addition to cinema's extensive association with magic lantern, its connection to photography was also noticed by Chinese audiences early. The earliest Chinese name for cinema was Huo xiaozhao 活小照 (Moveable photographs,). It appeared on an advertisement for the cinema exhibition at Arcadia Hall in Zhang garden (張園安地地大洋房) in May 1897. Cinema, as its Chinese name "Moveable photograph"

¹⁶⁸ "The Animatoscope," NCH 28 May 1897.

¹⁶⁹ Guan Ji'an, "Yingxi shuru zhongguo hou de bianqian 影戲輸入中國后的變遷," *Xi Zazhi* 戲雜誌 1922, reprinted in ZWD, p. 1313.

¹⁷⁰ "From the Pulpit," NCH 29 Aug. 1914, volume 129, issue 2455.

suggested, was closely tied to photography. Many Chinese were already familiar with Photography back then. In 1890s, photograph was common in major treaty ports. In contrast to cinema's machine-based association with magic lantern, its connection to photography featured a strong intermediality and a direct spectatorship. The connection to photography came from an immediate impression of watching "moving pictures". The advertiser therefore took it for granted that cinema was "Movable photograph." Nevertheless, cinema differed from photography essentially. Photograph was merely a life-like still picture and cinema was a set of technological machine. In this regard, to treat cinema as photograph is inappropriate. Many Chinese also noticed it and the misunderstanding was soon clarified. Instead of a dim impression, the public attention was soon diverted to the technological aspects of cinema.

In retrospect, the crude connection to photography in turn helps deepen Chinese's understanding of the mechanic similarity between cinema and lantern. In June 1897, the name "Moveable photograph" was discarded and a pile of new translations for cinema appeared. A general strategy was to add prefixes before magic lantern to identify it as cinema. Most common prefixes were "electrically lightened" 電光, "electric mechanic 電機" and "mechanic electrically lightened 機器電光". These three key words—electric, lightening and mechanic—were combined in an arbitrary order. It revealed cinema's two technical advancements upon magic lantern. Firstly, from the machine-based viewpoint, cinema was powered by electricity. Secondly, in regard of exhibition context cinema was electrically lightened and mechanically operated. On contrary, magic lantern was non-electric and in most cases, it was exhibited without electric light sources. In addition, it was operated manually and therefore non-mechanically. Due to these technical advancements, a sharp contrast between lantern slides and moving pictures was formed. In this regard, Guan Ji'an called lantern slides "dead views" and cinema "Moveable magic lantern". At this point, it is evident that to refer cinema as magic lantern shows a deeper understanding than to associate it with photography. The former is a step forward because a certain measure of scientific demystification is already included.

1.3.2 Cinema as a subject

In 1898, the number of Chinese names for cinema increased, including “Meiguo xindao huodong dianguang yingxi 美國新到活動電光戲” (Newly arrived American moveable electrically lightened play), “Liusheng dianguangxi 留聲電光戲” (Speaking electrically lightened play), “Faguo huodong Yingxi 法國活動影戲” (French moveable magic lantern) and “Yingfa xingdong yingxi 英法行動影戲” (English and French moveable magic lantern).¹⁷¹ Most of them appeared in the advertisements for film exhibitions at *Xu* garden. At this point, in addition to the existant prefixes like electric, lightening and mechanic, two new types of prefixes appeared, i.e. “nationality” and “moveable 行動”. The specification on cinema’s origin country was aimed to increase cinema’s exotic novelty and to attract audiences. This phenomenon also reveals early cinema’s internationality. Nevertheless, the information on cinema’s origin countries was not verified. For instance, the “French moveable magic lantern” was de facto a movie machine manufactured in America and films were likely shot in England. The prefix “moveable” was a synthesizer that depicted cinema’s technical traits, mechanic operation of the exhibition as well as audiences’ general feeling about films. To some extent, it was the “moveable” that differed cinema essentially from magic lantern. This kind of synthesis indicates a further demystification of cinema. From the ontological viewpoint, cinema began to get rid of the association with photograph and magic lantern, or rather, a step forward to becoming its own subject. Although cinema was still tied to magic lantern, it purposely differed itself from lantern, with an emphasis on its moveable mechanism, exhibition context and spectatorship.

From 1899 onwards, other names for cinema entered the picture. Most of them bore no significant difference from previous translations and were merely repetitions, to name but a few, Yinghua 映畫 (Projected pictures), Qiqiao yanghua 奇巧洋畫 (Exotic foreign pictures), Qiqiao mingdeng xifa 奇巧明燈戲法 (Exotic lightened trick), Diandeng yingxi 電燈影戲 (Lightened magic lantern) and Huodong xiezhen

¹⁷¹ Huang Dequan, “‘Dianying’ gujin ciyi kao,” *Dangdai dianying* 6 (2009).

活動寫真 (Moveable photograph).¹⁷² Notable is that the nowadays Chinese name of cinema is Dianying 電影 (Electric shadow play), an abbreviation of “moveable electric lightning yingxi 活動電光影戲.”¹⁷³ It first appeared in an advertisement in *Dagongbao* in 1905. Retrospectively, the key words of cinema, i.e. electric, mechanic and lightening, had come to Chinese’s notice shortly after cinema was introduced in China.

Through the initial association with magic lantern and photography through 1897 to 1898, the demystification of cinema was generally accomplished. Ontologically, cinema sought to identify itself by distinguishing from magic lantern. In the process, cinema became its own subject but it was nevertheless a quasi subject, with no substantial cultural contents. The cinema view in the earliest years of film introduction to China was machine-based. After the initial round of film exhibitions in China, film screenings were disrupted by wars. It was not until after 1906 that cinema developed into a system of institutions with rich cultural meanings, i.e. a film industry.

¹⁷² Chen Shan, “Dianying shixue de goujian—dui ‘zhongguo dianying fazhanshi’ wenben de shixue yanjiu”, *Dianying yishu* 12 (2008): 6.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2. Itinerant Exhibitors, 1897-1899

2.1 Film Exhibitions in 1897

“While generalizing is required in all thinking about history, it becomes a special problem in the case of China’s history. ‘China’ is in fact one of the largest generalities used in modern speech. The term represents the largest body of people in one of the biggest land areas over the longest recorded time- a four-dimensional non-pareil. Just to think about ‘China’ or ‘the Chinese’ is to rise to a level of generality (measured in persons or years or acres) that in other fields of history would seem almost infeasibly high.”¹⁷⁴

Facing the large body of “China,” it proves a challenge to discuss exhibitions, theatres, films and filmmakers in late Imperial China. According to Frank Bren, the first cinema exhibition in China was given in Hong Kong by Prof. Maurice Charvet on Apr. 26, 1897. The dilemma is Hong Kong was a British colony then.¹⁷⁵ In this regard, it is inaccurate to credit Charvet’s Cinematograph exhibition as the first film exhibition in China. In contrast, Shanghai was semi-colonial. In 1897, Shanghai was ruled under “Foreigner-Chinese-Separation Policy”. Despite the small number of foreign residents in settlements, Shanghai was officially governed by Daotai. Strictly speaking, Welby Cook’s “Animatoscope” exhibition on May 22, 1897 in Shanghai was therefore the first film exhibition in “China”.

Based on “hard evidences” collected from contemporary source materials, Frank Bren presents two useful models in *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, regarding Maurice Charvet’s Cinematograph exhibitions and Welby Cook’s Animatoscope exhibitions, i.e. “Edison vs. Lumière” and “Hong Kong vs. Shanghai”.¹⁷⁶ The first model is based on the difference of movie machines. The machine-based view was common and popular at that time. According to Frank Bren,

¹⁷⁴ Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China: volume 10, late Ch’ing 1800-1911*, p.xv.

¹⁷⁵ Hong Kong Island was officially colonized on 29 Aug. 1842 during the first Opium War (1839-1842). Under the terms of the one-sided *Treaty of Nanking*, signed on that day, China ceded the island “in perpetuity” to Great Britain. Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*. Contemporary newspapers are like *Hongkong Telegram*, NCH, *The Tienstin & Peking Times*, SB, XWB, and *Youxibao*.

Cinematograph and Animatoscope are respectively “copycats” of Lumière and Edison’s inventions. From the historical viewpoint, this assertion is problematic, considering the chaotic status quo of movie machines back then. Charvet’s Cinematograph is not necessary a copycat of Lumière’s Cinématographe. In 1897, there were at least two movie machines under the name of “Cinematograph”.¹⁷⁷ In addition, at that time cinematograph already became a general signifier for all film-related items and activities. It is hard to know if Charvet’s Cinematograph was a machine name, or rather, a general signifier for movie machines.

The model of “Hong Kong vs. Shanghai” is inspiring regarding the initial introduction of cinema to China. Film historians like Yu Muyun think that cinema came to China “via Hong Kong to Shanghai”. The fact that Charvet and Cook held film exhibitions respectively in Hong Kong and Shanghai put this view in question. According to a stream record in NCH, Welby Cook, the earliest exhibitor in Shanghai by far we know, came directly from America, not via Hong Kong.

The spreading pattern of early film in China is therefore not linear but radial. Instead of “Hong Kong → Shanghai → the Interior”, cinema appeared simultaneously in foreign communities in major treaty ports like Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin and Hankou. It then expanded into local Chinese society. The spreading of cinema overlapped with the expansion of treaty port commercial networks.¹⁷⁸ The initial introduction of cinema into China was strongly contextualized by the colonial status quos and featured an internationality and foreign monopoly. A closer examination on foreign film pioneers’ identity, film practice and localization strategy is hence the primary task of this chapter.

¹⁷⁷ Robert Beard patented his projector as Cinematograph in 1897 and before that Cecil Wray had already sold a version of projector also named as Cinematograph.

¹⁷⁸ Johnson, *International and wartime origins of the propaganda state: the motion picture in China, 1897-1955*, pp. 40-41.

2.1.1 Spreading route and the “first” exhibition

“[i]t can be understood that the manufacture and display of moving pictures is, materially considered, one of the important developments of the century that is nearing the end of its first decade...”¹⁷⁹

In this section, I will briefly introduce the research state regarding early cinema’s spreading route in China, with a focus on the view of “via Hong Kong to Shanghai”. The issue of “first” film exhibition in China will also be discussed under the reference of Frank Bren’s models of “Hong Kong vs. Shanghai” and “Cinematograph vs. Animatoscope”.

The spreading pattern of cinema

In *Chinese Film Industry History* (1926), Cheng Shuren 程树仁 first time presents the view of “via Hong Kong to Shanghai, and then from Shanghai to inland areas”.¹⁸⁰ Hong Kong film historian Yu Muyun shares the view and according to him, cinema was first introduced in Hong Kong in January 1896, and later to Shanghai and Taiwan. His argument is based on the oceanic traffic then. He assumes that cinema was brought to China first by French. In 1896, there was no direct maritime traffic between France and mainland or Taiwan but a line was available between Hong Kong and France.¹⁸¹ In this regard, cinema had to be introduced “via Hong Kong”. Yu’s conclusion is based on two assumptions, i.e. the film exhibition in Hong Kong was the first exhibition in China and cinema was introduced from France. Either assumption is problematic. According to Yu’s investigation, the first cinema exhibition in Hong Kong was given at the beginning of 1896.¹⁸² However, instead of a real film screening, this exhibition was a lantern exhibition. Meanwhile, according

¹⁷⁹ “Moving Pictures and Morals”, NCH 13 Oct. 1909.

¹⁸⁰ Cheng Shuren, “Zhonghua yingyeshi 中華影業史”, *Zhonghua yingye nianjian 中華影業年鑒* (1917), reprint in ZWD, p. 1324.

¹⁸¹ Yu, *Xianggang dianying shihua 香港電影史話*, p. 9.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* pp. 5-6.

to Frank Bren, no direct evidence shows that “a Lumière representative ever showed films in either Hong Kong or mainland China in 1896-1897.”¹⁸³

A recent investigation on this issue is given by Liu Xiaolei in *Zaoqi huwai diqu dianying ye* 早期滬外地區電影業 (Early cinema beyond Shanghai). She shares the same view but emphasizes on foreign merchants’ important role in introducing cinema to China. According to her, early cinema in China can be categorized into three groups, i.e. as a profit-orienting entertainment, an effective colonialist tool and a non-profit-oriented private entertainment.¹⁸⁴ The spreading of early cinema shows a radial pattern and is “Shanghai-centric”.¹⁸⁵ Liu’s regional perspective is practical, considering that “China”, as John Fairbank says, is a vague concept with an enormously large body of people and land.¹⁸⁶

Law Kar and Frank Bren’s joint effort in *Hong Kong Cinema: a cross-cultural view* pushes the study of early cinema in China a step forward. Based on “hard evidences”, they construct a dynamic picture of cinema’s introduction in China. According to them, Prof. Maurice Charvet gave the first film exhibition in Hong Kong in April 1897 and Welby Cook gave the first film exhibition in Shanghai in May 1897. Their exhibitions were given independently. No evidence shows that Welby Cook came to Shanghai via Hong Kong.

In short, itinerant showmen brought cinema to China in 1897. The spreading of cinema in China prior to WWI is closely tied to the colonial status quo in late Imperial China and it synchronized with the emergence of treaty port commercial networks.

Maurice Charvet and Welby Cook’s exhibitions in 1897

In 1897, Maurice Charvet and Harry Welby Cook were the two major exhibitors in China. In addition to being film projectionists, both had multi-identities. In Hong

¹⁸³ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 5.

¹⁸⁴ Liu, *Zhongguo zaoqi huwai diqu dianyingye de xingcheng, 1896-1949*, pp. 12-21.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China: volume 10, late Ch’ing 1800-1911*, p. xv.

Kong, local newspapers called Charvet “Prof. M. Charvet”, which indicates that Charvet was likely an engineer or technician. Charvet arrived at Hong Kong per Str. Peru from San Francisco on Apr. 23, 1897. Three days later, he gave a private exhibition at City Hall, which was an experimental screening for next day’s public exhibition. The public exhibition was cancelled due to a mechanic malfunction.¹⁸⁷ A day after that, the public exhibition continued and this time it worked. According to Frank Bren, it is the first film exhibition in Hong Kong with “hard evidences.”¹⁸⁸ Charvet’s private and public exhibitions achieved an enthusiastic response. Local newspapers published many reviews about these exhibitions. Cinematograph exhibitions lasted at least to May 4 and on June 12, Charvet travelled to Shanghai. From there he went northward to Tianjin per Str. Haesin. The other exhibitor Welby Cook showed Animatoscope at Astor Hall on May 22 and it is the first film exhibition in Shanghai.¹⁸⁹ It was roundly a month later than Charvet’s first exhibition in Hong Kong. During his stay, Cook gave at least five exhibitions at Astor Hall and one at Arcadia Hall in Zhang Garden.¹⁹⁰ In June, Cook joined Charvet and boarded the same steam to Tianjin.

According to the steam record in NCH, Lewis M. Johnson and Albert Linton also joined this trip. The former was the manager of Astor Hotel and the latter a freelance painter, photographer and musician.¹⁹¹ Frank Bren considers that Charvet, Cook and Johnson formed a trio under Johnson’s impresario.¹⁹² In Tianjin, Charvet’s Cinematograph and Welby’s Animatoscope were booked to open in competing venues (Lyceum theatre and Gordon Hall) on the evening of June 25.¹⁹³ Due to “inclement weather”, Charvet cancelled his exhibition.¹⁹⁴ In contrast, Cook’s

¹⁸⁷ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ 4 June is the day of Dragon Boat Festival 端午节, a traditional Chinese festival.

¹⁹¹ Due to the duration of publication process, the steam date in reality may be several days before the date announced on newspaper.

¹⁹² Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.12.

¹⁹³ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, pp.12-13.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

exhibition proved successful. Johnson and Charvet did not give up but advertised for the next day (June 26)'s screening.¹⁹⁵ After finishing exhibitions in Tianjin, Charvet travelled back to Shanghai on July 9 and Cook headed to Beijing because Sir Claude Macdonald invited him to give a private exhibition on July 1, in honor of the French Minister. The next day he gave a public exhibition at Legation Theatre. This exhibition probably achieved a warm response and Cook gave another two exhibitions respectively at English Legation and Spanish Legation.¹⁹⁶ After finishing exhibitions in Beijing, he travelled back to Tianjin and continued to exhibit at Gordon Hall.¹⁹⁷ At the end of July, Cook departed for Shanghai per Str. Liengshing.¹⁹⁸

In August, Cook and Charvet both appeared in Shanghai. According to their schedules, a direct confrontation was carefully avoided. Cook gave one exhibition at Astor Hall and two at Shanghai Recreation Club at the beginning of the month. Charvet exhibited at Tianhua teahouse 天華茶園 from August 14 to 18.

Around Aug. 20, Cook left Shanghai for Singapore via Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, he exhibited a short season at Theatre Royal, commencing on August 21. Charvet stayed in Shanghai and enjoyed a series of triumphs in the following two months. He renewed his films and gave at least three exhibitions at Lyceum Theatre in September and moved to Tongqing 同慶茶園 in October. He appeared in Hong Kong afterwards and gave several exhibitions there at Theatre Royal.

In short, in the year 1897 both exhibitors were busy travelling among Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing. Under Lewis Johnson's management, a duel was staged in Tianjin. It remains unknown if Cook's other exhibitions were also arranged by Johnson but in Shanghai a direct confrontation between Charvet and Cook was carefully avoided. From the spectatorship viewpoint, they had different target audiences. Charvet exhibited mainly in fixed locations. Cinematograph had a large screen and the whole set of machines was cumbersome. More preparing work was

¹⁹⁵ *Peking and Tientsin Times* 26 Jun. 1897, reprint in Law, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 14.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 17.

¹⁹⁷ *Peking and Tientsin Times* 26 Jun. 1897, reprint in Law, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 17.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

hence needed. In contrast, Cook moved among various makeshift venues. His Animatoscope was portable and was suitable for small-scale private banquets. In this respect, Cook's Animatoscope was more like a lantern exhibition and Charvet's Cinematograph was of more a real film exhibition.¹⁹⁹

2.1.2 Teahouses vs. Western halls: exhibitions in Shanghai

“Shanghai is never deficient in energetic activity in pursuing its amusements. The recently published history of the Recreation Fund appropriations shows that, in almost all departments, the residents are disposed to spend thought, time, and coin on their pleasures.”²⁰⁰

Shanghai witnessed two rounds of sensational film exhibitions in 1897, given respectively by Harry Welby Cook in May and Maurice Charvet in the months of August, September and October. Although Welby's Animatoscope exhibition was the first film exhibition in Shanghai, it was Charvet's Cinematograph in September that marked the beginning of commercial film screenings in China.

Welby Cook, Animatoscope and “May” rush

On May 22, 1897, Welby Cook gave an “Animatoscope” exhibition at the Astor Hall in Astor House Hotel, the most important and prestige Western hotel in Shanghai back then. The Hall was not spacious but it did not stop audiences' passion for the first film screening in Shanghai. The audience was exclusively foreign residents. During the exhibition, some twenty pictures were screened, including “the arrival of a train, the Czar's procession to Paris, workmen leaving Portsmouth Dockyard, King's Road, Brighton, conjuring sea-bathing and the vanishing lady trick.”²⁰¹ The show was an immediate success. The audience was mesmerized by the “life-like” figures on screen and they “burst into hearty applause.”²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ The timeline of Charvet and Cook (see Table I in Appendix D).

²⁰⁰ “The Lyceum,” NCH 15 Jan. 1874, volume 29, issue 0350.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

Shortly thereafter, a review was published in NCH, demystifying the “mysterious” Animatoscope for readers:

“The Animatoscope as it is called in the present instance is a marvelous advance upon the familiar optical lantern, inasmuch as by the extremely rapid reproduction of photographs taken at a high rate of speed, the eye is deceived so surprisingly that the life of thoroughfares at home, the arrival of a railway train, and the picturesqueness of the turbulent sea are presented to us with a fidelity that is little short of marvellous”.²⁰³

The high degree of “fidelity” represented the “correctness and vividness of the pictures” and was deemed as the key element to distinguish cinema from lantern. In addition, the review also criticized Cook’s exhibition due to “a certain amount of vibration.”²⁰⁴ Interestingly, the show also included magic lantern. To combine film screening with lantern exhibition was a common and practical strategy in the earliest years of cinema. To hold the public attention, Cook also arranged his pictures in a different order since the second exhibition. In total, Welby Cook gave no less than four exhibitions at Astor Hall.

Animatoscope’s fame preceded it in Chinese society. Celestials were curious about this wonderful machine. Cook was hence invited to exhibit on June 4 at Arcadia Hall in Zhang garden. The day was Dragon Boat Festival 端午節, a traditional Chinese festival. This arrangement was no accident. Chinese was accustomed to be entertained in festivals and it would assure Cook enough audiences. Later Charvet also adopted this strategy and arranged his opening show at Tianhua teahouse on the day of Double Ninth festival 重陽節.²⁰⁵ Additionally, Cook’s exhibition was in association with two popular trends in Shanghai, i.e. Bishu 避暑 (to relieve the summer heat) and Youyuan 遊園 (visiting a park). Shanghai had a name for its high temperature and sultry weather during the summer time. To relieve the summer heat, local residents preferred to visit the public park.

²⁰³ “The Lyceum”, NCH 15 Jan. 1874, volume 29, issue 0350.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ The day is Chongyangjie 重陽節 (Double Ninth Festival).

In Shanghai, public parks were not open to Chinese until 1888.²⁰⁶ Although the regulation was changed later, due to culture differences and nationalist feelings, Celestials preferred Chinese gardens. Among Chinese gardens, Zhang Garden was the biggest and most famous one, widely known as “the first public space in modern China.”²⁰⁷ Arcadia Hall was the main building in Zhang Garden and it was the highest Western-style architecture in Shanghai then. In contrast to Astor Hall, the Arcadia Hall was more spacious and the audience here was exclusively Chinese. Cook’s exhibition was part of a variety programme in Zhang garden. According to records in SB, his exhibitions there lasted for a week (June 4 to 11).²⁰⁸

A week before the official opening of the show, two advertisements appeared in XWB, titled “*Living Photographs* 活小照” and “*Electric lightning magic lantern* 電光影戲”.²⁰⁹ As mentioned before, the English newspaper NCH already demystified Animatoscope for foreign readers. In contrast, the Chinese press had no clue about the machine. According to its Chinese pronunciation, Animatoscope was translated as “Ai Wei Mei Da Shi Gu Pu 爱尾美大师谷浦”, which was hardly understandable. The advertisements nevertheless gave some information on the exhibition context. The admission fee was charged at the price of 1 Yuan for adult and half Yuan for servant and child. In comparison to Charvet’s exhibition for foreign audiences at Lyceum theatre in the coming September, the price was low, but to an average Chinese, it was still costly.

Cook’s Animatoscope exhibition at Arcadia Hall was evidently sensational. On June 11 and 13, a long review appeared at the front page of XWB. The writer began with mentioning that Shanghai had long been a trade port and it had witnessed many foreign novelties such as magic show, circus and oil painting exhibition. Given the

²⁰⁶ In 1888, there was a movement to revoke the prohibition of public parks for Chinese. Yan Yongjing and his coworkers in Cowies Residents all participated in this movement. See “Lun huashang hanzhi gongbuju qingzhun huaren de gongyou gongjia huayuan shi 論華商函致工部局請準華人得共遊公家花園事” (About Chinese Merchants’ Suggestion on Opening Public Parks to Chinese), SB 08 Dec. 1885: 1.

²⁰⁷ Xiong Yuezhi, “Zhangyuan yu wanqing Shanghai shehui 張園與晚晴上海社會 (Zhangyuan and late Qing Shanghai), *Nanfang zhoumo* 南方週末, 4 (2002).

²⁰⁸ “Linghuo yingxihua”, SB 8 Jun. 1897.

²⁰⁹ XWB, 30 May- 4 Jun. 1897.

circumstance, Animatoscope was still “extraordinarily amazing.” Cook’s previous exhibitions at Astor Hall had made Animatoscope famous in Chinese society and the writer was curious about the machine. He therefore attended the show with a Chinese photographer who shared the same curiosity.

According to him, Arcadia Hall was already crowded when they arrived. Seats were arranged as coed block. It was a very modern and rare scene even in Shanghai because it was a bold violation against Confucianism doctrines. In total, there were about hundred audiences. The white screen was in a 3.33×3.33 format. The exhibition began at nine o’clock. Film screening was divided into two parts, with a ten-minute pause. The show lasted about 90 minutes and 20 titles were screened.²¹⁰ The screening had musical accompaniments. Each film was followed by a magic lantern slide. English titles of films were provided but no one there understood Western languages. Audiences were notwithstanding delighted and mesmerized by the show. The writer observed that “those present all stretched their necks to have a clear view, they laughed and amazed by the fineness.”²¹¹

At the end of the review, the writer made an effort to demystify Animatoscope for readers. He explained that the machine was invented by an American named Thomas Edison. He then frankly admitted that he had no knowledge on its optical principle. This vague explanation formed a sharp contrast to the detailed demystification in NCH. The review then ended with a typical Confucianism preaching, “The machine should be employed as an educational means for rightness 正道/正用.”²¹²

Cook’s twenty films

On May 22, 1897 Cook screened about 20 titles together with some lantern slides at Astor Hall. Two days later, he showed the same batch of films but “in a different

²¹⁰ For titles and descriptions of these twenty views, see Table II in Appendix I).

²¹¹ “Weichunyuan guan yingxi ji 味蕪園觀影戲記” (A Review on the Show at Arcade Hall), XWB 11, 13 Jun. 1897.

²¹² It is obviously not Robert W. Paul’s *Royal train* (1896) because the description is not consistent with film contents.

order”.²¹³ In June, Cook exhibited the same titles at Zhang garden. Most of his films were actualités. Actualité is a term coined by film pioneers Auguste and Louis Lumière denoting the short films showing real-life activities (recent and topical events or news, usually with a hint of novelty, curiosity, or sensation) that predominated in cinema’s earliest years. Actualités rarely ran to more than a single shot or a few minutes’ running time, and were sold to exhibitors as sets of single views that could be arranged and screened in a variety of combinations.”²¹⁴

A report in NCH listed 12 views in regard of Cook’s exhibitions at Astor Hall. A Chinese review in XWB listed all twenty titles Cook exhibited at Zhang garden (See Table II in Appendix I).²¹⁵ A comparison between the English report and Chinese review shows that it was the same set of films. Seven titles were mentioned in both records, including “*The life of bustling thoroughfares at home* 鬧市行者”, “*The arrival of a railway train* 鐵路”, “*The picturesqueness of the turbulent sea* 海岸”, “*Sailors of H.M.S. Excellent* 小輪”, “*The vanishing lady trick* 戲法”, “*Horse Artillery at Aldershot* 駿隊” and “*Boys scrambling for pennies in the sea* 雨景”. Beside those titles, some other English titles were mentioned in NCH, such as “*The Czar’s Arrival in Paris*”, “*Kings Road*”, “*Brighton*”, “*Conjuring sea-bathing*”, and “*A gardener burning weeds*”.²¹⁶

To identify these titles remains a huge challenge. Nevertheless, based on the English description and Chinese synopsis, I manage to identify some of them. *The arrival of a railway train* is probably the famous *The arrival of the train* from Lumière. It is difficult to identify which version this film was because Lumière made several versions of this theme. *The picturesqueness of the turbulent sea* was likely *A rough sea at Dover* (aka, *The beach of Dover*), a British short film directed by Birt Acres in 1895. It is a Robert W. Paul production. The other possibility is C. Goodwin Norton’s “*Wave*”. As to *Sailors of H.M.S. Excellent*, although there is no perfect

²¹³ “The Animatoscope”, NCH 28 May 1897.

²¹⁴ Kuhn, *Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies*, p. 4.

²¹⁵ See XWB 11 and 13 June, 1897. For descriptions of these titles, see Table II in Appendix I.

²¹⁶ “Weichunyuan guan yingxi ji 味蕪園觀影戲記” (A Review on the Show at Arcade Hall), XWB 11, 13 Jun. 1897.

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march, the fact that the steam H.M.S Excellent docked usually at Portsmouth wharf indicates that the actuality was probably shot by C. Goodwin Norton, who also shot *Workmen leaving Portsmouth Dockyard*. The vanishing lady trick is highly possible Méliès' *The magician*. The problem is that in 1897, like Lumière's *The Arrival of Train*, the vanishing lady trick had become such a popular motif that many filmmakers emulated it. For instance, Robert W. Paul made a British version of Méliès' *Vanishing Lady* in 1897.²¹⁷ As to *Horse Artillery at Aldershot*, there is a seeming march titled "*New South Wales Horse Artillery in Action*". According to the Chinese synopsis, *Bicycle, Ferry and Horse racing* were likely all Robert W. Paul productions, i.e. *Hyde park Bicycling Scene*, *Scene on the River Thames* and *The Derby*.²¹⁸ *Trick* (the dance trick) may be the famous dance of *Amy Muller* directed by William Heise for Edison Manufacturing Company and distributed by Raff& Gammon.²¹⁹ Besides, Cook also screened the famous "*The Czar's Arrival in Paris*", a hit film in early cinema history.

Keywords like "at home", "Brighton", "H.M.S Excellent", "Portsmouth" and "Kings Road" indicate that most of Cook's films are British actualités. Among them, many are Robert W. Paul productions, including *A Rough Sea at Dover* (1895), *Hyde Park Bicycling Scene* (1896), *Scene on the River Thames* (1896) and *The Derby* (1896). The British filmmaker C. Goodwin Norton probably also contributed, e.g. *Sailors of H.M.S Excellent*. Early hit films like "*The Czar's procession in Paris*", "*Serpentine Dance* (aka, *Amy Muller*)" and "*The Vanishing Lady* were already included in the programme. After finishing the one-week exhibition at Zhang garden, Cook moved back to Astor Hotel and exhibited there "no less than 25 separate

²¹⁷ The film was likely 40 feet, in a 35mm spherical format. The synopsis was: a magician makes a woman disappear. See Gifford, *British Film Catalogue: 1895-1970*, n.00064.

²¹⁸ *The Derby* (1896) was produced by R.W.Paul in 1895 or 1896. The British short film is directed by Birt Acres, a Robert W.Paul and Birt Acres production. It was shot on 29 May 1895 at the Epsom Derby, one of the approximately 13 subjects that were shot while Acres and Robert W.Paul were still partners. Acres dissolved their partnership on 12 July 1895. See Perry, *The Great British Picture Show*, p.60a.

²¹⁹ *Amy Muller* is about 150 feet, See Maguire& Baucus Edison and International Photographic Films Catalogue, Apr. 1897.

incidents.”²²⁰ Among them, some were new titles, for instance, “*The costume race*,” a Robert W. Paul production made in 1896.

Charvet’s Cinematograph exhibitions and films in Shanghai

Prof. Maurice Charvet arrived in Shanghai from Hong Kong around June 12, 1897. He stayed there for about ten days before he travelled to Tianjin at the end of the month. No evidence shows that he had given Cinematograph exhibitions during this stay. Charvet reappeared in Shanghai at the end of July after finishing his exhibitions in Tianjin. This time he did not exhibit in Western entertainment venues but targeted Chinese audiences in the first place. He gave a series of exhibitions at Tianhua teahouse, commencing on July 31. The exhibitions there lasted from July 31 to August 2 as well as from August 14 to 18. In total, 16 titles were screened. Those were from the same batch of films that he screened in Tianjin.

After finishing exhibitions at Tianhua teahouse, Charvet renewed his films and moved to Lyceum Theatre. There he gave exhibitions respectively on September 8, 15 and 18. The number of films increased to twenty. On Sep. 8, he showed the street view of Shanghai to audiences for the first time. It indicates that his Cinematograph was a combination of projector and camera. Charvet probably shot the view by himself. The scene was filmed in the Bubbling Well Road, which was not far from Lyceum theatre. According to a report in NCH, this special screening was such a sensation that it was demanded by audience to show twice.²²¹ In October, Charvet again moved to Chinese teahouse, this time, at Tongqing teahouse 同慶茶園. The exhibition was opened on the day of the Double Ninth Festival.²²²

Retrospectively, Charvet first exhibited at Chinese teahouse and showed old batch of films. He then moved to Western theatre with renewed films for foreign audiences. He was forced to adopt this strategy because of Cook’s early exhibitions in Shanghai.

²²⁰ NCH 18 Jun. 1897, volume 75, issue 1559.

²²¹ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 18.

²²² The Chongyang Festival is celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month. Two traditional activities on this day are to climb mountain and to have the whole family getting together. The day of the 23rd was also a traditional Chinese festival: the Double Ninth Festival 重阳节

At that time, foreigners in Shanghai had already watched films. On contrary, few Chinese had witnessed Cook's Animatoscope. Cook's early exhibitions nevertheless impeded Charvet's Cinematograph exhibitions. In September when Charvet exhibited at Lyceum, the press media noticed immediately that it was not the "first" film exhibition in Shanghai and the show was only "comparative novelty".²²³ In this regard, the success of Cinematograph did not come from the machine-based sensational effect of "first" but relied heavily on the thoughtful planning and the renewed films.

As a rule, Charvet's Cinematograph exhibition was organized by Lewis M. Johnson. In Chinese resource materials, Johnson was recorded as "Meiguo dianying fangyingshang Yong Song 美國電影發行商雍松" (American film distributor Johnson).²²⁴ In the field of Chinese film study, "Yong Song" has long been mistaken as the photographer James Ricalton.²²⁵ Little has been known about Lewis Johnson, with an exception that he was born in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.²²⁶ According to Frank Bren,

"Alongside Harry Welby Cook and Maurice Charvet, L. M. Johnson may be one of the first wheeler-dealers in the history of the film medium in China, perhaps its first major distributor, to use the term loosely. Somehow, he has been missing from histories naming other Westerners who brought movies to China or set up early film venues."²²⁷

Before their joint enterprise in Shanghai, Charvet and Johnson had already teamed up for Cinematograph exhibitions in Tianjin, where Johnson marketed the exhibitions in a mass scale. For the exhibitions at Tianhua teahouse and later at Lyceum in Shanghai, Johnson again arranged a series of promotions. In contrast to Cook's advertisements for exhibitions at Arcadia in May, Johnson's was more formal and

²²³ "The Cinematograph at Lyceum Theatre", NCH 10 Sep. 1897, volume 76, issue 1571.

²²⁴ "Meiguo dianying fangyingshang yongsong 美國電影放映商雍松" (American film distributor Johnson). See Cheng, ZDFZS, p. 8.

²²⁵ Leyda wrote in *Dianying* that "the American film distributor" was James Ricalton. In *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, Frank Bren clarifies the misunderstanding and identifies the mysterious Yong Song as "Lewis M. Johnson". See Leyda, *Dianying*, p. 2.; Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 10-11.

²²⁶ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 11.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

thorough. Prior to the opening show at Lyceum theatre, John promised to the public, “the vibration so noticeable and trying to eyes at Mr. Welby-Cook’s entertainments would be entirely eliminated”, which according to a report in NCH, was unfortunately “not the case”.²²⁸

Cinematograph exhibitions at Tianhua teahouse serve as a striking example for Johnson’s thoughtful arrangement. Cinematograph was promoted not only as an entertainment but also an effective way of enriching knowledge. This strategy obviously worked and the exhibition attracted many Chinese gentries. On Aug. 16, *Youxibao* published a review titled “A record on the foreign magic at Tianhua teahouse 天華茶園觀外洋戲法歸述所見”, which enabled a detailed investigation on the exhibition context.²²⁹ The Cinematograph exhibition was arranged as part of the variety show, together with Chinese Opera and French magic show. The admission price was evidently lower than Cook’s Animatoscope exhibition at Zhang garden. The first class cost 5 Jiao (half of the fee for Cook’s exhibition at Arcadia), the second 4 Jiao, the third 2 Jiao and the fourth 1 Jiao. The exhibition was strongly localized. A Chinese was hired to stand next to the screen and explain film contents for audiences. To suit Celestials’ favor for noisy and festival mood, before each film there was a short piece of Western music.

Beside Johnson’s thoughtful arrangements, the other element that strongly contributed to the success of Charvet’s exhibition was the film content itself. Charvet screened at Tianhua teahouse totally 16 titles (See Table II in Appendix I). Through an analysis on the English descriptions and Chinese synopsis, I identify some of them. The first title was “*The Czar’s Arrival in Paris*”, a French hit actuality produced and distributed by Pathé Company in 1896.²³⁰ The second title “*Loie Fuller’s Serpentine Dance*” was de facto *Loie Fuller Serpentine Dance*. In 1897, there had been at least three versions of serpentine dance, produced respectively by Edison, Gaumont and

²²⁸ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 11.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Bardèche, *The History of Motion Pictures*, p. 7.

Lumière.²³¹ It is therefore hard to identify the version that Charvet screened. In Chinese advertisements, the name of the famous dancer Loie Fuller was translated to “Luo yi fu la 羅依弗拉” and was mistaken as a place name. The third title “*Street Scene in Madrid*” was likely *Bois de Boulogne* (aka, *Porte de Madrid*, 1896), a Geoges Médiès production.²³² The fourth title “*Spanish Dancers*” can hardly be identified.²³³ The “dance” motif was extremely popular in the earliest years of cinema and there were quite a number of group-dance films, such as *Bowery Waltz*,²³⁴ *Sioux Ghost Dance*,²³⁵ and *Buffalo Dance*.²³⁶ The fifth title “*Passing of Cavalry*” was likely *The Cavalry Sham Battle*, a French actuality made in 1896.²³⁷ Like “dance” motif, the cavalry was also a popular subject and many “cavalry” films were produced.²³⁸ The sixth title “*Moorish Dance!*” might be *Dance de Ventre*.²³⁹ The seventh title “*Hypnotic: Scene in Trilby*” was likely *Trilby and Little Billee*.²⁴⁰ The eighth title “*La Bourée, a Peasant’s Dance*” was probably *Parisian Dance*, an Edison production in 1897. There is no perfect march for the ninth title “*Soudanese at the*

²³¹ *La Loie Fuller Dance* (1896) is an Edison Manufacturing Company production, distributed by Raff&Gammon. La Loie Fuller did not actually dance in this film. She objected to travelling to West Orange, New Jersey, to freeze in the Edison Black Maria studio. The dance was performed by Fuller’s sister. See Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of Motion Picture*, p. 253. *Serpentine Dance* (Loie Fuller, 1897) is directed by Geoges Demeny. It was a Sociétés Etablissements L.Gaumont production. *Loie Fuller-Serpentine Dance* (1896), a Lumière production.

²³² It is a Théâtre Robert-Houdin production. Frazer, *Artificially Arranged Scenes: The Films of Georges Médiès*, p. 242.

²³³ The title is not Edison’s *Carmencita* or the famous “*Annabelle Dance*” because the advertisement clearly said “dancers” rather than a dancer. According to Edison film historian Charles Musser, Spanish dancer Carmencita was the first woman to appear in front of an Edison motion picture camera.

²³⁴ The film was directed by William Heise, an Edison Manufacturing production. Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907*, pp.329-330.

²³⁵ It is an 1894 Edison Manufacturing Company production and distributed by Raff& Gammon and Maguire& Baucus Co. The Cinematographer was William Heise.

²³⁶ The film was an 1894 Edison Co. production, 17 ft. It was directed by W.K.L.Dickson, with five performers. It was distributed by Maguire&Baucus. The Cinematographer was William Heise.

²³⁷ Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907*, p. 143.

²³⁸ For instance, *Bareback riding, sixth U.S. cavalry*, an American Mutoscope Company production. See *Ibid.* pp. 245, 247, 598.

²³⁹ Notable is that *Trilby* was a part of a popular drama at that time and if the film was adapted from *Trilby*, it was quite unusual because it was a fantasy film but not a common actuality. *Ibid.* pp. 78, 600.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.148.

Champs de Mars". The tenth title "*Indian Short Stick Dance*" might be "*Short stick dance*", a short film directed by W. K. Dickson for Edison Co. in 1894. The eleventh title "*Fencing Bet: Pini and Kirschoffer*" can hardly be identified.²⁴¹ The twelfth title "*The Czar going to Versailles*" was also known as "*Cortège du Tsar allant à Versailles*" (aka, *The Czar Excursion to Versailles*), a French short film directed by Georges Méliès in 1896.²⁴² The thirteenth title "*Boxing Bet: Corbett and Mitschell*" was probably staged in Edison studio to satisfy audience's passion for boxing fight.²⁴³ The fourteenth title "*A Donkey in Difficulty*" was de facto "*Lynching Scene in Far West*", one of the earliest west films shot by Edison Co. The sixteenth title "*Little Jake and the Big Dutch Girl*" was also an Edison production. The film was known as *Clog Dance* and it was directed by James H. White in 1896.²⁴⁴

To sum up, the Chinese translations of those film titles were hardly understandable and there were few obvious mistakes. *Hypnotic: Scene in "Trilby,"* for instance, was translated to "*Tuolilubi defang renmin shuimian zhizhuang 托里露比地方人民睡眠之狀*" (The scene of people from Trilby sleeping). Trilby, which was in fact a title of a play, was mistaken as a place name.

After finishing exhibitions at Tianhua Teahouse, Johnson and Charvet renewed their films and moved to Lyceum Theatre. According to the review in NCH, the exhibition there played to "a very full house."²⁴⁵ Totally, 20 titles were screened. Among them:

"The Jubilee procession in London, received with most enthusiastic applause by the audience, which culminated when the last picture thrown on the screen showed the Queen's carriage passing in the procession, so that before it had

²⁴¹ Kirschoffer Rouleau was the French fencing master and Pini the Italian. W.K.L. Dickson and William Heise shot in 1892 a "Men fencing," but it was not likely the film here.

²⁴² It is a Théâtre-Houdin production, produced by Georges Méliès, 35mm spherical format. See Fell, *A History of Films*, pp. 40, 42.

²⁴³ Jim Corbett was a famous boxer. The boxing bet between Corbett and Charlie Mitschell was a real event in about January 1894. It was held at Duvall Athletic Club in Jacksonville, Florida, USA. The winner was said to be paid \$20,000. "How Corbett Won and Mitchell Lost the Great Battle at Jacksonville", *The Daily Huronite* 26 Jan. 1894.

²⁴⁴ James White was a Cando-American. He filmed the famous short film *The Kiss*. He was a 22-year-old gramophone salesman when he went to work at a kinetoscope operation in Boston in 1894.

²⁴⁵ "The Cinematograph at Lyceum Theatre," NCH 10 Sept. 1897, volume 76, issue 1571.

faded from view the audience rose and broke out with the English national anthem. This was the most striking incident of the evening, and went far to compensate for defects in the exhibition that had been too apparent during the course of completing the programme.”²⁴⁶

Other popular films were comic views, which also pleased the audience immensely. New films were like *Love Scene*, *Columbia and clown*, *Nurse maid*, *Lighting artist*, *The haunted castle*, *A troubled Dream*, to name but a few. Some of them were Méliès’ new films. *A Troubled Dream*, for instance, was probably *Le Cauchemar* (The Nightmare). Those pictures were mostly staged comedies and trick films that appeared first time in Shanghai. They formed a sharp contrast to early actualities and provided audiences more visual pleasure. Notable is the mismanagement of seat arrangement at Lyceum theatre. According to a report in NCH, “Many people booked reserved seats well in advance, only to find that they could not obtain those seats when they arrived at the theatre.”²⁴⁷

2.1.3 Exhibitions beyond Shanghai: Hong Kong and Tianjin

Prof. Maurice Charvet arrived at Hong Kong per Stream Peru from San Francisco on April 23, 1897.²⁴⁸ According to Frank Bren, Charvet bought two motion picture machines with him, “namely the Cinematograph (a brand name of the Lumière) and the Kinetoscope (patented by Edison)”.²⁴⁹ The next day, *Hongkong Telegraph* published an advertisement, announcing that Charvet would show first time in Hong Kong the “Cinematograph” in Music Room of City Hall on April 27.²⁵⁰ According to records in *Hongkong dairy Press*, on the previous day a private exhibition was already given at the same spot.²⁵¹ During this private exhibition, Charvet showed a

²⁴⁶ “The Cinematograph at Lyceum Theatre,” NCH 10 Sept. 1897, volume 76, issue 1571.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 6.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ *Hongkong Telegraph* 土蔑西報 was founded on 15 June 1881 in Hong Kong, with Robert Frazar Smith as chief editor. Although Smith’s bold remarks were welcomed by readers, he was imprisoned in 1882 for Libel. In 1900, the newspaper went to Chesney Duncan and M. T. Francis and a corporation was formed. Most shares were controlled by Chinese merchants. Most people considered that this newspaper was “justice” and they could express their opinions through it.

²⁵¹ NCH 7 May 1897, volume 75, issue 1553.

dozen scenes, including French titles like “*The entry of Czar into Paris*” and “*The march past of a regiment of French cavalry*.”²⁵²

The private exhibition was a success and *Hongkong Dairy Press* gave a 3-layers description on it.²⁵³ According to the report, the ultimate attraction was the machine itself. Cinematograph was the “latest invention” with an “extraordinary tableaux.”²⁵⁴ In terms of spectatorship, audiences “were really astonished” by what they saw. They were most intrigued by the “plainly visible” “movement” and they were “mystified” as well as amazed by the “so life-like”. An obvious fault of Cinematograph was the “irritating quiver”. The elimination of the “quiver” later became a critical element to the success of film exhibitions in China. Intense competitions were carried out between Charvet’s Cinematograph and Cook’s Animatoscope regarding the mechanic advancements.

Charvet’s first public exhibition, according Frank Bren, was called off. Charvet explained that “the machine is delicate, the setting is complicated and electric power should be used, thus an advanced control is necessary” and the exhibition was therefore postponed to 28 April. On that day, the exhibition was duly held. In Hong Kong, Charvet’s Cinematograph exhibition lasted at least to May 4, with five exhibitions per day and they were sensational. Every day a great number of people went to watch it.²⁵⁵

On June 12, 1897, Charvet left Hong Kong for Shanghai per Str. Ravenna.²⁵⁶ The next thing we know about M. Charvet is that around June 25, he left Shanghai for Tianjin per Str. Haeshin, together with his strong competitor Cook. They were accompanied by Lewis Johnson and Albert Linton.²⁵⁷ Johnson, as mentioned above,

²⁵² NCH 7 May 1897, volume 75, issue 1553.

²⁵³ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 6.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ Bren, “Dianli yu shying de jiehe—chongjiu xianggang zaoqi yingshi rizhi 電力與攝影的結合—重究香港早期影史日誌” (A Combination of Electricity and Photography—A Study on Early Hong Kong Film History. *Xianggang dianying ziliao guan tongxun mulu* 香港電影資料館通訊目錄 11 (1998).

²⁵⁶ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 12. It was confirmed by a record on NCH 18 Jun. 1897.

²⁵⁷ NCH 25 Jun. 1897.

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was the manager of Astor House Hotel where Cook first exhibited Animatoscope.²⁵⁸ Linton was an active artist in Shanghai foreign society.²⁵⁹ He was in charge of music accompaniments for the exhibitions. Later when Cook was invited by Claude McDonald to exhibit Animatoscope at a dinner party in Beijing, Linton played incidental music.²⁶⁰

According to Frank Bren, Charvet, Cook and Johnson formed a “trio” under Johnson’s impresario.²⁶¹ Johnson and Charvet did team up but the relation between Charvet-Johnson team and Cook was intriguing. Cook seemed more like a strong competitor to Charvet and Johnson, rather than a team member. In Tianjin, Cook’s Animatoscope and Charvet-Johnson’s Cinematograph were booked to open in two competing venues on the same evening.²⁶² In this round of competition, Charvet-Johnson team lost the score. The Cinematograph exhibition was cancelled due to the inclement weather and Cook’s Animatoscope opened as planned.²⁶³ On Jun. 26 and 28, Cinematograph exhibitions opened successfully.²⁶⁴ In contrast to Cook’s modest promotion, Johnson and Charvet paid great attention to commercial marketings. They put several advertisements in *Peking & Tientsin Times* and listed out 16 titles.²⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the Cinematograph exhibition was likely not as sensational as they expected and they left Tianjin for Shanghai per. S.s Str. Wuchang around July 9, 1897.²⁶⁶ From Shanghai Charvet probably travelled to Hankou per Str.Poyang.²⁶⁷

²⁵⁸ Lewis M. Johnson was born in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. After his adventure in China, Lewis Johnson went back to America and became a junior partner in an American company that operated the Alhambra theatre on the Escolta. The Alhambra theatre on the Escolta was sued for debt in August 1901. See *Independence Day Mysteries* 9 Jun. 2007.

²⁵⁹ According to NCH records, he attended the Smoking Concert Club in Feb. 1897 and travelled to Wenzhou per Str. Poochi. In April, he gave a piano performance and a painting exhibition in Wenzhou. He was back in Shanghai in May. See NCH 26 Feb. 1897, NCH 23 Apr. 1897 and NCH 14 May 1897.

²⁶⁰ NCH 9 Jul. 1897, Issue 1563.

²⁶¹ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 12.

²⁶² *Ibid.* pp. 12-13.

²⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 13

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 16.

²⁶⁷ NCH 9 Jul. 1897.

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From Tianjin, Cook travelled to Beijing for giving an exhibition at a private dinner party on July 1. The next day he gave a public exhibitions at Legation theatre and another two exhibitions afterwards. These exhibitions earned Cook a good name and about a week later, he gave another exhibition at the Spanish legation.²⁶⁸ After finishing exhibitions in Beijing, Cook went back to Tianjin and gave two exhibitions at Gordon Hall (July 16 and 17). At the end of July, he returned to Shanghai per Str. Liengshing.²⁶⁹

In Shanghai, Cook gave some sporadic exhibitions. His reappearance was probably not so sensational. As the curiosité for Animatoscope waned, he boarded Str. Bayern around Aug. 20 for Singapore. His last exhibition in Shanghai was on Aug. 14 at Club's Smoking Concert. The day happened to be Charvet and Johnson's opening night of Cinematograph exhibition at Tianhua teahouse. It remains unknown if it was a mere coincidence or purposely arranged.

En route to Singapore, Cook stayed briefly in Hong Kong and exhibited at Theatre Royal of City Hall, commencing on Aug. 21. Two months later, according to an advertisement in *Hongkong Telegraph* (Oct 16, 1897), Charvet and Johnson completed their successful season in Shanghai and reappeared Hong Kong. They claimed having eliminating the disturbing vibration and 15 views were listed in the ads.²⁷⁰ The last record about Charvet was on February 13, 1908. NCH recorded that one "Messrs. Charvet" left Shanghai for Marseilles per Str. Oceanien.²⁷¹

Conclusion

In terms of Charles Musser's "screen practice", cinema had one foot in the shadow of magic lantern and the other at the starting point of a new mass media. Cook was a

²⁶⁸ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 17.

²⁶⁹ NCH 30 Jul. 1897, volume 76, issue 1565.

²⁷⁰ The views are *The Queen's Diamond; Jubilee in London; A dispute between Bicyclists; the "Bolero" Spanish Dance; Place de la Concorde, Paris; French Cavalry retreating? From Drill; Love Scene-Columbine and Clown; Arrival of the Czar in Paris; Pleasure Boats on the Seine; Children playing on the seashore; The Nurse Maid; The Lightning Artist; Arrival of the Express Train; The Magician; Place de la Republique, Paris; Workmen leaving a Factory; The Haunted Castle.*

²⁷¹ NCH 21 Feb. 1908.

prominent example of the former situation and Charvet for the latter. Based on the analysis of their travel route, exhibition venue, programme and spectatorship, it is not difficult to conclude that although they are both “profiteers” (Frank Bren’s words), Charvet and Cook have evidently different identities and exhibition strategies.

When Cook first appeared in China, beside Animatoscope, he also brought a set of magic lantern with him. Meanwhile, Charvet had a set of Kinetoscope, a peephole device invented by Thomas Edison. Kinetoscope was very popular before the invention of cinema. It was usually deemed as a transition from magic lantern to cinematograph. From the machine-based viewpoint, Charvet’s equipments were advanced than Cook’s. His Cinematograph was a set of professional movie machine and Charvet was therefore called “Prof. Maurice Charvet”. In contrast, Cook was more of an ordinary showman. Accordingly, Charvet’s Cinematograph was demanding on light source, weather and venues, and Cook’s Animatoscope was as portable as magic lantern. The latter can be exhibited in small indoor spaces as well as in open air.²⁷² The exhibition context was also more flexible. Animatoscope exhibition can be inserted in variety shows as well as given as an independent entertainment on private occasions. Cook’s exhibition was more like one man’s show and he had the full control over the show. Given the circumstance, he can change the order of films and arrange various music accompaniments. To fill the time for changing films, he can also include magic lantern and show lantern slides before each film.

However, Cook’s close association with magic lantern can also be a disadvantage. The scale of Animatoscope exhibition was usually limited. The screen was evidently small and the equipment was inadequate for spacious locality. Cook’s exhibitions therefore featured a strong mobility. After the initial novelty waned, he could hardly sustain audiences’ attention and was force to move to the next locality. It was thanks to the mechanical novelty that his first exhibition in Shanghai became sensational, but its influence was still limited. In addition, Animatoscope was not qualified as a mass

²⁷² The Animatoscope exhibition on 5 August 1897, for instance, was given on the ground of Shanghai Recreation Club. NCH 6 Aug. 1897, volume 76, issue 1566.

media, a quality that ultimately defines cinema. Retrospectively, Cook's Animatoscope exhibitions bore no fundamental difference to the outdated lantern exhibitions, with an exception of a higher "fidelity".

On contrary, Charvet's Cinematograph was professional from every sense. As a "copycat of Lumière's Cinematograph", Cinematograph was a combined camera-projector and a large "belle tableau" was equipped for the exhibition. Technologically, the disturbing vibration in Cinematograph exhibition was not that obvious as in Cook's and a better screening effect could be achieved. As a professional projectionist, Charvet was able to hold audiences' attention in a longer duration. The success of his exhibitions did not come entirely from the machine but also from film contents. Charvet noticed film's importance rather early and he renewed films frequently.

The first batch of films that Cook and Charvet screened in Shanghai were all outdated single-shot actualités or short films produced in Edison laboratory. They lasted only one or two minutes and the subjects were mostly street views, dances, military drills, modern transportation, etc. The main attraction was not the film content but the mechanic novelty. After Charvet teamed up with Johnson, he renewed films, which can be roughly categorized into two groups. The first group consisted of up-to-date newsreels like *the Jubilee procession in London*. This film purposely targeted British residents, who formed the largest foreign community in China. According to a report in NCH, Charvet's exhibition with renewed films at Lyceum theatre was sensational and after the screening of *the Jubilee procession in London*, "the audiences rose and broke out with the English national anthem."²⁷³ It helped vent British residents' nostalgia for home. The other group consisted of Méliès trick films, which were worldwide the most popular titles back then. Charvet, for instance, screened Nü'zi penyu 女子盆浴 and *Jiuqin zhuo chongzi* 就寢捉蟲子 at Qi Garden 奇園, both were Méliès' hit films.²⁷⁴

²⁷³ "The Cinematograph at the Lyceum Theatre," NCH 10 Sep. 1897, volume 76, issue 1571.

²⁷⁴ Cheng, ZDFZS, p. 8.

Additionally, Cinematograph exhibition was a result of a team work. Charvet collaborated with Lewis Johnson and they both paid great attention to the marketing. In this respect, the promotion of Cinematograph exhibition in Tianjin was exemplary. They made many efforts to attract Chinese audiences. Their first Cinematograph exhibition in Shanghai, for instance, was given at a Chinese teahouse rather than a Western venue. To make the film content understandable, they translated film titles into Chinese. The catering to Chinese audiences proved successful. Cinematograph exhibitions at Tianhua teahouse, to some extent, mark the real beginning of film introduction to Chinese society.

2.1.4 Makeshift theatres

At the beginning stage, cinematograph exhibitions were usually given in makeshift venues like teahouse, Western theater and private hall. Screening was given on occasions like private meeting, banquet and temple fair. As a rule, film exhibitions were held for foreign audiences. Maurice Charvet, for instance, exhibited Cinematograph mainly at Lyceum Theatre and Welby Cook travelled among foreigners' gathering points like Astor Hall, Gordon Hall, McDonald's dinner party, Legation Theatre and Recreation. Due to the limited number of foreign residents, the initial novelty soon waned in foreign society. Exhibitors were hence forced to move to Chinese entertainment venues. Cook exhibited later at Zhang garden. Charvet followed suit and gave exhibitions at Tianhua teahouse, Qi garden and Tongqing teahouse. Retrospectively, film exhibitions started in foreign gathering points and later moved to Chinese localities. In the this section, I will carry out an investigation on some important makeshift venues and discuss why they were chosen by early itinerant showmen.

Astor House and Lewis Johnson: foreign society

Fig. 4 Astor House Hotel at the Beginning of 20th Century

The first Animatoscope exhibition took place at Astor House Hotel, “the first [hotel] in Shanghai with latest mod cons.”²⁷⁵ Astor House Hotel was formerly Richards Hotel and Restaurant.²⁷⁶ In 1858, Richards Hotel and Restaurant was relocated to the northern banks of the Suzhou Creek and was renamed into Astor House Hotel “in honor of the then most famous hotel in the United States, the Astor House in New York.”²⁷⁷ The original Chinese name of the hotel was “Lee-zo 礼查饭店”. After resale, in 1897 the hotel was in Ellen Jansen’s control. By then, the hotel had long been the most modern and luxury hotel in Shanghai and was “a landmark of the white man in the Far East.”²⁷⁸ For newly arrived families who were awaiting the completion of their own residences, Astor House Hotel was their first choice, as well as for the official privilege envoys and travelers. A rich number of celebrities stayed

²⁷⁵ “Five-star legend,” *Shanghai Daily News* 18 Apr. 2005.

²⁷⁶ It was the first Western restaurant and hotel in Shanghai at that time. The hotel was founded by Scottish merchant Peter Felix Richards (1808-1868) in 1844. See Hibbard, *Bund*, 212.

²⁷⁷ Powell, *My Twenty Five Years in China*, p. 7.

²⁷⁸ Baker, *Shanghai: Electric and Lurid City: an Anthology*, p. 100.

there while visiting Shanghai.²⁷⁹ In addition, the hotel was “the center of social activity” for foreigners.²⁸⁰

In 1897 when Welby Cook first arrived at Shanghai, it was a natural choice for him to accommodate in the Astor House Hotel and demonstrate his wonderful machine there. At that time, the hotel was under Lewis M. Johnson’s management.²⁸¹ Johnson might be “one of the first wheeler-dealer in the history of the film medium in China, perhaps its first major distributor.”²⁸² He was responsible for booking Cook’s exhibition. Astor Hall, albeit as a makeshift venue, hosted at least seven Animatoscope exhibitions in 1897. The hotel was significant regarding the initial film introduction to China.

Even after permanent cinemas emerged, Astor House Hotel continued to host film screenings. The hotel was in possession of “a fine riverside garden open to the South” and in sultry summer, it gave nightly open-air cinematograph exhibition frequently, with “seats placed on the lawn.”²⁸³ For instance, in May and June 1908, there was a series of open-air film screenings at Astor Garden given by Paris Cinematograph Company. These open-air entertainments were enormously popular and it became a routine for the hotel to host open-air film screenings in the hot summer nights. It was before long that other gardens in Shanghai joined this trend.

Lyceum Theatre: foreign society—> Chinese society

“We have seen it rise from the literal ashes of the ancient edifice, and have been pleased with the completeness and convenience of the structure.”²⁸⁴

²⁷⁹ For instance, US President Ulysses S. Grant stayed here for his Shanghai tour in 1879.

²⁸⁰ Hahn, *The Soong Sisters*, p. 15. To name but a few social activities at Astor Hall: the annual St. Andrew’s Ball, the first Western circus show in 1882, China’s first prom celebrating the 60th birthday of Cixi, the Emperor Dowager in 1897, etc.

²⁸¹ In 1861, Richards sold Astor House Hotel to Englishman Henry W. Smith. Around 1873, the Hotel was purchased by DeWitt Clinton Jansen (1840-1894). During his reign, a serial of enlargement and renovations were completed, including installing electric lights and running water. Both were the first in Shanghai. After Jansen’s death, the Hotel remained in his wife Ellen’s control until 1900.

²⁸² Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p. 11.

²⁸³ NCH 23 May 1908, volume 104, issue 2128.

²⁸⁴ “The Lyceum,” NCH 15 Jan. 1874, volume 29, issue 0350.

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In contrast to Astor House Hotel, Lyceum Theatre was a professional entertainment venue in Shanghai. Not only in Shanghai but also in Tianjin and other major trade cities, theatres under the name “Lyceum” emerged. For their close connections to the first round of film exhibitions in China, I would like to focus on Lyceum theatres in Shanghai and Tianjin.

The name “Lyceum” came from the famous “Lyceum Theatre London”. The Lyceum Theatre in Shanghai had many Chinese names, including Xiguo xiyuan 西國戲院 (Western theatre) and Daying xiyuan 大英戲園 (British theatre). The theatre was also called “Ai ti xi 愛提西” because it was founded and owned by the Amateur Dramatic Club (A.D.C). Due to its location in Yuanmingyuan Road, the theatre was sometimes also called Yuanmingyuan Theatre 圓明園大劇院. Shanghai Lyceum Theatre was first built in 1867 and was destroyed by fire in 1871.²⁸⁵ The theatre was rebuilt and reopened in January 1874 with the performance of A.D.C’s “*Mask and the Face.*”

The new building was about 146 feet long and 55 feet wide, with a further space of some 30 feet in addition. It cost roundly Tls. 20,000 and was seated for about 700 persons.²⁸⁶ Designed by the architect Kidner, the theatre featured fireproof and multifunction. It was designed for hosting all kinds of public entertainments. The structure was non-wood, with a number of emergency exits and smoking was strictly forbidden.²⁸⁷ In 1897 when Charvet first exhibited his Cinematograph at Lyceum, the theatre had long been the finest and prestige theatre in Shanghai. For his exhibition at Lyceum, Charvet purposely renewed films and a large screen was erected. Two years later when E. F. G. Hatch came to screen films for children in Shanghai, the charity performance was also given at Lyceum Theatre. Compared to other makeshift venues,

²⁸⁵ NCH 29 Jan. 1874.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ “Yi xibao gongbujue huiyi zujue xiguan shi xizhiyulun 譯西報工部局會議租界戲館事系之以論” (A Translation on Western Newspaper, About Theatres in Settlement), SB. 13 Jan. 1894. “Xiyuan fanghuo shuo 戲園防火說” (Prevention on Fire Dangers in Theatres), SB 29 Mar. 1897.

the exhibition effect was particularly good because “the theatre itself was an exhibition.”²⁸⁸

Notable was that Lyceum theatre was deemed as a foreigners’ territory exclusively. In 1890s, alongside other Western public facilities, Lyceum was open to Chinese. The theatre even hosted a performance exclusively for Chinese in 1894.²⁸⁹ There were also foreign and Chinese joint performances. According to records in SB, Dangui teahouse opera troupe once collaborated with a Western drama troupe and performed at Lyceum. It encouraged many Chinese gentries, and to attend shows at Lyceum theatre became a fashion in Chinese society. However, there was a fundamental difference between foreigners and Chinese in regard of the way of watching a show. The Chinese way of entertaining can be roughly referred as “teahouse” way. Chinese audience was accustomed to the festival mood and they ate and conversed during a show. To suit Chinese audience’s taste, many old rules at Lyceum theatre were temporarily changed. For example, smoking was permitted and audiences were allowed to walk around and talk to each other when the performance was on.

As more and more Chinese audiences visited Lyceum, the conflicts between Chinese and foreigners escalated. For instance, in 1898 when Carl Hertz, the world famous conjuror, gave magic shows here, NCH published a complaint letter “A *Growl*”, in which the writer apparently felt uncomfortable to give up Lyceum Theatre to Chinese “to take their pleasure thereon in foreign fashion.”²⁹⁰ According to him, the theatre was packed:

“with a seething and frowsy mass of Chinese humanity, presumably at very ‘popular prices,’ so that when the foreign holders of booked seats arrived they found their seats taken, and the place turned into a Chinese ‘sing-song.’ Some of the foreigners were accorded seats in the boxes, but the experience was a distinctly unpleasant one.”²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ NCH 8 Dec. 1899, volume 80, issue 1689.

²⁸⁹ “Yongrong yuyang 雍容榆楊”, SB 5 Apr. 1894.

²⁹⁰ Ibid

²⁹¹ “A Growl”, NCH 20 Jun. 1898.

Arcadia Hall in Zhang garden

Zhang garden was located in Bubbling Well Road. It was founded by an English merchant. On August 16, 1882, Chinese merchant Zhang Shuhe 張叔和 (Chang Soo Ho) bought over the garden from Heji foreign trade firm 和記洋行, as a retirement place for his mother. The garden was renamed “Weichun yuan 味蕪園”.²⁹² In 1894, the garden had reached 61.52 Mu 畝 and became the largest private garden in Shanghai. Zhang garden was open to public in 1885 without entry fee. Shortly thereafter, 1 Jiao per person was charged due to the large number of visitors. In 1896, the Bubbling Well Road had been metalled from Zhang garden to the Skew Bridge and the traffic to the garden became very convenient.²⁹³

Arcadia Hall, the main building in the Garden, was completed in 1893. It was the highest building in Shanghai at that time. In 1890s, it became a tourist attraction to climb the Arcadia Hall and have a bird’s view on Shanghai. The hall itself was a “very handsome one, it is very well lighted, and its acoustic properties leave nothing to be desired.”²⁹⁴ The Hall hosted Western performances like philharmonic concerts regularly. After the completion of Arcadia Hall, the entry fee of Zhang garden was again abolished but fees for other services and entertainments were charged. In 1897, Zhang garden was already the most famous public sphere in Shanghai. Even Westerners succumbed to “the fascination of a Chinese beauty”.²⁹⁵ Various charity and social events were held there.²⁹⁶ It became fashionable and profitable to have Western entertainers to perform in the garden.

In June 1897, after the initial exhibitions at Astor Hall, Cook was invited to give film screenings at Arcadia Hall. It could be safely assumed that the name of

²⁹² “Weichunyuan ji 味蕪園記” (A Review on Zhang Garden), SB 5 Apr. 1885.

²⁹³ NCH 28 Aug. 1896, volume 74, issue 1517.

²⁹⁴ NCH 8 May 1896.

²⁹⁵ NCH 21 Aug. 1896.

²⁹⁶ Chang Su-ho’s garden was famous for hosting modern and Western events. For instance, in 1897, ten distinguished Chinese ladies invited some fifty European ladies of different nationalities to Chang Su-ho’s gardens for a large semi-public dinner in regular European style, knives and forks. See “The Ladies’ Dinner at Chang Su-Ho’s”, NCH 10 Dec. 1897, volume 76, issue 1584; “Weichunyuan yanhuo zhuzhenshuo 味蕪園煙火助賑說” (The Beneficial Firework Display at Zhang Garden), SB 14 Aug. 1886.

Animatoscope had reached out the foreign society and expanded into Chinese society. Animatoscope incited an enormous interest among Celestials. Zhang Shuhe, the owner of Zhang garden, was probably the first Chinese who invited a foreign film exhibitor to give film screenings exclusively for Chinese audience. The opening show was arranged on June 4, the day of Dragon Boat festival. The festival assured enough audiences for the show. Cook's exhibition was a part of the variety show. The garden was an ideal place to pastime in sultry summer and beside variety shows, there were also "some fine fireworks"²⁹⁷ Cook's film screening was an immediate success and it became a regular programme at Arcadia Hall in the following days (ca. June 5-13). For most Chinese, it was the first time that they watched films.

Chinese Teahouses for Film Exhibitions

Compared to the Westernized Zhang garden, Tianhua teahouse was a traditional Chinese social place and entertaining venue. In late Imperial China, because in Chinese opera theatres hot towels and teas were served, opera theatres were called teahouses. Teahouse (Chayuan 茶園) was originally a place for talking and tea drinking. Later opera performance was added and teahouses gradually became a regular venue for traditional entertainments. The boundary between Chinese opera theatre and teahouse hence blurred. It was not until at the beginning of the Republic of China that the theatre function was gradually separated from teahouses.

Tianhua teahouse was located in Fuchou road. The place was well-known for the clapper opera 椰子戲.²⁹⁸ Some famous young opera players stationed there.²⁹⁹ As a social place, Tianhua teahouse was often involved in lawsuits or fights.³⁰⁰ According to records in SB, a censure was issued against Tianhua teahouse because the owner

²⁹⁷ NCH 14 Aug. 1896, volume 74, issue 1515.

²⁹⁸ Daya bianji weiyuanhui, *Daya yiwen zhi* 大雅藝文誌, p.22.

²⁹⁹ Chen Wuwo, *Lao Shanghai sanshinian jianwenlu*, p79.

³⁰⁰ In October 1896, for instance, a dispute between a custom and a waiter was recorded in SB. See "Yingxie wantang suo'an 英廨晚堂瑣案" (Trials in English Consular), SB 29 Oct. 1896.

hired girls to sing “dirty song”. The owner was put into prison but after he bribed the municipal authority, he was released and the teahouse was reopened.³⁰¹

Two other teahouses in International Settlement also got involve in film exhibition, i.e. Qi Yuan 奇園 and Tongqing teahouse 同慶茶樓.³⁰² Records on Qi Yuan were confusing because there were more than one Qi Yuan in Shanghai.³⁰³ The Qi Yuan, where film was screened, was probably a wooden house built by a Japanese named Wutian kuancilang 武田寬次郎 in August 1896 at the open ground near Nicheng Bridge 泥城橋. The Japanese used it as a makeshift venue for exhibiting an oil painting about American civil war.³⁰⁴ The painting exhibition became sensational and it got to local authority’s notice that the wooden house was not stable enough and in case of many visitors, it might collapse. The Japanese hence sold the enterprise to Chen Shusen 陳樹森, a Cantonese merchant.³⁰⁵ After the novelty waned, the business turned bad and Qi Yuan was shut down in March 1897.³⁰⁶ According to ZDFZS, when Galon Bocca and Antonio Ramos came to Shanghai, the open ground near Nicheng Bridge was also used for film exhibitions.³⁰⁷

In contrast to the blurry records of Qi Yuan, records about film exhibitions at Tong Qing teahouse were more convincing. A review in SB titled “*Huisheng huiying* 繪聲繪影” (Life-like) introduced a cinematograph exhibition there.³⁰⁸ According to it, the exhibition was arranged after the end of Cantonese opera and music accompaniments were provided, with a Gramophone. In total, about ten views were screened and the pictures were life-like. The show was a success and Chinese audience applauded heartily.³⁰⁹

³⁰¹ “Ding gu xia zhang 丁沽夏漲”, SB 29 May 1898.

³⁰² Xiong, *Shanghai tongshi* 上海通史, band 5, p.357.

³⁰³ According to SB, there were at least two Qi Yuan in Shanghai. One was located at Qipan street 棋盤街 and the other was an opium den. The latter was open prior to 1876. Qipan street was a famous red-light district since 1850s. See “Chiyun peiqiang 吃煙賠槍” (Smoking but Pay for the Gun), SB 22 Apr. 1876.

³⁰⁴ “Qiyuan huankai 奇園緩開” (The Postpone of the Opening of Qi Garden), SB 15 Sep. 1896.

³⁰⁵ “Chidao juchai 持刀拒差” (With a Knife against the Officials), SB 17 Jun. 1897.

³⁰⁶ “Huixun zazhi 會訊類誌” (A Compilation of Trials), SB 6 Aug. 1897.

³⁰⁷ Cheng, ZDFZS, pp.9-10.

³⁰⁸ “Huisheng huiying 繪聲繪影” (Life-like), SB 2 Feb. 1898.

³⁰⁹ “Huisheng huiying 繪聲繪影” (Life-like), SB 2 Feb. 1898.

Makeshift Venues in North China: Gordon Hall and Legation Theatre

The word “T’ien Tsin” means Heaven’s Ford 天津. The city was famous for its strategic position.³¹⁰ Tianjin was the name commonly given to the foreign settlement. The native quarter was known by distinction as Tientsin City (Tie tsin). The Chinese name for the foreign concession was Tze Chü Lin 紫竹林 (Bamboo Grove).³¹¹ Tianjin was originally an area, flat for 100 kilometers around, barely above the sea level and thoroughly waterlogged.³¹² Tianjin was pronounced an open trading port in 1860 and prior to 1902, nine concessions were ceded.³¹³ Tianjin developed rapidly after Sino-Japanese War and was considered “second in importance only to Shanghai itself among the cities of China.”³¹⁴

In 1897, there were already a number of entertainment venues in Tianjin, including “Chinese theatres in the Japanese and Australian Concessions, and a foreign theatre or music hall, the Arcade, in the French Concession.”³¹⁵ Two major social centres were Lyceum Theatre and Gordon Hall. The former was a private enterprise and the latter a Municipal property. Gordon hall was “named for General Charles ‘Chinese’ Gordon, who had helped suppress the Taiping Rebellion and later drew up the plans for Tianjin’s British settlement.”³¹⁶ The Hall was located in opposition of prominence of the British Bund, closed to the Tientsin Club and the Astor House Hotel, and directly across from Victoria Park. The renovation of the hall was finished in 1889. According to a record in NCH, after the renovation, the hall could accommodate four or six hundred people.³¹⁷ Gordon Hall was considered “in all ways superior as a place for

³¹⁰ Tianjin was 100 kilometers southeast of Beijing. It could be entered by three different routes: the Siberian railway route; or from Shanghai by ship either direct or by way of Chin-wang-tao 秦皇島; or from Peking by rail, having journeyed to Peking from Shanghai by the Peking-Hankow railway.

³¹¹ Ibid. pp. 5-8.

³¹² Hershatter, *The Workers of Tianjin, 1900-1949*, p.11.

³¹³ Ibid. p.16.

³¹⁴ Burton, *China Times Guide to Tientsin and Neighbourhood*, pp.1-3.

³¹⁵ Ibid. p.7.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ “Gordon Hall”, NCH 2 Oct. 1899, volume 80, issue 1678.

entertainments.”³¹⁸ It was “the evening resort of the elite of Tientsin.”³¹⁹ Touring companies performed there from time to time, and concerts and dances were also frequently given, chiefly in winter. The hall was designed for multiple functions and it could host a wide variety of gatherings, such as banquet, public meeting, concert, A.D.C. Operettas, dinner, etc.

As a rule, Charvet and Cook’s film exhibitions in Tianjin were following festivals and celebrations. Their joint trip to Tianjin was probably for the Jubilee season. The Jubilee was on 22 June 1897, celebrating the anniversary of Queen Victoria’s occupation of the British throne. In Tianjin, Cook and Charvet’s dual opening was arranged on June 25. The exhibitions were likely part of the celebration programme because public celebrations usually lasted many days. According to a record in NCH, Gordon Hall, where Cook gave Animatoscope exhibitions, was tastefully decorated for the Jubilee.³²⁰ In contrast, Charvet’s Cinematograph exhibitions at Tianjin Lyceum theatre were more commercial.³²¹

After finishing exhibitions at Gordon Hall, Cook travelled to Beijing and screened films at the Legation Theatre. Little was known about this theatre. In a letter to Campbell in 1885, Sir Robert Hart mentioned that he had attended a performance at the Legation Theatre.³²² It indicated the Legation theatre in Beijing was put in use no later than 1885. The Legation Theatre was de facto the British Legation Theatre, a modern theatre located in British legation district.³²³ The theatre was recorded as “a cozy, pleasant box of a place.”³²⁴ The British Legation Theatre, albeit its name, was likely a public space shared by all foreign communities at the legation compound.³²⁵

³¹⁸ Rasmussen, *Tientsin: An Illustrated Outline History*, p.65.

³¹⁹ Hershatter, *The workers of Tianjin, 1900-1949*, p.19

³²⁰ NCH 2 Jul. 1897, volume 76, issue 1561.

³²¹ It was little known about the Lyceum Theatre (Tianjin) or its relation to the Lyceum theatre in Shanghai.

³²² Matheson, *The I.G in Peking*, p. 588.

³²³ NCH 16 Mar. 1887, volume 55, issue 1025.

³²⁴ Matheson, *The I.G in Peking*, p. 588.

³²⁵ NCH 18 Mar. 1885, volume 51, issue 0923.

2.2 Film Activities in 1898

Film activities in 1898 can be roughly divided into two groups, i.e. film exhibition and filmmaking. Film exhibition in this year was sporadic and in small scale. Exhibitors were mainly magicians, who employed cinematograph exhibition as an integral part of their shows. One prominent example was Carl Hertz. Beside him, there were some small-scale film exhibitions at teahouses. An American conjuror, for instance, screened films at Rongchun teahouse 榮春茶園 in June 1898.³²⁶ Rongchun teahouse was likely a popular low-class social place.³²⁷ A review in SB identified his machine as “Ai di chen yingxi 爱弟臣影戏 (Edison Shadow play)”.³²⁸ The review listed some film titles. The best views were *the Queen’s Jubilee*, *Czar’s Arrival in Paris* and *Queen’s Review*.³²⁹ These three views were supposed to help Chinese learn about Western customs and landscapes.³³⁰ Other titles were scenic scenes like “fisher swimming, inspectors being fooled, cars on snowy field, stormy sea, horserace, military fortress, dancing.”³³¹ In addition, there were “yingxi” performances at Jiangnan yizhichun teahouse 江南一枝春茶樓. SB also recorded that the American missionary Bu Huilian 步惠廉 (William Burke, 1864-1947) exhibited “yingxi” when local officials invited him to a dinner. Nevertheless, it is hard to tell whether the yingxi here was magic lantern or cinematograph.

Regarding filmmaking activities, around 1898 the famous lecturer Burton Holmes visited China with his assistant Oscar Depue, and shot numerous scenic and topic views in South China. Although most were still pictures, there were also few filmic fragments. These views were later compiled into “*the Edge of China*”. In the same

³²⁶ “Yingxi qiguan 影戲奇觀” (A Spectacular Show), SB 17 Jun. 1898.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ “Huisheng huiying 繪聲繪影” (Life-like), SB 18 Jun. 1898:3

³²⁹ The original text is: Yinghuang Weiduoliya dengji hou liushinian qingdian 英皇维多利亚登极后六十年庆典; E’guo huangdi you Bali 俄国皇帝游巴黎; Weiduoliya qin chu yuebing 维多利亚亲出阅兵. See *ibid.*

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ The original text is: Yuren qiushui, xunyi shouyu, xuedi feiche, haitian langtao, guangchang saima, yewei junyao, yingxi nǚlang linfeng feiwu 渔人洒水, 巡役受愚, 雪地飞车, 海天浪涛, 广场赛马, 野鬼军要, 瀛西女郎临风飞舞. See “Yousheng youse 有声有色” (With Music and Colorful), SB 19 Jun. 1898.

year, James White, the new head of Edison Kinetograph Department, and his cameraman Frederick Blechynden were assigned to a world tour. They travelled to the Far East and shot a large number of actualities, which were later compiled into “*the Occidental and oriental series*”.³³²

Carl Hertz’s magic show with cinematograph exhibitions

Carl Hertz came to Shanghai per Str. Satsuma Maru from Nagasaki around May 30, 1898. He performed at Lyceum Theatre from May 27 to June 25. His performance was assisted by a charming vocalist Mdlle d’Alton and a Cinematograph exhibition was included in the show. According to a record in NCH, the Cinematograph exhibition formed “so large a portion of the second part of the programme”.³³³ Hertz claimed that the Cinematograph he brought with was an original Lumière Cinématograph.³³⁴ However, Frank Bren records that in 1896 Lumière refused to authorize Hertz a Cinématographe and the latter then acquired a Robert Paul Theatrograph through David Devant, a leading British magician.³³⁵ The quality of the machine was obviously outstanding because Hertz’s Cinematograph exhibition was described as “the most distinct and realistic and nothing so much of wobbler as we have seen”.³³⁶ Hertz’s magic show was so popular that he had to prolong his season in Shanghai.³³⁷

³³² James White’s teamwork with cameraman could be seen as a primary form for the later “collaborative” system, a terminology used by Charles Musser in his study of early American cinema. Richard Adel in his study on French cinema, especially through the research on PathéFrère cited Janet Staiger’s term “director-unit” system of production, “in which each of several filmmakers regularly worked with a small unit (including cameraman and cast) to produce a quasi-independent series of films. White’s collaborative work with first William Hesser and later Fred Ackerman characteristic of a “director” center position as White was the head of Kinetoscope Department of Edison Manufacturing Co. then. The two arrived in China in May 1898. Abel (ed.), *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896-1914*, p.22.

³³³ NCH 30 May 1898.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, p.587.

³³⁶ NCH 30 May 1898.

³³⁷ After his three farewell nights, Hertz reappeared on 15 June. See NCH 20 Jun. 1898.

From the spectatorship viewpoint, Hertz's performance in May was still confined inside the foreign society. Despite the general success of Hertz's magic show, the Cinematograph exhibition, according to a review in NCH, was unsatisfactory. The writer complained that the Cinematograph "wan an unqualified success, as it was much too lengthy and the waits were tiresome."³³⁸ Obviously, in spite of the reliable movie machine, the projectionist was unqualified. The other problem came from the outdated films. According to the review, "the most of the views he [Hertz] exhibited have already been shown in Shanghai and are therefore not novelties."³³⁹ The review kindly advised him to buy in "more natural scenes" and "fewer of the made-up scenes."³⁴⁰ It obviously reached Hertz's notice and films were renewed in the following exhibitions.

At the end of May, Hertz's magic show became so sensational that the fame reached Chinese society. Some Chinese then attended the show at Lyceum Theatre. They later published several reviews in SB. The first was titled "*Guan jia le li fu si xifa ji* 觀加勒里福司戲法記" (An account on Carl Hertz's show). According to it, the Cinematograph exhibition was inserted in the show. After Hertz's magic performance and Mdlle d'Alton's songs, the light darkened out and a large screen was erected on the stage. A projectionist then began to screen films. There were roundly ten views, including "driving, gaming and boxing, marching, birds flying, horserace, arrest, bathing".³⁴¹ Among them, *Xin ü tiaowu* 西女跳舞 (The Western female dancer) was highly praised for the colorful effect of the light changing. In contrast, the editor of SB thought the views of ocean and cavalry were most impressive.³⁴² After the film screening, the magic show continued.

³³⁸ NCH 30 May, volume 77, issue 1608.

³³⁹ *ibid.*

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ The original text is: "Yuche zhineng, xixi boji, bufa, jiaoniao luanfei, nufa du chu, daoyin yu bu, qushui xizi 御車之能, 嬉戲搏擊, 步伐, 嬌鳥亂飛, 怒馬獨出, 盜飲遇捕, 取水洗子." See *Guan jia le li fu si xifa ji* 觀加勒里福司戲法記 (An Account on Carl Hertz's Show), SB 30 May 1898: 3.

³⁴² "Guan shuxi ji 觀術戲記" (A Review on a Magic Show), SB 10 Jun. 1898.

In early June, Hertz became so famous that many privileged Chinese officials came to Lyceum theatre. The new viceroy of Szechuan Yu Lu 裕祿 (ca. 1844-1900), for instance, booked private boxers on June 4. The number of Chinese audience increased so rapidly that a complaint letter titled “A *Growl*” was sent to the editor of NCH, complaining “the place turned into a Chinese ‘sing-song’”.³⁴³ Celestials were passionate for the show and Hertz was invited to perform at Zhang garden. Before the opening show, Hertz published a series of advertisements in SB, announcing the screening of a set of new films.³⁴⁴ According to a Chinese review, in total 11 views were screened.³⁴⁵ Among them, the most noteworthy was “*the call of the fire brigade*”, a Lumière production in 1897. It was praised for being “especially realistic”.³⁴⁶

After giving the last show on June 25, Hertz departed Shanghai for London on the next day.³⁴⁷ A farewell article to Carl Hertz was published in NCH, in which Hertz was praised as a distinguished entertainer and his success in China would encourage many other equally famous London “stars” to try their fortune in the Far East.³⁴⁸

Amateur filmmaker: Elias Burton Holmes and Travelogue

Elias Burton Holmes (1870-1958) was born in Chicago. He became interested in photography since 1883, devoting much time to picture-making in the course of his earlier travels worldwide. In 1893, he gave a public lecture about “*Japan—the Country*” and “*Japan—the Cities*” in Chicago, introducing illustrations all in color for the first time. In the following five years, Burton Holmes’ lectures won an increasing recognition in the cities of the Middle West as well as in the larger Eastern cities. In 1897, he was already using the “original motion picture”, projected by a

³⁴³ “A *Growl*”, NCH 20 Jun. 1898.

³⁴⁴ “Mingyuan shuxi 名園術戲” (Magic Show at the Famous Garden), SB 4 Jun. 1898.

³⁴⁵ “Zaiguan yingshushi gaiyan xifa ji 再觀英術士改演戲法記” (The English Magician’s Renewed Shows), SB 5 Jun. 1896.

³⁴⁶ NCH 6 June 1898.

³⁴⁷ There was a stream record that around July 04, showing that Hertz boarded Str. Sydney for Singapore. See NCH 4 Jul. 1898.

³⁴⁸ NCH 27 Jun. 1898.

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Chronomatographe. For Burton Holmes, cinematograph was an auxiliary as well as an entertainment. He treated it as an advanced magic lantern and employed it to illustrate his lectures. According to him, cinematograph was a special photographic apparatus that had the capability to create a life-like illusion. Cinematograph therefore occupied an important position in his lectures and was often the main attraction of his shows. Holmes' entertaining lecture was later called "travelogues". The word was first presented in 1904 when Holmes was lecturing in London. Holmes' travelogues were characteristic of colored photographic slides and a different series of motion pictures shown at every performance, after the conclusion of the lecture. Pictures were made expressly for exhibition in connection with the topic.³⁴⁹

Holmes' projectionist was Oscar Depue, whom he met first in 1893. Depue was a talented engineer, specializing in optical devices.³⁵⁰ In 1896, both Burton and Depue realized that the audience was no longer content with colored slides and they had a growing rival—the motion picture. In 1897, Depue headed to London to acquire a motion-picture camera but the price was exorbitant. He then went Paris and bought a Chronomatographe, a Demeny camera for 60-mm film from Mr. Leon Gaumont, which was cumbersome and the tripod was crude. They got Eastman Kodak Co. to agree to cut this off-standard film (both negative and positive). The moving picture cameras that they equipped in the 1898 and 1901 trips to China were not Chronomatographe but improved modifications constructed by Depue himself.

In May 1898, Holmes and Depue made their first trip to China, albeit only a "via" journey. The aim was to cover the Manila war, so they did not spend much time in China. The journey started at Vancouver wharf. The team boarded Empress of China to Hong Kong. From there, they visited Macao and Guangdong. The result was a series of lectures – "*The Edge of China*". The camera that they equipped was an improved modification of Chromatographe.³⁵¹ The modification was a large camera

³⁴⁹ Holmes, *The Burton Holmes Lecture: Fifth Years*, p.6.

³⁵⁰ Oscar B. Depue, together with C. Francis Jenkins, wrote "*The Handbook for Motion Picture and Stereopticon Operators*". See Depue, *Handbook for Motion Picture and Stereopticon*, The KNEGA Co., Inc. 1908.

³⁵¹ Boss éno, "Avant les nickelodeons: images mouvantes cherchent spectateurs fixes", in Presses Universitaires de Rennes, *Cent Ans D'aller Au Cinem é*, pp.21-28.

that would accommodate 200-foot rolls of negative, with a portable tripod.³⁵² Holmes, sometimes entrusted his Chinese servant to charge one of the cameras.³⁵³

Details on this trip can be found in *The Burton Holmes Lecture*. Holmes' first impression on Chinese was "decidedly favorable", thanks to the neat Chinese stewards on "Empress of China".³⁵⁴ Holmes also recorded how Chinese superstitiously objected to being photographed and dodged the camera, without knowing that the motion-picture camera was "a photographic Gatling, certain to hit its victim, no matter how fast he may be able to run".³⁵⁵ During his stay in Hong Kong, Macao and Guangdong, Holmes repeatedly encountered this situation due to the isolation of Chinese society at that time. To film Chinese was adventurous. Pistol and local guides were equipped beside camera and tripods.

Holmes' choices of photography subjects could be roughly categorized to two groups, i.e. scenic and topic. The former consisted of oriental landscapes and daily scenes. The latter included topical scenes like privileged personages and sites of political importance. Compared to the random shooting of scenic views, topic views were often carefully arranged. In Guangdong consul quarter, for instance, the consul was asked to stage for Holmes a departure scene of USA representatives, which was played successfully after "three tremendously amusing rehearsals."³⁵⁶

The main obstacle in shooting China was the unwilling Chinese. The superstitious coolies had to be induced by "exhortation and handsome bribes to pass before the camera."³⁵⁷ According to Holmes, there was only one Chinaman in Guangdong who would pose willingly for the photographer, but "he, alas, is but the Oriental prototype of the cigar-store Indian!"³⁵⁸ It was also difficult to capture an ordinary scenic picture. In contrast to the portable photographic camera, movie camera was cumbersome and

³⁵² Fielding, *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television*, p.60.

³⁵³ Holmes, *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, volume 5, pp.143-144.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p.120.

³⁵⁵ Holmes, *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, volume 5, p.121.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.180.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

had a high demand on natural light and geographical condition. Nevertheless, Burton secured several motion pictures in Guangdong, showing canals of commerce in full flood and an animated street.

Professional filmmaker: James H. White (1873-?)

James White was born in the Canadian Maritime province of Nova Scotia in 1872. His career began as gramophone salesman. He then worked for Holland brother at a peep-show parlor in Boston and later toured American cities with a set of Edison's Kinetoscope. As the novelty of Kinetoscope wore off, White went back to peddling gramophones. In 1896, Edison obtained the exclusive parent right for Vitascope (a 35-mm film projector). White's employer Brother Holland bought a set of Vitascope and White therefore joined Edison's company as a Vitascope projectionist. From Oct. 1896 to Nov. 1902, White worked as the head of Kinetograph department.

In 1896, White and his cameraman William Heisse filmed Li Hung Chang's arrival in New York, which was a sensational event then. A year later, he and cameraman Fredrick Blechyden were assigned by Edison into "a ten month international tour to produce film subject".³⁵⁹ They started from New York in August 1897 and headed southwards to shoot south provinces like Florida and Mexico. After that, they went westwards to California. The team arrived at San Francisco in Jan. 1898 and shot several actualit ́s in Chinatown there.³⁶⁰ They then boarded S.s. Coptic for China. In middle of the ocean, they encountered a heavy storm and fell really ill. It undoubtedly shortened their planned stay in China. Nevertheless, they managed to shoot a number of actualit ́s in Hong Kong, Guangdong, Macao and Shanghai. The trip ended successfully in May 1898 and over 130 subjects were copyrighted thereafter.³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ Edison Catalog, or the introduction on *Parade of Chinese* at the website of Library Congress:

<http://www.loc.gov/item/00694278/>

³⁶⁰ *Arrest in Chinatown* (1897, 68ft) was a James H. White production. The cinematographer was Frederick Blechyden. The film was patented on 25 Oct. 1897. *Parade of Chinese in San Francisco, California* (50ft) was patented on 10 Mar. 1898. It was filmed on January 24, 1898. See AM&B Picture Catalogue, Form 266, Nov.

1902

³⁶¹ Edison Correspondent Records.

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The steamer S.s Coptic, one of the best in the occidental and Oriental Company's service, left San Francisco on Feb. 3 for Yokohama. On 7 March 1898, a thanks note was delivered to the editorial department of NCH:

Dear Sirs, --We, the undersigned saloon passengers per s.s. Coptic, have now safely reached Yokohama, desire to express to you our unanimous appreciation of the admirable conduct of Captain Sealby and Officers during our voyage from San Francisco,....

Signed by Mr. James H. White....Frederick Blechynden...et al³⁶²

According to records in NCH, the first half of the journey was peaceful but from Feb. 11 onwards, S.s. Coptic went through a devastating storm. As professional filmmakers, White and Blechynden seized the opportunity and shot several actualit és. The team arrived in Yokohama Harbour around Feb. 22.³⁶³ From there, they boarded S.s Gaelic to Nagasaki and then to Hong Kong. During their stay in Hong Kong, White and Blechynden visited Guangdong and Macao. After that, they boarded U.S.M steamer Doric from Hong Kong for Woosung (Shanghai). From Shanghai, they travelled back to American.³⁶⁴

The journey could be roughly divided into two parts. The first part was from Aug. 1897 to Feb. 1898. This part of journey was supported by the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. The team travelled over extensive railroad lines, mainly in southern and Western parts of America because "this section of the country presented a variety of beautiful and picturesque natural scenery".³⁶⁵ Films were later compiled into "*Southern Pacific Company Series*."³⁶⁶ According to *Edison Films Catalog*, White and Blechynden "had shot a number of animated photographs of interesting and novel scenes."³⁶⁷ Among these subjects, two shorts shot in San Francisco were related to China, i.e. *Chinese Procession* and *Parade of Chinese*. The second part of

³⁶² NCH 7 Mar. 1898, volume 77, issue 1596.

³⁶³ It was likely that the date was 15 Feb. The article on NCH was first published on the Japan Mail of the 25 February. This fact makes it more probably that the date could be 22 February. See *ibid*.

³⁶⁴ The stream was likely S.S.Doric.

³⁶⁵ The Southern Pacific Company (Sunset Route) offers special inducements to winter travelers, by reason of its southern route, especially the direct route to the popular resorts of Southern California, thereby making it a favorable route for tourists.

³⁶⁶ Complete Catalogue of Edison Films, No.94, Mar. 1900.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

the journey was cooperated by the Occidental and Oriental S.s. Coptic of San Francisco and films were later compiled as “*Occidental and Oriental Series*”. In this series, about five shorts were shot on board of S.s. Coptic, showing the steam bravely fighting the hurricane at sea.³⁶⁸ These films were registered and released mostly in May 1898.

White and Blechyden landed in China in Feb. 1898 and departed in May 1898. Within three months, they shot dozens of actualit és in south China. It was a pity that due to heavy illness, they did not go northwards to Tianjin and Beijing. The list of *Occidental and Oriental Series* was published in *Edison Films, Complete Catalogue* in March 1900. Accordign to the list, the series was a selective compilation, with an inclusion of 11 titles (see Filmography I in Appendix II).³⁶⁹ Among them, six titles were taken in Hong Kong. The catalog descriptions indicated that they were mainly ordinary scenes. Although military views like *Hong Kong Regiment* and *Sikh Artillery* had nothing to do with boxers. During the Boxer time, they were dug out and re-edited as Boxer films. In Guangdong, four scenic views were taken. In Macao, the Portuguese settlement, one view was recorded. In Shanghai, three views were shot. The Edison Co. later edited each view into 50 feet and sold for \$7.50.

This batch of views was copyrighted in June 1898, only a month later after White and Blechynden returned to America. The promptness is impressive. Within a month, negatives were developed for the official release. It formed a sharp contrast with Burton Holmes’ negatives, which took several months, even years to be finished due to their off-standard format. In addition, Edison Company provided a whole service for the production unit. The international tour featured professionalism and commercialization. The Company provided advanced cinematographic equipments and professional cameramen. It also cooperated with Southern Pacific Railroad Co. and Occidental and Oriental S.s. Coptic, San Francisco. These two transportation companies covered White and Blechyden’s travel fee and transported

³⁶⁸ Complete Catalogue of Eidson Films, No.94, Mar. 1900.

³⁶⁹ James White and Fredrick Blechydent had shot more films than the above 11. A relatively complete list should include no more less than 14 shorts.

cinematographic equipments without charges. As a return, *South pacific company series* and *Occidental and oriental series* became advertising films for the companies. In this regard, Thomas Elssaesser writes that, in contrast to Lumière brothers, the Edison Co. treated cinema as a “media” and commodity from the very beginning.³⁷⁰

2.3 Exhibitions in 1899

Gabriel Veyre (1871-1936)

In April 1899, the fine hall of the French Municipality was crowned by residents of all nationalities invited by one Mr. G. Veyre to attend an exhibition of photographs in colors. After the exhibition, Veyre screened some films with his “very well perfected cinematograph”. The show was praised for the “almost total absence of jiggling”.³⁷¹ Veyre was a Lumière cameraman. Between February and April 1899, he was in China. He then travelled to Hanoi and stayed in Indochina. Gabriel Veyre’s exhibition in April 1899 was supported by “Shanghai amateur photographic society”. Colored photograph was still a novelty back then. Gabriel was invited to explain to the public how colored photograph was produced. At this point, cinematograph was longer a novelty in Shanghai foreign society, but Lumière’s cinematograph advanced other movie machines in regard of the picture quality. Veyre’s cinematograph exhibition was likely an entertaining cabaret.

Veyre departed Shanghai for Indochina shortly thereafter. It remains unclear if Veyre had shot any films during his stay in China.³⁷² The documentary “*The Lumière Brother’s First Films*” nevertheless introduced three Veyre films, which seem related to China.³⁷³ The first film shows two Chinese men lying and smoking opium in a typical Chinese décor room. The second shows two Western women, probably

³⁷⁰ Cf. Elssaesser, *Film Geschichte und frühes Kino*.

³⁷¹ NCH 17 Apr. 1899, volume 79, issue 1654.

³⁷² Phillipe Jaquier from Lumière des Roses, also the author of “Gabriel Veyre, opérateur Lumière (editor Actes Sud), wrote in a Email to me that “we don’t know if he (Gabriel Veyre) shot a film in China.”

³⁷³ It is a documentary about Lumière brothers, coproduced by Association Frères Lumière and Institut Lumière in 1996.

missionaries, sprinkling grains in a Chinese yard. The third fragment shows a group of Chinese children running. It is noteworthy that this view was shot with camera movement. It is difficult to identify these views as Chinese films because they were possibly shot in Indochina. Here we meet the aforementioned problem again. As Fairbank says, China was such a big concept and in the colonial context, the situation was more complicated. Indochina was originally a part of the Imperial China but it later became a French colony. It was no longer the territory of Manchuria court, but we should not simply exclude it out of China sphere because it was still under Chinese influence.

Ernest Hatch (1859-1927): politician & businessman

The full name of Ernest Hatch was Sir Ernest Fredric George Hatch, a conservative M. P (Member of Parliament) with a particular interest in foreign issues.³⁷⁴ Hatch travelled widely. Through 1899 to 1900, he made a world tour to the Far East and Canada. Hatch arrived in China with Hon. Arthur Crichton from Japan in early December 1899.³⁷⁵ According to records in NCH, Hatch travelled “with a cinematograph and with an expert to take films illustrative of native life in the various places he visits.”³⁷⁶ The record identified the expert as one Mr. Willen.³⁷⁷

Hatch and his team arrived in Tianjin per Str. Tungchow around Dec. 11, 1899.³⁷⁸ During his stay, they gave no less than three exhibitions. At least two exhibitions were held at the Customs Club, “for the benefit of the Red Cross Societies, British and Dutch, now working in South Africa”.³⁷⁹ NCH reported that the room was filled by an enthusiastic audience and the exhibition was very successful.³⁸⁰ Hatch’s third exhibition was given for aiding the finances of Church Building Fund. However, the

³⁷⁴ NCH 19 Sep. 1900, volume 82, issue 1728.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ According to Hatch’s stream records on NCH (to Tianjin, Shanghai, Hankou and Hong Kong), the cinematographer with Hatch was likely S. A. Millen. See NCH 18 Dec. 1899, volume 80, issue 1689.

³⁷⁸ NCH 11 Dec. 1899, volume 80, issue 1688.

³⁷⁹ NCH 18 Dec. 1899, volume 80, issue 1689.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

exhibition had to be cancelled at the last moment because “the gear of the oxy-hydrogen plant went wrong” and the audience was disappointed.³⁸¹

At the end of the month, Hatch and his team headed southwards to Shanghai and there they exhibited cinematograph at Lyceum Theatre. The exhibition was likely also a beneficial one. More than a thousand of children, including several midshipmen from H. M. S Bonaventure, were invited. The exhibition was a collectivization job. It was run by Mr. Willen, with one Mr. Nelson looking after the electric light and one Mrs. Petersen in charge of the musical arrangements.³⁸² The show began with a piano duet and twenty views were screened afterwards, “in batches of four, with a musical interlude by some of the girl pupils of the Public School between each batch.”³⁸³ In the show, views shot by Hatch’s cameraman during their global tour were screened. Around Jan. 3, 1899, Hatch and his team left Shanghai for England via India per Str. Parramatta.

During his global trip, Hatch and his cameraman shot about fifty films. Among them, about twenty films were shot in China, including *Street Scene in Peking* and *An Old Chinese Woman Spinning*. In May 1900, Hatch and his team were back in the Great Britain. Two months later, Hatch gave an exhibition of his films at Lord Wimborne’s house in Mayfair, London in aid of a charity. At this time, due to the Boxer fever, any visual reference to the events in China was hot news. Although Hatch’s films had nothing to do with Boxers, they became popular in the market. Harrison and Co. advertised Hatch’s films under the head of “*Genuine cinematograph films of China*” and in the following months, these views were shown at several London music halls. The company also released Hatch’s other films, including panoramas taken from trains in the Rockies, Geisha Dances and several school scenes taken in Japan.

Hatch later published *Far East Impression*. The book was criticized as “written by the glob-trotters and the circumambulating Members of Parliament after paying a

³⁸¹ NCH 18 Dec. 1899, volume 80, issue 1689.

³⁸² NCH 18 Dec. 1899, volume 80, issue 1689

³⁸³ Ibid.

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flying visit to this country.”³⁸⁴ Although it did not record his film activities in China, the work reveals that beside Tianjin and Shanghai, Hatch and his team had visited many other parts of China, such as Beijing, Shanxi, Hankou, Hong Kong, etc.

³⁸⁴ “Notice of Books”, NCH 26 Aug. 1904, volume 90, issue 1933.

Chapter 3. War Cameramen, 1900-1905

3.1 Film Exhibitions→Shooting Practice: Bioscope and War Reportage

Through 1900 to 1905, the number of cinematograph exhibitions decreased rapidly, due to Boxer Rebellion (1900-1901) and Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). Film exhibitions were mostly sporadic and occasional. They were strongly contextualized in the sociopolitical milieu and embodied evident media heterogeneity. It formed a sharp contrast to the initial round of cinematograph exhibitions in China, which featured the novelty and demystification of movie machine.

Despite the intense wars and the complicated sociopolitical situation, cinema continued to spread in China. According to a report in NCH, “lately more or less enterprising Europeans have entered the interior of China, with modern shows, and amongst these the Kinematograph seems to be most popular.”³⁸⁵ However, China was never again a safe place for itinerant showmen. NCH reported a misfortune happened to a French Kinematograph exhibitor in Guangdong, who “was stabbed in no less than five places” in a quarrel with Chinese.³⁸⁶ After *the Treaty of 1900*, anti-foreigner was officially declared as a crime and foreigners in China gained freedom to enter the Interior. It greatly facilitated missionary work as well as film exhibition in remote areas. Like magic lantern, cinema was employed in missionary’s lectures. In addition, cinema was a popular program for all kinds of meetings. For instance, in Chengdu the China Inland Mission co-operated with Y.M.C.A to hold a three days’ opening ceremony of the new science Hall, during which a Kinematograph screening was given.³⁸⁷ After the allied forces entered Beijing in 1900, many new facilities were erected, including cinema venues. A new arcade, for

³⁸⁵ NCH 2 Dec. 1910, volume 114, issue 2260.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ NCH Feb.10, 1911, volume 1115, issue 2271.

instance, was built on the site of the old one to accommodate more “audiences that visited the popular kinematograph entertainment.”³⁸⁸

During the Boxer time, cinema evolved into a multifunctional media. “Kinematograph might be employed as a useful auxiliary to education in China” was a repeat tone.³⁸⁹ Cinema was treated as an effective propaganda tool. It was consciously manipulated for advocating governmental ideology (esp. patriotism). A prominent example is military film. In the wartime, there was a huge demand for military films and dozens of foreign cameramen were dispatched to China, with the support of allied forces.

Bioscope exhibition in China: Thomas Jessop Stevenson

In the interrupted session, although large-scale film exhibition was rare, it does not mean that there was no cinematograph exhibition at all. In this period, various models of movie machines appeared in China, such as Bioscope, Mutoscope, Biograph, Kinematograph, Squintograph etc. Among them, the multifunctional Bioscope was particularly popular. This camera-projector was portable. Bioscope exhibition was hence characteristic of flexibility. Given the unstable sociopolitical circumstance, this feature was particularly important. To some extent, Bioscope exhibition epitomized film exhibitions in China during the wartime. In this section, I will therefore conduct a case study on Bioscope exhibition, with a focus on Bioscope exhibitor Thomas. J. Stevenson.

Warwick Bioscope was designed in America by Walter Isaacs in 1897 and sold in Britain. The machine was patented in 1900. Bioscope appeared first at the Theatre Royal, Hong Kong in April 1900.³⁹⁰ The exhibition was an inserted program for a variety show. In China, Thomas Jessop Stevenson, a formerly marine engineer gave most Biograph exhibitions in China.³⁹¹ Like most travelling showmen back then,

³⁸⁸ NCH 16 Dec. 1910, volume 114, issue 2262.

³⁸⁹ NCH 18 Nov. 1910.

³⁹⁰ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.20.

³⁹¹ NCH 22 Aug. 1908, volume 105, issue 2141.

Stevenson left few records. He was charged of having murdered a ricksha coolie in 1908. According to the court protocol, Stevenson “had been in China since 1891” when he was about 23 years old, and “was showing cinematographs in China, and while touring from place to place he lived on a houseboat”.³⁹² A stream record in NCH indicates that as early as 1902, Mrs. Stevenson had been in China and travelled with her husband.³⁹³ The fact that Stevenson “and his family lived on the boat, and slept over the stern” indicated that they probably formed a “family troupe.”³⁹⁴

Stevenson gave Bioscope exhibition for about two years (Autumn 1901-January 1903). In Sep. 1901, he planned three “Imperial Bioscope” shows at Masonic Hall, Shanghai. The machine was advertised as “Stereo-Bioscope.”³⁹⁵ The shows were all well received and Stevenson henceupon arranged more shows in December. After finishing exhibitions in Shanghai, Stevenson probably took the machine to Tianjin and enjoyed a short but successful season at Gordon Hall.³⁹⁶ In Jan. 1903, “the Imperial Bioscope” appeared at Theatre Royal in Hong Kong.³⁹⁷ Stevenson showed this time “views of China life”, including “Street incidents in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing etc. and a ride down the Peak Tramway.”³⁹⁸ The quality of pictures was “exceedingly good”.³⁹⁹

In contrast to the movie machines that were employed in early film exhibitions (esp. Animatoscope and Cinematograph), Stevenson’s Bioscope was evidently advanced. According to reviews in NCH, the picture and every photograph “were excellent throughout”.⁴⁰⁰ “The display fully justified the claims made on behalf of the Stereo-Bioscope was being an advance on any machine of the kind previously shown

³⁹² “H.M. Police Court, Rex. V. T.J. Stevenson”, NCH 26 Sep. 1908, volume 105, issue 2146.

³⁹³ NCH 29 Jan. 1902, volume 85, issue 1799.

³⁹⁴ NCH 26 Sep. 1908, volume 105, issue 2146.

³⁹⁵ NCH 3 Dec. 1902, volume 86, issue 1848.

³⁹⁶ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.23.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ NCH 18 Sep. 1901, volume 84, issue 1780.

here”.⁴⁰¹ However, the success of a film exhibition depended heavily on projectionist’s skill and experience. Stevenson was probably not a professional projectionist. In his opening exhibition of animated pictures in December, there was “a patch on one side of the screen, probably due to a slight derangement of the light” and “an error of judgment was made in displaying a picture representing the Passion Dance”, which resulted in an evident disapproval among audiences.⁴⁰²

Noteworthy is that audiences already paid great attention on film content and film was called “animated photographs”.⁴⁰³ Stevenson got many recent newsreels from Pathé such as *King Edward VII Opens His First Parliament* and *Funeral of Queen Victoria*. He also got titles like *The Derby 1901* from Warwick Trading Co. After his initial Bioscope exhibitions, in December 1901 Stevenson renewed his films (See Table III in Appendix I). A batch of new titles was added and film genres were diversified. It was likely that through Pathé Stevenson got some Mètrès trick films, including *Cendrillon* (Cinderella). He also bought in a number of Edison films, which was a mixture of up-to-date films and old classic selections. Titles like *The Cragg Family*, *The Gordon Sisters Boxing* and *Love in a Hammock* were Edison new films patented in 1901. Titles like *Passion Dance* and *the Old Kiss* (the famous *May Irwin Kiss*) were outdated Edison productions made in 1896. The mix strategy proved successful. Local views like “*The views of Shanghai Police Force*” were also included.⁴⁰⁴ The strategy of screening local scenes for local audiences was not new but effective because audiences usually responded to these familiar scenes warmly. Stevenson probably shot this view by himself because Bioscope was a combined camera-projector.

From the viewpoint of spectatorship, Stevenson’s exhibitions had no essential difference from previous film exhibitions in China. The target audience was foreigner. In Shanghai, Stevenson’s exhibitions were held at Masonic Hall, a regular meeting

⁴⁰¹ NCH 3 Dec. 1902, volume 86, issue 1848.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

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place of the foreign society. Masonic Hall went through a big renovation recently and the new hall had a very good stage effect. Stevenson enjoyed there an enthusiastic appreciation for his newsreels exhibitions in September 1901. Most audiences were foreign residents. Among them, British residents occupied the largest proportion. Like the first round of film exhibitions in 1897, the “true life” pictures about homeland and royal family helped relieve British residents’ nostalgia feelings. After three exhibitions in September, audiences got bored and they asked for new pictures. Stevenson hence renewed films. The result was satisfying and the exhibition played to a full house.

In general, Stevenson’s career as cinematograph showman was not successful. Although he was in China as early as 1891, his Bioscope exhibition was in small scale and sporadic. Compared to film pioneers who entered the picture later than Stevenson, such as A. E. Lauro, Antonio Ramos and Benjamin Brodsky, Stevenson’s career was dim and tragic. The life as a travelling showman was obviously hard. Stevenson and his wife were serious sick in 1908 and lived in a boat-house. He later sent his wife to Nursing Home. Stevenson got drunk often and one night he got involved in the murder of a ricksha coolie. He was adjudicated “not guilty” but was sentenced to imprisonment for some time. After that, he seemed disappeared.

The next appearance of Bioscope was in July 1903. One W.A. Davis gave three shows at the Amoy Club Theatre. The Bioscope was operated by Mr. W. Baxter.⁴⁰⁵ In August, Davis gave another “Magic Up-to-date” show at Lyceum theatre. The performance again ended with a Bioscope exhibition. Among the views, “the collision between two trains on the Canadian Pacific Railway caused hearty laughter.”⁴⁰⁶ This view was likely R.W. Paul’s *A Railway Collision* (1900). Compared to T.J. Stevenson’s “the Imperial Bioscope”, Davis’ Bioscope was only an inserted program. In September, W. Baxter and W. A. Davis boarded str. Lienshing for Yantai (Cheffoo).⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ NCH 7 Aug. 1903, volume 88, issue 1878.

⁴⁰⁶ NCH 28 Aug. 1903, volume 88, issue 1881.

⁴⁰⁷ NCH 18 Sep. 1903, volume 88, issue 1884.

With the onset of Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the censorship on Bioscope exhibitions became strict. In March 1904, an article in NCH recorded an official obstruction of exhibiting Bioscope. One Bioscope exhibitor who held an official permission to exhibit in various inland cities proposed to “rent a place and give exhibitions in Hangchow”, however after he made necessary arrangements and came to Hangzhou, the local high officials surprised him with the bland announcement that “to avoid anything that might give rise to trouble, on account of the war in the North,” the exhibition was to be banned.⁴⁰⁸ The review sympathized with the exhibitor and criticized the retrogressive Chinese officials, arguing “exhibitions of this kind are appreciated by the Chinese, and have an educational value greater than might at first be thought”.⁴⁰⁹ During the wartime, some reporters used Bioscope as camera for covering war reportages. The correspondent of the “*Sphere*”, someone named as “R.”, for instance, found his way into Port Arthur and while arranging his Bioscope he was unfortunately ordered out of the city.⁴¹⁰

In addition, Biograph appeared at a party in Fuzhou, as an inserted program.⁴¹¹ Biograph theatres with vocal and instrumental music by the phonograph were installed on transatlantic streamers.⁴¹² Beside Bioscope, in this period other projectors (e.g. Mutoscope and Biograph) also appeared in China. NCH reported a fire accident, in which a number of Mutoscope machines survived in one damaged house but the water had injured films.⁴¹³

Film exhibition’s multifunction and the shift to shooting practice

In the wartime, cinema became multifunctional. Cinematograph was employed on various occasions. NCH records show that cinematograph was used as theater prop,

⁴⁰⁸ NCH 31 Mar. 1904, volume 89, issue 1912.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ *Sphere* was a British illustrated newspaper (1900-1964). The R. here was probably the famous Joseph Rosenthal. See NCH 24 Feb. 1905, volume 91, issue 1959.

⁴¹¹ NCH 21 Nov. 1900, volume 82, issue 1737.

⁴¹² NCH 5 Dec. 1900, volume 83, issue 1750.

⁴¹³ NCH 8 Jan. 1904, volume 89, issue 1900.

photographic technology, additional entertainment for old-fashioned lectures as well as a means for fundraising. Despite social upheavals and wars, film exhibitions made several progresses in this period. Although film exhibition was a risky enterprise, exhibitors reached the interior part of China like Hubei, Hunan und Yunnan provinces. Along with the wave of anti-foreigner and anti-imperialism, the Chinese nationalist feeling emerged and cinema was employed in nationalism movements for educating people.⁴¹⁴ Notable was that public film screenings also emerged in this period. In June, on occasion of French National Fete, the International Settlement in Shanghai arranged a series of celebrations and public film screening was included. After Boxer Rebellion (ca. 1901), the social order was gradually restored. In the following two years, itinerant showmen continued to screen films at makeshift venues like Chinese teahouses and Western-style theatres, though their exhibitions were mostly disorganized and in small scale.⁴¹⁵

Boxer movement and Russo-Japanese War, to some extent, functioned as “stimulati” for the spreading of cinema in China. They helped cinema find its own identity and root in Chinese soil. Nevertheless, “stimulati” was inevitably accompanied by “antipathy” and “resist”. For Chinese, cinema was in association with “foreign” and “missionary”. In the Boxer time, cinema was demonized as devils toy. This section of film history serves as an illustrative example of Jean Piaget’s knowledge development theory that emphasizes on the process of assimilation and association. The siege of alliance cleared the road for the exportation of foreign commodities to China, with an inclusion of cinematograph. Shortly thereafter, *the Treaty of 1900* was signed and it provided an opportunity for the further spreading of cinema. Through the Boxer movement and the following Russo-Japanese War, the Manchu court and its conservative party became weakened. There was an evident progress regarding cinema in north China, where conservative parties camped. As allied forces stationed

⁴¹⁴ NCH 25 Jul. 1900, volume 82, issue 1720.

⁴¹⁵ Some disputes and law suits appeared due to disorder. In 1902, a law suit was brought to court between M. Haimovitch and E.T. Brewer. According to a NCH report, the latter and a man named Newton were engaged to work a cinematograph show for some Chinese. They gave a performance at a theatre in Fuzhou Road 福州路 and hired a piano, but there was no repay of the music instrument. See NCH 22 Oct. 1902, volume 86, issue 1837.

in various trade cities, concessions were ceded and new treaty ports were opened, a huge demand for popular entertainment was created along with the rapidly growing number of foreign residents. Consequently, a number of movie theatres were constructed.

Instead of the disrupted film exhibitions, there were many shooting practices. Dozens of foreign cameramen were dispatched to China to record war scenes. As a rule, their film activities were characteristic of propaganda. Thanks to its marvelous “fidelity”, cinema soon became an effective tool for war reportage and the focus was on shooting important personages and historical events like “the arrival of Field Marshal Count von Waldersee in Shanghai.”⁴¹⁶ In contrast to textual reportage, cinematographic reportage, with its ultimate accuracy, enabled audiences to relive the scene.

Nevertheless, war reportage was a challenge. For many film companies, sending camera team to the front was an economical burden. Even they succeeded to do so, given the military circumstances, it was extremely difficult to capture the real war scenes. In addition, to transport negatives back to home country was inconvenient.⁴¹⁷ A large number of fake war films were therefore produced in film studio. During the Russo-Japanese War, the made-up war films were deluged with an ill repute. The view that cinematograph equalled reality was mocked and revised. NCH recorded an interesting anecdote that a Parisian reporter saw a strange advertisement: “Thirty reliable men wanted as supers for cinematograph. Apply at eight o’clock to-morrow morning behind the Tenon Hospital.”⁴¹⁸ The reporter then disguised as unemployed and went to the spot. A theatrical-looking individual then scrutinized him carefully and told him that “an attack on Russian outposts by Japanese troops under General Oku was to be enacted on the spot and recorded by a cinematograph.”⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ NCH 3 Oct. 1900, volume 82, issue 1730.

⁴¹⁷ NCH 2 Nov. 1906, volume 98, issue 2043.

⁴¹⁸ “A Modern Industry”, NCH 23 Sep. 1904, volume 90, issue 1937.

⁴¹⁹ NCH, Sep. 23, 1904, volume 90, issue 1937. A Modern Industry

Shooting Practices during Boxer Time and Russo-Japanese War

Shooting practices appeared in China almost simultaneously with the beginning of film exhibitions. On Sep. 18, 1897, Maurice Charvet showed the local street view to the audience in Shanghai. This experiment proved a huge success. The view was demanded by audiences to show twice.⁴²⁰ Shooting practices increased from 1898 onwards. A wide variety of globetrotters travelled to China and among them, many were amateur filmmakers. At the end of Nineteenth century, along with the geographical discovery and colonial process, there was a huge demand on films about foreign countries and customs. Given the circumstance, film companies pushed their star directors and cinematographers into international trips. The history of this kind of filmmaking can be traced back to the Lumière brothers, who dispatched their cameramen into world tours to promote Cinématographes shortly after the machine was invented in 1895. To make demonstrating exhibitions attractive, projectionists often shot local scenes to create an emotional bond with local audiences. Other film companies soon emulated it. In 1898, Edison Co. assigned its star producer James White and his fellow cameraman Fred Blechynden into a “foreign tour”, including the Far East. A year later, Société Lumière sent out Gabriel Veyre to the Orient. Gabriel Veyre spent a long time shooting Indochina, a French protectorate at that time. Unlike James White and Fred Blechynden, Veyre’s primary task was to promote “Cinématograph”.

As a rule, filmmakers came to China for Boxer Rebellion and Russo-Japanese War. The former was particularly important in regarding filmmaking. The event shocked the world and attracted an unprecedented number of cameramen to China. Although at the beginning stage of the movement, foreign cameramen camping in Philippine islands for Philippine-American War were summoned to China, their shootings did not achieve a broader attention. As the conflict escalated in the summer of 1900 (esp. the Siege of Legation), a “Boxer fever” appeared in Western countries. Any film related to Boxer or China was hot in the market. With the governmental support,

⁴²⁰ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.18.

many film companies dispatched cameramen to China. Nevertheless, due to the long journey when they arrived, the event was almost over and they only managed to capture the aftermath.

In 1904, the Russo-Japanese War broke out. The war was, to some extent, a consequence of the Boxer movement. During the Boxer time, Russian and Japanese forces increased rapidly in northeast China and their competition inevitably led to war. Cameramen were again sent with soldiers on battle fields and in camp, to form a complete pictorial history of the war. However, compared with the Boxer time, the number of cameramen dispatched during the Russo-Japanese war decreased obviously. Charles Urban, though, kept his taste for actualités and sent his ace cameraman Joseph Rosenthal (with Japanese) and George Rogers (with Russian) to the front.⁴²¹ As a rule, most film companies adopted a more economical strategy to meet the market demand. Old boxer-time negatives were dug out and re-edited to form Russo-Japanese war series. In addition, a large number of war enactments were promptly made. In America, William Selig presented “*Naval battles between the Russian and Japanese fleets at Port Arthur and Chemulpo*” in March 1904 and it was only less than two months after the original battle. In April, Edwin S. Port produced two successful enactments for Edison Company: *Skirmish between Russian and Japanese Advance Guards* and *Battle of Chemulpo Bay*. In France, although Pathé had sent an operator to cover the reportage, to compete with these “timely” enactments, the company was “obliged to bring before the public immediately some films relating to the actual state of affairs” and the director Lucien Nonguet hence produced “*événements russo-japonais*”, with 19 separate short films included.⁴²² Meanwhile, Georges Méliès produced the symbolic trick film *Le joyeux prophète russe* (The fake Russian Prophet).

⁴²¹ Charles Urban divorced Warwick Co. and found his independent company: Charles Urban Trading Co. in 1904 and many former employees came over with him. Among them was the ace cameraman Joseph Rosenthal, who made the name in shooting Boer War. See Mckernan, *A Yank in Britain: The Lost Memoir of Charles Urban, Film Pioneer*, p.75.

⁴²² Supplement for January 1904, Pathé Frères.

In the wartime, cinema was generally treated as “a great pictorial newspaper, constantly in touch with all of the most interesting activities of the world and reproducing them as crisp and fresh as the latest budget of news in daily press”.⁴²³ The most important function of cinema was to chronicle the events promptly. During the Boxer movement, film companies like Biograph were able to record the event of the day with cameras and showed pictures at the up-to-date theatre in the evening the action which had only occurred in the morning or afternoon of the same day. Biograph hence claimed that its Mutoscope reels were “almost as quickly as the daily press gives its news to its patrons.”⁴²⁴ This kind of promptness was critical for cinema to function as a mass media and compete with print press. In this period, cinema was also noticed as a commodity. Cinema was above all a money maker, garnering in the nickels “quietly and unobtrusively”, “working twenty-four hours a day without tiring”.⁴²⁵

In the Boxer time, cinema effectively took part in the carnival of Boxer fever in Western countries.⁴²⁶ It allied with press media and pictorial media, and constructed a “yellow peril” image of China. In the process, cinema began to realize its potential as a mass media, with a strong heterogeneity and connectivity. In aid of its high fidelity, cinema also competed with textual coverages and photographic reportages.

3.2. Boxer Rebellion

—that was the pivotal point upon which the fate of China turned.—David Glass⁴²⁷

The Boxer movement began with Zhu Hongdeng 朱紅燈’s folk sect Yihe tuan 義和團 in Shandong province in April 1899.⁴²⁸ In the early summer, Shandong suffered a

⁴²³ The Mutoscope: A Money Maker, 1898.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin’s terminology.

⁴²⁷ David Glass was a member of Canadian Bar. He was visiting the Far East during the Boxer time. “MR. David Glass on the Situation”, NCH 20 Jun. 1900, volume 81, issue 1715.

⁴²⁸ In Apr. 1899, Zhu Hongdeng founded Yihe Tuan in Shang Dong in the name of Hongdengzhao jinzongzhao tiebushan dadaohui 红灯罩金钟罩铁布衫大刀会. They then initiated the first revolt and changed the name into

severe dryness and it brought the Boxer sect many recruits. Retrospectively, the outbreak of Boxer Rebellion in Shandong was no accident. In Shandong, at that time several railways were under construction. It triggered farmers' hatred because railway was supposed to impede Fengshui 風水.⁴²⁹ The colonization of Jiaozhou peninsula and Roman Catholic Church's interference with local jurisdiction intensified the conflicts.⁴³⁰ In late 1899, the movement prevailed in all parts of Shandong and Chili 直隸 (Hebei).⁴³¹ Boxers threatened to burn down Tianjin and they infiltrated in Beijing in the spring of 1900. In June, boxers got favor of Empress Dowager and the Manchu court declared war with imperialist powers.⁴³² Chinese soldiers attacked the electric railway station at Manchiapu. The railway and telegram between Tianjin and Beijing were cut off.⁴³³ Tianjin was paralyzed. The blockage bred wild rumors and caused panic both in- and outside China. Boxers then surrounded the legation district. The confrontation in legation district continued in July and August. In September, allied forces liberated the legation and the Empress Dowager and royal family fled to Xi'an. It was the famous Siege of legation. Li Hongzhang was summoned to Beijing to negotiate treaty issues. *The Treaty of 1901* was signed afterwards, marking the end of the Boxer movement.

Boxer Rebellion was an anti-foreigner movement characteristic of "fanaticism" and "brutality". Radical slogans like "fan-kywei 番鬼 (foreigners) were all going to be 'finished' and 'slaughtered'" were common then.⁴³⁴ While the nineteenth century

Liulin quan 柳林拳. To avoid the court punishment, the sect was renamed as Yihe Quan 义和拳 and later Yihe tuan 義和團. Yi is "self-respecting righteousness", Ho is harmony and Ch'uan is the first. This high-sounding name was later ironically laughed for being appearing ridiculous in the face of facts. After the revolt spread, they were also called Yihe Tuan 义和团.

⁴²⁹ "Shandong tielu 山東鐵路" (Railways in Shandong), SB 2 Feb. 1900.

⁴³⁰ "Lun ride erguo jianshi laihua shi 論日德二國簡使來華事" (A Review on the Arrival of Japanese and German Embassadors), SB 15 Jul. 1900. "Jiaohui chongtu 教會衝突" (Conflicts with Churches), SB 25 Jan. 1900; NCH 18 Sep. 1901, volume 84, issue 780.

⁴³¹ "Xiangshu Shandong yihetuan naojiao shi 詳述山東義和團鬧教事" (A Thorough Account on Boxers in Shandong), SB 21 Jan. 1900.

⁴³² NCH 4 Jul. 1900, volume 82, issue 1717.

⁴³³ NCH 20 Jun. 1900, volume 81, issue 1715.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

was the “progressive” century, “the century of science” and “the century of chances”, the Boxer movement was feudal and anti-progress.⁴³⁵ Although Boxers were often laughed out by Western press because of their superstition and ignorance, the “obscurity of causes”, “rapidity of developments” and “terrible character of the consequences” notwithstanding intrigued and shocked Western countries. The movement was also a media event. Events like the murder of German Minister Baron Klemens von Ketteler (on June 20, 1900) and attacks on missionaries were widely reported.

After the movement, the alliance countries loathed Manchuria court and became supportive to Chinese nationalist movement. They initialled revengeful acts against boxers and their supporters. The general attitude toward China became harsh and *the Treaty of 1900* was a heavy blow to Chinese economy. Russia and Japan seized the opportunity and increased their forces in China rapidly, which led to the following Russo-Japanese War.

Boxer movement as a media event

“...and like most wars and conflicts it was a big news story, covered by journalists, war artists, photographers and film cameramen alike”⁴³⁶

Early cinema possesses the potential of mediality. Films can be edited or remade for various purposes. The exhibition context provides a wide variety of interpretation possibilities. In this respect, Boxer films served as a vivid example for understanding early cinema’s mediality. The Boxer movement was a media event from the very beginning. The alliance countries sent a large number of journalists to China. Of all the wars in 1900s, the Boxer movement was most international.⁴³⁷ The brutal and fanatical event was characteristic of anti-foreigner and anti-progress. To most Western minds, it was incomprehensible. A Boxer fever hence emerged in alliance countries.

⁴³⁵ NCH 25 Jul. 1900, volume 82, issue 1720

⁴³⁶ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-p.1.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

Boxers adopted a propaganda strategy too. They imitated modern newspapers in Shanghai and issued their own “expresses” (ch’uan-tan 傳單, flyers), which were printed on coarse yellow paper, emanated from Boxer headquarters and disseminated voluntarily in a cunning way. The express promised potential distributors prosperity and freedom. More expresses one distributed, more he would be rewarded. Those who refused would be taken as pro-foreigners and thus be punished. Natives in North China were often threatened by Boxers that if they did not join the Boxer flag their throat would be cut and their livelihood be damaged.⁴³⁸ Superstition occupied a significant proportion in this reward strategy. Some Boxer placards claimed that the rain would not come until the foreigners were destroyed. Renaming foreign items was also a common strategy. For example, the Chinese name of jinricsha 人力車 is Tung-yang-ch’e 東洋車 (Japanese wheel), and it was forced to be changed into Tai-ping-ch’e 太平車 (peace wheel). An exemplary express would be:

Be it known to all that the Chief Disciple, i.e., chief Boxer leaders, has ordered that the street hitherto known as “Tung Chiao-ming-hsiang’ 東交民巷 (Legation street, Beijing) shall from henceforth be styled “Mieh Yang Chi-ming-chieh” (The Street Foreign Annihilation at Cock-crow.) Let no one dare to henceforth give the said accursed street its former name, for his own person and those of his family and relatives will be in danger of fire and sword. Respect this.⁴³⁹

In addition, Boxer movement was characteristic of symbolism. It was embodied in Boxer slogans, badge (the red band around the forehead), flag, costumes and body languages. The movement itself became a symbol of anti-foreign. At the end of Russo-Japanese War in 1906, Celestials still used the boxer flag to express their anti-foreign stance.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ NCH, June 20, 1900, volume 81, issue 1715

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ “Zhuhu falingshi yu wanfu wanglai gedian 駐滬法領事與皖附撫往來各電” (The Letters between An’hui Prefect and French Consular in Shanghai), SB 15 May 1906.

3.2.1 *Cameramen to China in Boxer time*

During the Boxer time, dozens of cameramen were dispatched to China. Among them, there were at least two Japanese, a Frenchman, and possibly a Briton.⁴⁴¹ The Briton here was some “George Scott” who planned to sail on June/July 1900 for China. The two Japanese operators were Shibata Tsunekichi (1850-1929) and Fukaya Komakichi, sent by Yoshizawa Company (Yoshizawa Shōten 吉沢商店) on July 28, 1900.⁴⁴² They were shooting the allied victory in Beijing in August. Gaumont dispatched a mysterious “Monsieur X.X.” whose precise arrival date in China remains unknown. Beside those professional photographers, Burton Holmes again visited China with his cameraman Oscar Depue in 1901. They shot aftermath of Boxer Rebellion for their travelogue, which was titled as “*China*.”⁴⁴³

The most famous filmmakers in this period were Fred Ackerman and Robert Bonine from AM&B and the ace British photographer Joseph Rosenthal from Warwick Trading Co. In this section, based on contemporary records in NCH and trade press like *Variety* and *New York Clipper*, I carry out a case study on Ackerman and Rosenthal, under the reference of Stephen Bottomore’s pattern, i.e. “alliance with military forces vs. individual”.⁴⁴⁴ Fred Ackerman was closely associated with military forces and his shooting was part of the propaganda agenda. On contrary, Rosenthal pursued “a more independent line, and filmed scenes of Chinese daily life as well as of the foreign troops and the aftermath of war.”⁴⁴⁵

C. Fred Ackerman and Robert Kate Bonine

AM&B sent two expeditions to cover the war in China, i.e. C. Fred Ackerman and Robert Kate Bonine (1862-1923). Bonine was son of the photographer R. A.

⁴⁴¹ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-p.7.

⁴⁴² Yoshizawa Shoten was founded by Kawaura Kenichi. It was the biggest and most stable film company in Japan until the formation of Nikkatsu in 1912. See Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, p.708

⁴⁴³ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-pp.7-10.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Bonine.⁴⁴⁶ Bonine joined AM&B relatively later and was dispatched to China mainly for filming the signing of *the Treaty of 1901*. He was likely responsible for some scenic views taken in Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing. Ackerman was an American cameraman and projectionist. He worked for AM&B in June 1899. He was in Philippine shooting military activities when the Boxer movement broke out. He was probably immediately summoned by AM&B northwards to Tianjin and Beijing to cover the pictorial report. Ackerman made a name for shooting military news reels.

Ackerman's travel route inside China was confirmed by NCH. Stream records show that he took str. Peking from Ningbo to Shanghai twice.⁴⁴⁷ Ackerman stayed in China from May 1899 to the end of 1900, filming a large number of precious troop manoeuvres. He was likely the only cameraman who went through the full stages of the movement, which emerged in spring of 1899 and spread rapidly in the following autumn and winter. In the summer of 1900, the movement reached its summit and evolved into an intense confrontation between Manchu-supported Boxers and international allies from June to September. Ackerman's shooting was coordinated by Deutsche Mutoscope & Biograph Co. The aim was to make "wargraphs" (propaganda films), which aided the intervention of international allies.⁴⁴⁸ Additionally, in Beijing Ackerman visited the Chinese statesman Li Hongzhang and presented a set of Mutoscope to him.

At the near end of the Boxer movement, Ackerman returned to the United States and toured the country together with the famous journalist Thomas Millard, presenting a programme of films, lantern slides and commentary titled "*War in*

⁴⁴⁶ In 1907, Robert Bonine left on his fourth tour of the world for making moving picture photographs of different countries, including China, for the American government. See MPW Oct. 1907.

⁴⁴⁷ "Per str. Kiangteen from Ningpo-MR. Ackermann", NCH 27 May 1899, volume 79, issue 1651; "Per str. Peking, from Ningpo-Messrs. Browett, and Ackerman" NCH 18 Sep. 1899, volume 80, issue 1676; "Per str. Peking, from Ningpo- Mr.Ackerman", NCH 4 Apr. 1900, volume 81, issue 1704.

⁴⁴⁸ In the war time, cameras and projectors were renamed by manufactures as "wargraphs" and "warscopes", and moving pictures were organized by exhibitors at venues such as New York's Eden Musee into thematic coherent twenty-minute programs interspersed with magic lantern slides and illustrated songs Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of early cinema*, p.314.

China". In 1908, Ackerman once more travelled to China, working as the advance representative of a vaudeville company for a trip around the world.⁴⁴⁹

"War in China"

Ackerman was sent by AM&B to Philippines to shoot newsreels about the Philippine-America War.⁴⁵⁰ It remains unknown when Ackerman left Philippine and came to China, but it was probably no later than September 1899. A complete catalog of AM&B in 1902 showed that Ackerman made no stay in Southern China but went directly up to Tianjin for shooting the event. Ackerman's Boxer films were later compiled into "*War in China*", under the head of "Military" in the catalog. Military film was at the service of government and its importance was recognized by most governments of the world. AM&B claimed that the company had made many efforts "for securing the most interesting pictures in times of peace and war and "In every case, our operators worked under the direct patronage and with the most perfect co-operation of the respective Governments involved".⁴⁵¹ Ackerman's China campaign was "recognized and assisted by the American, English and German War Departments".⁴⁵² He was mainly in association with the American and German forces.⁴⁵³

"*War of China*" consisted of 26 short films, depicting military activities of allied forces (see Filmography II in Appendix II). Statistically, eight films were shot in Tianjin, fourteen in Beijing and four in Shanghai. The fact indicated that Ackerman's focus was on Beijing, where the famous Siege of legation happened. Most films were

⁴⁴⁹ *Variety* Jan. 1908.

⁴⁵⁰ The war was broke out on 4 Feb. 1899 and soon escalated to "battle of Manila", which was a part of the Spanish-America War. The Spanish-American War was a conflict in 1898 (25 Apr.—12 Aug.) between Spain and the U.S., effectively the result of American intervention in the Cuban War of Independence. American attacks on Spain's Pacific possessions led to involvement in the Philippine Revolution and ultimately to the Philippine-American War.

⁴⁵¹ AM&B Picture Catalogue, Form 266, Nov. 1902.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-p.1.

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of military interest, with an inclusion of important military personages. Ackerman first followed the Field Marshall Count von Waldersee and recorded the latter's grand review of the allied forces. Relevant titles were like *Russian Sharpshooters*, *Russian Artillery*, *Von Waldersee and Staff* and *Von Waldersee's Review*. After that, Ackerman was "embedded" with Lieut. Col. Theo. J. Wint. Notable was that many of Ackerman's war documentaries were de facto remakes or reproductions that he shot on the spot. For instance, in Beijing Ackerman staged the *Assault on the South Gate*, representing Sixth United States Calvary's famous assaulting on the gate. The film was recommended by AM&B as "an historical scene of great interest".⁴⁵⁴

"*War in China*" also included scenic views, such as *An Army Transport Train*, *Coolies at Work*, *Ruins of Tien-Tsin-Tien—Tsin* and *A British Donkey Train*. Among them, *Ruins of Tien-TSIN-Tien-Tsin* was a "Panoramic view of the ruins of Tien-Tsin from the river, after the bombardment by the allied forces".⁴⁵⁵ It was likely the only panoramic view that Ackerman shot in China. In Shanghai, although it was far from the war field, Ackerman continued to capture military scenes in *British Rajputs*, *Fourth Ghorkhas*, *The fourth Goorkhas* and *Second Queen's Rajputs*, showing British-Indian army marching northwards to Tianjin and Beijing.

"*War of China*" was obviously propagandistic. According to Stephen Bottomore's investigation, Ackermans' shorts were sent back to the United States and had "been recognized and adopted as official by several branches of the Government" and "in Germany, the entire exhibition of the Military Views by the Mutoscope was under the charge and control of the German Flotenverein, the official Naval Society."⁴⁵⁶ "*War of China*" was also appealing to the public interest. These sensational views enabled audiences to relive the real battle. In contrast to the studio production, Ackermans' on-the-spot reenactments had an "enormous historic value".⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-p.1.

⁴⁵⁵ AM&B Picture Catalogue, Form 266, Nov. 1902.

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

Bonine's scenic China

Pictures of strong local interest were categorized into the section of “Scenic” by AM&B, according to its 1902 complete catalog.⁴⁵⁸ Scenic views appeared almost simultaneously with the invention of cinema. Early film companies all participated in making scenic views.⁴⁵⁹ The first batch of Lumière films like *the Arrival of Train* and *Workers leaving the Lumière Factory* all belonged to this category. As the novelty of local scenes wore off, the public asked for films of foreign interest. Lumière brothers hence dispatched cameramen to all corners of the world, e.g. the aforementioned Gabriel Veyre to China. In the same vein, Edison Co. sent James White and cameraman Fredrick Blechyden into a ten-month international trip.

Although Ackerman and Bonine was assigned to make Boxer films. In the process, they also shot some scenic views, to which Bonine contributed the most. Bonine was sent to China in 1901, almost a year later than Ackerman's trip. At that time, the Boxer movement was almost over and Bonine hence shot many scenic views. Bonine entered China in September 1901 per Str. Nipion Maru from Hong Kong.⁴⁶⁰ A record in NCH shows that he left Tanggu to Shanghai in the same month.⁴⁶¹ The time span fitted the negotiation of *the Treaty of 1901*. Bonine was probably commissioned for filming this event.

Most scenic views that AM&B copyrighted were released evidently later than military views (“*War in China*”). It was likely that they were shot by Bonine during his trip in 1901. In total, there were no less than 20 subjects under the head of “Scenic” (see Filmography III in Appendix II). Scenes were mainly shot in Tianjin, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. In Beijing, subjects like “*A Chinese Market*”, “*The Forbidden City*” and “*The Chien-Men Gate*” were taken. Views from Shanghai were like “*Street in Shanghai*”, “*Shanghai from a Launch*”, “*In old China*” and “*Harbor of*

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*.

⁴⁵⁹ Lumière brothers filmed scenes in French and later expanded to the whole Europe. Edison Manufacturing Co. first filmed metropolitan bustle scenes in east coast, later expanded to the remote southern and Western parts of the country.

⁴⁶⁰ “Per Str. Nipion Maru-From Hongkong, R.K.Bonine”, NCH 4 Sep. 1901, volume 84, issue 1778

⁴⁶¹ “Per str. Hsiehho, from Tangku, Bonnie”, NCH 18 Sep. 1901, volume 84, issue 1780.

China". Subjects like British Sikh policeman, every-day traffic, the Bund, harbor composed the typical scenes for this cosmopolitan city in China. In Hong Kong, two scenes were taken, i.e. "*In Old Hong Kong*" and "*The Queen's Road*."

Tianjin was given special attention because it was the main battlefield in Boxer time. About seven views were taken there. Landmarks like Taku Road, Pei-Ho River, French Bridge and the newly rebuilt railway were filmed. Among them, the scene of Taku Road shows "the primitive methods of transportation and a Chinese street cleaning department at work" and the scene of United States officers in jinricsha shows a "characteristic life" in China.⁴⁶² Both views were "very fine pictorially and photographically", indicating a significant technique progress in shooting scenic views.⁴⁶³ The camera position was not fixed and the same subject would be shown with views taken from different perspectives and angles. For instance, two different views of French Bridge were taken to show "a remarkable gathering of representatives of various nations on the French Bridge over the Pei-ho" and "the traffic".⁴⁶⁴ There were also many panoramic views. Two separate panoramic views of Tianjin from a launch on the Pei-Ho river were taken.

Joseph Rosenthal—a much travelled cinematographer

"From there I went to Peking, with the expedition during the Boxer trouble. I saw the whole place smashed up, and went through the Forbidden City. Really, the thing wasn't so bad as the press made it out."⁴⁶⁵

Joseph Rosenthal was born in east London with a humble Jewish background. He first worked as a pharmaceutical chemist.⁴⁶⁶ In 1896, he joined Maguire & Baucus Company where his sister Alice worked as a film stock keeper. Two years later,

⁴⁶² AM&B Picture Catalogue, Form 266, Nov. 1902.

⁴⁶³ A prominent example was AM&B's "*the Series of Niagara Falls*". The fall was filmed from various perspectives and angles. All sections of the fall were thoughtfully exhibited, from "the upper rapids, across the Canadian and American Falls and as far down as the cantilever bridge." See AM&B Picture Catalogue, Form 266, Nov. 1902.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ "A Much Traveled Cinematographer," MPW Jan.—Jun., 1909.

⁴⁶⁶ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-p.7.

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Charles Urban formed Warwick Trading Co. out of Maguire & Baucus and Rosenthal was assigned as cameraman, first in Europe and then in South Africa. Rosenthal made his fame with his prominent filming on Boer War (1899-1902). After filming the war in South Africa, in June 1900 Rosenthal returned to London. In early August, he departed London for China, commissioned by Warwick Trading Co. to film the Boxer trouble in China.⁴⁶⁷ For this assignment, Rosenthal brought with him Warwick's new panoramic tripod-head, aka "revolving tripod", which enabled him to "depict larger areas than in a static shot and could also impart some extra movement to the image."⁴⁶⁸

According to a record in NCH, Rosenthal arrived in Shanghai around 26 September.⁴⁶⁹ He then headed northwards to Tianjin and Beijing. Rosenthal arrived in Beijing at the end of October. By then the main conflict was over. To satisfy the audience back home, Rosenthal filmed characteristic Chinese life. At the end of November, he was back in Shanghai.⁴⁷⁰ Rosenthal stayed in China until the end of the year and then embarked for the Philippines to film the war there.⁴⁷¹ In May 1901, Rosenthal appeared again in China and he probably went to Australia afterwards, for filming a congress conference there.⁴⁷²

The first batch of Rosenthal's films (ca. 40 films) was advertised by Warwick Co. in early November. Most films were taken in Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing. The company promoted those "Genuine Chinese Films" together with the name "Rosenthal", in regard of the latter's fame as "a much travelled cinematographer"

⁴⁶⁷ Rosenthal and another Warwick's photographer Mr. Seymour, who left India for China on June 22, formed War Staff for the company. Warwick Co. expected that the "first consignment of Genuine Chinese War Film Negatives" would be received "[in] the latter part of September." Ibid. p.11.

⁴⁶⁸ John Barnes noted that Rosenthal had used this apparatus "to good effect" in his China Films. Examples are like *Circular Panorama of Hong Kong Harbour*, *Curious Natives on Shanghai's Streets*. Ibid. p.14.

⁴⁶⁹ "Per str. Bengal. From London, Lieut. S.A. Hiekley, Messrs. E.N. Hopkins, Ws Hayes and J. Rosenthal", NCH 26 Sep. 1900, volume 82, issue 1729.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid. p.11

⁴⁷¹ Ibid. p.14

⁴⁷² According to the record "Per str. Tungchow, From Tangku, Mr. and Mrs. Kleinnan, Messrs. Jamieson, Rosenthal, Dulkewick and Holye", the Rosenthal here was likely the J. Rosenthal, but can not be confirmed. See, NCH 8 May 1901, volume 83, issue 1761 and "A Much Traveled Cinematographer," MPW Jan.—Jun. 1909.

after filming Boer War.⁴⁷³ Only one view survived, i.e. *Nankin Road, Shanghai*. The Warwick catalogue described it as:

“an excellent street scene, owing to the varied character of the vehicles, and the cosmopolitan character of the pedestrians. Here are shown rickshaws, hansoms, a Chinese fourwheeler with a native driver and his pigtail, a European lady on a bicycle sedan chairs, a detachment of Sikhs, Palanquins and German officers.”⁴⁷⁴

According to the description, the view bore no fundamental differences from ordinary scenic views that James White and Fred Blechyden shot two years ago. The strong oriental sense was embodied by symbolic Chinese elements like rickshaw and pigtail. Rosenthal’s films were hence concluded as “travelogue-type views”, which focused on everyday life of local Chinese.⁴⁷⁵ It formed a sharp contrast to Ackerman’s military interest films.⁴⁷⁶ Rosenthal’s choice of film subjects was probably advised by his company. Compared to military views’ narrow usage, oriental scenes can be edited and interpreted on various occasions. This strategy proved successful. In the following Russo-Japanese War, these films were dug out and remade into newsreels. Rosenthal nevertheless did not entirely reject war-reminders. Films were more saleable if “any military personnel or other reminders of the war” were contained.⁴⁷⁷ In street views, pictures of Sikhs and German officers were included.⁴⁷⁸ Rosenthal also filmed the location where the famous Field Marshall Count Von Waldersee entered Beijing on October 17, 1900. According to the Warwick catalogue description, this film was “an imposing film of an historic event”.⁴⁷⁹

Noteworthy is that Rosenthal conquered many difficulties and shot at least two films in the strategic fortified Port Arthur. Port Arthur was located across the Bo Hai part of the Yellow Sea from Tianjin. Geographically it was in easy reach but due to its

⁴⁷³ “A Much Traveled Cinematographer,” MPW Jan.—Jun. 1909.

⁴⁷⁴ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-p.12.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-p.12.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid. p.13.

⁴⁷⁸ It was suggested by film titles like *The Sikh’s Camp at Shanghai*, *Foreign Warships off the Bund at Shanghai*, *American Transport Entering Peking*, *H.M.S. Terrible and Other Battleships in Chinese Waters* etc. Ibid. p.12.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

strategic importance, photographing was strictly banned by the Russian authority.⁴⁸⁰ According to Stephen Bottomore's investigation, Rosenthal probably filmed the port "from a passing ship on his way out of China" or "from a smaller vessel that he chartered for the job".⁴⁸¹ It was a panoramic view showing "the arsenal, store-houses, barracks and coast along this fortified settlement, while much shipping is eminent alongside the docks and landing stage."⁴⁸² The view also revealed Rosenthal's convince of the value of a moving camera. The Warwick Co. was thrilled for this view and proudly announced that it "was for the first time successfully" that the port was cinematographed.⁴⁸³

Burton Holmes

"China has been chastised. But now? Thousands of innocent folk have suffered, hundreds of peaceful villages have been destroyed; a few of the supposed guilty have been punished; but the actual instigators of the Boxer outbreak and the more powerful ones who supported and encouraged the fanatics still sit in high places, or, at the worst, loll in a luxurious exile."⁴⁸⁴

In August 1901, a year after the Siege of Legation, Burton Holmes arrived in China with cameraman Oscar Depue. Compared to Holmes' last short stop in South China, this trip was dedicated exclusively to China. The primary task was to film aftermath of the Boxer movement and to expose the true image of China to the world. Holmes and Depue this time chose a land route. They started from Berlin-Warsaw, via St. Petersburg to Moscow. There they boarded the Trans-Siberian Express (July), changed several Russian streams and finally arrived at Manchuria shore. From there they travelled southwards to Tangu 塘沽 (Taku), and later to Yantai and Tianjin. From Tianjin, after five hours' train they arrived at Beijing, the capital of the Celestial Empire and the destination of this trip.

⁴⁸⁰ Port Arthur was captured by the Japanese during the China-Japan War, but wrested from them by the Russians in 1898, since which time it has been solely occupied by the latter. See *ibid.* pp.13-14.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p.117.

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The motion-picture camera they brought with was a “box-like” portable camera that Oscar Depue built in 1900.⁴⁸⁵ It was probably a modification of Oscar Depue’s new camera in 1899, which had a large negative and daylight capacity.⁴⁸⁶ The film they shot was off-standard 60-mm, which proved difficult to handle. Oscar Depue later described the 60-mm as a “passé” because, due to the off-standard format, they could not always obtain film when they needed it, nor could they sell these wide films to the trade.⁴⁸⁷ After the stay in Beijing, they travelled to Nagasaki and Tokyo for developing negatives. In September, negatives were successfully developed in the Yokohama club and they boarded S.s. Coptic for America.⁴⁸⁸

In the last trip, Holmes was unable to dive into the life of Chinese in inner city of Guangdong due to the short stay. This time Holmes and Depue spent most time in Chinese society, shooting ordinary life of Chinese. Shooting Boxer film was the main concern but the result seemed disappointing. According to Holmes, “there is little to remind us that period of horror. Legation-life goes as calmly and luxuriously as of yore.”⁴⁸⁹ Holmes, as the well-known humanist, shared his sympathy for China and its people. He condemned the foreign occupation and said that it had only confirmed the Chinese in their belief that Western nations were barbarian.⁴⁹⁰

Holmes duly recorded the separations and disputes among the Allies with his camera. In Tanggu station, Holmes’ team captured a dispute about railway privileges and control between the Russian and the British. Holmes recalled that as they were planting tripods and taking photographs, the Sikh sentry suspected that they were spies of the Tsar to design upon the transportation system of North China and called the guard by the station-master. While Holmes explained to the British that they ran

⁴⁸⁵ Fielding, *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television*, p.60.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ In 1908, Burton Holmes and Oscar Depue again visited China. It was part of their second world tour. They went first to Hawaii, Japan, and China, and from Hong Kong they took a Dutch freighter to Java.

⁴⁸⁹ Holmes, *The Burton Holmes Travelogue*, volume 9, p. 210.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p.116.

no mission for Russians, a train came from Beijing with a regiment of Germans in khaki uniform. Holmes described the scene ironically as “the exodus of the Allies”.⁴⁹¹

Holmes’ real interest was in scenic views. He was passionate for the “Occidentalized Orientalism”.⁴⁹² Subjects like pigtail, lily feet, chop-sticks, transportations (rikishas, laden carts, over-laden wheel-barrows), social customs (pawnshop, teahouse, theater, sentences, funeral procession) and press media (placard on wall, *Peking Gazette*) were his favorites.⁴⁹³ For him, the street was a perfect place for observing all those symbolic elements: “Being so fascinating and dramatic a spectacle, it would seem a waste of time and money to patronize the theater”.⁴⁹⁴ According to him, only the magic of the motion-picture could reveal the peculiar fascination of ordinary scenes in Beijing.

3.2.2 Staged Boxer films

“From a propaganda viewpoint it is the immediate reactions that count for most.”
—Jay Leyda⁴⁹⁵

The summit of the Boxer movement was the Siege of Legation, which began with little warning and lasted only a few weeks before the allied force liberated the legation district. Only few cameramen managed to cover the Siege, which in turn simulated a great demand on Boxer films.⁴⁹⁶ As John Barnes commented, “So much interest in China had been stirred up by the Uprising that audiences seemed content just to view everyday scenes of this distant land”.⁴⁹⁷ In this regard, Edison Co. dug out James White’s 1898 “*Serials of Oriental*”, added few Boxer actualités and presented them to the market as genuine Boxer films. The British distributor Harrison and Co. advertised Hatch’s 1899 films as “Genuine cinematograph films of China,”

⁴⁹¹ Holmes, *The Burton Holmes Travelogue*, volume 9, p.132.

⁴⁹² Ibid. p.186.

⁴⁹³ Ibid. pp. 139, 148, 186.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid. p.162, 192.

⁴⁹⁵ Leyda, *Dianyng*, p.4.

⁴⁹⁶ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-p.1.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid. p.4.

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insinuating their connections to the ongoing Boxer movement. This kind of “cheating” proved successful. Hatch’s films were praised as “wonderful” and “in great demand” and even lantern slides from his trip became popular.⁴⁹⁸

To some extent, producing fake Boxer films were inevitable. Firstly, it was profitable. Compared with actualities filmed in the Battle field, fakes had two obvious advantages, i.e. economical and timely. War enactments were released when the news was still fresh. As a replacement for the historical events that the camera missed to capture, enactments can be easily reconstructed in studios for the audience to relive the scene. For small film companies that could not afford to organize their own expeditions to the front, fake films enabled them to catch the trend and compete with large companies. Secondly, in the Boxer time there had been many progresses in regarding editing and story telling. Accordingly, films became longer and multiple-shots were popular. A large number of film spectators were nurtured. These spectators already acquired a certain measure of cinematic aesthetic and were no longer content with old single-shot actualities. Although fakes could not totally replace real war films, they provided some cinematic entertaining elements that actualities could not compete. In this respect, enactments created an atmosphere that was more real than the reality.

The demand for Boxer films was so huge that the Boxer event was arbitrarily manipulated into any form of film fiction that dramatic or propaganda purposes suggested.⁴⁹⁹ In *Dianying*, Jay Leyda lists some important Boxer films produced “on Brighton lawns, in French Parks, and on New Jersey farms” and presented to audiences “as authentic records”.⁵⁰⁰ Those films fulfilled propaganda purposes and assured a commercial success. In trade journals like *New York Clipper* and *Variety*, there were numerous advertisements on fakes. Most fakes had sensational titles. Eye-catching words like “beheading”, “attack”, “capture” and “assassination” were

⁴⁹⁸ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XII-p.4.

⁴⁹⁹ Leyda, *Dianying*, p.4.

⁵⁰⁰ To name but a few, *Beheading a Chinese Boxer*, *Boxer attack on a missionary outpost*, *An attempted capture of an English nursery and child by boxers* (Walturdaw, 1901), and the original inspiration for above titles, James Williamson’s *Attack on a Chinese mission*. See *Ibid*.

supposed to stir up audience's interest. The other group of Boxer films was trick film, which according to Jay Leyda, was "less significant as reflections of the Boxer crisis in the film allegories in the infancy years of cinema".⁵⁰¹ After Ching Ling Foo, the famous Chinese conjuror, toured America in 1898, there had been a fever of Chinese magic in Western countries. Accordingly, many trick films relevant to Ching Ling Foo were produced. In the Boxer time, trick film became a new form of entertainment for Western audiences to vent their feelings against Boxers. After Georges Méliès staged and filmed *La Chine contre les Allies* in 1900, the Vitagraph Company in the United States remade it and added a patriotic tone to it.

Boxer fakes were produced mainly in America, the Great Britain and France. Important film companies in America were, to name but a few, Edison Co., AM&B, Lubin Co., Selig Co., Kleine Optical Co. In the United Kingdom, fakes were produced by individual filmmakers or small film companies like James Williamson, Edwards Amet and M&K. In France, they were produced mostly by Pathé Co. and Méliès. In this period, filmmakers from various companies, with their experiences accumulated in the Boer War, realized that promptness was critical for Boxer films to be successful. Studio reproductions were packed as genuineness and put in the market with sensational titles. Many fakes hence became hit films.

America—AM&B, Edison and Lubin

Although AM&B dispatched its cameramen to the front for making Boxer actualités, the company also produced several important Boxer fictions based on the trouble in China, such as *Rescue of a white girl from the Boxer* (1900), *How the Artist Captured the Chinese Boxers* (1900) and *An American Soldier Tortured by Boxers*. These fictions were dramatic, timely and commercially successful.

At the title suggest, *Rescue of a white girl from the Boxer* told the story that "During the Boxer Uprising, Chinese men entrap a white woman during a war scene, and then a dashing white soldier comes to her rescue".⁵⁰² Although the company

⁵⁰¹ Leyda, *Dianying*, p.5.

⁵⁰² Adams, *Seeing the American Women, 1880-1920*, pp. 119-120.

claimed that the story was “based on the trouble in China”, this “dramatic episode” was de facto “largely invented by film makers” and the contemporary political upheavals in China worked merely as a backdrop.⁵⁰³ This film was often criticized for its anti-Chinese stance as well as for simplifying the conflict into “good white vs. bad Boxer”. Nevertheless, the feeling for “Chinese villain” in films was complicated. On one hand, the vicious Chinese was loathed but on the other hand, the mysterious Chinese possessed some witchery power that frightened Westerners a lot. In the same vein, *An American Soldier Tortured by Boxers* shows, “two Chinese Boxers drag in an American soldier, strip him to the waist, tie him to a stake, and build a fire at his feet”.⁵⁰⁴ The torture scene was designed to satisfy audience’s desire for witnessing the cruelty of vicious Boxers. A slightly modified version appeared in *How the Artist Captured the Chinese Boxers*, a comedy produced by Arthur Marvin (1859-1911). In the film, not the innocent white woman but a white artist was approached by two armed Boxers. The artist quickly painted a large rat and the sight of the rat “prompts the hungry Boxers to drop their guns and dive through the canvas after the rodent. The artist then picks up a gun and triumphantly marches them off.”⁵⁰⁵ The story was obviously fictional and the Boxer was laughed out as rat eater.

In contrast to AM&B’s Boxer fictions, Edison Co. conveniently adopted a “buy-in” strategy. It dug out White’s *Occidental and Oriental Series* and added to it few “buy-in” films, to make the Boxer series “China”. The company standardized this series, with each title edited in 50 feet format and sold \$7.50. According to Edison catalog, scenic views were reinterpreted. *Street Scene in Peking*, for instance, was claimed “taken on the ground in front of the Legation, showing British police dispersing a crowd of unruly Chinamen”.⁵⁰⁶ Although not a word about Boxer was mentioned, the ongoing Boxer trouble in China was insinuated by key words like “legation” and “unruly Chinamen”. In this series, the hit film was *Bombardment of*

⁵⁰³ Adams, *Seeing the American Women, 1880-1920*, pp. 119-120.

⁵⁰⁴ “The Laundry Man’s Got a Knife”, *Chinese America: History and Perspective 2001*, p.39.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ *Street Scene in Peking* (1901), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0360037/>

Taku Fort by the allied fleets, a bought-in film from Lubin Co. It depicted a “very exciting naval battle” in Tanggu with “immense volumes of smoke arise from the fleet” to give the audience a chance to relive this famous battle.⁵⁰⁷ Edison Co. probably also bought in Méliès’ *Congress of Nation* and renamed it into *Chinese Mystery*, in which “a beautiful Chinese maiden” was transformed by a Chinese conjurer into “the huge hand of a Chinese hobgoblin” and “an American traveller then appears upon the scene and seizing a huge sword splits open the hand of the hobgoblin”.⁵⁰⁸ The trick film slightly insinuated the conflict between allied forces and boxers. The film was such a success that a film with same title and similar plot was produced by Vitagraph Company.⁵⁰⁹

Beside AM&B and Edison Co., small film companies like Selig Polyscope Co., Lubin Co. and Kleine Optic Co. also joined in Boxer fever and produced a rich number of Boxer fakes. Selig Co. produced *Beheading Chinese*, showing “a line of unfortunates on their knees awaiting the executioner’s sword”.⁵¹⁰ The film was 50 ft and sold \$6.75. The prestige lanternslide producer Kleine Optical Co. also produced some Boxer titles, such as *Boxer on Parade*, *Boxers Entering Peking* and *Boxers Besieging the Legation*. Nevertheless, it was difficult to know whether they were films or lantern slides. Among those small film companies, Lubin produced a vast number of sensational titles, such as *Chinese Massacring Christians* (1900), *Beheading a Chinese Prisoner* and *In the Pillory* (1900). In the last film, the executioner “displays the head to the spectators to serve as a warning for evil doers.”⁵¹¹ Those fakes were “marketed as an actuality straight from the war”.⁵¹² The most famous Boxer fake was *Bombarding and Capturing the Taku Forts*, a Lubin

⁵⁰⁷ *Bombardement of Taku Fort by the allied fleets* (1900), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0302359/>

⁵⁰⁸ Edison Co. classified it as “Class B” film, edited it into 100 ft and sold \$ 12.00. Roan, *Envisioning Asia: On Location, Travel, and the Cinematic Geography of US*, p.100.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ *Beheading Chinese* (1903), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0400221/>

⁵¹¹ *Beheading Chinese Prisoner* (1900), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0212806/>

⁵¹² Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XIII-p.3.

reproduction of the historical battle at Tangu on Jun. 17 1900.⁵¹³ The film was praised as “a wonderful and realistic naval battle.”⁵¹⁴ Noteworthy is the cinematic technique. According to Stephen Bottomore, “There are various similar angles jump-cut/spliced together, all wide shots, and the camera pans jerkily to capture the action, all of which helps give it a quite realistic, shot-as-it-happened quality”.⁵¹⁵

Britain: Amet, Mitchell & Kenyon

In Britain, Edward Amet and his friends from the Waukegan area re-enacted *Execution of Six Boxers*, showing “Boxers armed with curved sword-spears” and “a beheading scene”, with red colored water for blood. This family workshop production was crude, but at that time, it had a sensational impact on the public. The film “provoked the local authorities to curtail the film’s public showing”.⁵¹⁶ Before re-enacting this title, Amet had already faked a Boer war film.

In July 1900, Mitchell and Kenyon timely delivered a series of fake Boxer films, including *Attack on a Mission Station*, *Attempted Capture of an English Nurse and Children*, *The Assassination of a British Sentry* and *The Clever Correspondent*.⁵¹⁷ Only the first title survives. It lasted about one minute and was shot in a fixed point. The film was likely a comedy. The Boxers were played by foreigners wearing pigtailed, Chinese robes and hats. It was obvious enough to see through that they were no authentic Chinese. The distributor also bluntly admitted that it was a fake. Unlike their American peer, the British filmmaker and distributor “were perfectly open that these were *faked* war films and called them exactly this in their ads, even drawing attention to the advantages of fakes over genuine war films”.⁵¹⁸ In Great Britain,

⁵¹³ According to Stephen’s investigation the film survives, but is not identified as a Lubin film and was copyrighted by the Edison Co. on 16 August 1900, less than two month after the real event. Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XIII-p.3.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XIII-p.4.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid. p.5.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid. p.6

these Boxer fakes were popular at that time and were often “the penultimate item on the programme, a typical placing for ‘hit’ items.”⁵¹⁹

France: Pathé

In France, Pathé produced a series of fake Boxer films titled “*A missionary martyred at Pao-Ting-Fou Intervention of the allied troops.*” This series was photographed at a military tournament in France. The 1903 British catalog of Pathé listed several titles from the series, including *An Engagement Near the Walls of Peking* (no. 532), *After the Bombardment of Tien-Tsin* (no. 533), *A Missionary Martyred at Pao-Ting-Fou Intervention of the Allied Troops* (no. 534) and *An Execution in Peking* (no. 535).⁵²⁰ *A Missionary Martyred at Pao-Ting-Fou Intervention of the Allied Troops* was about 100 ft and was probably a hit, showing,

“The Boxers seize a missionary and hang him by the feet over a fire, afterwards setting fire to the mission station. A detachment of the allies comes on the scene and charges them with fixed bayonet, putting them to fight, and killing a good many.”⁵²¹

Compared to M&K and Lubin’s fake films, this series was produced relatively late because it already included the allied victories, which happened at the near end of the Boxer movement.

Like M&K’s Boxer fakes, Pathé’s series had many distributors. It was first distributed by Warwick (from September), then by Walter Gibbons (November) and later by the British Pathé. Between 1900 and 1902, Pathé’s series was screened in no less than three places in Europe. It was praised as “an appreciation of French patriotism.”⁵²² This chauvinistic tone revealed, “how some fakes, with their clear-cut victories by ‘our’ side, were received at the time by some audiences, or at least by some reporters” and audiences might have shared a same “triumphalist reaction”.⁵²³ In practice, distributors often changed film titles. The Warwick Company, for

⁵¹⁹ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XIII-p.6.

⁵²⁰ Ibid. p.3.

⁵²¹ Ibid. p.9.

⁵²² Ibid. p.7.

⁵²³ Ibid.

instance, renamed Pathé's films into *Under the Walls of Peking*, *Chinese Attack on a Mission*, and *Chinese Prisoners and Decapitation*. Warwick Co., with its typical honest, frankly admitted "these films about the war in China, 'are only representations, photographed in France'"⁵²⁴ On contrary, the distributor Walter Gibbons silenced on this issue. The fact that distributors, according to their advertising strategies, can choose to come frank (or not) with the audience, indicated that distributors were also an important part of film post-productions. In addition, distributors sometimes added their own interpretations to make films more saleable.

In contrast, Georges Méliès made no effort to reconstruct Boxer events but developed "a symbolic representation of the struggle in China and one with an unusually pro-China message" in his trick films.⁵²⁵ His *The Congress of Nations in China: A Tropical Creation* served as a prominent example. Although the film does not survive but a catalog description stays:

"A magician presents a circular piece of paper from which he removes the flags of the allies. Then from each flag he produces a soldier from the respective country, and finally he produces a Chinaman. But hardly have the allies seen the latter than they pounce on him and try to cut him into pieces. The funniest part of our story is that the Chinaman escapes in a balloon, with an expression of childish innocence on his face as the allies try to cut him up."⁵²⁶

As mentioned before, in Autumn 1900, Vitagraph Co. remade Méliès' film and released it under the same name. Although both films shared a similar magic trick and plot, there was an essential difference. On contrary to Méliès' pro-China stance, Vitagraph's version had an obvious anti-China tone. In the film, the "Chinee" in "laundry costume" was depicted as a loser. In the same vein, the British filmmaker R.W. Paul produced *The Yellow Peril*, an "allegorical film" with a magic tone. The leading role was "a European conjurer", who helped allied forces defeat and disembody the Boxer.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ Bottomore, *Filming, Faking and Propaganda: the Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902*, Chapter XIII- p.6.

⁵²⁵ Ibid. p.13.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Ibid. p.14.

Conclusion

In short, there were two groups of Boxer films. The first group was Boxer fiction that reconstructed a Boxer scene and was promoted as “genuineness” afterwards. One representative film was James Williamson’s *Attack on a Missionary*. The film initiated the classic narration of Boxer films with attack on missionary, beheading or fire torture, capture of white women and finally the coming of allied soldiers for rescue. Boxer fictions occupied a large proportion of Boxer films and exerted an enormous influence on Western society. Meantime, there was a minor variant of Boxer fiction, i.e. allegorical trick film. It was a combination of Méliès style trick film and the ongoing Boxer fever. One prominent example was Méliès’ *The Congress of Nations*. The second group was Boxer reenactment. Reenactments usually reconstructed a Boxer event in studio or at military tournament. It was aimed for audiences to relive the historical event. Lubin’s hit film *Bombardment of Taku Fort* served as an outstanding example.

In regards Boxer fakes, two issues should be paid special attention to. The first was the “fake” issue. Most Boxer fakes were often promoted as genuineness. Distributors could decide whether to come frank with audiences. Boxer fakes usually had a strong propagandistic tone because most countries were directly involved in the movement. Boxer fakes were manipulated as patriotic narration and with these visual expressions, a “yellow peril” image of China was gradually constructed.

3.3 Russo-Japanese War

At the end of Boxer Rebellion, Russia and Japan increased their forces in China rapidly. The event had given Russia the opportunity to subdue the whole of Manchurian and establish themselves in it, under pretext of “protecting” the railway.⁵²⁸ Russian and Japanese competed with each other intensely for railway

⁵²⁸ For instance, Port Arthur fell into Russian control since 1890 and Niuzhuang 牛莊 was also taken over. NCH 6 Jun. 1900, volume 81, issue 1713.

control in North China.⁵²⁹ For example, while the Russian army stationing at legation district in Beijing drilled, Japanese soldiers carried a similar deed to show their military power as well as to boost soldiers' morale.⁵³⁰ The competition also expanded into the field of film exhibitions in China. The screening of Russo-Japanese war films became a sensitive issue. In May 1905, Japanese residents in Zhenjiang province were so excited about the victorious naval battle against Russia in Tsushima strait that they decided to screen naval battle films for the celebration in June.⁵³¹ They asked Chinese gouverneur for a permit and were rejected because of Manchu government's neutral policy. The Japanese notwithstanding decided to continue the screening but they had to promise not to screen films that would humiliate the Russian.⁵³² Because of the ambivalent meanings of "yingxi 影戲", it remains unknown whether the Japanese gave a lantern exhibition or a film screening, but according to the context, it was probably a film screening, or rather, a combination of lantern slides and films. Interestingly, in this period Western photographers continued to provide lantern slides for the entertaining market. The American Underwood & Underwood Co. released a set of lantern slides about Russo-Japanese war, including 98 photos, shot by photographers from UK, America, Russia and Japan. Among them, James Ricalton (1844-1929), a stereo photograph expert who had visited China several times before the ongoing war, contributed the most.⁵³³

Although the war was fired on Chinese territory, the Manchu court issued an edict, announcing its official neutral stance. After the defeat in Boxer movement, the court could not afford to make enemy with either of the countries. The war zone (the west

⁵²⁹ "An'hui jinguan huiyi wansheng tielu banfa 安徽京官會議皖省鐵路辦法" (The Officials from An'hui Province Discuss the An'hui Railway Issue), SB 31 Jun. 1905.

⁵³⁰ "E'bing lianxi madui beizhan 俄兵練習馬隊備戰" (Russian Rmy Trains Cavalry), SB 1 May 1905.

⁵³¹ Battle of Tsushima (27-28 May 1905), or Ribenhai haizhan 日本海海戰 (Sea of Japanese Naval Battle), was the major naval battle during the Russo-Japanese war. The destruction of the Russian navy caused a bitter reaction from the Russian public, which induced a peace treaty in September 1905 without any further battles.

⁵³² "Kaidao yanzou ri'e yingxi zhi jinshen 關道準演日俄影戲之謹慎" (Caution on the Show of Russo-Japanese war films), SB 13 Jun. 1905.

⁵³³ Xu Guangyu, *1904-1905, Yangjingtou li de ri'e zhanzheng 1904-1905 洋鏡頭里的日俄戰爭*, p.211.

of Liaohé (遼河以西) was pronounced as neutral territory.⁵³⁴ Chinese officers in trade ports were ordered to protect foreigners' safety and personal property, including Russian and Japanese citizens. Despite these efforts, in many parts of China, commercial activities were interrupted by the war and severe economical losses were caused.⁵³⁵ Most Western countries were inclined to maintain a balance between Russia and Japan because a total victory of either side would be a threat to their interest in China. As a rule, their stance was neutral. In contrast to the pan-national Boxer movement, during the Russo-Japanese War, instead of sending cameramen to the front, most Western film companies and individual filmmakers went for cheap and fast reproductions. The war stirred some interest in Western societies but it could not compete with the Boxer fever. As a result, Edison Co.'s buy-in strategy was widely emulated. Film companies dug out old negatives and staged war films. It was economically favorable. Meanwhile, the audience developed a taste for narrative fictions. In this general trend, one exception was the Warwick Trading Co. The company sent two expeditions to the front for filming war documentaries, i.e. Rosenthal with Japanese army and Roger with Russian.

3.3.1 Cinema as propaganda tool and Siege of Port Arthur

In *The Imperial Screen*, Peter B. High traces back the history of propaganda films and considers that the propaganda value of film was recognized by the Hearst organization as early as 1898. The organization advanced capital to Edison and Biograph companies to hype the war with Spain. At the time of Russo-Japanese War, “coverage of international conflicts—or more precisely, its cinematic exploitation for commercial or propaganda purposes—was already an established tradition”.⁵³⁶ It was out of this consideration that both Japan and Russia dispatched cameramen to

⁵³⁴ “Quan zhongxi guanshen jijiu beifang nanmin shuo 勸中西官紳急救北方難民說” (A Suggestion to Chinese and Western Merchants for Rescue Refugees from the North), SB 20 Feb. 1904: 1.

⁵³⁵ “Zhili zongdu yuan zou wei tianjindao zhengshou haishui yinian qiman zheman nianqiri 直隸總督袁奏為天津道征收海稅一年期滿折滿廿七日” (Zhili Viceroy Yuan Present the Annual Report of the Tax Income in Tianjin), SB 18 Jan. 1905.

⁵³⁶ High, *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Year's War, 1931-1945*, p.3.

Northeast China for covering war reportages. In Japan, *Asahi Shinbun* called for films from cameramen to “imbue the minds of the young with a military spirit and a true appreciation of what the nation requires of them in its hour of need.”⁵³⁷

At the beginning stage, America seemed pro-Japan. Filmmakers produced “one-or-two-reel battlefield dramas informing their public that ‘the plucky little Japanese’ were the good guys in the conflict”.⁵³⁸ Notable is the promptness of those films. Billy Bitzer from Biograph Co. made *The Hero of Liao-Yang* (1904) only a month after reports of the actual battle appeared in the US press. The film was likely staged in company’s New York studio and it featured a number of Japanese actors and actions of the Japanese hero. The highlight of the war was naval battles, which consequently became the main subject of war reproductions. The turning point of the war was the battle of Tsushima 對馬海峽海戰 in May 1905. Pathé and Urban made several “naval combat” reproductions regarding this event. Most of them were crude and had incited criticisms from the public. For instance, *Kobe Shimbun* (神戸新聞) reviewed on a recent cinematic show in August 1904 and considered it:

“offering nothing more than toy battleships maneuvering in a small pond by the means of threads. Pistols were fired to replicate the belching of naval guns and even the moon was a mere electric light. In a scene purportedly shot at night, there is a battleship still flying its flags as if it were daytime, and another ship moves through the water with no smoke coming out of its stacks. Childish film-flammy of this sort convinces no one, and so the show had a bad reputation.”⁵³⁹

The disgust against those coarse fakes in turn created a conscious demand on the “‘truth in cinema’ in its most literal sense.”⁵⁴⁰ As the initial patriotic feeling waned, reflective films appeared at the near end of the war. In Japan, M. Pathé made *Cherry Blossoms of Japan*, a war drama that revealed a “profound sense of the universal pathos of war”.⁵⁴¹ The film told “an amazingly simple story” that a Kyushu man was called up to military service and he was cheered off by other villagers. The man was

⁵³⁷ High, *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Year’s War, 1931-1945*, p.4.

⁵³⁸ Ibid. p.4

⁵³⁹ Ibid. p.5.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid. p.6.

⁵⁴¹ The company has no connection to the French company except the name.

sent to the battlefield near Port Arthur and later the famous slopes of Ridge 203. Despite his patriotic spirit, the fighting was horrendous and the hero died in an attack. The ending scene showed a Buddhist priest read sutras over him.⁵⁴²

Beside war films, lantern slides about the Russo-Japanese War were also produced. Kleine Optic Co. produced a set of lantern slides with lectures. The slides were carefully selected and claimed to be “of exceptional beauty”.⁵⁴³ The set consisted of two parts, each with 31 titles.⁵⁴⁴ They were mainly war-related views like Russian battleships, harbor views, personages, landmark views from Japan and Russia and some oriental scenes.⁵⁴⁵ In the wartime, stereopticon views became popular. Eugene Co., for instance, made various stereopticon views under the title *China and Chinese and Japan-Russian War*.⁵⁴⁶ They were sold in “set only”, with 50 cents for colored slides and 25 cents for plain slides.

In a 1909 interview with MPW, Rosenthal shared with readers his adventures in Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese War. He travelled from Canada to Port Arthur during the siege, “being with the third Japanese army, under General Nogi”.⁵⁴⁷ From the observation hills above Port Arthur, he witnessed several naval battles, including two Russian torpedo boats blowing up mines in the entrance to the port. Rosenthal’s assignment was dangerous because “one could never know where the shell was going to fall”.⁵⁴⁸ To film the battlefield was a challenge. The Japanese army carried a confidential work and the filming of some military weapons was forbidden. The turn-table of Rosenthal’s tripod was made of aluminum and it flashed in the sun. It could easily give away the hidden place of the army. This apparatus was mistaken by

⁵⁴² High, *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Year’s War, 1931-1945*, p.8.

⁵⁴³ Complete Illustrated Catalogue of Moving Picture machines, Stereopticons, Slides, Films, Kleine Optical Co., Nov. 1905.

⁵⁴⁴ *The Russo-Japanese War*, see Kleine Optical Co., Eighteenth Illustrated and Descriptive General Catalogue and motion picture machines, stereopticons, magic lanterns, talking machines, views and Supplies.

⁵⁴⁵ In the USA, magic lanterns were often called stereopticons. See Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, p.585.

⁵⁴⁶ Catalogue of Eugene Cline & Company, 1906.

⁵⁴⁷ “A Much Traveled Cinematographer”, MPW Jan.—Jun. 1909.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

the Russian as a heliograph and draw some fires with shells. According to the interview, Rosenthal also revisited Central China where “some of the Chinese were inclined to be hostile owing to the insurrections. They objected to being photographed, thinking that their souls were being taken.”⁵⁴⁹ It was possible that Rosenthal bragged a little on his adventure, but in general, the review was convincing.

3.3.2 *Fake war films*

“The people of America are greatly excited over the doings of the little brown fellow and the big giant with whiskers. The battles are just far enough away to make business good in this country without causing the awful hardships of war.”⁵⁵⁰

The war was a commercial opportunity for film companies that made a huge fortune in making Boxer films two years ago. As a rule, Russo-Japanese war films can be categorized into following three groups: enactment, trick film and actualité. The first group occupied the largest proportion of Russo-Japanese war films. The latter two groups were contributed respectively by Geo. Méliès and Charles Urban Trading Company. Charles Urban sent its Ace cameraman Joseph Rosenthal with Japanese and George Rogers with Russian to China. With the coverage of the Russo-Japanese War, the company first made its name.⁵⁵¹ Geo. Méliès (1861-1938) made *Le joyeux prophète russe* (The Fake Russian Prophet) in April 1904. The film was 200 ft and sold at the price of \$34.00.⁵⁵² The story took place in the interior of a small Russian cottage where a peasant acted as a foreteller and fooled both Japanese and Russian. The film was a remarkable variant of Méliès’ trick film. The peasant was de facto a transformation of Méliès-style conjurer. In the film, the ongoing war was insinuated with an ironical touch. There was an eager everywhere for forecasting the war result back then and Méliès obviously got his inspiration from the reality.

⁵⁴⁹ “A Much Traveled Cinematographer”, MPW Jan.—Jun. 1909.

⁵⁵⁰ Films of the Passion Play or Life of Christ. See Selig Polyscope Co., 1903/1904.

⁵⁵¹ Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, p.157; Mckernan, *A Yank in Britain: The Lost Memoir of Charles Urban, Film Pioneer*, p.75.

⁵⁵² *The Fake Russian Prophet* (No.575-577, 200 ft, \$34.00), see Supplement No.17, Geo. Méliès of Paris.

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Re-enactments include dupes, remakes, copycatting, and cheap productions etc. Most of them were studio productions. They were either reconstructions of historical events or feature films with the war backdrops. Reenactments safely satisfied Western audiences by providing timely and sensational pictures. Major film companies all involved in making war reenactments. In the following section, I will explore some most important re-enacts at that time. Representative titles were like William Selig's *Naval Battles between the Russian and Japanese Fleets at Port Arthur and Chemulpo* (Mar. 1904), Edwin S. Porter's *Russo-Japanese War* (Apr. 1904) and Biograph's *The Battle of Yalu* (Mar. 1904). Those fakes were extremely popular in the spring and summer of 1904. Beside that, Pathé also made several war films.⁵⁵³ For instance, Lucien Nonguet (1868-1920), a former crowd-scene manager who later serviced Pathé produced *Evenements Russo-Japanois*.⁵⁵⁴ To meet the demand as well as to avoid any undue expense, Edison Co. "duped English news films and purchased a group of travel films".⁵⁵⁵ The company produced "a mixture of studio creations, comparatively realistic reenactments using American military personnel, and scenes actually filmed in the belligerent countries."⁵⁵⁶

The Selig company

The Selig Polyscope Company was founded in Chicago by William N. Selig (1864-1948), a magician and minstrel show operator. With the help of a mechanic, Selig got his own camera and Polyscope projector.⁵⁵⁷ He opened an exhibition

⁵⁵³ The list of *War Films* is as follows: *Advance Guard's Fight*, 106ft; *Alarm*, 82ft; *Ambush*, 131ft; *Around Port Arthur*, No.1...246ft; *Around Port Arthur*, No.2...246ft; *Attack on a Fortress*, 98ft; *Attack on a Train*, 114ft; *Capture of a Gun*, 82ft; *Fight on the Yalu*, 114ft; *Naval Fight*, 213ft; *Outlook at Port Arthur*, 131ft; *Outposts Skirmishing*, 106ft; *Russian Artillery*, 49ft; *Russian Cavalry*, 65ft; *Russian Infantry*, 65ft; *Spy's Arrest*, 65ft; *Spy's Execution*, 98ft. See Pathé Films 1904.

⁵⁵⁴ Abel (ed.), Richard. *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896-1914*, p.21.

⁵⁵⁵ Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*, pp. 273-274.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁷ The Selig Polyscope Co., *Complete Catalogue of Films and Moving Picture Machines*, 1903.

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service and prior to 1898, he had made some local scenes. Selig's Spanish-American war reproductions were extremely popular.⁵⁵⁸

During the Russo-Japanese War, the Selig company produced a series of "money earners" films, including *Naval Battles between the Russian and Japanese Fleets at Port Arthur and Chemulpo*, "a wonderful accurate and realistic series showing the exciting conflicts" and offering "the highly picturesque coloring and excited action".⁵⁵⁹ Selig's war series consisted of actualities and reproductions. According to Selig catalog, "with several correspondents in the field, the Selig Co. was able to get first copies of foreign made films" and those copies were processed with "utmost promptness" and "nobody can compete with us".⁵⁶⁰ Beside actualities, with the assistance of a former naval expert "thoroughly familiar with the war front", Selig made war reenactments with "the accuracy of details".⁵⁶¹

To promote the war series, Selig Co. prepared a brochure for potential buyers, in which *Torpedo Attack on Port Arthur* and *The Battle of Chemulpo* were listed. The former was a reconstruction of the historical battle, released in Mar. 1904. In regard of the promptness, Selig claimed being "the first in the market with film".⁵⁶² This film was divided into two parts. The first part shows that Japanese Torpedo Boats raided on Russian ships and the discharged torpedoes struck the Battleships "Csarevitch", "Retvizan" and the Cruiser "Pallada." In the second part, both land and naval battles were included, showing "the Japanese fleet returned to Port Arthur and the Russian land Batteries opened a fierce fire on them".⁵⁶³ The Selig Co. made evident efforts to represent the "reality and chills". In this regard, the names of battleships and harbors were purposely mentioned. In *The Battle of Chemulpo*,

⁵⁵⁸ To prevent illegal copies, all genuine Selig Films were stamped and had the trade mark on films after 1903. The company also made effort to standardize their product. Selig films, for instance, usually shared a uniform length of 50 feet and were sold at the uniform price of \$6.75. Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Films of the Passion Play or Life of Christ. See Selig Polyscope Co., 1903/1904.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

cinematographic techniques and fire effect were used to represent the historical moment.

Lubin company

Lubin Co. timely produced a series of Russian-Japanese reproductions, including *Bombardment of Port Arthur*, *The Fight on the Bridge for Supremacy* and *Difficulties of the Russian Advance in Korea*.⁵⁶⁴ Like Selig Co., Lubin made efforts to create a realistic effect. In the first film, according to the Lubin catalog, the water effect was “grand” and the explosion was impactful. The second film depicted a firing scene when both parties of the war met on a bridge. The last title told a story of how the Japanese made their headway in Korea at their wits. Beside the above titles, other Lubin reproductions were like *Ambush*, *Attack on a Train*, *Around Port Arthur*, *Outlook at Port Arthur* and *A Fight on the Yalu*.⁵⁶⁵

Lubin’s war series was likely distributed by Pathé Company. Pathé compiled a series of war films in 1904, which consisted of seventeen titles and many films overlapped with Lubin’s productions.⁵⁶⁶ Kleine Optic Company also distributed some of Lubin’s reproductions, including *The Hero of Liao-Yang* and *the Battle of Yalu*. *The Hero of Liao-Yang* told the story of a young Japanese officer who joined the army and became a war hero afterwards.⁵⁶⁷ In *the Battle of Yalu*, Japanese skirmishers were seen rushing and firing against the Russian position on the crest of a hill. According to Kleine catalog, the film was filled with actions like charging and

⁵⁶⁴ The Series of *Russian War Films*, see Lubin’s Films.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ *Advance Guard’s Fight*, 106ft; *Alarm*, 82ft; *Ambush*, 131ft; *Around Port Arthur* (No.1), 246ft; *Around Port Arthur* (No.2), 246ft; *Attack on a Fortress*, 98ft; *Attack on a Train*, 114ft; *Capture of a Gun*, 82ft; *Fight on the Yalu*, 114ft; *Naval Fight*, 213ft; *Outlook at Port Arthur*, 131ft; *Outposts Skirmishing*, 106ft; *Russian Artillery*, 49ft; *Russian Cavalry*, 65ft; *Russian Infantry*, 65ft; *Spy’s Arrest*, 65ft; *Spy’s Execution*, 98ft. See Pathé Films 1904. Another war-related film from Pathé was *Japanese Soldier’s Return* (164 ft, Price 19.68)

⁵⁶⁷ Complete Illustrated Catalogue of Moving Picture machines, stereopticons, slides, films, Kleine Optical Co. Nov. 1905.

defending from either party as well as explosion effects.⁵⁶⁸ The film ended with a Japanese standard bearer “exultantly waving his banner over the captured guns”.⁵⁶⁹

Edison films

In July 1906 Edison Films catalog, there was a series of *Russo-Japanese War*, including four titles: *Skirmish between Russian and Japanese Advance Guards*, *Battle of Chemulpo Bay*, *Russian Infantry Warsaw* and *Scene and Incidents, Russo-Japanese Peace Conference, Portsmouth*. The first film shows a drill of Japanese soldiers on top of a hill. With some routine gunfire and bombs, the film ended with a Japanese retreat. It was a remake of AM&B’s *The Battle of the Yalu*. Impressed by this film’s popularity at the leading vaudeville houses and cheers from the audiences, Edison Co. assigned Edwin S. Porter to remake it for its own commercial purposes. *The Battle of Chemulpo Bay* was the reconstruction of the famous naval battle in Chemulpo Bay on Feb. 9, 1904. This reenactment was cinematographed by Edwin S. Porter on April 18, 1904.⁵⁷⁰ The film was released on April 20, about two months after the original event. Porter may have remodeled some old pops for the battleship set and the film was finely photographed.⁵⁷¹ *Russian Infantry, Warsaw* shows “a large band heads several companies of infantry on their way to the front.”⁵⁷² In addition, Edwin S. Port also filmed the peace conference at the near end of the war. Unlike studio re-enactments, *Scenes and Incidents, Russo-Japanese Peace Conference, Portsmouth* (800 ft) was a multi-reel actuality.⁵⁷³ Edwin S. Porter photographed them respectively at Oyster Bay, Portsmouth and New Hampshire from August 5 to 9, 1905. In these films, many

⁵⁶⁸ Complete Illustrated Catalogue of Moving Picture machines, stereopticons, slides, films, Kleine Optical Co. Nov. 1905.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ See the library of congress: <http://www.loc.gov/item/mp73003400/>

⁵⁷¹ To one knowledgeable observer, the film recalled the miniature warships then being exhibited at the St. Louis Exposition. It was extremely popular, selling 109 copies during 1904-5, as compared to 56 copies of *Skirmish Between Russian and Japanese Advance Guards* and 34 copies of the *The Buster Brown Series*. See Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*, pp.273-274.

⁵⁷² Edison Films, Form 288, Jul. 1906.

⁵⁷³ Edison Films, Down on the Farm, Form 270, Nov. 2, 1905.

personages were recorded.⁵⁷⁴ The camera was in a fixed position and most pictures were very stable. There were some moving shots. The film was released in Nov. 1905 and classified as “latest feature subject, Class A”. It can be sold either in complete set or by separate scenes.⁵⁷⁵

3.4 Chinese Image and Yellow Peril

That it “will have a ‘yellow’ question, perhaps a yellow ‘peril’ to deal with, is as certain as that the sun will shine tomorrow.”—Sir Robert Hart⁵⁷⁶

Boxer Rebellion dramatically changed the image of China in the world. As a rule, the formerly friendly diplomat policy toward China was revised. Alongside the American *Exclusion Act of 1882* and the long standing “yellow peril”, a demeaning image of China was gradually painted out in Western entertaining industry. Motifs like laundry, opium den, China town and Chinese conjuror became popular. Symbolic elements like pigtail, foot binding, rickshaw and wheelbarrow appeared frequently in films produced by Biograph, Edison, Lubin, M éi ès, etc. As feature film became popular in the market, a negative image of China was constructed and it became the origin of a long Hollywood tradition of the illegal, unmoral and stealthy Chinese image.

The word “yellow peril” contains two layers of meanings. Firstly, it represents the negative knowledge and image of China. Secondly, it had the meaning of China threat theory, in which the fundamentalist, fanatical, nationalist and patriotic China would threaten the stability of the Western world. Yellow peril was constructed by politicians, media and public imagination collaboratively. Cinema as a visual media played an important role. Yellow peril was, for the most part, due to the

⁵⁷⁴ To name some, Marquis Jutaro Komura, Baron Kogoro Takahira, Graf Sergei IUL’evich Witte, Baron Roman Romanovich Rosen, Herbert H.D. Pierce, Admiral William Mead.

⁵⁷⁵ In total, there were four scenes: *Departure of Envoy for Oyster; Admiral Mead and Staff receiving Envoys, Portsmouth Navy Yard; Procession; Envoys leaving Hotel Wentworth.*

⁵⁷⁶ Hart, “The Peking Legations: A National Uprising and International Episode”, *Fortnightly Review* Nov. 1900.

misinformation in the Boxer time. In this regard, some journalists lamented, “How cunning, how unscrupulous they have been in this Yellow Peril business”.⁵⁷⁷

In the wave of yellow peril, Sir Robert Hart (1835-1911) played a critical role. Hart was an expert in China and he had worked as the director of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs for many years. He contributed various reviews on Boxer movement and China. His speeches were widely spread in the West. Based on his recent experiences in Beijing, he considered the Boxer movement as “national and patriotic”. According to him, the movement “has taken hold of the Chinese imagination and will spread like wildfire throughout the length and breadth of the empire.”⁵⁷⁸ He predicted, “fifty years hence there will be millions of Boxers in serried ranks and war’s panoply at the call of the Chinese Government.”⁵⁷⁹ He also pointed out that there was no “permanent solution” for yellow peril. Many foreigners disagreed with Robert Hart’s view and argued that the Boxer movement happened in only two or three provinces in North China. It was therefore not conclusive to treat the “wave of patriotism spreading all over China as a protest against the encroachments of foreigners”.⁵⁸⁰ In contrast to Hart’s relatively mild and friendly attitude, they attempted to prove that the anti-foreigner phenomenon in China was not foreigners’ fault but due to Chinese’s narrow-minded tradition and the arrogance of being the Celestial Empire.⁵⁸¹

Under such a circumstance, in Western countries a large number of films degenerating Chinese image emerged between 1900 and 1906. Among them, many were feature films. According to their subjects, settings and motifs, these films can be roughly categorized into three groups, i.e. laundry, China town and opium dens. In laundry films, Chinese laundrymen were portrayed as “ridiculous buffoons” and “target of ridicule for the white audiences”.⁵⁸² In the latter two groups of films,

⁵⁷⁷ “Sir Robert Hart at Home”, NCH 29 Nov. 1900, bolume 82, issue 1738.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ “Addenda,” NCH 9 Jan. 1901, volume 83, issue 1744.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² “The Laundry Man’s Got a Knife”, in Fung, *Chinese America: History and Perspective 2001*, p.31-47.

Chinese were depicted as “evil dope fiends who entice young white women and schoolgirls into their opium dens.”⁵⁸³

Laundry

The history of “laundry” film can be traced back to Edison’s Kinetoscope film *Chinese Laundry*, a vaudeville production shot on Nov. 26, 1894. In this comedy duo, a Chinese hits the policeman over the head with a basket and the latter pursues him into a laundry but the Chinese swings outside on the other side of a revolving door.⁵⁸⁴

Biograph Co. also made several Chinese laundryman films, in which laundrymen were portrayed as “ludicrous buffoons”.⁵⁸⁵ Important titles were like *In a Chinese Laundry*, *Yam Kee* (1897), *Ghost in a Chinese laundry* (1900) and *Chinese Rubbernecks* (1900). The first title was a short comedy and the latter two were comic trick films. *In a Chinese Laundry*, *Yam Kee* was produced in Biograph studio before the Boxer fever emerged. The story is simple but entertaining: a pretty, who comes in for a package of laundry, makes such an impression upon the Chinaman that he immediately proceeds to make love to her. His efforts are very incredulous. The film laughed at the laundryman’s sexual incompetence, which nevertheless contradicted “the reality that some Chinese laundrymen actually married white women, a situation that was not socially acceptable at the time” and the film hence provided to white audiences a safe vent for their “anxiety over interracial sex”.⁵⁸⁶

Ghost in a Chinese laundry was produced in Biograph’s New York Studio. It is a clever combination of the laundry subject and trick film. In this case, there is no white woman or policeman but a simple and amusing mischief that happens to two busily ironing Chinamen.⁵⁸⁷ The film was shot in the Boxer time. With rumors on superstitious Boxers flying around in the press, it was not difficult for such a film to find audiences. The film proved successful and the company soon produced another

⁵⁸³ “The Laundry Man’s Got a Knife”, in Fung, *Chinese America: History and Perspective 2001*, p.31-47.

⁵⁸⁴ *Chinese Laundry Scene* (1895), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0229300/plotsummary>

⁵⁸⁵ “The laundry man’s got a knife”, Fung, *Chinese America: History and Perspective 2001*, p.31-47.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p.99

⁵⁸⁷ AM&B Picture Catalogue, Nov. 1902.

trick film *Chinese Rubbernecks* (1900), showing two Chinese laundrymen starting a comic fight at work. The scene was set in the interior of a Chinese laundry where one Chinaman burned another with his flat-iron and started a quarrel. In the melee, one man seized the other's neck and tried to drag him out of the door while the neck stretched to a marvelous length. As the Chinaman let off the neck, it flied back immediately to its owner. This short comic trick film shared an evident similarity with Méliès' popular trick films. The film was interpreted as the commodification of Chinese, showing the fascination with the "strangely mutable 'Chinese' bodies" and the fear "of Chinese fluidity and mobility."⁵⁸⁸

After witnessing the success of Biograph's *Chinese Rubbernecks*, the Edison Company decided to remake it. The result was *Fun in a Chinese Laundry* (1901).⁵⁸⁹ There were some evident differences between these two films. In *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, instead of a quarrel between two laundrymen, a Miss Mischief tickled the neck of one busy ironing Sing Lee with a duster, but upon being observed, she ran from the place. Sing Lee hastened her exit. After a while, she sneaked back and played the same trick, but this time Sing Lee had prepared. He splashed a mouthful of water on this Miss Mischief and expelled her with the threat of a hot iron. This kind of trick was not new in early cinema history.⁵⁹⁰ Given the Boxer fever circumstance, this film was exceptional. Instead of being a victim, the laundryman here defended himself cleverly and successfully.

The trick film was such a success that S. Lubin also produced a *Fun in a Chinese Laundry* (1901).⁵⁹¹ In the film, "a proverbial bad boy annoys two Chinese, who are hard at work at their wash tubs."⁵⁹² The laundrymen tried to punish the boy but the story took a surprising turn from here. The boy beat the laundrymen and at last threw

⁵⁸⁸ Haenni, *The Immigrant Scene: Ethnic Amusement in New York, 1880-1920*, p.146.

⁵⁸⁹ AM&B Picture Catalogue, Nov. 1902.

⁵⁹⁰ Even in 1897, when cinema was first introduced to China there were already records of Chinese audience watching similar plots. The view "Jiequ 街衢" (Street) showed that a kid tricks a women several times. See "Weichunyuan guan yingxiji 味蕪園觀影戲記", XWB 11 Jun. 1897.

⁵⁹¹ 45 ft, sold at the price of 4.95 dollar.

⁵⁹² *Fun in a Chinese Laundry* (1), 1901, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0347029/>

them on the floor as he departed, but the “Chinks” “suddenly come to life and wind up the picture which one of their peculiar dances.”⁵⁹³ The prototype of naughty boy comics possibly originated from Lumière’s *L’Arroseur arrosé* (The Waterer Watered). Lubin’s version was obviously anti-Chinese. In the catalogue description, Chinamen were called “Chinks”. The plot that even a boy could conquer “Chinks” reflected a complacent emotion after the allied victory over Boxer.

As if not satisfied with this remake, Lubin Co. produced *Chinese Laundry* (50 ft, 1903), in which the Chinese laundryman’s expertise was hop. He was therefore called “Hop Lee”. Out of his usual vocation, Hop Lee hopped “lively in one door and out of another, making a very funny pantomime before the audience” and an irate policeman was “hot in pursuit”.⁵⁹⁴ The film was likely inspired by Méliès’ trick films. In 1903, Lubin made *New Chinese Laundry*, in which the laundrymen “John Chinaman” and his brother “rat-eater” were mocked. The scene was set in “an exact reproduction of a Chinese laundry” where “John Chinaman” and “rat-eater” quarrelled. In the film, “ladies are seen coming into the laundry, and the wily Chinaman throws kisses to them as they go out”.⁵⁹⁵ Like Biograph’s *In a Chinese Laundry, Yam Kee*, laundrymen’s indecent wooing to white women was ridiculed.

Chinatown

From the American cinema viewpoint, although the iconography of Chinatown appears in silent screen regularly Chinatown remains “unrecognized, underground, illegitimate”.⁵⁹⁶ The Chinatown iconography began with actuality films. Examples were like Edison Co.’s *Chinese Procession, No. 12 (1898)*, *Parade of Chinese (1898)*, and *San Francisco Chinese Funeral (1903)*. These early actualités capture “apparently unstaged scenes in open, urban space, often privileging moment of celebration”.⁵⁹⁷ In contrast, staged Chinatown films appeared relatively later.

⁵⁹³ *Fun in a Chinese Laundry* (1), 1901, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0347029/>

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ Haenni, *The Immigrant Scene: Ethnic Amusement in New York, 1880-1920*, p.145.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

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Studio productions about Chinatown could be generalized into two groups. The first group of Chinatown films show scenes of everyday life in Chinatown, such as *Scene in a Chinese Restaurant* (AM&B, 1903), *Chinese Shaving Scene* (Edison, 1902), and *Scene in Chinatown* (AM&B, 1903). There was no evident indication of a negative Chinese image in those films. Chinatown and life in Chinatown were filmed for its oriental and exotic attractions. They provided white audiences a chance to look into the inner life of the mysterious Chinatown. The other group appeared alongside the Boxer fever. AM&B produced several Chinatown features, of which *The Deceived Slumming Party* (1908) was “the most outrageous early film about Chinatown”.⁵⁹⁸ The film began with a location shot on New York City’s Forty-second Street, showing a sightseeing automobile which was leading tourists to Chinatown. This film did not intend to “exhibit and display Chinatown but its insistence on the unimaginable horrors hidden within Chinatown, emphasizes the exotic difference of the Chinese, their inability to assimilate”.⁵⁹⁹ Chinatown films provided audiences an experience that enabled them to “negotiate the Chinese presence in the city.”⁶⁰⁰ On one hand, Chinese were banned by the *Exclusion Act of 1882*, but on the other hand, their presence in America was a de facto. Chinatown films hence provided Americans “a new sense of self and a new sensorial experience”.⁶⁰¹

The most important Chinatown feature was probably Selig Co.’s *Lights and Shadows of Chinatown*, released on Oct. 29, 1908 with a length of 1000 ft. It was “the first real Chinese story of love and adventure.”⁶⁰² Set in the San Francisco Chinatown before the great fire, the film told a complex story about two Chinese antagonists fighting for a girl. Chon Yet was an honest merchant in Chinatown and Li Ching a powerful leader of secretive society. Li Ching fell in love with Chon’s fiancée Kim

⁵⁹⁸ Haenni, *The Immigrant Scene: Ethnic, Amusement in New York, 1880-1920*, p.145.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid. p.148.

⁶⁰² *Lights and Shadows of Chinatown*, released on October 29, 1908. See The Selig Polyscope Co., Supplement No.126, Oct. 29, 1908.

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Soy during his recent trip to China. He hence enticed her to America and held her in captivity. After a series of tricks and conspiracies, Chon acquired his fiancée's location and came to her rescue with the aid of white policemen. His first attempt failed but the lovers finally reunited and Li Qing was killed by his hired man. This film was highly metaphorical. The villainous Li Ching had the same name of the Manchurian court. The Qing court was notorious for conspiring with Boxers. In the film, Li Ching was the owner of a reprobate opium den and the leading member of a secret society, which bore a high similarity to the Boxer section. *Lights and Shadows of Chinatown* was promoted for its spectacle and complexity. To bestow it a genuineness of "Chinese love story", Selig Co. hired about fifty Chinese to play roles and all exotic props were "lavishly displayed". The staged San Francisco Chinatown in the film was amazingly real and spectacular, giving "a faithful idea of life in the Chinese quarter of a metropolitan city".⁶⁰³ According to Selig's catalog description, the drama had comic as well as pathetic side, and "much fun is provided by an Irish policeman and a mischievous Chinese boy named See-See."⁶⁰⁴

Although the drama was spectacular in regard of its settings, actors, props, scenes, it was de facto a triangle love story of Chinese, a motif that was fresh and novel in Western society. It formed a sharp contrast to previous single-shot Chinatown films. Noteworthy was the clever arrangement of the Irish police in the story. On one hand, they embodied justice and social order. On the other hand, they did not punish the vicious Li Ching at last. Western countries took a similar neutral stance during the Russo-Japanese War. The ideological correctness could not allow white policemen to be murders. It reveals a general strategy in negotiating with the fascinating but dangerous presence of Chinese in American society: watching instead of participating. To keep the Chinese and Chinatown in the "forever foreigner" state with no stable identity suits the comfort zone of the white society.

⁶⁰³ *Lights and Shadows of Chinatown*, released on October 29, 1908. See The Selig Polyscope Co., Supplement No.126, Oct. 29, 1908.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

Opium Den

In 1895, William Dickson directed *Robetta and Doretto, No. 1 & No. 3* in Edison Laboratory, West Orange, New Jersey. The scene of *Robetta and Doretto No. 1* was set in the interior of a Chinese Opium Den. It is probably the first opium den film. The opium den motif appears early in actuality films. Biograph Co.'s *On the Pei-Ho—China* gives a panoramic view of the bank of the Pei-Ho River in Tianjin, showing old Chinese opium junks with their crews. In another Biograph actuality *Old China-Shanghai, China*, a number of abandoned opium junks appears in the panoramic view of “the Bund”, Shanghai.

In 1903, encouraged by the success of its *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, Lubin produced *Fun in an Opium Joint*. According to Lubin catalog, two Chinks sat on the floor “hitting the pipe” and they presently repaired to their bunks that were placed one over the other. The Chink in the upper berth tickled his companion who slept in the lower berth with his long pigtail. The trick went to a moment of excitement and the both roll out on the floor. This dramatic comedy used the pigtail as a key prop to ridicule Chinese opium addicts. Méliès also produced an opium den film, i.e. *The Dream of an Opium Fiend*. The film was 346 ft and sold at the price of \$41.52. Compared to other Méliès trick films, it was remarkably long. This comic film was a mixture of Méliès’ dream trick, trip to the moon and opium den motif.⁶⁰⁵ Despite the ironic and unreal tone, the film promoted the general knowledge that opium was a fiend that would push people into hallucinogenic state.

In addition to opium-den-related actualities and comic trick films, Biograph Co. produced several opium den features. The most influential was *The Heathen Chinese and the Sunday-school teachers* (1903), shot on Dec. 17, 1903 by cameraman Weed at Biograph studio. It was “a fairly long film for Biograph in this period”.⁶⁰⁶ The film consisted of four shots and the third shot was set in the interior of an opium den. According to Biograph catalog, three white women invited Chinese workers of Sam Kee Laundry to attend Sunday school but the latter cavorted with them in an opium

⁶⁰⁵ *Le rêve d'un fumeur d'opium* (1908), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0000755/>

⁶⁰⁶ Lee (ed.), *The Silent Cinema Reader*, p.145.

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den. The police eventually came to the rescue and arrested the Chinese in time. The Sunday school teachers tried to bail out their Chinese friends but failed. The film was based on the reality. At that time, women in Sunday schools did occasionally invite Chinese laundrymen to teach them English or try to convert them to Christianity. Newspapers sometimes reported cases that Western women got romantically or sexually attracted to Chinese laundrymen, “a situation that no one spoke about openly but one that provoked anxiety among whites”.⁶⁰⁷ In contrast to “the sexual-attractive-dangerous laundrymen in 1897”, the film painted out a cunning and bewitching picture of Chinamen, who were more dangerous because they were no longer passive but played a dominant role. The film has an open ending. Whether the vicious and reprobate Chinaman can be finally conquered remains unanswered.

⁶⁰⁷ Jung, *Chinese Laundries: Tickets to Survival on Gold Mountain*, p.99.

Chapter 4. Incipient Film Industry, 1906-1911

4.1 Cinematograph Exhibitions

In *Ciné goes to town*, Richard Able defines early cinema as “cinema de curiosité”, which is characteristic of mechanical novelty and high fidelity.⁶⁰⁸ Around 1903, it became evident that instead of movie machine, the real attraction of cinema came from the “picture, which aroused ‘bad sensationalism’”.⁶⁰⁹ Accordingly, there was a transitional period from “cinema as an attraction” to “cinema as a narration”.⁶¹⁰ The transition was completed around 1906, considering technique progresses, non-flammable film, picture palaces, film genre etc. Film exhibitors were no longer itinerant showmen and cinema evolved into an independent form of entertainment, rather than a fit-up for variety shows.⁶¹¹ An incipient film industry emerged in China. Permanent cinemas appeared and largest films companies branched in China. Film competed with opera and drama for its legitimacy. Open-air public screenings became popular. Cinema became multifunctional. Moving picture business expanded to the interior part of China. In Jilin 吉林, for instance, a cinematograph company had started.⁶¹²

The year 1906 was a turning point regarding the spreading of cinema. Cinema was widely employed in fundraising, entertaining and education. The Chinese Y.M.C.A, for instance, arranged a series of film screenings for fundraising.⁶¹³ Y.M.C.A. and Chinese Sunday School also gave cinematograph exhibition in rally or meetings to entertain its members.⁶¹⁴ When Viceroy Chen Kuei-Lung came to Shanghai,

⁶⁰⁸ Abel (ed.), *The Cin éGoes to Town: French cinema 1896-1914*, pp.59-61.

⁶⁰⁹ NCH 6 Mar. 1909, volume 107, issue 2169.

⁶¹⁰ Tom Gunning’s terminology.

⁶¹¹ “On the Other Foot”, MPW Apr.—Jun. 1913.

⁶¹² NCH 1 Aug. 1908, volume 105, issue 2138.

⁶¹³ “The Chinese Y.M.C.A Land Fund”, NCH 27 Sep. 1907, volume 101, issue 2094.

⁶¹⁴ NCH 11 Dec. 1909, volume 110, issue 2212.

excellent cinematograph views were included in his reception.⁶¹⁵ Cinema as an integral part of variety shows became common. When the established magician Howard Thurston toured China, cinematograph exhibition was inserted in the second part of the programme.⁶¹⁶ As an educational tool, cinematograph continued to work together with lantern slides for illustrating lectures. In Ningbo, Imperial Maritime Customs gave several lectures with cinematograph and lantern illustrations.⁶¹⁷

Public screening and Cinema de parlant

From 1906 onward, there were two trends in regarding cinematograph exhibitions, i.e. open-air public screening and cinema de parlant (speaking cinema). In large cities, public screenings became popular. They were usually organized by international consulars in the settlements. Among them, the public screening in the French National Fete was most sensational. The screening was a regular part of the whole celebrations and it had attracted a wide variety of audiences. According to a record in NCH, in July 1906 moving pictures were “thrown on to a screen erected over the gate of the consulate leading on to the Quai de France” and “crowds of natives and foreigners thronged the principal streets, the mass congregated in front of the Consulate watching the cinematograph display being particularly dense.”⁶¹⁸ Open-air public screening also expanded into Chinese society. On occasions of traditional Chinese festivals or temple fairs, film was screened. In public screenings, local scenes were sometimes also included. In 1909, for instance, on occasion of the French Concession Illumination, pictures like “*Chinese Life on the River and Ashore*” and “*A Ride on the French Tramways*” were screened in a gratuitous cinematograph performance.⁶¹⁹ Shooting practices had reached such a wide range of subjects that some local residents

⁶¹⁵ “The Reception to Viceroy Chen Kuei-Lung”, NCH 8 Nov. 1907, volume 102, issue 2100.

⁶¹⁶ NCH 15 Jun. 1906, volume 96, issue 2027.

⁶¹⁷ NCH 31 Dec. 1909, volume 110, issue 2212.

⁶¹⁸ NCH 20 Jul. 1906, volume 97, issue 2032.

⁶¹⁹ NCH 17 Jul. 1909, volume 109, issue 2188.

complained. The appearance of camera on some occasions (e.g. funeral) was deemed improper.⁶²⁰

In Shanghai, open-air screening was given for refreshing in the sultry summer nights at public or private gardens. Astor House Hotel hosted a series of open-air screenings in its fine riverside garden. The screening was given by Paris Cinematograph Company, which had “a fine repertory of the latest and most interesting films.”⁶²¹ Prior to 1908, it became common for local hotels or other entertaining venues to hire professional film companies to screen films. St. George Hotel, the main competitor of Astor House Hotel, also provided cinematograph exhibitions in its garden fete.⁶²²

The other trend was cinema de parlant. To insert moving pictures in vocal numbers or give music accompaniments during the screenings was not new in China.⁶²³ For example, at Astor House, film exhibition was interspersed with selections by the band.⁶²⁴ In the Royal Society of St. George Empire Fete, the Café Chantant and the Cinematograph show were given “almost simultaneously.”⁶²⁵ American Cinematograph Company owned a movie theatre in North Szechuen Road and had its own orchestra for cinematograph exhibitions.⁶²⁶ Nevertheless, in 1908 a fashion of “cinema de parlant” emerged. The audience in China was no stranger to the idea of speaking cinema. Newspapers published the news that some Continental firm had played grand opera on the cinematograph, with full accompaniment of gramophones instructed by the best singers and orchestra.⁶²⁷ In Shanghai, the real “speaking cinema” was given by the company named “Cinematograph Parlant”. According to a record in NCH, in January 1908 the company gave an interesting film screening to a

⁶²⁰ “British Residents ad the Wounded”, NCH 9 Dec. 1911, volume 118, issue 2313.

⁶²¹ NCH 23 May 1908, volume 104, issue 2128.

⁶²² NCH 30 May 1908, volume 104, issue 2128.

⁶²³ Shanghai Arcade, variety, selected cinematograph pictures and plus vocal numbers, the accurate opening date may be 10 July, 1909. See NCH 17 Jul. 1909, volume 109, issue 2188.

⁶²⁴ NCH 6 Nov. 1909, volume 110, issue 2204.

⁶²⁵ NCH 29 May 1909, volume 108, issue 2181.

⁶²⁶ NCH 2 Jan. 1909, volume 107, issue 2160.

⁶²⁷ NCH 20 Jun. 1908, volume 104, issue 2132.

fairly house, including pieces like *The Sandwich Man*, *A Violin Solo* and *A Nigger Quartette*.⁶²⁸ The speaking effect was achieved by adding a phonograph to the show. In Cinematograph Parlant's shows, the phonograph "worked amazingly fine with the moving representations, through which, a realism is thus added which enhances very much the dumb show of an ordinary cinematograph".⁶²⁹

4.2 Formative Film Industry

Cinema won an enormous popularity in China after Russo-Japanese war. The public was aware of cinema's mechanical principle and the period of "cinema de curiosité" was passé.⁶³⁰ Retrospectively, picture business went through three stages in China, from "the use of a lantern to cast the pictures on a screen" to "the introduction of the old peep-show Kinetoscope" and finally to "the profitable cinematograph business".⁶³¹ The commercial potential of cinema became evident in this period. In Shanghai, two nights' performances could generate about 400 dollars, which was quite an impressive sum.⁶³² The profitability motivated many capitalists to join this line of business.

However, the incipient film industry was in chaos. Firstly, cinema continued to struggle for its legitimacy.⁶³³ Taking advantage of its mediality, cinema became "ubiquitous" and was in association with other forms of entertainments, including civilized drama and Chinese play.⁶³⁴ When St. John's University gave "an interesting modern version of a Chinese play", cinematograph exhibition was included.⁶³⁵ Secondly, copyright issue achieved the public attention. Many argued that the original author should have the exclusive right of authorizing the reproduction of his works by

⁶²⁸ NCH 3 Jan. 1908, volume 103, issue 2108.

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

⁶³⁰ ibid

⁶³¹ NCH 6 Mar. 1909, volume 107, issue 2169.

⁶³² NCH 4 Dec. 1909, volume 110, issue 2208.

⁶³³ NCH 2 Jan. 1909, volume 107, issue 2160.

⁶³⁴ E.g. in play (*Lady from Osten*), NCH, Jan.02, 1909, volume 107, issue 2160

⁶³⁵ "The Chinese Red Cross Society", NCH 2 Dec. 1911, volume 118, issue 2312.

cinematograph.⁶³⁶ In addition, film-related lawsuits became common. An all-round variety performer Steven Adson, for instance, was accused of breaking a contract with L.M. Levy.⁶³⁷

Shooting and distribution: Eclipse and Mr. Path é

Through Boxer Rebellion and Russo-Japanese War, shooting activities became widely spread. Shooting and projecting local scenes or important Chinese personages for local audience became fashionable. In Shanghai, in a cinematograph exhibition at Country Club, “a distinctly novel feature was provided by throwing on the screen some of the representations of Local celebrities”.⁶³⁸ In Xiamen (Amoy), views of delegates of Woman’s Work-Education were taken while they proceeded to the British-General Consulate.⁶³⁹ Beside that, film shooting was included in public education. Through 1910 to 1911, there was a severe Manchurian plague and the Health Department suggested that hygiene films should be shot, under the reference of foreign motion picture plays, as an auxiliary to education in China.

Filmmaking was gradually professionalized. In China, film shooting was carried out mainly by professional film companies. Among them, one prominent example was Socié é Générale des Cinématographes Eclipse. This French company shot a number of local scenes and events in Shanghai and many were screened at the American Cinematograph Theatre. In 1908, Eclipse was commissioned to shoot a local contest. The cinematographer from Eclipse took pictures from different points of views and in total shot a length of over 150 metres.⁶⁴⁰ These pictures were remarkably clear and were developed and printed timely.⁶⁴¹ The company’s promptness of post-production was impressive. A record shows that in February 1909,

⁶³⁶ NCH 4 Feb. 1910, volume 111, issue 2217.

⁶³⁷ NCH 1 May 1909, volume 108, issue 2180.

⁶³⁸ NCH 5 Oct. 1906, volume 98, issue 2043.

⁶³⁹ “The Afternoon Session”, NCH 3 May 1907, volume 100, issue 2073.

⁶⁴⁰ 1 metre is 3.28 feet.

⁶⁴¹ NCH 5 Dec. 1908, volume 106, issue 2145.

Eclipse shot the laying of cornerstone of the New Shanghai Club and within the same month, these films were screened at American Cinematograph Company's theatre.⁶⁴²

In 1900s, the leading French Company Pathé Frères employed 5,000 men and maintained staffs throughout France and in the United States, Spain, Russia, Italy, Germany, India and Japan.⁶⁴³ The year 1907 was important in regard of film distribution in China because in this year Mr. Pathé came to Shanghai and gave a demonstration on how to take and prepare cinematograph films.⁶⁴⁴ Mr. Pathé's lecture was hosted by the Shanghai Photographic Society and it was likely the first lecture about cinematographing. The arrival of this prestige film company signalled that cinema entered the era of professionalism and industrialism. In Mr. Pathé's lecture, he explained "the taking of pictures of men flying to the moon and undertaking other impossible tasks".⁶⁴⁵ The fact indicated that Chinese audience was likely already familiar with Méliès' *The trip to the moon*, or at least trick films in this category. In 1909, a Pathé combined Stereopticon and moving picture outfit could be easily purchased in Shanghai, at an expense of 650 dollar.

Film regulations: fire, censorship and critiques

In China, fire remained a serious threat to public screenings. Nitrate film stock could easily catch fire. In August 1906, at Astor Garden "one of the films caught fire and the flames spread to the bamboo house from which the machine is worked."⁶⁴⁶ In April 1908, "as the spectators left a cinematograph show", the film caught fire owing to the overheating of a portion of the apparatus.⁶⁴⁷ Fire accidents were often caused by sloppy showmen. The native Chinese showman Koo Lan-yung, for instance, was charged of "causing a fire at 157 Foochow Road on the 20th instant by his

⁶⁴² NCH 20 Feb. 1909, volume 107, issue 2167.

⁶⁴³ "Moving Pictures and Morals", NCH 14 Oct. 1910, volume 114, issue 2253.

⁶⁴⁴ NCH 25 Oct. 1907, volume 102, issue 2098.

⁶⁴⁵ "Cinematograph", NCH 6 Mar. 1909, volume 107, issue 2169.

⁶⁴⁶ NCH 31 Aug. 1906, volume 97, issue 2038.

⁶⁴⁷ "A Cinematograph Fire", NCH 10 Apr. 1908, volume 104, issue 2122.

carelessness”.⁶⁴⁸ He lighted a cigarette while he was operating a cinematograph exhibition and the film caught fire. The danger of celluloid and the frequency of fire disasters got the public attention. In a review in NCH, the writer complained that only some of local cinematograph halls employed proper safeguards and most were “more or less filmsily constructed, and poorly provided with exits.”⁶⁴⁹ The other complaint was about the public disorder. Open-air public screening often disturbed social orders. Consequently, in many Chinese cities public screening was prohibited by local authorities.

This kind of prohibition was particularly strict in the interior part of China. NCH reported that in Yichang 宜昌 (Ichang) a French company planned to show a cinematograph in the native city.⁶⁵⁰ The company placarded bills announcing its coming in all the city and it fell unfavored by local authority. The show was rumored “not conducted in a very honourable way” and it was expelled out Shashi 沙市 by Daotai (magistrate). In Yichang, the magistrate “put out a proclamation regarding the exhibition”. The show was nevertheless opened but the gambling went rampant on the same day and the Chinese got “very dissatisfied with the methods, so much so that there was danger of a row.” The local literati even sent round a letter to all schools advising them to “have nothing to do with the thing.”⁶⁵¹

As cinematograph exhibitions became regular, criticisms increased rapidly. Around 1909, moving picture theatre was already “a recognized institution in Shanghai” and many audiences complained that the “morbid sentiments” were unsuitable for children.⁶⁵² In a letter sent to the NCH editorial department, one Donald MacGillivray, expressed her horror and disgust at the sort of programme after she took her children and friend to a cinematograph exhibition in Shanghai. The mother protested against the sensational tragic drama and “dubious songs”. According to her,

⁶⁴⁸ NCH 27 Feb. 1909, volume 107, issue 2168.

⁶⁴⁹ “Danger of Celluloid”, NCH 22 Apr. 1911, volume 116, issue 2280.

⁶⁵⁰ There was no indication on the name of this French company.

⁶⁵¹ “Cinematograph [Ichang]”, NCH 13 Dec. 1907, volume 102, issue 2105.

⁶⁵² Someone signing as A.H wrote to NCH to complain the smoking. See NCH 28 Aug. 1909, volume 109, issue 2194.

“these things must corrupt the minds of any children who may be present and parents should be warned.”⁶⁵³ Despite “a great many amusing and interesting things to be seen in the cinematograph”, the effect of some films was injurious and a cinematograph censor was therefore in demand”.⁶⁵⁴

Not only films but also entertainment venues were often criticized. American Cinematograph Theatre had become a public space where many troubles happened. An article in NCH titled “*An International Affair*” recorded an assault case happened opposite the Cinematograph.⁶⁵⁵ K. Takeda, the proprietor of a cinematograph hall in Foochow Road, stabbed a Chinese.⁶⁵⁶ Although permanent cinemas were built, most film exhibitions were still given in makeshift venues like hotels, teahouses and variety theatres. Many of those venues were notorious for gambling, opium, prostitutes and so on. For example, film screening was a regular programme at Alhambra hotel, a notorious gambling house in Shanghai that had been repeatedly banned by the Municipal Council.

In 1909, the Consul-General M. Ratard permitted a French citizen to open the Alcazar for the purpose of a cinematograph show under “the extremely satisfactory conditions”.⁶⁵⁷ These conditions were published in *The Municipal Gazette*, which enabled a close look to the film censorship in Shanghai back then. The Gazette listed at least five regulations, i.e. “no opium/ gambling”, “film of decent character”, “not contrary to public order”, “the lessee should be responsible for the order of Foreign Settlement” and “police had right of entry at any hour for purpose of inspection”.⁶⁵⁸ It was probably the earliest record on film censorship in China. Despite the strictness, the regulation was loosely executed due to corruption and bribery.

⁶⁵³ NCH 19 Sep. 1908, volume 105, issue 2145.

⁶⁵⁴ NCH 25 Nov. 1911, volume 118, issue 2311.

⁶⁵⁵ NCH 22 May 22, 1909, volume 108, issue 2180.

⁶⁵⁶ NCH 18 Feb. 1910, volume 111, issue 2219.

⁶⁵⁷ NCH 5 Jun. 1909, volume 108, issue 2181.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

4.2.1 Film pioneers

Early film pioneers in China can be generally divided into two groups, i.e. showmen and businessmen. The former took Antonio Ramos, A.E. Lauro and Ben Brodsky as representatives. Travelling showmen came to China mainly after Russo-Japanese war, with nothing but a set of cinematograph outfit. They wandered as self-employed projectionists from one treaty port to another, sometimes even into the interior part of China, exhibiting cinematograph for audiences from lower social classes. They had no regular exhibition venues. Their cinematograph exhibitions were usually held in makeshift venues like teahouses or Chinese theaters. Occasionally they were invited to give performance at Western-style hotels or private parties. After several years' accumulation of capitals and social resources, they were able to afford a fixed place and some of them became proprietors of permanent cinemas. The other group consisted of commercial businessmen. A prominent example was G. S. Hertzberg. Before entering cinematograph business, Hertzberg was the owner of St. Georges Hotel, one of the leading hotels in Shanghai at that time. He got involved in film business accidentally after he attended a cinematograph exhibition.

There was no distinct boundary between these two groups. They overlapped in many cases. With their primitive capital accumulations, shrewd travelling showmen turned into professional businessmen. Instead of operating the machine themselves, they hired and trained projectionists to do the work. They then worked as the owner or manager of the film enterprise. A. Ramos, for instance, started by screening short films at Qinglian'ge 青蓮閣 and later became a film mogul, owing several movie theatres in Shanghai and a cinema chain in the costal part of China. As a rule, both groups relied heavily on consulates in International Settlements for protections. A. Ramos was supported by the Spanish consular, Hertzberg by Russian Jewish society and A. E. Lauro by the Italian community.

Antonio Ramos Espejo (1875-1944)

Antonio Ramos Espejo was the most important figure at the beginning stage of cinema in China. He was not only one of the first film exhibitors but also an

ambitious enterpriser who built an entertainment empire, quartering in Shanghai.⁶⁵⁹ His Ramos Amusement Co. owned the largest cinema chain in China. Although Ramos' career began as a traveling showman, he later became a talented variety manager and a tycoon in the cinematograph business. Ramos came from Spain and before sailing to China, he was a soldier in Manila. His biography and early adventures outside China had long been mysterious in Chinese records but thanks to Ignacio Toro's investigation, we now knew more about him.

Ramos was born in Granada, Alhama in 1875 and died in Madrid in 1944. He sailed to Philippines for seeking fortune, but it was in China that his dream came true. He established seven cinema theatres in Shanghai and after he sold them, he went back to Madrid. Due to his close connections to China, he was called "El Chino" (the Chinese) in his hometown. Ramos' mother was a teacher and Ramos had some trainings in school teaching. When his family went in financial difficult, young Ramos volunteered to join the army and was then sent to a camp in Philippines. With his good skills in reading and writing (a rare skill then), he was assigned to Manila and worked in an office there. During his stay in Manila, his commercial talent began to exhibit. He dug the first barrel of gold by teaching illiterate soldiers. Together with another Spanier he founded a beer factory in Manila.

After Spain was defeated in the Spanish-American war, Ramos decided to stay in Manila. Through a magazine he lerned about Lumière brothers' latest invention. He invested his savings and purchased a Lumière Cinématograph with a collection of twenty films. He then toured the Philippine islands as a traveling showman, introducing films to that country in 1897. Ramos devoted himself to "*La Pasión de Cristo*" (passion play) and screened films for aboriginals with a preacher named Agustinos. The profit did not reach Ramos' expectation and he decided to try his luck in China.

Ramos moved to China and took over the cinematograph business from a fellow Spaniard who was identified by Jay Leyda as "Galen Bocca". According to ZDFZS,

⁶⁵⁹ Leyda, *Dianying*, p.3.

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Galen Bocca arrived in Shanghai in 1899 and he gave cinematograph exhibitions at Shengping teahouse 升平茶樓, Skating rink in Hongkou district 虹口跑冰場 and Jingguxiang restaurant 金穀香番菜館. Bocca achieved little success because of the outdated films and poor management. He then sold the outfits to Ramos. Ramos took over Bocca's film business in 1903 and started to give cinematograph exhibitions at Skating rink in Hongkou district. He later moved to Tong'an teahouse 同安茶居 and Qinglian'ge 青蓮閣. He rented a small room under Qinglian'ge teahouse and, to draw public attention, he hired a band in colorful costumes to perform in the street. Ramos changed the order of films and added some new films. The business henceforth thrived.⁶⁶⁰

As a talented businessman, Ramos' Amusement Corporation soon became China's first well-established film enterprise, a dominant force in China for the next twenty years. In 1909, Ramos was the manager of Colon Cinematograph on 112 A Chappoo Road 乍浦路. NCH recorded that one E. Florez, employed at the hall, concealed underneath A. Ramos' bed with the intention of robbing the takings for Saturday and Sunday night's performances, a sum about \$400.⁶⁶¹ This incident revealed that the business of Colon Cinematograph was in prosperity. In 1910, Ramos filed an application to the council for tavern licenses for his properties, respectively on 24 Haining Road and 112 A Chappoo Road.⁶⁶² The former was Victoria Cinematograph and the latter the Colon Cinematograph.⁶⁶³ In the same year, Colon Cinematograph was renovated into Victoria Skating Rink (with Colon Cinematograph inside the Rink).

In addition to regular film screenings, there were variety shows in both venues. Victoria Cinematograph was featuring the Quealys, comedy sketch team, and comedienne.⁶⁶⁴ Ramos Amusement Corporation had agencies in many Asian trade

⁶⁶⁰ Cheng, ZDFZS, pp.9-10.

⁶⁶¹ "Under Suspicion", NCH 4 Dec. 1909, volume 110, issue 2208.

⁶⁶² There was an application for "Tavern Licences", showing "A. Ramos: 111 A Chappo Road; A. Ramos: 24, Haining Road". See NCH 18 Mar. 1910, volume 111, issue 2223

⁶⁶³ "Tavern Licences", NCH 15 Apr. 1910, volume 112, issue 2227.

⁶⁶⁴ "Notes from the Far East", NYP Feb. 1912.

cities, such as Manila, Hong Kong, Shanghai and so on. With these agencies, Ramos organized seasonal tours for vaudeville troupes. For example, he arranged Miss Dollie Kel to perform in his Colon Cinematograph in Shanghai and he then accompanied her to tour Hong Kong. After that, Miss Dollie once more performed at Victoria Skating Rink and Victoria Hall in Shanghai.⁶⁶⁵

Cinematograph remained a risky business and Ramos was often involved in lawsuits.⁶⁶⁶ In 1910, two foreigners tried to enter the Victoria Hall (Victoria Cinematograph) without the ticket. The Indian ticket collector stopped them but was struck.⁶⁶⁷ Another lawsuit relevant to ticket control happened in the following year. According to a record in NCH, Ramos was fined five dollars for having refused to admit the Municipal Police, when on duty, to the Victoria Hall in contravention of one of the clauses of his licenses.⁶⁶⁸ *Tavern Licenses* permitted Ramos to sell alcohol and beverages but in return, the venue was obliged to accept inspections from the Municipal council. Ramos nevertheless managed to renew his *Tavern License* in the following years.⁶⁶⁹ To 1912, Ramos was “duly qualified to vote at the Annual Meeting of Ratepayers”, indicating that he was rich and privileged in the foreign society of Shanghai.⁶⁷⁰ Shortly thereafter Ramos built the luxury cinema “New Olympic” at the junction of Carter and Bubbling Wells Roads. It was one of the first luxury moving picture theatres in Shanghai. According to a report in NCH, about 5,000 feet of film was shown during the one daily performance given. The screenings were all electrically lighted. Films were changed biweekly, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Beside features, moving pictures of an educational nature were also showed.

⁶⁶⁵ “Miss Dollie Died”, NCH 17 Jun. 1910, volume 112, issue 2236.

⁶⁶⁶ “Colon Cinematograph”, NCH 25 Feb. 1910, volume 111, issue 2220. Colon Cinematograph; NCH 11 Mar. 1910, volume 111, issue 2222.

⁶⁶⁷ NCH 15 Jul. 1910, volume 113, issue 2240.

⁶⁶⁸ NCH 22 Apr. 1911, volume 116, issue 2280

⁶⁶⁹ NCH 29 Apr. 1911, volume 116, issue 2281; “Tavern Licences 1912”, NCH 6 Apr. 1912, volume 120, issue 2329.

⁶⁷⁰ NCH 23 Mar. 1912, volume 119, issue 2328.

Having expanded his exhibition business successfully throughout Shanghai, Ramos made a brief and ill-judged move into production in 1924 before the treat of revolution in 1927 forced him to sell up and return to Spain. His Ramos Amusement Co. shot *Evidence* 孽海潮 in 1923 with David P. De Tague as play writer.⁶⁷¹ The film was screened at Empire theatre afterward.⁶⁷² The company also shot short comedies like *Buxing'er* 不幸兒 (An Unlucky Fellow) and *Hutu jingcha* 糊塗警察 (A Smart Cop).⁶⁷³ In general, Ramos' investments in film production failed.

B. Goldenberg (?-1922)

In 1922, the manager of the Victoria Theatre B. Goldenberg was found murdered in his room above the foyer of the Victoria theatre.⁶⁷⁴ According to the report in NCH, by the time of death Goldenberg was a married man of some 36 years of age. He and his family (a wife and four children) resided in Yates Road but he slept sometimes at the theatre when the owner A. Ramos was away. Goldenberg was a Jew of Spanish extraction, born in Singapore and he was registered in Shanghai as a citizen of Spain. Goldenberg was well connected to the Spanish community in Shanghai, widely known for his “cordial manner”, rich travel experience and language talent.⁶⁷⁵ He had “travelled widely throughout Europe, South America and the East. A fluent speaker of Chinese, he had also mastered several Asiatic languages, in addition to English and Italian.”⁶⁷⁶ Goldenberg was probably a business partner of A. Ramos in the local film trade. The two had known each other since 1904 but it was not until Apr. 1916 that Goldenberg joined A. Ramos in the management of Victoria Theatre.

⁶⁷¹ “Leimasi youyi gongsi 雷瑪斯遊藝公司” (Ramos Amusement Company), SB 20 Dec. 1923.

⁶⁷² “Kaiying yu enpaiya daxiyuan 開映與恩派亞大戲院” (Opening Show and the Empire Theatre), SB 13 Feb. 1924.

⁶⁷³ “Leimasi zhi huaji xinpian pinglun 雷瑪斯之滑稽新片評論” (A Review on Ramos Co.'s New Films), SB 3 Mar. 1924.

⁶⁷⁴ “Shocking Tragedy at Local Cinema”, NCH 2 Dec. 1922.

⁶⁷⁵ “Shocking Tragedy at Local Cinema”, NCH 2 Dec. 1922.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

Goldenberg came to Shanghai from Manila at the end of Russo-Japanese War.⁶⁷⁷ He opened Shanghai's first picture palace in Chapoo Road. In the following years, he bought No. 3 North Honan Road as home and attended various cinematograph exhibitions in Shanghai.⁶⁷⁸ The venture proved successful and Goldenberg built another cinematograph theatre, i.e. the Republic Cinema. Goldenberg ran the movie theatre for seven or eight years. According to stream records in NCH, Goldenberg might have expanded film business into Tianjin and Hong Kong. Films screened in his theaters were acquired from America by himself.⁶⁷⁹

Americo Enrico Lauro (1879-1937)

A.E. Lauro was truly a "Far East cinema pioneer". He was not only a savvy businessman in exhibiting and producing motion pictures but also a leading figure at the initial stage of Chinese film industry. He devoted most of his life to the film business in China. He and his beloved wife Marie H. Lauro died and were both buried in Shanghai. Americo Enrico Lauro was born in Naples, Italy. He was trained at the Cines Company in Italy.⁶⁸⁰ Lauro was versatile in regard of film business. He was a very early exponent of color films. He later won a diploma for a picture called '*The Customs and Habits of China*' at the Exhibition of Rome and the picture was classified as a work of art.⁶⁸¹

Lauro came to China from Naples per str. Hamburg in 1901.⁶⁸² His career in China can be roughly divided into two periods, i.e. as projectionist (1905-1906) and as manager (1907-1912). Prior to 1905, Lauro was already involved in cinematograph

⁶⁷⁷ A NCH stream record confirms this statement. See "per Str. Tonkin from Singapore", in NCH April. 1906.

⁶⁷⁸ He lived at and was the landlord of No.3 North Honan Road. B. Goldenberg was attending a cinematograph exhibition. See NCH 17 Jan. 1908.

⁶⁷⁹ "Per str. Gouverneur for Tientsin, B. Goldenberg", NCH 16 Sep. 1911; "Per str. Persia from San Francisco B. Goldenberg", NCH 23 Nov. 1912; "Per Str. China for Hong Kong, B. Goldenberg", NCH 30 Nov. 1912; "Per Str. Fushimi Maru from Hong Kong, Goldenberg", NCH 28 Dec. 1912.

⁶⁸⁰ The company was first founded by Filoteo Alberini and Dante Santoni in Rome 1905 and renamed as "Società Italiana Cines" (or simplified as "Roman Cines") in 1906. It was famous for making Italian epics. After Baron Alberto Fassini took in charge, many influence feature length films were produced.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² NCH 25 Sep. 1901, volume 84, issue 1781.

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business. As a travelling showman, he first gave cinematograph exhibitions at teahouses and later he moved to a Chinese theatre “Chung Sien”, near Foochow Road. Through 1905 to 1906, he was giving film screenings there. In an interview, he recalled, “Admission was one dollar for the best seats and sixty cents for the others; every day’s programme consisted of four one-reel films which had already been shown and one new one.”⁶⁸³ The cinematograph exhibition at Chung Sien was a huge success. The seating capacity there was three hundred and Lauro nearly always played to a full house. Films he exhibited in these days were mostly shot by himself and “they were one-reel pictures of such innocuous subjects as tea-culture or picturesque scenes in Shanghai streets”.⁶⁸⁴

Through 1907 to 1912 Lauro was providing exhibition service for prestige Western-style hotels in Shanghai, especially St. George’s Hotel and Palace Hotel.⁶⁸⁵ After about two years’ accumulation of capitals and social resources, Lauro changed his business model around 1907. He stopped working as a travelling showman but began to run an exhibition enterprise. Lauro founded the Lauro Cinema China Co. on 44 Range Road. He hired and trained operators to work for him, assigning them to various exhibitions in the city. Lauro hence transformed into a manager. As the novelty of cinematograph wore off, audiences demanded for rapid changes of film. In this respect, Lauro met some difficulties. In 1907, he filed a lawsuit against Alfred Ross & Co. for the breach of contract and demanded \$262.10 for compensation. According to the court record, Lauro contracted with Ross to give one month’s film exhibitions at Palace hotel, with the price of \$25 per night. Lauro later stopped exhibitions because Ross did not pay him duly. Ross in turn accused Lauro for the poor quality of exhibitions. According to Ross, the operator whom Lauro dispatched came often late and the exhibition was one hour later than planned. Lauro himself did not appear at all. Most films were outdated and there was no change of new films every night. Lauro refuted that he had “changed part of the programme each night at the

⁶⁸³ NCH 15 May 1935, volume 195, issue 3536.

⁶⁸⁴ NCH 15 May 1935, volume 195, issue 3536.

⁶⁸⁵ NCH 25 Jan. 1907, volume 99, issue 2059; NCH 27 Dec. 1907, volume 102, issue 2107.

theatre” and put in a book showing lists of the films he had shown.⁶⁸⁶ The fact that most audiences came only for new films indicates that film content became the attraction of cinematograph exhibitions.

In 1910s, Lauro moved to permanent cinemas and worked briefly as the manager of Ramos’ Victoria Cinematograph.⁶⁸⁷ In 1911, he got involved in another lawsuit. He was sued for refusing detective Constable Rye to Victoria hall.⁶⁸⁸ Generally speaking, it was hard for a foreign showman to make a living in Shanghai back then. To be successful, one had to partner up and obtain the protection from the authority in International Settlement. For this purpose, Lauro actively engaged in social activities in Shanghai. He gave a lecture titled “*Cinematograph, the mechanic of the camera*” to the Photographic Society of Shanghai, voted for Municipal council as a ratepayer, donated for “Croce Rossa italiana” and established a close connection to the Italian community.⁶⁸⁹ After he departed Victoria Cinematograph, Lauro participated in movie theatre business. In 1912, Lauro applied to build one wooden stage and a machine room in Huangpu district.⁶⁹⁰ In the same year, he partnered Cantonese merchant Deng Ziyi 鄧子義 and built Helen Cinematograph in Haining Road, which was rebuilt into New Helen Cinematograph in 1908. In 1917, Lauro also invested in Isis Theatre 上海大戲院 in Sichuan Road.⁶⁹¹

The booming film business attracted many established film companies to China and Lauro’s exhibition enterprise was challenged. Given the circumstance, Lauro carried out a series of corporations with other cinematograph companies and got involved in film exchange business. Lauro claimed that he “managed to hold his own against the Pathé people” and “had the satisfaction of buying their stock when they gave in.”⁶⁹² In the same vein, he made several favorable deals with other French companies. He

⁶⁸⁶ “A.E.Lauro vs. Alfred Ross”, NCH 27 Dec. 1907.

⁶⁸⁷ NCH, 1911, May 25, volume 120, issue 2337.

⁶⁸⁸ NCH 6 May 1911.

⁶⁸⁹ NCH 23 Jan. 1915. NCH 23 Mar. 1915. NCH 19 May 1917.

⁶⁹⁰ NCH 13 Jun. 1912.

⁶⁹¹ “Shanghai dajuyuan luocheng 上海大劇院落成” (Isis Theatre is Completed), SB 18 May 1917.

⁶⁹² “La Compagnie des Cinematographes Le Lion”, NCH 8 May 1935, volume 195, issue 3535.

later became the “sole agent for the Compagnie des Cinématographes ‘Le Lion’”.⁶⁹³ As the exhibition business thrived, film supply became a problem. Lauro possessed a set of cinematograph and he hence shot actualités for his exhibitions.

Among others, he listed in his pictures *The Funeral of the Empress Dowager in Peking* and an aviation film, recording “Mr. Rene Vallon flew from the Kiangwan Race Course, crashed there and was killed.”⁶⁹⁴ The former was shown in England and in regard of the latter, Lauro showed the film in a benefit performance for Mr. Vallon’s widow. Other news event films that Lauro photographed were about the meeting with Sun Zhongshan at Zhang garden, the cutting of the queues in Shanghai, incidents of Nanking War, Mason’s ceremonies of bringing Shrine to Shanghai and the first tram in Shanghai.⁶⁹⁵ Beside those short actualities, Lauro also attempted to make a feature length film. The result was “*The Curse of Opium*”, a domestic drama illustrating the downfall of one Tzu-Kuei (Opium addict). In the film, female roles were played by man actors. The picture was eventually “abandoned owing to difficulty of making the cast performing with only a camera for audience.”⁶⁹⁶ Lauro considered Chinese drama not compatible with modern cinema. Nevertheless, he had “kept some of the negative, and sometimes he takes it out and looks at it, and laughs.”⁶⁹⁷ After the attempt failed, Lauro thought about removing to Manila and starting again with travel-picture there.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹³ “La Compagnie des Cinematographes Le Lion”, NCH 8 May 1935, volume 195, issue 3535..

⁶⁹⁴ NCH 13 May 1916.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ NCH 22 May 1935, volume 195, issue 3537.

⁶⁹⁷ “Far East Cinema Pioneer Here”, NCH 15 May 1935.

⁶⁹⁸ “Far East Cinema Pioneer Here”, NCH 15 May 1935.



Fig. 5 Some stilles from *The Curse of Opium*, from “A Chinese Film in Years Gone By,” NCH 22 May 1935

S. G. Hertzberg

In 1920s, S. G. Hertzberg, the proprietor of Embassy Theatre and Apollo Theatre, travelled between China and America to make possible arrangements for the programme at his theatres. In an interview with NCH, Hertzberg recalled his first venture as an itinerant showman. According to him, he and “one or two others all started about the same time [at the end of Russo-Japanese War] to introduce the movies to China”.⁶⁹⁹ Like other adventurers, he claimed to know “nothing whatever

⁶⁹⁹ “Shocking Tragedy at Local Cinema”, NCH 2 Dec. 1922.

about the movies, but took a chance when he heard some films were available”. The first show was “as bad a show as well could be imaged” and “the ‘house’ only amounted to \$50”.⁷⁰⁰ Nevertheless, “one comedy of the films became popular. By repeated requests, this comedy was “kept going off and on for nearly a year”.⁷⁰¹ It led him to believe that there was a great chance in this line of business and if he could find some good films and endeavored to improve the shows, he would eventually succeed.

The road to Hertzberg’s success in cinematograph business in China was typical. He started as showman around 1907 and after many attempts and improvements, he saved some money and invested in the cinematograph enterprise. The business thrived after several expansions. In regard of his success, he summarized the secret recipe as finding “hit” films and improving the shows.

4.2.2 *Movie theatres in Shanghai*

Year	Venue	Proprietor and location	Note
1907	St.George’s Hotel	S. Hertzberg (Russian), Bubbling Well Road	A.E.Lauro exhibited there
	Palace Hotel	Central Stores, Ld.(British), 2 Nanking Rd	A.E.Lauro exhibited there
	Metropole Hotel		
1908	Alhambra Hotel	Louis Ladow, Sicawei Road	
	American Cinematograph/ Palace Variety	Popovich (Austian), 51-56. N. Szechuan Rd	ended in 1912 and became Apollo Theater
1909	Alcazar Hotel	6, Sicawei Rd	
	Colon	A.Ramos, 112 A. Chapoo Rd	

⁷⁰⁰ “Shocking Tragedy at Local Cinema”, NCH 2 Dec. 1922.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

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	Cinematograph		
	Arcade Cinematograph	A.Koplin (German), 1A Yuenfong Rd.	ended in 1912
1910	Bijou Theater	Moutrie & Co. 5/6 Nanking Rd	
	Victoria Skating Rink	A. Ramos, 112A, Chapoo Rd	same address as colon Cine
	Victoria Cinematograph	A.Ramos, 24 Haining Road	
1911	Apollo Theater	G.S.Hertzberg, 52 N. Szechuen Rd.	same address with American Cine
1912	Republic Theatre	B. Goldenberg.	
1914	Olympic Theater	A.Ramos, 127 Bubbling Well Rd.	

Chart 4 Makeshift Theatres and Permanent Cinemas in Shanghai

As a rule, film exhibition business in Shanghai prior to WWI was monopolized by A. Ramos' Ramos Amusement Company. Ramos built a cinema chain in China. In Shanghai, he was the manager and proprietor of Colon Cinematograph (later renovated into Victoria Skating Rink), Victoria Cinematograph and the luxury Olympic Theatre. Other proprietors like A.E. Lauro and B. Goldenberg all briefly worked as managers in Ramos' properties. In this regard, Ramos had trained a batch of travelling showmen and transformed them to professional theater managers. A.E. Lauro later founded the Lauro Cinema China Co. and built Helen Cinematograph. B. Goldenberg claimed to have built Shanghai's first cinema house in Chapoo road and in 1912 he founded the Republic Theatre. Retrospectively, Ramos can be seen as the prominent representative of the group of travelling showmen.

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In contrast, S.G. Hertzberg was a representative of the businessman group. This group consisted of estate proprietors, who later participated in film business. Hertzberg was the proprietor of St. George's Hotel and later became the owner of Embassy theatre and Apollo theatre. Beside Hertzberg, other real estate merchants and companies also took part in film business. Louis Ladow, the co-owner of Alcazar and later the manager of Alhambra Hotel, provided regular cinematograph shows in his hotels. The Austria merchant A. Popovich was the proprietor of American Cinematograph in North Szechuan Road. He probably sold the property to S.G. Hertzberg in 1912 because the latter's Apollo theatre had the same address as American Cinematograph. The German merchant A. Koplín established Arcade Cinematograph. The Moutrie & Co. renovated the Moutrie theatre later to Bijou Theatre and included film screening to its regular programme.

In regarding the first permanent cinema in Shanghai, there were different sayings. According to ZDFZS, the first permanent cinema in China was the Hong Kou Theatre, built in 1908. This theatre was probably Ramos' Victoria Skating Rink, with Colon Cinematograph inside. Jay Leyda considers Ramos' storefront theater under Qinglian'ge as the first permanent cinema. This view was first presented in Cheng Shuren's *China Year Book* (1936). Cheng traces the first cinema theatre to a ramshackle affair in the famous Qinglian'ge teahouse in Fuzhou Road, under the direction of the Spaniard Ramos.⁷⁰² Cinematograph exhibitions in its earliest years were often held in makeshift venues like Chinese teahouses, Western-style theaters and hotels. Due to the mobility of itinerant showmen, it is difficult to identify a specific location as the "first" in China.

Movie theatres prior to WWI were mostly multifunctional. Even permanent cinemas like Ramos' Victoria Cinematograph and Colon Cinematograph provided variety shows. Many movie theatres were also taverns and beverages were served there. As a public space, disputes and crimes happened a lot in these venues. To run a successful business, proprietors and managers relied heavily on their private social

⁷⁰² Cheng Shuren, "Zhonghua yingye nianjian."

connections. As a rule, they were in association with their Consular for protections and supports. In order to accumulate social resources, they energetically engaged in social activities. In Shanghai, the municipal council regulated these venues through tavern licenses, which obliged entertainment venues to undergo inspections on regular bases. Historically, movie theatres went through three stages, i.e. makeshift venues, permanent cinemas and palace/luxury cinema. In this regard, moving picture was an extension of the existant entertainments like variety, Chinese opera, drama etc.

Western-style Hotels: Astor, Alcazar and Alhambra

As mentioned before, Astor House Hotel hosted the first cinematograph exhibition in Shanghai. From 1906 onward, the hotel continued to provide film screenings and variety shows. In this period, the hotel was troubled by several lawsuits. For example, L.M. Levy, the manager of the hotel, sued the all-round variety performer Steve Adson for breaching an exclusive contract because the latter intended to perform in Alhambra and the Colon Cinematograph after finishing his shows at Astor Hotel.⁷⁰³ At that time, there were intense competitions among entertainment venues. In addition to Astor House Hotel, Alcazar Hotel and Alhambra Hotel, two notorious gambling houses in Shanghai, also provided regular film screenings.

Alcazar Hotel was registered at American Consulate in 1905, on 6 Sicawei Road near the International Settlement. The hotel was also known as “Alcazar and California Garden”.⁷⁰⁴ In 1906, Alcazar Hotel was troubled by a series of lawsuits and lease disputes. The hotel had an ill repute as a gambling house. It sometimes also hosted illegal Boxing contests.⁷⁰⁵ In Oct. 1906, by order of the U.S. Consul-General, the hotel was closed. The property went through many hands of nationalities afterwards. In Jun. 1909, cinematograph show was permitted in Alcazar, under four conditions.⁷⁰⁶ By then, the manager of the hotel was W. Gerdessu, who came from

⁷⁰³ NCH 1 May 1909, volume 108, issue 2180.

⁷⁰⁴ Lessor was Mary McLachlan and Lessees were Messrs. Biddle and Ladow in 1905. See NCH 15 June 1906.

⁷⁰⁵ NCH 5 Apr. 1907.

⁷⁰⁶ NCH 4 Jan. 1909.

Marseille to China no later than 1903.⁷⁰⁷ Gerdessu ran the business well because he was qualified to the election of Councilors for the Foreign Settlement of Shanghai in 1910, which had certain requirement on assets.

The other Western-style hotel was Alhambra Hotel, the most notorious gambling house in Shanghai. The general manager was Louis Ladow, who was formerly the co-owner of Alcazar Hotel. Many entertainment companies chose this hotel when they toured Shanghai.⁷⁰⁸ This hotel was providing regular cinematograph shows prior to 1908.⁷⁰⁹

Permanent cinemas: Colon, Arcade and American Cinematograph

Prior to May 1909, Colon cinematograph had already been a strong competitor to other entertainment venues in Shanghai, such as Astor House Hotel, Alhambra and Alcazar. In 1909, A. Ramos had already gained an initial monopoly on cinematograph businesses in Manila and China (esp. Shanghai and Hong Kong). Ramos assumed the position of manager in Colon Cinematograph. He was likely also the proprietor. Under Ramos' management, the business boomed. He got a sum about \$400 for Saturday and Sunday nights' performances.⁷¹⁰ Running movie theatre in Shanghai was not an easy task. NCH recorded several incidents relevant to Colon Cinematograph. In 1910, there was a trivial dispute among A. Ramos' employees.⁷¹¹ In the same year, Ramos lost a close business partner of Colon Cinematograph, the performer Miss Dollie Keldie.⁷¹²

In 1910, Municipal council issued "*Licensed Taverns*", which listed two other movie theatres, i.e. American Cinematograph and Arcade Cinematograph. The former

⁷⁰⁷ "W. Gerdessus (French), per str. Annam from Marseille in Feb. 1903", see NCH 18 Feb. 1903. There were several stream records on his trips inside China before he run the Alcazar Hotel. He went per str. El Dorado for Chefoo in July and came back Shanghai per str. Kobe Maru from Dalny. See NCH 31 Jul. 1903; NCH 17 Oct. 1908.

⁷⁰⁸ NCH 1 May 1909.

⁷⁰⁹ NCH 19 Sep. 1908.

⁷¹⁰ "Under Suspicion", NCH 4 Dec. 1909, volume 110, issue 2208.

⁷¹¹ "Lee Ping-yung v. J. M.Cotta", NCH 25 Feb. 1910, volume 111, issue 2220.

⁷¹² NCH 17 Jun. 1910, volume 112, issue 2236.

was open in July 1909. According to a record in NCH, in the opening show “a large and enthusiastic audience” was at present and “the programme submitted was a lengthy and well-varied one, comprising well-selected cinematograph pictures”.⁷¹³ Arcade Cinematograph was a Western-style theatre with modern decorations. The hall was “well-lighted, and numerous electric fans have been installed, making for comfort in the trying heat usually experienced indoors. The acoustic properties are good, and excellent seating accommodation is provided.”⁷¹⁴

The proprietor of Arcade Cinematograph was A. Koplín, a German origin who came to Shanghai on June 5, 1907 per Str. Oceanien from Kobe.⁷¹⁵ Like other film pioneers, he energetically engaged in social activities. Three months after his arrival, he attended a carnival fest given by Shanghai International Swimming Club and achieved the second place in Long Plunge.⁷¹⁶ He remained an active club member in the following years. In March 1910, he applied to Municipal for a tavern license for Arcade Cinematograph on 1 A Yuenfong Road in international Settlement.⁷¹⁷ He renewed the license in 1911 but there was no record on Arcade cinematograph in the 1912 Municipal *Licensed Tavern*.⁷¹⁸ The fact indicated that he probably ended the business in this year. There were several records on his club activities in 1913 but no records on him thereafter. A. Koplín probably returned to Germany with the onset of WWI.

In 1908, there was a Palace of Varieties at No. 51 North Szechuen Road, where “excellent cinematograph films” were screened.⁷¹⁹ Three months later, the Palace was renamed into “the American Cinematograph Company’s Theatre”. The proprietor was A. Popovich, an Austrian origin. Popovich took over Palace of Varieties at the beginning of 1909 and established there the American Cinematograph and Vaudeville

⁷¹³ NCH 17 Jul. 1909.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ NCH 7 Jun. 1907, volume 100, issue 2078.

⁷¹⁶ NCH 20 Sep. 1907, volume 101, issue 2093.

⁷¹⁷ NCH 11 Mar. 1910, volume 111, issue 2222.

⁷¹⁸ NCH 29 Apr. 1911, volume 116, issue 2281.

⁷¹⁹ NCH Oct. 1908, volume 106, issue 2148.

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Company. The entertainment in American Cinematograph Company's Theatre included both vaudeville and cinematograph pictures. Film screening was given "nightly" and regularly. The most interesting and popular were the views of Henry Farman's aeroplanes—*The bi-plan and tri-plane-in Flight*, and "those of the laying the foundation stone of the New Shanghai Club and the Shanghai Paper".⁷²⁰ The American Cinematograph Company might have shot the latter two actualités. According to a record in NCH, on the day of laying the corner stone, a cinematograph was busy filming "the ceremony, members and guests, assembled spectators".⁷²¹ Within the same month, this actuality film was screened. It showed how timely local scenes could be shot, developed and projected on the local screen. The company not only screened moving pictures in its theatre but also provided cinematograph exhibitions for other entertainment venues and various social occasions. For example, in Jan. 1909 the American Cinematograph Company played at the beginning of a show given at the Scandinavian Sailor's new Home.⁷²² In June, the company gave a benefit performance for the English Presbyterian Mission.⁷²³

The owner of American Cinematograph A. Popovich applied in 1909 to the council for a new Hotel and Restaurant License for the ensuing Municipal year. It revealed that prior to 1909, the American Cinematograph was already permitted to sell alcohols and beverages. A tavern was probably built inside the theatre.⁷²⁴ A. Popovich successfully renewed his *Tavern License* in 1910 and 1911, however in 1912, there was no record on American Cinematograph. An "Apollo Theatre" appeared on the same spot, which belonged to the Russian businessman S. Hertzberg.

The American Cinematograph company also got involved in film production and rental business. The company's business boomed in the years of 1909, 1910 and 1911.

⁷²⁰ Henri Farman (1874-1958) was a French pilot, aviator and aircraft designer and manufacturer with his brother Maurice Farman. His came from a British family but he took French nationality in 1937. See NCH 20 Feb. 1909, volume 107, issue 2167.

⁷²¹ NCH 20 Feb. 1909, volume 107, issue 2167.

⁷²² NCH 2 Jan. 1909, volume 107, issue 2160.

⁷²³ NCH 17 Jun. 1910, volume 112, issue 2236.

⁷²⁴ NCH 13 Mar. 1909, volume 107, issue 2170.

Popovich appeared at the Ratepayers Meeting in March 1910, which attested his richness.⁷²⁵ There was no more record on him afterwards. Popovich might have left China with the onset of WWI. He was back in Shanghai in 1920s, working as the proprietor and manager of Savoy Hotel 興隆酒飯店.⁷²⁶ Retrospectively, A. Popovich can be treated as the forerunner of S.G. Hertzberg. They both ran hotel businesses, managed variety shows and took part in moving picture business. They ran movie theatres in the same way as running the real estate business.

Palace cinema and Apollo Theatre

Beside the aforementioned permanent cinemas, there were some other makeshift theatres in Shanghai, such as Moutrie & Co.'s Bijou Theatre and Huanxian Theatre 幻仙. Bijou Theatre was formerly known as "Moutrie Hall". The hall was lent to Operatic Troupe for 5 years, but around 1910, the business of Operatic Troupe failed and the hall was sublet.⁷²⁷ In contrast to the advanced Lyceum Theatre, Bijou was small and modest regarding the stage and lighting effect. The theatre became famous for screening Ching Ling Foo's war documentary *Wuhan Zhanzheng* in 1911. Huanxian theatre was located in Beihai Road in international Settlement. It was originally a Chinese teahouse. The theatre was founded with Chinese capitals and in 1908, a fire accident happened in Huanxian theatre.⁷²⁸ Beside the Huanxian theatre in Shanghai, there was also a Huanxian theatre (Huanxian Yingxiyuan 幻仙影戲園) in Yangzhou, founded by Chinese merchant Liu Bohua 劉伯華 for performing civilized dramas.⁷²⁹

From 1911 onward, palace cinemas appeared in Shanghai. Among them were Hertzberg's Apollo Theatre, Goldenberg's Republic Theatre, Lauro's Helen Theatre and Ramos' Olympic Theatre. The proprietor of Apollo theatre was S. Hertzberg and

⁷²⁵ NCH 25 Mar. 1910, volume 111, issue 2224.

⁷²⁶ *The Comacrib Directory of China* 中國商務各錄, p.346; NCH Aug. 1922, volume 161, issue 2871.

⁷²⁷ "S.Moutrie & Co., LD., Adjourned annual Meeting", NCH 15 Jul. 1910, volume 113, issue 2322.

⁷²⁸ "Kan yingxi wudian shihuo 看影戲無端失火" (The Fire at a Cinematograph Show), SB 6 Apr. 1908.

⁷²⁹ There is also a Huanxian theatre in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province. The proprietor was Liu Bohua 劉伯華, a comprador. See SB 13 May 1911.

the manager was A. Popovich. The manager and proprietor of Victoria Cinematograph was A. Ramos. Both theatres were fairly successful regarding moving picture shows and vaudeville performances. According to a report in *Variety*, in November 1913, Apollo theatre was screening Pathé films and in Victoria Cinematograph, Gaumont films filled out the bill.⁷³⁰

At the end of 1911, the construction of Apollo Theatre on site of former American Cinematograph Hall was completed. Apollo theatre can be treated as one of the first palace cinemas in Shanghai. The theatre was “one of the most up-to-date and comfortable of its size in the Far East”.⁷³¹ The architect E. Leigh Newman was responsible for decorating, furnishing and upholstery. According to the record in NCH, “The stage and proscenium have been greatly enlarged and the stage fittings brought quite up to date”.⁷³² The theatre had three noteworthy features. Firstly, the ground floor was converted into a well-graduated slope, with “very comfortable and stoutly built cane-seated chairs” and “there is not a seat in the house from which one cannot obtain a clear and uninterrupted view of the stage.”⁷³³ Secondly, the theatre was designed as a luxury venue. Inside the theatre, there were “a large and well-fitted bar room” and “a prettily decorated tea and coffee room for ladies.” Thirdly, the theatre was modernized, “The electrical fittings were of the most modern kind, and a ceiling exhaust fan which, hidden from the view of the audience by artistic moulding, enabled the hall to be cleared of smoke and bad air within three minutes of the time that the fan was set in motion”.⁷³⁴

4.2.3 Cinematograph companies

⁷³⁰ “Small Time in Far East (Shanghai, Nov.10)”, *Variety*, Dec. 1913.

⁷³¹ “The Apollo Theatre”, NCH 23 Dec. 1911, volume 118, issue 2315.

⁷³² *Ibid.*

⁷³³ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*

Pathé phono-cinema-chine

In a meeting of film society in 1926, Weisi 韋斯, the manager of “Pathé Phono Cinema, Chine” gave a speech, in which he looked back the history of Pathé Chine. As early as 1907, Pathé Co. had sent its staff to give “a demonstration of the manner in which cinematograph films are taken and prepared” for Shanghai Photographic Society.⁷³⁵ Around 1910, the brand of “Pathé” was already well known in China and the company branched in Shanghai. Pathé Phono Cinema, Chine initially focused on the phono business and later cinema became the main interest.⁷³⁶ The company was particularly famous for its gramophone. It attracted many Chinese merchants. For example, Li Houtian 李厚田, a Tientsiner who first worked as comprador for Russo-Chinese Bank, opened a store named Baidai gongsi 百代公司 (Pathé Company) and sold gramophones. However, it is not clear if Li’s store was officially authorized by Pathé Company.⁷³⁷

In Shanghai, Pathé Phono Cinema Chine was closely tied to French Consular. Shanghai Pathé agency was often hired to give cinematograph shows in French Fete and other celebrations in French Concession.⁷³⁸ Like early film pioneers and cinematograph companies, Pathé Chine participated in charity activities. The company placed a donation Box for Central Famine Relief Fund and Pathé staffs also donated for the Vallon Subscription Fund.⁷³⁹ Pathé Chine later got involved in film shooting. In Mar. 1910, Pathé sent cameramen to film a local motorcar accident and the film was projected on the screen timely.⁷⁴⁰ This news event film became a hit. The main business of Pathé Chine was film exchange. Pathé established a film rental system and monopolized film distribution in China.

⁷³⁵ NCH 27 Oct. 1907.

⁷³⁶ SB 9 Aug. 1926: 19.

⁷³⁷ “Nabu tianjiyun an sanji 拿捕田際雲案三紀” (Three Reviews on Tian Jiyun Case), SB 1 May 1911.

⁷³⁸ “Fazujie juxing qingdian 法租界舉行慶典” (The Celebration in French Concession), SB 15 Jul. 1911.

⁷³⁹ “Central China Famine Relief Fund” and “The Vallon Subscription Fund, Staff Pathé Phono Cinema, Chine”, NCH 13 May. 1911.

⁷⁴⁰ NCH 25 Mar. 1910.

Although Pathé Chine met many challenges, such as piracy films and copyright infringements, the company succeeded in supplying films in Chinese market. In June 1911, the company transported by the last Siberian Mail from Paris *Aeroplane Tragedies*, a fine cinematograph film illustrating the aviation disaster at the start from the Paris-Madrid aeroplane race.⁷⁴¹ In 1912, some latest and best Pathé productions can already be seen in Shanghai, including the fine staged long feature film *Little Emily*. It is evident that at that time, the taste of the public had undergone a change and drama was in demand.⁷⁴²

The first director of Pathé branch in Shanghai was Paul Le Bris.⁷⁴³ He was also the director of Pathé branch in Hong Kong.⁷⁴⁴ Le Bris was “one of the best known Frenchmen” in China and was praised for having “done a great deal for the French Concession.”⁷⁴⁵ Although he was widely known for representing the famous cinematograph firm Pathé Frères, Le Bris appeared in China as early as 1901, long before the establishment of Pathé branch.⁷⁴⁶ Le Bris was an active member of the French Fire Brigade and the French A. D. C.⁷⁴⁷ He appeared on the list of Annual Meeting of Ratepayers at the beginning of 1912.⁷⁴⁸ Under Le Bris’ management, Pathé Chine actively participated in charity events. The company, for instance, provided living picture shows for the Famine Fete in the central hall together with the magician “the Great Raymond”.⁷⁴⁹ The show was a huge success. Pathé Chine also provided cinematograph service for renters, theatres and various occasions (e.g. dinner party).⁷⁵⁰ According to Le Bris’ travel records, through 1909 to 1910 Pathé

⁷⁴¹ NCH 17 Jun. 1911, volume 116, issue 2288.

⁷⁴² NCH 16 Mar. 1912.

⁷⁴³ NCH 18 Nov. 1916.

⁷⁴⁴ NCH 4 Nov. 1916.

⁷⁴⁵ “Departure of M. Le Bris”, NCH 14 Aug. 1920.

⁷⁴⁶ “Per str. Yarra for Marseilles, Le Bris”, NCH 31 Dec. 1901.

⁷⁴⁷ “The French A.D.C”, NCH 22 Apr. 1910.

⁷⁴⁸ “List of persons duly qualified to vote at the Annual Meeting of Ratepayers”, NCH 23 Mar. 1912.

⁷⁴⁹ “The Famine Fete”, NCH 25 May 1912; “The Great Raymond”, NCH 1 Jun. 1912.

⁷⁵⁰ “‘B’ Company Dinner, Messrs. Pathé Frères showed a number of most interesting pictures”, NCH 22 Mar. 1913. “French Naval Brigade Concert”, NCH 27 Feb. 1915.

Chine probably expanded its business into Hankou.⁷⁵¹ Le Bris returned to France and served the 67th Infantry Regiment when WWI broke out.⁷⁵² In 1916, he returned in China to resume the management of Pathé Frères Agency in Hong Kong and Shanghai.⁷⁵³ In Shanghai, he was elected into the Municipal Councillors. He was also a member of the French Chamber of Commerce and the committee of the Cercle Sportif Français. In the same year, he travelled to Nice for marriage and was back in Shanghai the next year.⁷⁵⁴ It remains unknown when Le Bris quitted Pathé Chine but in 1918, the legal representative of the company was E. Labansat.⁷⁵⁵

The Société Générale des Cinématographes Eclipse

In Dec. 1908, pictures of a local race contest were screened at American Cinematograph Theatre. They were shot by the Société Générale des Cinématographes Eclipse in Shanghai.⁷⁵⁶ The pictures were “remarkably clear” and measured over 150 metres. A review in NCH praised Eclipse for developing and printing such a lengthy film in “so short a time”.⁷⁵⁷ Eclipse was likely the film supplier for the American Cinematograph Company. For a benefit performance in aid of the Italian Earthquake Fund in 1909, Eclipse supplied American Cinematograph Company “many excellent pictures” without any charge, including *the Wilbur Wright’s Aeroplane* and the recent *Interport Rugby Football Match*.⁷⁵⁸

In addition, Eclipse Company also got involved in film exhibition business. In May 1909, the company exhibited “an interesting selection of new films” for the open-air screening at the lawn nearest the Supreme Court for the Royal Society of St. George

⁷⁵¹ “Per str. Limao for Hankow, Le Bris Charignon, and Alrion”, NCH 14 Aug. 1909; “Per str. Lifong from Hankow, Le Bris”, NCH 21 Aug. 1909; “Per str. Tuckwo for hankow, Messrs. Le Bris”, NCH 25 Feb. 1910; “Per str. Lifong, from Hankow, Mr. Le Bris”, NCH 23 Dec. 1910.

⁷⁵² His war service won him the Croix de Guerre.

⁷⁵³ NCH 4 Nov. 1916.

⁷⁵⁴ “Mr. P le Bris returned to SH”, NCH 23 Jun. 1917.

⁷⁵⁵ “Pathé Phono Cinema, Chine, E. Labansat”, NCH 30 Mar. 1918.

⁷⁵⁶ “The International Walk”, NCH 5 Dec. 1908, volume 106, issue 2156.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁸ “The benefit performance”, NCH 6 Feb. 1909, volume 107, issue 2169.

Empire and Fete. Noteworthy is that in the fete, the film screening was inserted in variety performances and music accompaniments were provided.⁷⁵⁹ Beside that, Eclipse participated in lantern business. In 1910, Rev. D. K. Darwent gave a lecture titled “*The Black Forest*”, illustrated with nearly two hundred lantern slides. Eclipse provided these slides and worked the lantern. Lantern slides were also shown by Eclipse staffs.⁷⁶⁰

4.3 Cinema in China After 1906

“China is, certainly the most inaccessible country in the world in which to introduce European civilization and progress. But it is now a fact that the cinematograph in its victorious trip the world round even got a foothold here.”⁷⁶¹

In 1911, Martin M. Walker, the film tycoon who owned half a dozen moving picture theaters in Hong Kong, observed that after Russo-Japanese War, the moving picture business developed “wonderfully” in China. The interest in moving pictures was widely spread and all large cities had moving picture theaters. Cinema was “rapidly becoming one of the chief sources of amusement in the Orient.”⁷⁶² Consul C.L.L William of Shantou (Swanton) also noticed, “moving pictures have made great strides in public favor until now, especially along the coast, they are very well known, almost every port boasting at least one theater, while many of them have five or six.”⁷⁶³ The flourishing business attracted many oversea investors. The American investor S. Morton Cohn, for instance, after spent a six months’ trip through the Orient, excitedly announced, “Orientals like pictures”.⁷⁶⁴

Cinema’s “wonderful” development in China had a great deal to do with concession expansions in China. Retrospectively, there were two large settlement expansions prior to WWI. Both were the direct consequences of wars. The first

⁷⁵⁹ “Royal Society of St. George Empire and Fete”, NCH 29 May 1909, volume 108, issue 2181.

⁷⁶⁰ “The Black Forest”, NCH 4 Feb. 1910, volume 111, issue 2217.

⁷⁶¹ “The Cinematograph in China”, MPW Mar. 1908.

⁷⁶² “Pictures in China,” *The Nickelodeon* Jan.-Mar. 1911.

⁷⁶³ “Pictures for China,” *Motography* Apr.-Dec. 1911.

⁷⁶⁴ “Oriental Likes Pictures,” *The Nickelodeon* Jan.-Mar. 1911.

expansion appeared at the end of Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). After the war, the English monopoly was challenged and Russian, French and Japanese forces increased rapidly in China. A bunch of new ports were opened after *the Treaty of Shimonoseki* on Apr. 17, 1895. The number of foreign residents increased enormously and popular entertainment was in great demand. The second expansion appeared after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). In contrast to the first expansion, this time there were more foreign powers in the picture. The status quo in Tianjin served as a prominent example. Tianjin, the economic centre of North China, was destroyed during the Boxer Rebellion. After the movement, allied forces stationed to protect their interests in China. With foreign soldiers guarding on military sites, Tianjin was immediately rebuilt.

Given the circumstance, the need for “modern theatres and of entertainment and relaxation for the foreign population” became “one of the most pressing questions to be settle by communities interesting in maintaining large and satisfactory European populations.”⁷⁶⁵ According to a review in NCH,

“While the governmental business relied heavily on its personnel and, with the fact that the life in oriental communities was so far separated from homelands, it was ultimately necessary to support and provide means of relaxation, instruction and recreation”.⁷⁶⁶

Film business in China was supported by foreign forces. Among them, the French concession contributed the most. In some part of China, an annual opera season was provided under subsidy from the French government.⁷⁶⁷ The Japanese government was also an enthusiastic advocator of cinema, considering its propaganda function. During the Russo-Japanese War, a number of Japanese exhibitors were active in China. According to Hong Kong Consul General George E. Anderson, the Japanese was “the first people in the world to recognize the political possibilities of the moving picture” and “under the protection of the Japanese government, Japanese moving picture exhibitors were taken into China, India and other Asiatic countries”.⁷⁶⁸ These

⁷⁶⁵ “Oriental Likes Pictures,” *The Nickelodeon* Jan.-Mar. 1911.

⁷⁶⁶ “Theaters in the Orient,” NYC, Dec. 1913.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ “Picture for China,” *Motography* Apr.-Dec 1911.

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Japanese itinerant exhibitors showed pictures of Japanese troops overwhelming and routing the Russians, representing them as bona fide pictures of actual incidents of the war.⁷⁶⁹

Compared to variety shows, cinema had enormous advantages in terms of mobility. For most variety companies, foreign communities in the Far East were mostly in small-scale, distances between ports in various parts of the Orient were large and travelling was expensive, not to mention the time lost between ports without engagements. It was therefore difficult for a first class company in either the drama or opera to inaugurate and maintain their shows in either community location. Consequently, “The relative high price for those shows always resulted in financial disaster and another drawback to the presentation better class attractions has been lack of theatres to accommodate them.”⁷⁷⁰ In contrast, movie machines and films were portable. Additionally, cinema possessed a strong media heterogeneity, which allowed it to be combined with other forms of entertainments flexibly. The interim of variety shows was often filled in with the high grade cinematograph entertainments.⁷⁷¹

As a rule, cinematograph corporations and private travelling showmen coexisted in this period.⁷⁷² Large cinematograph establishments usually centred in large trade cities like Shanghai and Hong Kong, and to offset their disadvantages, itinerant showmen with portable outfit travelled to the Interior where moving picture was still a novelty. From the historical viewpoint, after the stages of initial exhibitions and shooting practices, cinema in China now entered the era of a formative film industry and in large cities and trade ports, permanent cinemas were erected for showing photoplays regularly.

⁷⁶⁹ “Picture for China,” *Motography* Apr.-Dec 1911.

⁷⁷⁰ “Theaters in the Orient,” NYC, Dec.1913.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷² “Picture for China,” *Motography* Apr.-Dec 1911.

4.3.1 Anecdotes, theatres and film market status quos

In regarding the introduction of cinema in China, two anecdotes spread widely among foreigners. The first was that, some time ago, an expert with machines and films started from Brussels for Beijing and he had met with quite a success, even obtaining permission to exhibit his pictures at the imperial court. The Empress “expressed great interest and was of the opinion that the cinematograph would be of quite an influence as an educator for the Chinese people, giving them an opportunity to study American and European condition in industry and social life.”⁷⁷³ Although this story can hardly be confirmed, there were indeed some cinematograph exhibitions at the Manchu court. According to Chinese records, in 1904 on the occasion of Empress Cixi’s birthday, a British ambassador tributed a set of moving machines and during the exhibition, an explosion happened.⁷⁷⁴ Two years later, Duan Fang brought back moving machines from his oversea constitutional inspections and screened films at his private residence. The machine exploded too. Moving machine was hence deemed inauspicious and was banned inside the Forbidden City.⁷⁷⁵ In spite of the prohibition, outside the Forbidden City cinematograph spread rapidly.

The second anecdote was about how Chinese was encouraged to step in moving picture theaters. According to Martin Walker, the experienced cinematograph proprietor in Hong Kong, “When moving pictures were first introduced in China, the Celestials considered them uncanny” and “for about a year after the first moving picture theater was opened in Hong Kong it was patronized mainly by foreigners.”⁷⁷⁶ Although the Chinese was curious enough, it seemed that they could not understand what the pictures were about, and beside that, they had to consider the regard from their “foolhardy conservative fellow countrymen” who superstitiously “thought very little of this devil’s device”.⁷⁷⁷ The stalemate was accidentally broken by a prince of the royal blood. Some American navy men invited the Chinese prince to the theater

⁷⁷³ “The Cinematograph in China”, MPW Mar. 1908.

⁷⁷⁴ Liu Shanling 劉善齡, *Xiyangfeng: xiyang faming zai zhongguo* 西洋風: 西洋發明在中國, p.71.

⁷⁷⁵ A detailed investigation on Duan Fang’s film activities is given in chapter five.

⁷⁷⁶ “Pictures in China,” *The Nickelodeon* Jan.-Mar. 1911.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

and the latter, first timidly, but finally enthusiastically enjoyed the show. He then became a devotee of cinematograph. When other Chinese saw that even a prince went to watch the movie and no harm was done to his life, they began to follow suit and a few months later “the theater was playing to crowded houses of Chinamen every day.”⁷⁷⁸

Theatres: number and regional imbalance

According to Consul C.L.L Williams of Shantou, around 1911 Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Hankou, Hong Kong and Guangdong each supported “several theaters and there are numerous travelling shows in the neighboring country districts.”⁷⁷⁹ A report in *The Daily Consular and Trade Reports* pronounced, “nearly every town and port in the Southern part, as well as the Northern, boasts of at least one cinematograph theater and as many as five and six”.⁷⁸⁰ Although the “ventilation and comfort” might not be all satisfying, “most theatres in China were well patronized”.⁷⁸¹

Despite this optimistic observation, cinematograph theatres business in China featured an obvious regional imbalance. Picture theaters were, for the greater part, confined in treaty ports and “those living away from the coast ports, who are not in touch with Western people, are scarcely aware of the existence of these shows.”⁷⁸² According to A. E. Carleton, the Vice consul General in Hong Kong, in total there were less than 50 cinematograph shows in all China and Macao, and all of these are in the treaty ports.⁷⁸³ Beside film screenings, most movie theatres also featured variety shows.

To sum up, although cinema, especially the number of movie theatres increased rapidly in China after 1906, more moving picture establishments were in demand and “the immediate future may offer a great opportunity in the interior ports of China in

⁷⁷⁸ “Pictures in China,” *The Nickelodeon* Jan.-Mar. 1911.

⁷⁷⁹ “Pictures for China,” *Motography* Apr.-Dec. 1911.

⁷⁸⁰ “Motion Picture in China,” *MPW* Oct.—Dec. 1911.

⁷⁸¹ “Oriental Likes Pictures,” *The Nickelodeon* Jan.-Mar. 1911.

⁷⁸² Vice consul General A.E.Carleton, Hongkong, *Motion Picture Trade Abroad*, *MPW* Oct.-Dec. 1911.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*

this line”, for which “a campaign of education and considerable capital” would be required.⁷⁸⁴

Status quos of Chinese film market

The imperial Maritime Customs did not specify the imports of films for moving pictures into China, and Hong Kong had no customs returns whatever. This fact made it impossible to give any figures regarding the present use of films in moving picture establishments either in Hong Kong or in China.⁷⁸⁵ According to A. E. Carleton, “the films now generally in use in Hongkong and in the treaty ports were over 40 per cent secondhand films, and of the total in use it is estimated that 25 per cent only are American.”⁷⁸⁶ Most short pieces were imported from Europe, with the length of 400 feet or 500 feet. The market for new films was not good due to the high customary price. In Hong Kong, new films were taxed for 6 cents. The managers of the movies hence turned to the second grades.⁷⁸⁷ As a rule, most films in China were furnished by “a large French Film Exchange of Hongkong”, viz. Pathé Phone Cinema, Chine. The only agency for the rental of American films in the Far East was located in Manila and American films mostly went to China through European exchanges rather than direct import. Most Pathé pictures were “of a dramatic and historical nature”⁷⁸⁸

In regards film taste, according to the theatre proprietor Martin S. Walker, the Chinese did not seem to care for comedy and they wanted serious things. Tragedies were hence the most liked. Around 1910, Walker organized “a company of Chinese actors to play before the camera. The Celestials like Chinese skits very much, but they seem to appreciate films made with white actors, too.”⁷⁸⁹ The American investor S. Morton Cohn, on contrary, observed that the Chinese was particularly fond of “the

⁷⁸⁴ “Cinematograph for Chinese”, NYC Dec. 1913.

⁷⁸⁵ “Pictures for China,” *Motography* Apr.-Dec 1911.

⁷⁸⁶ Vice consul General A.E.Carleton, Hongkong, *Motion Picture Trade Abroad*, MPW Oct.-Dec. 1911.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁸ “Motion Picture in China,” MPW Oct.—Dec. 1911.

⁷⁸⁹ “Oriental Likes Pictures,” *The Nickelodeon* Jan.-Mar. 1911.

antics of Americans and Europeans” and “Occidental humor is not appreciated, preference being shown for the purely pictorial”.⁷⁹⁰

4.3.2 Southeast cities and Arcade Film Company in North China

Foreign businessmen and film companies monopolized Chinese film market. It was particularly obvious in South China, where Hong Kong and Shanghai became two centres for film exchanges. In Southern and costal parts of China, Ramos Amusement Company built a cinema chain and Pathé established a rental system. In trade cities like Guangdong, Xiamen and Shantou, established movie theaters and travelling shows coexisted. In contrast, the natives in North China showed no great interest in this line of business, with an exception of Arcade Amusement Company in Tianjin.

In addition, cities in border areas were usually under the influence of the neighbouring countries. In this respect, Harbin served as a prominent example. According to Consul Lester Maynard, there were four moving-picture machines in Harbin, all of French manufacture. The proprietors of the theaters obtained their supplies through Moscow and Paris agents. The Paris agent was probably PathéChine, which had a monopoly of film exchange in the Orient back then. One owner of the movie machine also handled films in Harbin and sold “about 10,000 meters each of positive and negative films per year.”⁷⁹¹ Beside that, there were two cinematograph machines for taking moving pictures, “one of English and the other of French make”.⁷⁹²

Hong Kong: the centre of film distribution

In 1910s, the population in Hong Kong reached over half a million and “in a few years this number will be more than doubled.”⁷⁹³ In this regard, there was a promising future in local film business. Hong Kong film business was “good” and

⁷⁹⁰ “Pictures All Over in China,” *The Motion Picture Story Magazine*, Feb.-Jul. 1912.

⁷⁹¹ “China’s Picture Show,” *Monography* 1912.

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*

⁷⁹³ Vice consul General A.E.Carleton, Hongkong, “Motion Picture Trade Abroad,” *MPW* Oct.-Dec. 1911.

“growing” as in other districts and Chinese ports.⁷⁹⁴ According to consul General G. E. Anderson, Hong Kong had come to be “quite an exchange centre in film distribution”.⁷⁹⁵ Film concerns there provided films for the Orient, including the Philippines, Indo-China and the Malay States, Siam, Burma and North China”.⁷⁹⁶

In Hong Kong, the most preferred were French films but as a British community, English films were also welcomed. Some American films were used, but they were obtained “mostly through European exchanges” and few American film houses had reached Hong Kong.⁷⁹⁷ The Chinese in Hong Kong preferred action films and they “demand movement in every picture—heavy tragedy or love picture do not appeal to Hong Kong audience”.⁷⁹⁸ The market was flooded with secondhand films (over 40 per cent) imported from Europe and some were even “years old, which have gone the rounds of Europe” due to their price advantage against the new material.⁷⁹⁹ The customary price in Hong Kong was about 6 cents gold for new films.

In regarding movie theatres, Ramos’ Amusement Cooperation “had practically complete control of the skating rink business and nearly all similar enterprises.”⁸⁰⁰ The other film pioneer was Martin S. Walker, who opened about six moving picture houses. When moving picture theatres first appeared in Hong Kong, the spectators were exclusively foreigners but soon cinematograph exhibitions diverted to “appeal to the Chinese” and it was not before long that “the Chinese in general learned to appreciate” this form of entertainment.⁸⁰¹ Although the picture business boomed, there were several obstacles. Firstly, the theater prices here ranged from about 35 cents to 75 cents gold for European theaters and half the price for Chinese theaters.

⁷⁹⁴ Consul Genral George E. Anderson, Hongkong, “Films in China,” *Motography* Apr.—Dec. 1911.

⁷⁹⁵ Consul, Gen’l G.E. Anderson, “Cinematograph for Chinese”, NYC, Dec. 1913.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁷ Consul Genral George E. Anderson, Hongkong, “Films in China”, *Motography* Apr.—Dec. 1911.

⁷⁹⁸ Vice consul General A.E. Carleton, Hongkong, *Motion Picture Trade Abroad*, MPW Oct.-Dec. 1911.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁰ Consul Genral George E. Anderson (Hongkong) said the “the cinematograph business in Hongkong and the lower China coast is largely in the hands of Portuguese, former residents of Macao.” It was highly possible that the “Portuguese” was Ramos. See Consul Genral George E. Anderson, Hongkong, “Films in China”, *Motography* Apr.—Dec. 1911.

⁸⁰¹ Vice Consul General A.E. Carleton, Hongkong, “Motion Picture Trade Abroad,” MPW Oct.-Dec. 1911.

The rates of admission were nevertheless still beyond average Chinese.⁸⁰² Secondly, in Hong Kong the transportation from one district to another was slow, tedious, and expensive and it discouraged moviegoers. There were hence only two shows an evening, one commencing at 7:15 and the other at 9:15, and each lasted “practically two hours, using one long film and fill up the rest with short films for the two hours’ duration.”⁸⁰³ This kind of show arrangement was inadequate for local Chinese who was accustomed to long hours’ shows in the Chinese theaters and was unwilling to pay for a short performance. Thirdly, there was also the language problem. Most Chinese were illiterate then but the charge for having the readings in Chinese to the audience was large and only few theaters could afford it. Last but not least, superstitious Celestials were not passionate for producing Chinese films. Film production was ignored for a considerable long time. It was not until the early Republic of China that an American Company manufactured Chinese pictures. The attempt, though, had not been a financial success.

South China: Shanghai, Shantou, Guangdong and Xiamen

In Shanghai, about 15,000 foreign inhabitants and 1,000,000 natives dwelled respectively in Foreign Settlements and the Native City. Local picture theaters hence enjoyed a steadily growing number of audiences. In 1910s, there had been a number of permanent cinemas, such as Apollo theatre, Victoria Musical Hall and the Cinema Paris. Some of them were already palace cinemas. The number of new motion picture theatres attested the “growing popularity” of movie picture. In the summer months, open-air film screenings were also popular.⁸⁰⁴ Films were mostly supplied by the Pathé Frères agency here.⁸⁰⁵ Local audiences preferred comic plays and scenes.

⁸⁰² Consul Genral George E. Anderson, Hongkong, “Films in China”, *Motography* Apr.—Dec. 1911.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁴ Vice consul General Nelson Thusler Johnson, “China”, NYC May 1913.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

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American films were also “well” received for their “realism, purposefulness, and strength of plot”.⁸⁰⁶

The purchase price for new films was 8 to 15 cents per foot and the price for secondhand films was 1 to 5 cents per foot. As a rule, films were rented and not purchased.⁸⁰⁷ The methods of renting films varied greatly. The rental paid for supplies of first class films was about \$50 per week, including one change. The rental for medium-class films was about \$37.50 per week. The films were, in some cases, rented by the meter per night. When rented by the meter (39.37 inches), the price per night was about 1 cent per meter for films which had not been on exhibition at one or more of the other theaters. Films which had been shown in other theaters rent for about one-half cent per meter. Beside that there was the five per cent ad valorem duty collected on imported films.⁸⁰⁸

Class	Film	Length	Changes	Price
A	have not been shown in Shanghai	500 metres (1,640 ft)	twice a week	Mexican \$125 per week
B	have been shown in but one other house in Shanghai		twice a week	Mexican \$0,02 per metre
C	have been shown in three or four places		Twice a week	Mexican \$0.01 per metre.

Chart 5 Path éFilm Rental System in Shanghai, “China” by Vice consul General Nelson Thusler Johnson, published in NYC, May 1913

⁸⁰⁶ Consul General Thomas Sammons, Shanghai, “Growing Popularity at Commercial Metropolis,” MPW Oct.-Dec. 1911.

⁸⁰⁷ Consul General Thomas Sammons, Shanghai, “Growing Popularity at Commercial Metropolis,” MPW Oct.-Dec. 1911.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

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Beside Shanghai, other cities in South China also followed Pathé's rule. Shantou was a striking example. Consul General William in Shantou gave a thorough introduction on film rental system there. According to him, Shantou was "one of the smaller ports as regards population, and yet it has two theaters in operation, while four or five traveling shows work the nearby territory."⁸⁰⁹ The travelling shows generally depended on some other artificial lighting system. Consequently, there was a great demand for films and to a lesser extent for apparatus. Pathé Chine monopolized the film market in South China through its agency in Hong Kong and Shantou was no exception. Here Pathé Chine rented its films in three series under monthly charges and conditions:

"series A comprises a program of films never before seen in the locality; series B, a program seen in one theater in the locality; series C, a program seen in various shows. Series B film may be rented for one performance at the rate of 60 cents a hundred feet per day; series C film at 30 cents a hundred feet per day."⁸¹⁰

In addition, "The rent for films was payable in advance" and Pathé Chine required the rentee to make a guaranty deposit, which would be refunded without interest on return of the last lot of films.⁸¹¹ Film prices varied under different circumstances and for "films depicting special events", the prices were naturally much higher.⁸¹² Second-hand films hence found a ready market in China, although the prices naturally varied considerably, according to condition and subject matter, etc. The prices of American second-hand films were usually higher than English or French. The import tariff on films and apparatus was five per cent ad valorem.

As regards theater status quos in South China, Consul General F. D. Cheshire in Guangdong conducted a detailed investigation on theaters there. According to him, around 1913 there were three cinematograph shows in the city of Guangdong, all catering to Chinese taste.⁸¹³ Films were imported from France and Germany, and a few were produced in America and Great Britain. The film market was monopolized

⁸⁰⁹ Consul C. L.L. Williams of Swaton, "Pictures for China", *Motography* Apr.-Dec. 1911.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁸¹² *Ibid.*

⁸¹³ Consul General F. D. Cheshire, "China Enjoy Silent Dramas," *Motography*, Jan.-Jun. 1913.

by the former two countries. Films were rented to exhibitors for a short time from a firm (probably Pathé Chine), who imported them direct from Europe. In the foreign settlement, a small cinematograph show was given, “usually once a week, for foreigners who choose to patronize it.”⁸¹⁴ Considering the limited foreign population, the Consul General Cheshire advised the firm who desired to enter this business to cater entirely to the Chinese. All shows at these three establishments were open usually from 6 P. M. to midnight and two of the establishments had two performances. The admission charges differed slightly. The average prices were 30 cents for Box seat, 20 cents for first class seat, 10 cents for second class seat and 5 cents for third class seat. All prices were “in Canton currency, \$1 of which is worth about 50 cent in United States currency.”⁸¹⁵

Similarly, in Xiamen most cinematograph exhibitions were given by travelling companies, who stopped for a few days at a time when passing through. In 1913, the first picture house was in construction. The enterprise was financed by the Amoy Cinematograph Co. (Ltd.), which capitalized at 6,000 dollar gold from local wealthy men. The company rented a building formerly used as a Chinese theater. According to Charles P. Brissel, the Vice Consul of Xiamen, the company “placed the order for its entire plant with a firm in the Philippine Islands” and the cinematographic equipment would be delivered within a few weeks, “with an American engineer to install it and to instruct the local Chinese in the method of operation.”⁸¹⁶

North China and Arcade Amusement Company

In China, the moving picture business was much more largely developed among the treaty ports in southern China than it was from Shanghai northward.⁸¹⁷ In contrast to South China, the natives in the North showed no great interest in moving picture shows. In Tianjin several efforts had been made to establish a moving picture house in

⁸¹⁴ Consul General F. D. Cheshire, “China Enjoy Silent Dramas,” *Motography*, Jan.-Jun. 1913.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁶ “First Picture House for Amoy, China,” *Motography*, Jan-Jun, 1913.

⁸¹⁷ “Moving Pictures in China,” *Motography* 1912:26.

the Chinese city to cater entirely to Chinese patronage, but they had been “only moderately successful”.⁸¹⁸ According to Tianjin Consul General Samuel Knabenshue, it was due to “too little promotions in this part of the world” and the situation “would be improved if some firm would enter the business and provide travelling cinematograph shows to be exhibited in Chinese theaters in the various native cities of North China.”⁸¹⁹

The most important film company in this part of world was Arcade Amusement Company. Prior to 1908, Arcade Co. had built a chain of seven houses in North China and was doing a big business, combining pictures and vaudeville. According to a report in MPW, no less than three thousand persons patronized Arcade houses.⁸²⁰ Arcade Co. was ambitious about building “a circuit of theatres all through the East in short time”.⁸²¹ On Sep. 27 1909, the company opened Arcade theatre in the French concession in Tianjin.⁸²² The proprietor was A. Barry and the manager was M.S. Ayer. Ayer subscribed and maintained a good relationship with MPW, a leading trade press in America.⁸²³ In Tianjin Arcade, usually eight films were screened during the evening, “interspersed at times with turns from one or two variety actors.”⁸²⁴ In regard of film supply, according to Consul General Knabenshue, the theatre rented films regularly from Pathé which had an agency in Tianjin and films were sent “from house to house along the coast until they were worn out”.⁸²⁵ In contrast, according to the theatre’s manager Ayer, Tianjin Arcade rented films from a Shanghai firm at the price of \$600 Mex. per month and there were “two changes per week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, 4.500 feet each change, of which half were subjects already shown and

⁸¹⁸ Consul General Samuel S. Knabenshue, “China,” NYC Jun. 1912.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid.

⁸²⁰ “Rustling in Tientsin”, MPW Jan.-Mar. 1914.

⁸²¹ “Bandmann Comedy Co. in China,” NYC Feb. 1908.

⁸²² The Arcade celebrated its third anniversary on 27 Sep. 1912. See MPW 6 Jul.—28 Sep.

⁸²³ Ayer often wrote letters to MPW, discussing some technique problems that they met. “From China: Arcade Amusement Company, Tientsin, China,” MPW, Jul.-Sep. 1914. In 1913 letter, Ayer warned men from the United States “against rushing blindly into China” because the competition was intense and “Strangers nearly all fail”. “From Hawaii: Mr. George F. Renton”, MPW Apr.-Jun. 1913.

⁸²⁴ Consul General Samuel S. Knabenshue, “China,” NYC Jun. 1912.

⁸²⁵ Consul General Samuel S. Knabenshue, “China,” NYC Jun. 1912.

half not shown previously in this city.”⁸²⁶ Tianjin Arcade was in small scale and the patronage was not large, almost entirely from the white population. The business was bad and Ayer held bad films partly for accountable. He hence wrote to several London firms for film supply but failed because the cost was prohibitive.

In the early 1910s, Ayer succeeded in screening some hit films. For example, in 1912 Tianjin Arcade played Alexander Duma’s play *Camille*, the profitable Éclair film *Zigomar*, and the Milano subject *An Evil Fascination*.⁸²⁷ Popular news event films like “*the Olympic Games of 1912* and *the Oxford-Cambridge boat races*” were also included.⁸²⁸ Beside that, there were adventure films like “*Attacked by a Lion*” and “*The Trainer*”. In 1914, Arcade Theatre played “*Quo Vadis?*” for five nights, a spectacular history film produced by the Italian Cines Company. Tianjin Arcade promoted this film heavily in press media.⁸²⁹ This series of screenings were evidently successful. According to MPW, in 1912 the Arcade theatre was able to “celebrate anniversaries where all other ventures in North China have not lasted a year out.”⁸³⁰

Arcade Amusement Company was also active in Beijing. Consul General Knabenshue mentioned that “there was an amusement house of the same character in Beijing, also called the Arcade”, which was closed in November 1911.⁸³¹ In 1914, Ayer excitedly wrote to MPW, announcing that the company was opening a new theatre opposite the Austrian legation in Beijing called “The Peking Pavilion”. It would be completed by the end of November and be open by the middle of December.⁸³² According to Ayer, Peking Pavilion would be seated for 700 persons and it was operated by A. Barry.⁸³³

⁸²⁶ “Rustling in Tientsin”, MPW Jan.-Mar. 1914.

⁸²⁷ MPW 6 Jul.-28 Sep. 1912.

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

⁸²⁹ “Rustling in Tientsin,” MPW Jan.-Mar. 1914.

⁸³⁰ “From the Arcade: The Arcade Theater, Tientsin,” MPW 5 Oct.-28 Dec. 1912.

⁸³¹ Consul General Samuel S. Knabenshue, “China,” NYC Jun. 1912.

⁸³² “New Theater in Peking, China,” MPW Jan.-Mar. 1914, volume 19.

⁸³³ “Small Time in Far East (Shanghai, Nov.10),” *Variety* Dec. 1913.

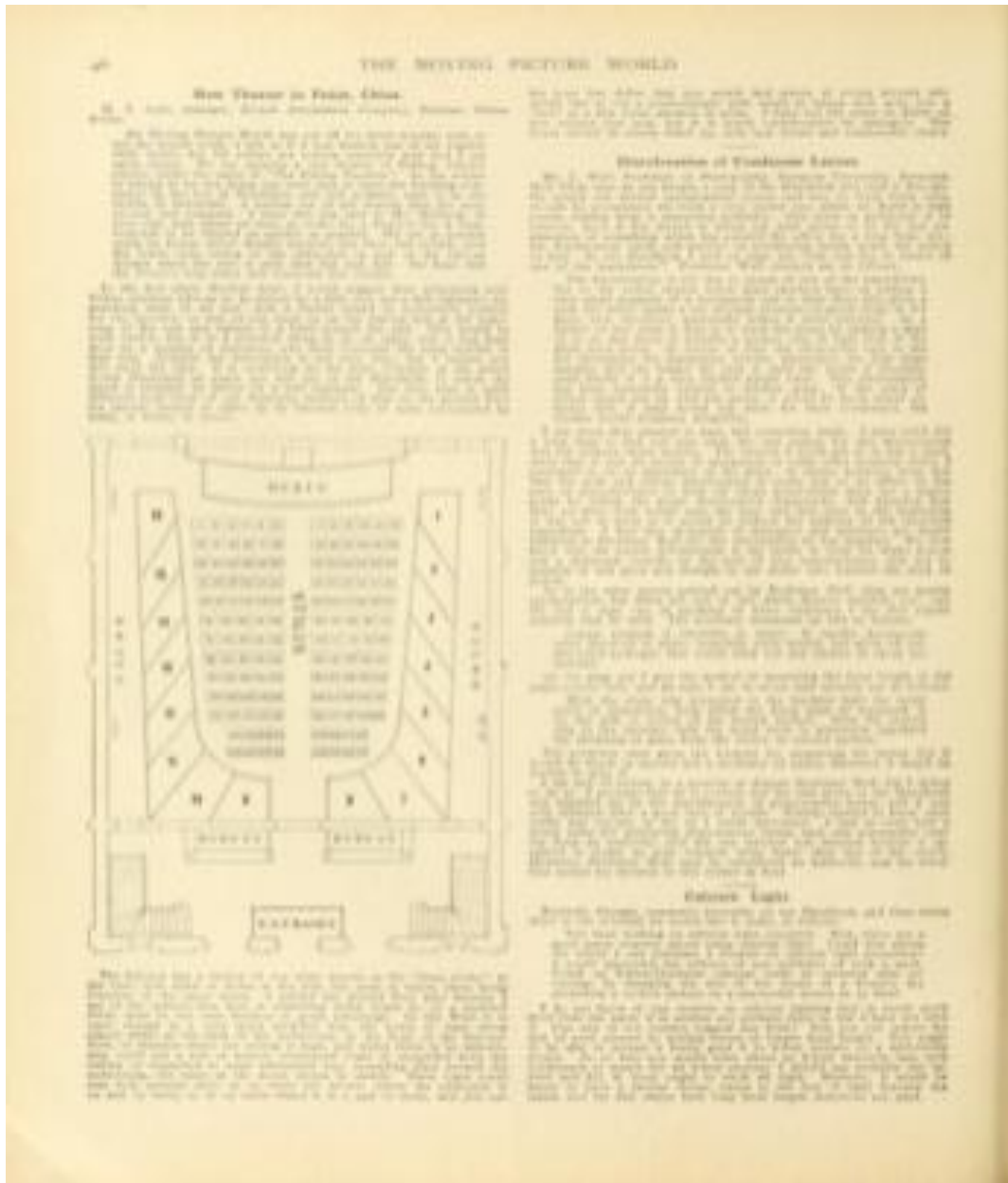


Fig. 5 "New Theater in Peking, China," MPW Jan.-Mar. 1914, volume 19

Chapter 5. Chinese Film Production, 1912-1914

5.1 Exhibitions

In the early Republic of China, film-related fire accident, explosion, natural disaster and illegal activities continued to draw the public attention.⁸³⁴ In Shanghai, cinematograph had a bad name because film exhibitions were often given in illegal entertainment venues, for instance, gambling house.⁸³⁵ Quarrels and disturbance happened often in or near movie theatres. The youths hung about the places like Skating Rink and the Victoria Cinematograph, and they were criticized of living “beyond their means”.⁸³⁶ Decent people hence kept a distance from cinematograph theatres.⁸³⁷

Meanwhile, fete celebrations and public exhibitions continued, in which film screening was arranged as an integral part of variety shows.⁸³⁸ Benefit film exhibitions became widely spread. In Ningbo, for instance, a proprietor of a cinematograph establishment expressed his willingness to give benefit shows for local Famine Relief Committee.⁸³⁹ Travelling showmen arrived in the interior parts and remote areas. In 1913, a Greek who had spent some years in the hinterland exhibited cinematograph in Sichuan and it caused “a temporary excitement” “as such a thing has never been shown here before”.⁸⁴⁰ Notable was cinema’s rapid growth in

⁸³⁴ Reports of serious fire accidents in Western countries appeared frequently in NCH. To name but a few: “A Big Prize-Fight Johnson vs. Elynn” (US), NCH 13 Jan. 1912, volume 119, issue 2318; “Loss of Life” (JP), NCH 20 Jan. 1912, volume 119, issue 2319; “The Light that Failed”, NCH 14 Sep. 1912, volume 121, issue 2352. Other threats to cinematograph were like explosion, natural disasters or illegal activities in theatre. “Tonados in America”, NCH 29 Mar. 1913, volume 123, issue 2381; “Cinematograph Explosion”, NCH 15 Mar. 1913, volume 123, issue 2379.

⁸³⁵ NCH 31 Aug. 1912, volume 121, issue 2351.

⁸³⁶ NCH 26 Apr. 1913, volume 124, issue 2385.

⁸³⁷ NCH 7 Dec. 1912, volume 122, issue 2365.

⁸³⁸ “Exhibition,” NCH 3 Aug. 1912, volume 121, issue 2347.

⁸³⁹ “Famine Relief,” NCH 23 Mar. 1912, volume 119, issue 2328.

⁸⁴⁰ “General Improvement in Szechuan,” NCH 29 Mar. 1913, volume 123, issue 2381.

Shandong province. In Jinan 濟南府 (Tsinanfu), on the day of German Emperor's birthday, the German Consulate celebrated with "a special cinematograph show and other entertainments".⁸⁴¹ In Qingdao, cinematograph shows were already given nightly.⁸⁴²

New phenomena: Y.M.C.A, film genre and censorship

From 1912 onward, cinema's educational function became foregrounded. Cinematograph proved an effective means for enlightening people.⁸⁴³ Educational institutions employed cinematograph to illustrate lectures as well as to entertain audiences.⁸⁴⁴ In this respect, Y.M.C.A was a prominent example. According to a record in NCH, Y.M.C.A's lectures "were rendered doubly interesting by the introduction of cinematograph pictures" and it became a routine to include cinematograph in their meetings.⁸⁴⁵ In 1912, Y.M.C.A. reached out to the Swedish Olympic Contests' Committee for the supply of slides and cinematograph films of the Olympic Games at Stockholm.⁸⁴⁶ The arrangement was fulfilled in the following year and Y.M.C.A announced to show Olympic pictures "throughout China with the object of appealing, not only to the national spirit but also to the athletic instinct."⁸⁴⁷ Other social groups and associations also shared the passion for cinematograph. The Ladies' International Club, for instance, employed cinematograph to entertain the attendance.⁸⁴⁸

Theatre business continued to boom in this period. Numerous new theatres were under construction, including both palace cinemas and makeshift venues.⁸⁴⁹ The

⁸⁴¹ NCH 7 Feb. 1914, volume 127, issue 2426.

⁸⁴² "The Siege in Tsingtao," NCH 12 Sep. 1914, volume 129, issue 2457.

⁸⁴³ "The Aviation Display by Mr. Atwater," NCH 30 Nov. 1912, volume 122, issue 2364.

⁸⁴⁴ "The Aurora University," NCH 4 May 1912, volume 120, issue 2334.

⁸⁴⁵ "Life in the Antarctic, Y.M.C.A." NCH 13 Sep. 1913, volume 125, issue 2405; NCH 6 Jul. 1912, volume 121, issue 2343.

⁸⁴⁶ "Y.M.C.A Future Arrangement," NCH 9 Mar. 1912, volume 119, issue 2326.

⁸⁴⁷ "Olympic Games, Chinese successes at Manila," NCH 22 Feb. 1913, volume 123, issue 2376.

⁸⁴⁸ NCH 4 Apr. 1914, volume 128, issue 2434.

⁸⁴⁹ "Charges of Attempted Bribery," NCH 23 Mar. 1912, volume 119, issue 2328.

number of film-related criminal cases increased strikingly. Taking Victoria Cinematograph as an example, in 1912 the proprietor Ramos sued one O. Rodil for fraudulency.⁸⁵⁰ In 1914, Ramos received duplicate receipts.⁸⁵¹ In the same year, one E. J. Lockerby was charged of being drunk and disorderly in the Victoria Cinematograph on Christmas Eve.⁸⁵² In addition, there were lawsuits among employees in Victoria Cinematograph. P. Villarverdi, the musician at the Hall, sued the doorkeeper Miram Bux.⁸⁵³

In regards film genres, photoplay was extremely popular, especially those adapted from classic literatures. In Feb. 1913, “*Les Miserables*” was screened at Apollo Theatre. The film lasted more than three hours. In contrast to the theatrical drama which was confined to a few set scenes, the cinematographic version scored “in being outside the limits of small stage” and obtained “an endless succession, the action of the story being thus infinitely broadened”.⁸⁵⁴ Historical spectacular films were particularly popular and the managers of cinematograph shows also preferred this category of films because most patrons were indeed attracted by luxury sceneries.⁸⁵⁵ Other popular film genres in this period were “the detective story”, newsreels, sport films and films on wild life.⁸⁵⁶

In this period, there was a growing demand for a “very strict” film censorship and films were supposed to be “conducive to public morality”.⁸⁵⁷ Many other Asian countries already issued film regulations.⁸⁵⁸ In China, the cinematograph craze incited many criticisms, mainly about the demoralization of film and the smoking

⁸⁵⁰ “At the Mixed Court on the 29th Instant,” NCH 9 Mar. 1912, volume 119, issue 2326.

⁸⁵¹ NCH 28 Mar. 1914, volume 127, issue 2433.

⁸⁵² NCH 3 Jan. 1914, volume 127, issue 2421.

⁸⁵³ NCH 25 May 25, 1912, volume 120, issue 2337.

⁸⁵⁴ “The Drama in Pictures,” NCH 22 Feb. 1913, volume 123, issue 2376.

⁸⁵⁵ “Cinema Shows,” NCH 20 Jun. 1914, volume 128, issue 2445.

⁸⁵⁶ Newsreel was also called “Gazettes” of current events.

⁸⁵⁷ “Cinema Shows,” NCH 20 Jun. 1914, volume 128, issue 2445.

⁸⁵⁸ In late 1913, the Japanese government issued new regulations in regard of film censorship. “Censoring Films,” NCH 9 Aug. 1913, volume 125, issue 2400; In 1914, the Manila the Chief of Police took actions against certain cinematograph films which was considered “not suitable for exhibition in the city of Manila”. NCH 18 Apr. 1914, volume 128, issue 2436.

inside movie theatres. In an article in NCH, the writer warned readers against cinema's "hypnotic influence".⁸⁵⁹ According to him, limitations of time and film space compelled "glaring crudities in the dramatic action of most stories".⁸⁶⁰ The writer hence praised educational films like travelogues, science pictures and news reels.⁸⁶¹ He recommended newsreels as "newspaper of the future". To use gramophone in conjunction with cinematograph pictures was a "novel means of securing an audience".⁸⁶²

In 1914, there was a heat debate about smoking inside cinematograph or other public venues. Many readers wrote NCH to express their opinions. A Non-Smoker complained, "About half-time these places of entertainment are so full of smoke that it is difficult to see the pictures clearly".⁸⁶³ The other wrote, "Atrocious mixture pervades the whole atmosphere, hurts everyone's eyes and get into the ladies' hair and clothes in a crowded cinematograph hall".⁸⁶⁴ S. Hertzberg, the proprietor of Apollo theatre promptly seized the opportunity and announced that his theatre had "Air Cleansing".⁸⁶⁵

5.2 Chinese as Film Audiences: Li Hongzhang, Duan Fang and Wu Tingfang

Previous studies on early China cinema suggested that cinema before WWI was in its infancy and merely a foreign novelty. In these studies, China was generally seen as a recipient. In this section, I would like to argue that previous studies have failed to recognize late Qing officials' prominent role in promoting cinema and using it to assist reforms during the process of China's modernization and nationalization. I intend to investigate film activities of several high officials in the Manchu

⁸⁵⁹ "The Souless Cinema," NCH 20 Sep. 1913, volume 125, issue 2406.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

⁸⁶² "Newspaper of the Future," NCH 27 Sep. 1913, volume 125, issue 2407; With the onset of WWI, war films appeared on screens in Shanghai. See "A Grim Scene," NCH 21 Nov. 1914, volume 130, issue 2467.

⁸⁶³ "To the Editor of *North China Daily News*," NCH 7 Feb. 1914, volume 127, issue 2426.

⁸⁶⁴ "Smoking in Theatres," NCH 14 Feb. 1914, volume 127, issue 2427.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

government and the beginning of the Republic of China, analyze their cinematographic views and discuss on how their involvements and views are weaved in the context of late Qing reforms. Based on their political stances, these high officials can be roughly categorized into three groups: reformists, constitutionalists and revolutionaries, with the most powerful statesman Li Hongzhang as forerunner, Duan Fang and Dai Hongci these two special commissioners as representatives of the second group and Wu Tingfang, the Minister to the United States for the third. Accordingly, there are three distinct but developmental views on cinema, i.e. machine-based, educational and commercial.

Li Hongzhang's world tour and acceptance of Mutoscope

In 1896, on occasion of Coronation of Czar, Li Hongzhang was appointed as Special Envoy to Moscow. He then boarded on from there a world tour. In regarding film business, his visit to Europe and North America was epoch-making, for being the first Chinese moviegoer and the first Chinese “movie star”.

From Russia, Li and his suite went to Germany and then to Hague, Holland. He was given a Government reception at the Kurhaus at Scheveningen, a famous seaside resort within convenient distance of The Hague.⁸⁶⁶ Li arrived at Kurhaus on July 5, 1896.⁸⁶⁷ That evening Li was given a banquet, in which cinematograph exhibition was given. NCH reprinted a news report from *Times* saying: “here he saw for the first time the Kinematograph, which is practically an enlargement to life size of Edison’s Kinetoscope, and this interested him enormously.”⁸⁶⁸ The exhibition was arranged by Bernard Goldbeck, the Director- General of the Kurhaus. By the time Li arrived, it had been only four months after the first cinematograph exhibition in Holland.⁸⁶⁹ In June 1896, Camille Cerf organized film screenings during the summer season at the

⁸⁶⁶ Denby, *Grand Hotels: Reality and Illusion*, p.137.

⁸⁶⁷ The Kurhasu was called Shuiwu ning'en gong 水物凝恩宫. See Cai, *Li hongzhang lipin ou'mei ji*, P.76.

⁸⁶⁸ NCH reprinted an article from *Times*, which was translated from *Vossische Zeitung*. See NCH 28 Aug. 1896.

⁸⁶⁹ The first public showing in Holland was given by a Belgium representative of Lumi ère Company, Camille Cerf, with a Cin ématographe operated by Francis Doublier on 12 March 1896 in Amsterdam.

luxurious Kurhaus.⁸⁷⁰ The cinematograph exhibition was probably an integral part of the Kurhaus attractions from its reception.⁸⁷¹ It was very likely that the exhibition Li attended was also given by this Camille Cerf.⁸⁷² It explains why later when the interpreter accidentally made a comment to Mr. Goldbeck “this is the invention of the great Edison”, Mr. Goldbeck immediately replied: “No, excuse me, it is the invention of Lumière.” This answer was then duly translated to the Envoy Li.

A report in NCH gave a vivid description on this showing and the spectatorship: Li sat to the right of Mr. Goldbeck and on whose left was the interpreter. The delight and the astonishment were so extraordinary that the show was promptly called halt when the first picture appeared on the screen, and an explanation was called for. Mr. Goldbeck volunteered this job by unfolding a long roll he held in his hand and explained that on it 1,500 instantaneous photographs were printed, showing that a number of different views of one card party. Li was mesmerized and delightfully said “Give him (the operator) this one to show us”. Mr. Goldbeck answered that the operator possessed a duplicate of the card party views and would screen them in due course. After the show, Li’s interest in the large screen grew. He asked to have the light thrown on the blank screen and this being done, he walked over to take a closer look. It was then that “he was highly diverted at seeing his own shadow thrown in bold relief on the white ground.”⁸⁷³ Li left no direct comment on his movie experience but he was undoubtedly delighted and satisfied with the reception.⁸⁷⁴

From Holland, Li then visited Belgium, France, United Kingdom and eventually the United States. The group arrived in New York on Aug. 28 1896. The press and

⁸⁷⁰ Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, p. 469.

⁸⁷¹ Denby, *Grand Hotels: Reality and Illusion*, p.139.

⁸⁷² In 1896 there were several other exhibitors in Netherlands and the projector hired by Goldbeck was possible someone from H.O. Försterling & Co. because in the article, Kinematograph was explained as “practically an enlargement to life size of Edison of Edison’s Kinetoscope” and Försterling & Co.’s Kinematograph was advertised as “Edisonov Ideal”. See, Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, p.469.

⁸⁷³ NCH 28 Aug. 1896.

⁸⁷⁴ Li wrote in visitor’s book “it has never yet been my experience to have found myself in such an earthly paradise, across the seas and oceans, as in this of Scheveningen. I have found pleasure in the music, and it was high honour for me to read in the fireworks the good wishes for my long life that were there displayed. This I wish to express.” See Little, *Li Hung-chang: His Life and Times*, pp.258-259.

general population seemed fascinated by “the Grand Old Man of China”.⁸⁷⁵ Compared to his first encounter with cinema at Kurhaus as an audience, Li this time became a “movie star” chased by cameras. The trip from the dock to Waldorf Hotel was dutifully filmed by two rival companies: Edison Manufacturing Company and American Mutoscope Company. James H. White filmed *The Baggage of Li Hung Chang*—a full 50 feet of celluloid— showing the luggage of the great man leaving the pier and *The Arrival of Li Hung Chang*, in which the subject stepped into his carriage at the entrance to the Waldorf Hotel.⁸⁷⁶ These two films were released in August under the classification of New Edison films.⁸⁷⁷ After that, it seems that Edison did not pursue filming Li’s following itinerary.

In contrast, William K. L. Dickson, the co-founder of American Mutoscope Company, worked hard to beat his older employer Edison Manufacturing Company to make a name for his new company. William Dickson not only successfully filmed Li’s arrival but also followed closely on Li’s other schedules. Li’s trip from the dock to the Waldorf was filmed and released as *Li Hung Chang—Fourth Avenue and Broadway* and *Li Hung Chang 5th Ave and 55th Street*. Li took the next day off and rested in Waldorf Astoria.⁸⁷⁸ On August 30, Li visited Grant’s tomb and laid a wreath. The scene was captured by William Dickson as *Li Hung Chang at Grant’s Tomb*.⁸⁷⁹ These three films were recorded in *Biograph Catalog* respectively as *Li Hung Chang* (No.53, 204 ft), *Li Hung Chang* (No. 54, 148 ft) and *Li Hung Chang at Grant’s Tomb* (No. 55, 198 ft), and were released in September. Though in terms of promptness, Dickson’s films were not as timely as Edison’s, his filming on Li Hongzhang was an unmitigated success. AM&B released these films under the classification of “notable personage”, usually dedicated to “Kings and Emperors, Presidents and Potentates”,

⁸⁷⁵ Li was dubbed by western press “the Grand Old Man of China.”

⁸⁷⁶ John Haddad, “The Laundry Man’s Got a Knife,” See Fung, *Chinese America: History and Perspectives 2001*, p.31; For details of Waldorf Astoria decorations for Li’s arrival see Morrison, *Waldorf Astoria*, p.23.

⁸⁷⁷ Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907*, p.120.

⁸⁷⁸ Li Hongzhang arrived at New York on August 28. He took the next day off and rested in Waldorf Hotel. On August 30 he visited Grant’s tomb and the next day he left New York for Washington to meet with president. See Cai, *Li hongzhang lipin ou’mei ji*, p.204.

⁸⁷⁹ *AM&B Catalog*, Volume4, No.’s 1503-3002.

and those who have the privilege to pose before the camera”.⁸⁸⁰ William Dickson not only produced hot titles of Li Hongzhang, but also established a friendly relation with this notable personage, which in turn helped promote his flagship product “Mutoscope”, a competitive product of Edison’s Kinetoscope. As a token of peace, American Mutoscope Company promised Li a set of Mutoscope and this promise was carried out two years later at Li’s summer home in Beijing.

Shortly after the anti-imperialist Boxer Rebellion, Li was called to Beijing to settle the aftermath and he was approached by Fred Ackerman, a cameraman assigned to shoot Boxer films by American Mutoscope Company. Fred Ackerman presented the Mutoscope to Li and the scenes were faithfully filmed as *Li Hung Chang in Peking* and *Presentation of Parlor Mutoscope to Li Hung Chang*.⁸⁸¹ According to the American Mutoscope Co. catalog description, in the films, Li Hongzhang was first interviewed by Fred Ackerman and he then received the Parlor Mutoscope, containing the movie picture *Li Hung Chang at Grant’s Tomb*, shot by William Dickson in 1896, New York City. It was for the first time Li, also likely the first Chinese person in history, watched himself in a film.

Late Qing reforms, Duan Fang and cinema

After Boxer Rebellion, the feeble Qing government was forced by both allied forces and domestic progressive factions to carry out more reforms. Out of various political purposes, the court therefore sent several commissions abroad. Among them, the most

⁸⁸⁰ The patented dates of those films, according to Lee Daw-ming’s list are as follows: *Li Hung Chang Driving through 4th St. and Broadway*, copyrighted December 18, 1896; *Li Hung Chang at Grant’s Tomb*, copyrighted December 19, 1896; *Li Hung Chang, 5th Avenue & 55th Street*, copyrighted January 7, 1897; *Li Hung Chang-Riverside Park*, unknown. See Lee Daw-ming 李道明, “1896-1912 nian waiguoren zai zhongguo paishe de yingpian,” 1896-1912 年外國人在中國拍攝的影片, *Zaoqi xianggang zhongguo yingxiang* 早期香港中國影象, *di shijiu jie xianggang guoji dianyingjie tekan* 第十九屆香港國際電影節特刊 Apr. 1995, pp.117-124.

⁸⁸¹ *Li Hung Chang in Peking* (No.1746); *Presentation of Mutoscope to Li Hung Chang* (No.1747, 12 ft) was shot in January 1901 by Akcerman and patented on April 22, 1902. See Leyda, *Dianying*, p.392 and AM&B Picture Catalogue, Form 266, Nov. 1902.

important were “1901 expiatory commissions” and “1905 Imperial Commission”.⁸⁸² During their stays in the West, the imperial commissioners were frequently entertained with cinematograph and they also made connections with international expositions, which were opportunities to showcase cinematograph.⁸⁸³

In 1901, The Qing government sent out Prince Chun as ambassador extraordinary to Germany to convey the regret for the death of Baron von Ketteler.⁸⁸⁴ After the audience with Kaiser Wilhelm II on September 4 at Potsdam, Prince Chun travelled to Danzig. There he was filmed by Deutsche Mutoskop und Biograph, the German affiliate of AM&B, as *Prince Tsung of China—Danzig, Germany*. This short actuality showed Prince Chun, brother of the Emperor of China, returning in a state carriage from the military maneuver at Danzig.⁸⁸⁵ The film was released in November 1902 with a length of 25 feet.

In 1905, the Manchu court dispatched Duan Fang and Dai Hongci’s Imperial Chinese Commission into an oversea trip to inspect politic institutions in various countries.⁸⁸⁶ As state guests, the commissioners were very often invited to theatrical entertainments, which enabled them to have frequent contacts with cinema. In his travel dairy, Dai Hongci thoroughly recorded the commissioners’ film-related activities, especially those during their stay in Germany.⁸⁸⁷ On Apr. 15, 1906, the group visited Berlin University. They visited a theater specialized in moving picture shows on the campus. On the second floor of the theatre sat a museum exhibiting various electricity and chemistry instruments.⁸⁸⁸ Dai also recorded that the ticket was 3 Mark but there was no indication that the commissioners watched moving pictures

⁸⁸² 1905 Imperial Commission is called “Wu dachen chuyang 五大臣出洋” (Five Commissioners Travel Overseas).

⁸⁸³ Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, p.704.

⁸⁸⁴ Baron von Kettler was the German Minister in Beijing. He was killed during the Boxer Movement.

⁸⁸⁵ The film was registered as No. 10170 in AM&B Picture Catalogue, Form 266, Nov. 1902.

⁸⁸⁶ In July, a sensational open-air public screening was held at the Consulate General, in the verandah, for French National Fete. According to a NCH record, audiences were “all the consular and diplomatic officers, native and foreign...among them being H.I.H Duke Tsai Tseh (载泽, 1868-1929) and his fellow travelling commissioner recently from abroad.” See NCH 20 Jul. 1906, volume 97, issue 2032.

⁸⁸⁷ Dai Hongci’s travel diary is *Chushi jiuguo riji*.

⁸⁸⁸ Dai, *Chushi jiuguo riji*, p.130.

there. On May 3 in Duesseldorf, they were invited by the mayor to a movie picture show. The show began at 12 P.M. and ended at about 2 A.M.⁸⁸⁹ It is the first conclusive record of the group's participation in film activity. By then, it had been ten years since Li Hongzhang watched the Lumière Cinématographe at the Kurhaus banquet in Holland. Here again cinema was a popular way to entertain the guests. In June, the group was back in Berlin. On June 2, Mueller, the chairman of Deutsche-Asiatische Bank, invited them to a dinner. After dinner, there were movie pictures showing men and women singing. The show had musical accompaniments from a gramophone. Dai was deeply impressed and noticed the "life-like" feature of moving pictures. He commented that the pictures were more natural and finer than the nature itself.⁸⁹⁰ On June 29, the owner of Arnhold Karberg & Co. invited them to a banquet and again a movie picture show was given. Dai this time gave a vivid description on the pictures: "the theater was electricity lightened. Suddenly clouds and trees appeared and suddenly ocean and waves. Then was a scene of sea bottom with palace, shell and fairer maidens. All was colorful and splendid."⁸⁹¹ It was, by far, the best cinema show Dai watched and it compelled him to praise the development of electricity and science by the end of the show.

The group seemed so impressed by movie picture shows they watched in Germany that Duan Fang brought a set of movie machine back to China, and intended to tribute it to Empress Cixi. Before he presented it to Empress, Duan Fang invited some Manchu nobles and officials and gave a demonstration of the machine at his residence. According to *Dagongbao*, the projectionist was not good at the task and the machine exploded, causing two deaths and four injuries.⁸⁹² Duan Fang, the host, accidentally avoided the accident and stayed intact. The incident was rumored as a fire and *Dagongbao* published several reports to clarify the situation.⁸⁹³ It seems that, inspite

⁸⁸⁹ Dai, *Chushi jiuguo riji*, p.165.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid. p.166.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid. p.201.

⁸⁹² For details on the news reports on *Dagongbao*, see Zhang, *Duanfang yu qingmo xinzheng* 端方與清末新政, p. 563; Cheng Xulu, *Sheng Xuanhuai dang'an ziliao xuanji* 盛宣懷檔案資料選輯, band 1, p.26.

⁸⁹³ Ibid.

of this unfortunate interlude, the Manchu nobles and Chinese high officials showed an unprecedented enthusiasm for cinema. Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909), the progressive viceroy of Liangguang 兩廣, for instance, watched films of Russo-Japanese War, screened by Japanese travelling showman.⁸⁹⁴ Duan Fang's demo-exhibition, with the newspaper reports and rumors flying around, became a hot media event and it in turn greatly promoted the cinema.

After their return in China, Duan Fang and Dai Hongci handed a written report to the Emperor, in which they looked back on their travels and proposed to enlighten Chinese people through expositions.⁸⁹⁵ As a part of the entertainment for expositions, cinematographic was indispensable. Duan's enthusiasm for combining exposition and cinematograph was not merely a coincidence. In 1904, as "one of China's most progressive mandarins", Duan had been approached by George Mooser, the proprietor and manager of Zhang garden in Shanghai.⁸⁹⁶ It seems that George Mooser and Duan Fang shared a common interest in cinematograph. After the proposal of holding Nan-yan Industrial Exposition at Nanjing 南洋勸業博覽會 was approved by the Manchu court, Duan appointed Mooser as "the Special Commissioner of the Exposition and also Director of Publicity and Amusements".⁸⁹⁷ Several months before the official opening ceremony in Nanjing, George Mooser gave a promo-exposition, viz. Shanghai Exposition 上海出品會, at Zhang garden. The exposition turned out to be a sensational event and Mooser's variety programme, especially the cinematograph exhibition became an attraction. In May 1910, the Nan-yan Industrial Exposition was successfully opened and it immediately became a sensation, drawing a large number of visitors from all over China.⁸⁹⁸ The cinematograph exhibition was again a hit.

⁸⁹⁴ "Zhang gongbao kan yingxi 張公保看影戲" (Zhang Gongbao Watches Movie), *Shibao* 時報, October 27, 1905.

⁸⁹⁵ Chen, *Qingmo kaocha zhengzhi wudachen chuyang yanjiu* 清末考察政治五大臣出洋研究, p.165; Exposition was deemed beneficial for constitutional reform. "Quanyehui yu lixian 勸業會與立憲" (Industrial Exposition and Constitutional Reforms), SB January 07, 1910.

⁸⁹⁶ "An Energetic Manager," NCH 23 Sep. 1904.

⁸⁹⁷ "Preparing for Chinese Exposition," *Variety* Apr. 1910.

⁸⁹⁸ "Lun riying bolanhui yu nanyang quanyehui 論日英博覽會與南洋勸業會" (A Discussion on Japanese and British Expositions and Nanyan Industrial Exposition), SB 14 May 1910.

The new China and industrializing the film business

Year 1911 and 1912 are generally seen as the transitional period from Qing dynasty to the Republic of China. After five or six years' "wonderful" development in China, cinema had been such a popular and profitable enterprise that could not be neglected.⁸⁹⁹ The knowledge of cinema, after the forerunner Li Hongzhang and the constitutionalists, was no longer strange to high officials in early Republic of China. The machine-based view and educational view of cinema had been widely accepted and the commercial feature of cinema became distinct. Cinema was therefore treated as a commercial enterprise. The Republic government consciously began to employ cinema into the process of building a new China. In this period, Wu Tingfang and other enlightened Chinese intellectuals and merchants actively engaged in film activities.

Wu Tingfang was born in Singapore and he received Western-style education early in Hong Kong. He worked under Li Hongzhang for about fourteen years and later became the Minister to United States.⁹⁰⁰ In 1903, he helped found the commercial department for the Manchu government.⁹⁰¹ In this sense, his commercial view on cinema was no coincidence. On Dec. 24, 1909, on the eve of returning to his own country, the retiring minister plenipotentiary Wu Tingfang called on Thomas Edison, the great inventor.⁹⁰² Charles R. Flint, an American financier who was largely interested in Chinese enterprises, hosted Wu on his trip to the National Phonograph Co.'s plant.⁹⁰³ Wu observed the plant and invited Thomas Edison to visit China. Mr.

⁸⁹⁹ According to Martin M. Walker, from the end of Russo-Japanese War to the early Republic of China, "The moving picture business has developed wonderfully". See Martin M. Walker, "Picture in China", *The Nickelodeon*, Jan.-Mar. 1911.

⁹⁰⁰ Wu Tingfang serviced under Li Hongzhang from October 1882 to October 1896 when Wu was appointed as the Chinese Minister to the United States. It was said that Li relied on Wu heavily. Wu, like Li had also worked for eliminating the discrimination on Chinese residents in United States when they were there. See Zhang, *Cong xifang dao dongfang* 從東方到西方, pp. 82-83.

⁹⁰¹ Zhu, *Guangxuchao donghualu* 光緒朝東華錄, volume5, pp. 5013-5014.

⁹⁰² *Edison Phonograph Monthly*, Jun. 1908, p.18.

⁹⁰³ *The Talking Machine World*, Jan.-Dec., 1910, p.50.

Edison was moved and recorded Wu's speech with Gramophone, according to a report on *Edison Phonograph Monthly*.⁹⁰⁴ Wu did not specify on Edison's Kinescope and other cinematographic items but it was highly possible. In his 1912 published "*America, through the spectacles of an oriental diplomat*", Wu mentioned "cinematograph" frequently. According to him, cinema should be utilized as a moral investment and its "dramatic" feature deserved special attention.⁹⁰⁵

Retrospectively, Wu's early contact with Edison not only encouraged a number of Chinese to follow his path and visit the oversea film companies, but also helped the Republic government include cinematograph business under its regulation.⁹⁰⁶ Following Wu's path, the number of private visitors to overseas film companies increased. Among them was an "intelligent and wealthy Chinese" Lung Yi-Sung.⁹⁰⁷ Lung was unsatisfied with status quo in China, especially the regional imbalance.⁹⁰⁸ He believed more opportunities were in the interior part, and the remarkable interest in picture "can be duplicated among the five hundred million of his native land."⁹⁰⁹ He hence toured around the world "in search of information concerning American picture and picture-makers, which he can use to advantage in the New China."⁹¹⁰ In America, Lung paid a private visit to Kleine Optic Company. At the same time, Ching We Ling, originally from Beijing, attended the Minnesota State Convention of the Motion Picture Exhibitors' League of America.⁹¹¹ Nevertheless, most film activities were organized by the newly founded Republic government. It dispatched several commissions to visit oversea film companies. The scale of the commissions was remarkable. In June 1914, Zhang Zhengxun 張振勛 (1840-1916), a powerful

⁹⁰⁴ *Edison Phonograph Monthly*, Jun. 1908, p.18.

⁹⁰⁵ Wu, *America, through the Spectacle of an Oriental Diplomat*, pp. 220-240.

⁹⁰⁶ "Wu Tingfang Calls on Edison," MPW 1910; Wu was later selected into a series of feature photoplays bearing the general title of "*War on War*" when Lewis J. Selznick, vice-president and general manager of the World Film Corporation planned to produced films against the ongoing WWI. "Selznick to produce a 'War on War' series," *Motion Picture News*, February 5, 1915, p.709.

⁹⁰⁷ "Chinese Picture Man Visits Kleine," *Motography*, Jul.—Dec. 1913.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹¹ "Minnesota State Convention," MPW Apr.—Jun. 1913.

merchant and official, led eighteen members of the Honorary Commercial Commission of the Republic of China and paid a visit to Edison Laboratory, where Mr. Edison and his staff warmly entertained his Chinese guests.⁹¹²

The Republic government also got involved in film distribution and production businesses. In December 1911, the government completed negotiations with an English syndicate from London for the establishment of a circuit of motion picture theaters in large cities of China. The houses would be financed by the local mandarins and operated also by Chinese. In return, the syndicate was granted the right to film any part of the Chinese Empire.⁹¹³ A year later, the government assigned Dr. Yen Mi Yen Loy, a graduate of the University of Tokyo, with a special commission to further the moving picture enterprise in China. According to a report in NYC, Dr. Yen had completed arrangements with a New York firm of producers for films to be imported to China and he would “start immediately with a full outfit of cameras and the other necessities, including experts with the machines.”⁹¹⁴

This series of joint ventures reached a summit in September 1916 when a conference regarding the exploitation and production of motion picture in China was held in New York, with the purpose of “merging of all interest in the picture business operating in China”.⁹¹⁵ A wide range of representatives attended the meeting, including a representative of the Chinese Embassy at Washington, a representative of Ben Brodsky’s China Cinema Ltd., and Sling Yung, who represented a coterie of Chinese merchants interested the motion picture industry.⁹¹⁶ Sling Yung had 2,000,000 Dollar pledged from Chinese residents in America and Brodsky’s affiliation were known to be heavily interested in film industry in China. The total interest pooled with the other capital represented at the conference would aggregate about 15,000,000 dollar. The representative of the Chinese government assured the capitalists that the Chinese government was interested in the exploitation of the

⁹¹² “Chinese Commissioners Guests of the Edison Laboratory,” *The Edison Phonograph Monthly*, Dec. 1914-15.

⁹¹³ MPW, Oct.—Dec. 1911.

⁹¹⁴ The conference took place at the law offices of Schechter & Morse, 10 Wall Street. See NYC Dec. 1912.

⁹¹⁵ “Chinese Film Trust,” *Variety*, Sep. 1916.

⁹¹⁶ “Chinese Film Trust,” *Variety*, Sep. 1916.

country through the motion picture and the government would give the use of army and navy, as well as all government properties and facilities, for production purposes. The sum of capitals intended to put in to the enterprise was remarkable.

5.3 Chinese as Film Amateurs: Ching Ling Foo and Mooser brothers

Ching Ling Foo 金陵福 (1854-1922) is the stage name of Zhu Liankui 朱連奎, the most famous Chinese magician in late Imperial China who later got involved in film production. In total, Ching and his troupe made three oversea tours, respectively in 1898, 1904 and 1911. His second and third world tours were arranged by George Mooser (ca. 1873-?) and Leon Mooser (?-1915).⁹¹⁷ Mooser brothers were greatly interested in the theatrical field and before their ventures in China, they had partnered as theatrical managers in New York City.⁹¹⁸ The brothers might have established a connection with Ching Ling Foo while the latter attended the Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha in 1898, which in turn motivated the Jewish brothers to travel to the Far East and start the entertainment business there.

Leon Mooser appeared in Shanghai in 1901 as a variety manager.⁹¹⁹ He travelled among oriental trade ports and oversea metropolitans, arranging various vaudeville and circus companies to perform in China.⁹²⁰ In 1902, George Mooser arrived in Shanghai from San Francisco per Str. American Maru.⁹²¹ He was first employed by

⁹¹⁷ The Mooser brothers and their two sisters Hattie and Minnie Mooser were born in Nevada to the Jewish parent Samuel and Rose Mooser, raised in Sacramento, and moved to San Francisco in 1900. Hattie and Minnie Mooser papers, BANC MSS 2010/728, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; George Mooser was formerly a California newspaper man and later connected with the New York journals *Variety*, Dec. 1912; Leon Mooser was a life insurance agent in Sacramento *The Weekly Underwriter*, Band 93, 1915, p.108

⁹¹⁸ Walsh, *The internationalism of the American Cinema: the establishment of United Artists' Foreign Distribution Operation*, p.79; George and Leon managed many famous magicians and “were some of the men who encouraged Houdini when he was just starting out.” Kalush, *The Secret Life of Houdini: the Making of America's First Superhero*, p.437.

⁹¹⁹ “Outward per str. Kosai Maru for Nagasaki, Leon Mooser”, NCH 16 Oct. 1901, volume 84, issue 1784.

⁹²⁰ “Outward per str. Annam for Hong Kong, Leon Mooser”, NCH 20 Nov. 1901, volume 84, issue 1789; “Inward per str. Yunnan from Newchuang and Chefoo, Leon Mooser”, NCH 30 Jul. volume 86, issue 1825; “Per str. Nippon Maru, from Hong Kong, L. Mooser”, NCH 19 Nov. 1902, volume 86, issue 1841.

⁹²¹ “Per str. America Maru, from San Francisco”, NCH 26 Nov. 1902, volume 86, issue 1842.

the China Mutual Life Insurance Company 永年人壽保險公司.⁹²² As a travel agent for the Insurance Co., George was assigned to establish branches in trade ports and large cities. With George's work in advance, Leon then arranged from abroad variety troupes to tour these ports and cities. After several years' accumulation of capitals and social sources, in late 1904, the brothers brought the half interest of Zhang garden and took over its management. They consequently diverted their attention to the entertainment business. By then, Mooser brothers had formed a close fraternal corporation. George quartered in Shanghai running daily business and Leon travelled around to bring in variety shows.

In the transitional period from Qing dynasty to early Republic of China, the brother actively involved in the picture business, intending to systematize and industrialize the film market in the orient. Leon Mooser died in California on Jul. 14, 1915 due to a sunstroke suffered in Ceylon some months ago.⁹²³ It seems after Leon's death, George Mooser retreated from the Garden enterprise and returned to the United States, where he worked as theatrical producer and continued in picture business.⁹²⁴

Zhang garden and Nan-yan Industrial Exposition

By 1905, George Mooser should have made a fortune in China because he was economically qualified to attend the special Ratepayers' meeting in Shanghai settlement.⁹²⁵ Inspired by Leon's success of bringing Ching Ling Foo troupe to Europe, in Mar. 1904 when one Evans approached George Mooser and asked if he

⁹²² China Mutual Life Insurance Company, probably the first life company in China, was established in Hong Kong under British registration in 1899 under the management of one J.H. Wattie. See *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, Band 1, issue 6, 1928. P.37; The earliest record on "Yongnian renshou 永年人壽" appeared on SB in May 1899, See "Ying gongxie jishi 英公廨紀事" (The Records of the Trials of the British Consular), SB 22 May 1899: 3.

⁹²³ *The Weekly Underwriter*, Band 93, 1915, p.108; He was remembered as the founder of Philippines' first insurance company. Duldulao, *A Century of Philippine legislature: Timelines of Events, People and Laws that Shaped the Filipino Nation*, p.120

⁹²⁴ *China Monthly Review*, Band 4, 1918, p.123; Walsh, *The Internationalism of the American Cinema*, p.79

⁹²⁵ NCH 9 Jun. 1905, volume 92, issue 1974.

would take over the management of Zhang garden, George Mooser negotiated with Evan and got a thirty-eight year's lease as well as the management of the garden.⁹²⁶

The brothers ran the garden business initially successfully. However, it did not last long. In 1905, there was an anti-America boycott.⁹²⁷ It was not before long that the boycott spread nationwide.⁹²⁸ Mooser brothers' Zhang garden was implicated in the campaign. Jing Yingshan 經營山 (King Chun-Kee), the powerful comprador-merchant attacked on Mooser brothers' American nationality and appealed to the public that the latter's enterprise should be boycotted.⁹²⁹ The boycott, on one hand, was out of patriotism. On the other hand, it was likely out of commercial consideration. Jing Yingsan was not only a wealthy estate merchant but also a business rival of Mooser brothers. In 1900s, Jing Yingsan was also engaging in the entertainment business, especially the civilized drama.⁹³⁰ The boycott was undoubtedly a success. At the end of August 1905, George Mooser had been forced by boycotters to give up his interest in Zhang garden. He therefore brought up a case against Jing Yingsan, claiming Tls. 20,000 damages.⁹³¹ This lawsuit was sensational in Shanghai at that time.⁹³²

⁹²⁶ "Chang Su Ho Garden," NCH 1 Sep. 1905, volume 93, issue 1986.

⁹²⁷ The boycott was generally accepted as an anti-foreign movement or a nationalism-inspired political movement.

⁹²⁸ Wang, *Yangshang shi*, p. 470.

⁹²⁹ It could not be sure if the King Chun-Kee here was Jing Yingsan or someone Jing Yingsan hired to boycott Mooser brothers' Gardens enterprise. In English source materials, especial NCH, it was King Chun-kee and in Chinese source materials like SB, it was Jing Yingsan who attacked on Mooser's business. The two names sounded alike. It is very likely that King Chun-Kee was the Wade-Giles Romanization of Jing Yingsan. Here I referred King Chun-Kee as Jing Yingsan. "Jing Runsan, Jing Yingsan, both powerful comprador-merchants in Shanghai, who worked for the western-run trade agencies as well as entertainment companies owned by his uncles during 1910s. See Huang, *Shanghai filmmaking: Crossing Borders, Connecting to the Globe, 1922-1938*, p.24.

⁹³⁰ Civilized drama was "an early form of Western-style theatre in China, the precursor of huajü 話劇. Jing Yingsan was likely running a civilized drama group Limin she 立鳴社. See Liu, *Zhang shichuan congying shi* 張石川從影史, p.20.

⁹³¹ NCH 25 Aug. 1905, volume 93, issue 1985.

⁹³² "Huixun zhangyuan yinkui shesong gong'an 會訊張園因虧涉訟公案" (The Trial of Zhang Gardens Case), SB 26 Aug. 1905; "Er'xun zhangyuan yinkui shesong an 二訊張園因虧涉訟案" (The Second Trial of Zhang Gardens Case), SB 31 Aug. 1905; "Xunjie zhangyuan yinkui shesong an 訊結張園因虧涉訟案" (The Closure of Zhang Gardens Case), SB 3 Sep. 1905.

After the failure of Zhang garden enterprise, the brother went back to the old routine. Leon Mooser kept on as travel agent for various entertaining groups to tour in China. George Mooser acted as the manager for the China Mutual Life Insurance Co.⁹³³ Mooser brothers, though, not entirely gave up the entertainment business. George Mooser turned his interest to the Nan-yan Industrial Exposition. From Mid-nineteenth century onward, international exhibitions became a trend in commercially promoting advanced technology and showcasing the military power of the host. After Sino-Japanese War, seeing Japanese successfully held four expositions, the Qing government intended to include expositions into its recent reforms. In 1906, the aforementioned Duan Fang handed a written report to the Emperor, in which he deemed exposition beneficial for the constitutional reform and proposed to hold Nan-yan Industrial Exposition at Nanjing.⁹³⁴ After the proposal was approved, George Mooser, as mentioned before, who had already known Duan Fang in 1904, was recruited to prepare for the exposition.⁹³⁵ He later became the director of the Bureau of Amusements and Concessions at the Nanjing Exhibition.⁹³⁶ As a Government-supervised and Merchant-managed enterprise, Nan-yan Industrial Exposition was generously supported by the business community in Shanghai. Several months before the official opening ceremony in Nanjing, George Mooser gave a promo-exposition, viz. Shanghai Exposition, at Zhang garden. The exposition turned out a sensational event and Mooser's variety programme, especially the cinematograph exhibition became an attraction. An advertisement in SB claimed that it was a worthy deal to buy the ticket to the exposition and the cinematograph exhibition alone would pay back the ticket price.⁹³⁷ In May 1910, the Nan-yan

⁹³³ "The China Mutual Life Insurance Co. Ltd.," NCH Jun. 1906; It seems Leon Mooser also joined the China Mutual Life insurance Co. Ltd. "China Mutual Life Insurance Co. Ltd.," NCH 3 Jun. 1910.

⁹³⁴ Chen, *Qingmo kaocha zhengzhi wudachen chuyang yanjiu* 清末考察政治五大臣出洋研究, p.165.

"Quanyehui yu lixian 勸業會與立憲" (Industrial Exposition and Constitutional Reforms), SB 7 Jan. 1910.

⁹³⁵ "Preparing for Chinese Exposition," *Variety*, April, 1910.

⁹³⁶ NCH 11 Mar. 1910, volume 111, issue 2222.

⁹³⁷ "Jinggao shanghai shenshangxue jie 敬告上海紳商學界" (The Announcement to Shanghai Gentry, Businessmen and Students), SB 26 Nov. 1909.

Industrial Exposition was successfully opened, drawing a large number of visitors from all over China.⁹³⁸

Mooser brother, Ching Ling Foo and motion picture business

Ching Ling Foo was a celebrated Chinese magician who created a fever of Chinese magic in Western countries around 1898.⁹³⁹ It remains unknown if Mooser brothers' decision of getting in the film business had something to do with the magic fever Ching Ling Foo initiated in his three world tours. By 1913, there had been a large number of trick films related to Ching. The fever of Ching Ling Foo trick film was actually inspired by Georges Méliès (1861-1938)'s trick film.⁹⁴⁰ Méliès was one of the greatest filmmakers in the earliest days of cinema, who himself was originally a magician. Méliès was well-known for using special effects and other cinematographic techniques to make trick films. In February 1900, Edison Manufacturing Company produced *Ching Ling Foo, Outdone* and two month later Siegmund Lubin released *The Wonder, Ching Ling Foo*. Both were Méliès style trick films. In *Ching Ling Foo, Outdone*, a foreign actor impersonated Ching Ling Foo and performed Ching's famous water bowl trick with a slight modification. Following Edison and Lubin, American Mutoscope Company produced *A Farmer's Imitation of Ching Ling Foo* (August 1900). Only this time an old farmer performed Ching's trick.⁹⁴¹ In September, Ediso Co. produced another Ching Ling Foo title *Ching Ling Foo's Greatest Feat*. This film was carefully staged and was more complicated than other Ching Ling Foo films. The scene was set in a Chinese Temple, which had "three rather hideous Chinese head" caved upon the door. Considering the film was

⁹³⁸ "Lun riying bolanhui yu nanyang quanyehui 論日英博覽會與南洋勸業會" (About the Japanese and English Exposition and Nanyang Industrial Exposition), SB 14 May 1910.

⁹³⁹ "Notes from the Far East (Shanghai, China, Jan.7)", NYC Feb. 1912.

⁹⁴⁰ Some of his famous trick films before 1900 are as follows: *Escamotage d'une dame chez Robert-Houdin*, (The Vanishing Lady, 1896); *Illusions fantasmagoriques* (The Famous Box Trick, 1898); *Un homme de têtes* (The Four Troublesome Heads); *L'illusionniste fin de siècle* (The Conjuror, 1899). *Le Portrait mystérieux* (The Mysterious Portraits); *L'illusionniste double et la Tête vivante* (The Triple Conjuror and the Living Head, 1900); *L'Homme-Orchestre* (The One Man Band).

⁹⁴¹ Niver, *Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection 1894-1912*, p.343.

produced when the Boxer Rebellion was reaching its summit, the scene might be interpreted as a metaphor of Boxer's cruelty.

In 1903, while Ching and his troupe were touring American, Selig Polyscope Company remade Edison's *Ching Ling Foo, Outdone* and the film was released under the title of *Outdoing Ching Ling Foo*. This remake shared the same plot with Edison's except it added some details to increase the sensation as well as to please the audience. In Selig's remake, the magician fired "his pistol direct at the tub" to produce a dramatic and sensational effect on audience. In the same vein, the boy who appeared in Edison's *Ching Ling Foo, Outdone* was switched to a "Venus lady", which was obvious more joyful to the audience.⁹⁴²

In 1905 when Ching Ling Foo returned from his second world tour, he probably brought a set of movie machine with him. According to Chinese records, in October 1911, when Wuhan Uprising broke out, Ching worked together with Meili Trade Firm 美利洋行, collected a large sum of capital and hired cameramen to record war scenes in the front.⁹⁴³ The documentary claimed to be the first Chinese war film and the first public screening was given at Moutrie Theatre on Dec. 1, 1911.⁹⁴⁴

Seeing the decline of variety business and the rising movie picture business, while Ching Ling Foo was performing road-show in America in the summer of 1913, Mooser brothers insightfully got involved in film business. In a *Variety* interview, George Mooser explained the motivation behind. According to him, although pictures had been shown over in China, they were showed intermittently and in a disorganized manner. A systematically exhibition network was therefore in need. The Chinese was willingly to pay up to 50 cents (gold) for a moving picture show, which made the business very lucrative.⁹⁴⁵ To acquire enough films, the brothers negotiated with

⁹⁴² *Outdoing Ching Ling Foo*, see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0404302/>

⁹⁴³ Xinhai Revolution 辛亥革命, or the Revolution of 1911, or Chinese Revolution (Oct. 1911-Feb. 1912) was the revolution that overthrew the late Qing dynasty and after it, the Republic of China was founded. The Wuchang Uprising 武昌起義 on 10 Oct. 1911 was the turning point of the revolution.

⁹⁴⁴ Li, *Yingshi quelue* 影史權略, p.267.

⁹⁴⁵ In China, the money system was based on Mexican currency; \$ 1 Mexican was equivalent to one-half American dollar. The actual computation of relative value was always on a gold basis. See "Pictures in China," *Variety* Jul. 1913.

American film companies directly. Their standard for films was relatively high. Films had to be new and they should be shipped to China timely. For that purpose, they arranged with Lubin Manufacturing Company to handle the latter's weekly releases, "getting eight weeks ahead in order that there might be no lapse to the Chinese service."⁹⁴⁶ Mooser brothers were optimistic on the future of the film business and claimed that, after their initial preparations, the other manufacturers of the Motion Picture Patents Company would likely also fall in the line for the Chinese trade.⁹⁴⁷

Mooser brother was ambitious to systematize the oriental film distribution. Once the film supply was secured, the next step was to organize rental agencies and to show the pictures in theatres in various trade ports regularly. As "experienced Far East showmen, who had offices in a couple of the largest Chinese cities", Mooser brothers arranged to exhibit films from "the Trust" companies systematically in china.⁹⁴⁸ According to them, the circulation of film in the Far East had been irregularly accomplished thus far through Pathé of Paris, with shipments of decorated celluloid taking a slow and long course to reach all points. To accomplish his picture mission, George Mooser planned to travel from San Francisco to the Orient and visit Hawaii, Japan, Philippine islands, China and India, to establish a distribution net. The aim was to plant Lubin outputs as well as other American films through local representatives. George Mooser expected to raise a system that can handle all the picture productions placed with it. The journey for this mission would last for a year or more.⁹⁴⁹

Mooser brothers' film enterprise was interrupted by the outbreak of WWI as well as by the death of Leon Mooser in April 1905. Nevertheless, George Mooser alone continued in this line of business at least to 1917. In the wartime, he headed to Russia, Mexico as the commissioner of war film for the American Cinema.⁹⁵⁰ In 1920s,

⁹⁴⁶ "Pictures in China," *Variety* Jul. 1913..

⁹⁴⁷ Motion Picture Patents Company was a patent-pooling organization, a holding company separated from its member companies, established at the end of 1908. See Abel (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, p. 641.

⁹⁴⁸ "Systematizing the Orient," *Variety*, Jun. 1914

⁹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁰ His activities in the past include those of newspaperman, organizer, financier, producer, government service and film executive. See "George Mooser Doubling Godwyn Production in East Lasky," *Variety* Nov. 1919.

George Mooser worked successively for film production and distribution companies like Goldwyn, Famous Players-Lasky Corporation and later for United Artist.⁹⁵¹

5.4 The Beginning of Chinese Film Production

When was film first produced in China? According to the authoritative ZDFZS, Fengtai Photography Studio 豐泰照相館 shot *Dingjun Shan* 定軍山 (Conquering Jun Mountain) in 1905 and it was the first Chinese film production.⁹⁵² According to ZDFZS, Ren Qingtai (1851-1930), the proprietor of Fengtai Photography Studio, purchased a French cinematograph and fourteen rolls of films from a German merchant, who opened the trade firm P. Kierulff & Co. at the legation districts, selling photographic devices. The German merchant was likely Carl Imbeck, who was formerly an employee of P. Kierulff & Co., the first department store in Beijing opened in 1874. In 1893, Carl Imbeck took the store over and became an agent for it.⁹⁵³ Carl Imbeck's store kept the Chinese name of Kierulff & Co, i.e. Qiluofu Trade Firm 祁羅浮洋行.

ZDFZS' assertion was later challenged for lacking conclusive evidences.⁹⁵⁴ Retrospectively, it is difficult to find a standard answer for the "first" question. As the recent studies show, Lumière brothers' Grand Café exhibition in 1895 is not the only answer to the question of when cinema was invented. Many researchers hence suggested an annihilation of these "first" questions. In contrast to being a fixed answer to the "first" question, Fengtai Photography Studio's experimental film production shows a close connection between modern cinema and traditional drama. Fengtai's first film *Dingjun Shan* was adopted from a classic Chinese opera.

⁹⁵¹ Walsh, *The Internationalism of the American Cinema: the Establishment of United Artists' Foreign Distribution Operation*, Volume 1, p.79

⁹⁵² Cheng, ZDFZS, pp.13-14; Many researchers consider that it was in 1908 that Fengtai made the film. Robertson, *The Guinness Book of Movie Facts & Feats*, fourth edition, p.8.

⁹⁵³ The owner of Kierulff & Co. Kierulff then opened a new department store at the opposite of Spanish ambassador.

⁹⁵⁴ Huang Dequan, "Zhiyi 'zhongguo diyibu dianying' *Dingjunshan* 質疑'中國第一部電影'定軍山," *Nanfang zhoumo* 12 May 2012.

As to the cinematographer of *Dingjun Shan*, there were two versions of stories: one considers that a French cameraman in Beijing shot the film and the other takes Liu Zhonglun 刘仲伦 as the cameraman.⁹⁵⁵ According to Frank Bren, between 1905 and 1908 three cinematographers stayed China, i.e. Felix Mesguich (1871-1949), Burton Holmes's cameraman Oscar B. Depue, and the Italian film exhibitor A. E. Lauro.⁹⁵⁶ The French cameraman mentioned in Chinese source materials was probably Felix Mesguich, who billed as the first pro cameraman.⁹⁵⁷ Mesguich was initially a Lumière operator. After Lumière retreated from film production business, Mesguich worked for Pathé

In regarding the Fengtai's first film production, a brief investigation on movie theatres in Beijing proved fruitful. At that time, the most important moving picture houses were the aforementioned Arcade Cinematograph 平安戲園 and Dagan lou 大觀樓. Around 1908, the manager of Dagan lou renovated the theatre. In addition to cinematograph shows, tea service was provided.⁹⁵⁸ Dagan lou hence became a popular entertainment venue. Nevertheless, Dagan lou's wood structure increased the risk of fire accidents and it caught the public attention.⁹⁵⁹ In contrast to Shanghai and other southern cities, the custom in Beijing was generally conservative. In Beijing, the censorship was executed by Minzheng bu 民政部 (Ministry of Civil Affairs).⁹⁶⁰ Around 1909, the authority closed a number of moving picture establishments because it was a "moral degeneration" to have men and women sitting in the same room.⁹⁶¹ The fact indicates that early censorship focused mainly on exhibition context, rather than film contents.

⁹⁵⁵ "Jingshi xinwen huojie liangze 京師新聞 火劫兩則" (Beijing News, Two Fire Accidents), *Shuntian Times* 順天時報 5 May 1908: 7, issue 1862.

⁹⁵⁶ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.310-311

⁹⁵⁷ Column "Riviera" by Frank Scully. See *Variety*, April 1933.

⁹⁵⁸ "Zaji: ji daguanlou gailiang wenming xinchashe 雜記: 記大觀樓改良文明新茶社" (The Renovation of Daganlou Teahouse), *Henan baihua yanshuobao* 河南白話演說報, issue 135, 1908.

⁹⁵⁹ "Jingshi huojing 京師火警" (Fire Alarm in Beijing), SB 16 Sep. 1903.

⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶¹ "Jingshi jinshi 京師近事" (News in Beijing), SB 1 Mar. 1909.

5.4.1 Benjamin Brodsky: film mogul in the Orient

Benjamin Brodsky (1875/1877-1960) entered the picture first as “a most traveled picture man”, who was noticed for his linguistic talents and film activities in exotic Orient.⁹⁶² As a representative of Variety Exchange of San Francisco and the Orient, he provided film and slide supplies for the Oriental market. In early Republic China, moving picture shows featured a regional imbalance. Seaport towns had been accustomed to moving pictures for some years but the vast majority of Chinese people were still ignorance of the moving picture. In interior part of China, cinematograph was often looked upon as an infernal machine.⁹⁶³ Beside that, the political disturbances in China remained a threat for this line of business. After the Boxer Rebellions, Chinese was, to some extent, traumatized by the horrifying foreign weapons.⁹⁶⁴ In an interview in 1912, Brodsky notwithstanding foresaw a promising future in the Republic of China.⁹⁶⁵ He exerted confidence on those “who have been to America and learned its ways and ideas” and believed that new Chinese intellectuals were “putting new life into the Celestial Empire.”⁹⁶⁶ Brodsky hence engaged in film production in China.

Pre-1906: Brodsky’s tent shows in China

Law Kar and Frank Bren conduct a thorough investigation on Benjamin Brodsky in *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*. According to it, Brodsky was born in Russia on a poor parental family. He stowed away on an English ship to England when he was a teenager and then boarded an America-bound ship. After he arrived in New York, he joined a circus and became a travelling showman.⁹⁶⁷ In regard of

⁹⁶² Brodsky was said to speak 11 languages, including English, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Korean, Hebrew, Arabic, Malayan, etc. See “A Cosopolitan Picture Man,” MPW 1911; According to “Benjamin Brodsky (1877-1960): the Trans-pacific American Film Entrepreneur,” part one: make a trip thru China, part two: taking a trip thru China to America, it should be 1877.

⁹⁶³ “A Visitor from the Orient,” MPW, Apr.-Jun. 1912.

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid

⁹⁶⁵ “A Cosmopolitan Man,” MPW 1911.

⁹⁶⁶ ibid

⁹⁶⁷ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.33.

Brodsky's early activities in China, the stories differed slightly. Nevertheless, prior to 1908 Brodsky was already in China.⁹⁶⁸ Brodsky's film business prospered in the Republic of China. In this period, there were several relevant traffic records in NCH.⁹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, reportages about him appeared in Western press, including *A Cosmopolitan Picture Man* and *A Visitor from Orient*.⁹⁷⁰ These articles enable a close look on Brodsky's personality and help pin down his routes and activities in China.

According to Frank Bren, Brodsky was running a nickelodeon in San Francisco before the great Earthquake of 1906. With experiences in show business, Brodsky fixed himself up a moving picture company, for which he “[brought] machinery and films and a tent and went to China.”⁹⁷¹ Brodsky's first venture in China was “in time for the Spanish-American War” (ca. 1898) and it “ruined him, and he barely made it back to America, via England.”⁹⁷² However, according to an interview in MPW, Brodsky first came to China around 1902.⁹⁷³ His first contact with China happened during the Japanese-Russian War (1904-1905). Brodsky worked first as official interpreter for the Russian government. At the close of the war, he travelled to San Francisco with his savings. In San Francisco, he was doing a good deal estate business when the earthquake put a temporary end to his financial affairs. He then purchased an old Edison Universal moving picture machine and forty or fifty reels of junk film and sailed for the Orient.⁹⁷⁴

The company Brodsky “fixed” shortly after the San Francisco Earthquake was probably Variety Film Exchange Co. According to the interview in MPW, Brodsky first arrived in Tianjin, where he worked hard to convince heath Celestials that “there

⁹⁶⁸ Brodsky appeared first time on NCH as witness in mixed court in 1908 but it could not be sure if this Brodsky is Benjamin Brodsky. See NCH 27 Jun. 1908, volume 104, issue 1994.

⁹⁶⁹ “Per str. Shinyo Mabu, July 8, for Yokohama, Brodsky”, NCH 25 Jul. 1914, volume 129, issue 2450; “Per str. Vawata Maru, Aug. 12, From Japan, B Brodsky”, NCH 15 Aug. 1914, volume 129, issue 2453.

⁹⁷⁰ To name but a few: “A Cosmopolitan Picture Man”, MPW 1911; “A Visitor from the Orient”, MPW 1912; “Ben Brodsky, A Visitor from Orient”, MPW 1915; “Ben Brodsky, A Visitor from Orient”, MPW Jan.-Mar. 1915; “Chinese Film Market”, *Variety* Aug. 1916; “Chinese Film Trust”, *Variety* Sep. 1916.

⁹⁷¹ Ibid.

⁹⁷² Ibid.

⁹⁷³ “A Visitor from the Orient,” MPW, Apr.-Jun. 1912.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid.

was no harm about him or his outfit.”⁹⁷⁵ Brodsky also erected a tent for moving pictures shows in Shanghai. According to Frank Bren, Brodsky’s picture shows contained wild west films, which

“went very smoothly until some cowboys came tearing down the road, shooting pistols. The audience rose en masse and fled for safety, both paying patrons and the hired ones, who were so afraid that they never came back of their money”.⁹⁷⁶

Brodsky later recalled that he had to pay customers to conquer Celestials’ angst for cinematography.⁹⁷⁷ Despite those efforts, Brodsky became a victim of the unstable political environment then. Chinese rioters were so frightened that they burned Brodsky’s cinematograph equipments.⁹⁷⁸ According to Frank Bren, a former shipboard friend of Brodsky, a young Chinese whom Brodsky met en route to China, was by then “in the Cabinet” in Beijing. He read of the disaster and visited the now-penniless Brodsky, offering him a partnership and enough money for a return trip to America.⁹⁷⁹

After 1906 and Variety Film Exchange Co.

Although Brodsky’s first venture in China failed, he remained confident in this country.⁹⁸⁰ After 1906, Brodsky worked as travel manager for the Variety Film Exchange of San Francisco and the Orient.⁹⁸¹ The company had branches in San Francisco, Japan, Siberia, China, Manila and Singapore.⁹⁸² As film business boomed in the Orient, the company moved to Hawaii and was renamed into “Variety Film Exchange, Honolulu”.⁹⁸³ From there, American films were transported to the oriental

⁹⁷⁵ “A Visitor from the Orient,” MPW, Apr.-Jun. 1912.

⁹⁷⁶ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.33.

⁹⁷⁷ It was in fact a common phenomenon. Similar records on Chinese’s angst and hate for Western novelties appeared repeatedly since foreigners came to China. It was always cited as a vivid example for showing the stupidity of Chinese, however, from nowadays viewpoint of culture study, it was only a normal reaction.

⁹⁷⁸ Brodsky’s cinematographic equipment was burned down.

⁹⁷⁹ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.34.

⁹⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁹⁸¹ They supply eleven theaters on the island from Honolulu. See “A Visitor from the Orient,” MPW Apr.-Jun. 1912.

⁹⁸² “Variety Film Exchange Co., 221 Sansome St., San Francisco, Cal.,” see *Motography*, Jan-Jun, 1914.

⁹⁸³ “Variety Film Exchange Co., 221 Sansome St., San Francisco, Cal.,” see *Motography*, Jan-Jun, 1914.

markets. Prior to 1912, Variety Film Exchange Co. had grown into a large-scale concern.⁹⁸⁴ Through 1911 to 1913, the company played an active role in film industry. It published a series of commercial advertisements in trade press like *Variety* and *NYC*. In addition to its main business of “buying films and supplies for the Oriental market”, the company also provided post-production services and was in association with the film cleaner company Mortimer, which made dirty films clean and bright.⁹⁸⁵

In regard of film genre and spectatorship in China, in the interview in *MPW*, Brodsky told the story of how he changed the attitude toward Chinese audiences. When he first came to China, he considered Chinese audiences crude and vulnerable. They welcomed pictures of rough and strenuous life. According to him, “Roughhouse comedy with plenty of crockery smashed, or physical violence of different kinds are held to be diverting by the Celestials”.⁹⁸⁶ The Chinese were fairly crazy for the Essanay and Selig Western pictures but scenes with weapons were repelled because “they are dreadly afraid of firearms even in picture”.⁹⁸⁷ In this regard, the Variety Film Exchange Co. was of the opinion that “the Chinese would stand for anything that came along and therefore they brought all the junk that nobody wanted in America and shipped it to China.”⁹⁸⁸ Consequently, the company’s moving picture business in the orient declined and reached the lowest ebb possible”. Brodsky then “saw the error of tits ways and began to buy new films for the oriental market” and “This wise move saved the company and the business took on a new life and began to flourish.”⁹⁸⁹ Brodsky also realized the importance to nurture and educate film audiences. According to him, by providing audiences the best in the market, China and the Orient could be made to respond as well as any other part of the world. Although junk films were still in demand, the Variety Film Exchange Co. was

⁹⁸⁴ “A Visitor from the Orient,” *MPW* Apr.-Jun. 1912.

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁷ “A Visitor from the Orient,” *MPW* Apr.-Jun. 1912.

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

“obliged to import a number of educational and high-class reels for the sake of the Occidental residents”.⁹⁹⁰

In 1912, the company was buying “twenty-eight prints per week, Licensed and Independent.”⁹⁹¹ Brodsky travelled often to America for placing orders for films. During his stay in New York in 1912, he brought many feature films, among which were “*The Odyssey*,” “*Life of Buffalo Bill*” and “*Dante’s “Inferno”*.”⁹⁹² In the interview, Brodsky told about his rental operation system: “Reels were rented to all houses supplied from one exchange and after the round they were sent to the other branches in exchange for an equal amount in return”.⁹⁹³ Accordingly, a unique transportation strategy was developed. The company supplied the American government with pictures to entertain the men on the battleships between large ports, in exchange for free transportation of films. For instance, “a battleship would take on forty or fifty reels at Yokohama and they would be delivered at another port where the company had a branch. In this way the company got free transportation for reels and rental at the same time”.⁹⁹⁴

The company also engaged in exhibition business, giving various picture shows, in both travelling tents and permanent cinemas. According to Brodsky, while in the coast cities there were separate theaters for the natives and for the white, in the interior parts of China, there were no permanent moving picture theatres and exhibitions were given mainly in tents by means of gas, “with natives squatting upon the ground”.⁹⁹⁵ Brodsky hence intended to improve the theatrical conditions, with an emphasis on travelling shows. During his stay in New York 1912, he placed many orders for machinery and one of his biggest orders was “the placing of a contract for

⁹⁹⁰ “A Visitor from the Orient,” MPW Apr.-Jun. 1912.

⁹⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹⁹² “A Visitor from the Orient,” MPW Apr.-Jun. 1912.

⁹⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid

twelve 8-horsepower electric light plants with the Detroit Engine Works.”⁹⁹⁶ Those equipments would be shipped to cities where there was no electric light.

Film production and China Cinema Co.

Along with the setting up of branches in the Oriental, Brodsky began to get involved in film production business, which was mainly self-financed. Based on his rich experience in film exchange business, Brodsky realized that the popularity of American and European films were limited in China because the natives did not understand this form of entertainment. Even with the “Chinese” titles inserted, they could hardly understand the film content since most Chinese were illiterate at that time.

To appeal to Chinese audiences, the supply of Chinese films was necessary. Brodsky therefore founded the Asia Film Company in 1909, a film production studio specializing in producing Chinese films. The studio and laboratory were erected in Shanghai, at a cost of 100,000 dollar and native talents were hired to produce films. The Asia Film company proved quite productive. Each week six thousand feet of dramatic subjects and four thousand feet of comedy subjects were made. Before being screened, all of this film was censored by the local government.⁹⁹⁷

In 1915, Brodsky had been widely known as the “Film King of the Orient”.⁹⁹⁸ His film production business thrived. In order to include film production into its main business, Brodsky sold Variety Film Exchange Co. to the China Cinema Company, which headquartered at Hong Kong and branched at Shanghai, Guangdong, Manila, Yokohama, Vladivostock and Honolulu.⁹⁹⁹ Brodsky was the president and general manager of the China Cinema Company.¹⁰⁰⁰ He appointed R. E. Hasbrook, formerly

⁹⁹⁶ “A Visitor from the Orient,” MPW Apr.-Jun. 1912.

⁹⁹⁷ “Chinese Film Market,” *Variety* Aug. 1916.

⁹⁹⁸ “Ben Brodsky, A Visitor from Orient,” MPW Jan.-Mar., volume 23, 1915.

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁰ “Ben Brodsky Visiting the States,” MPW, Jan.-Mar. 1916; “Ben Brodsky, president of the China Cinema Company,” MPW 5-26 Aug. 1916.

of the Variety Film Exchange Co., as the manager of the Shanghai office.¹⁰⁰¹ Hasbrook left America around 1913 to engage in the film business in the Far East.¹⁰⁰² In contrast to the Variety Film Exchange Co., the new concern “is actively engaged in producing, as well as distributing films, more than one hundred Chinese subjects having been turned out during the past year.”¹⁰⁰³ The China Cinema Co. existed at least to 1917 because in that year the company was promoting “*A Trip through China*” in America.¹⁰⁰⁴ The film was photographed by a Chinese cameraman Lum Chung and had about 20,000 feet of negatives of scenes.¹⁰⁰⁵

In 1916, Brodsky remained as the president of the China Cinema Company.¹⁰⁰⁶ The Company grew rapidly. Brodsky controlled eighty travelling theaters in China, each of which had standing room for from 5,000 to 10,000 persons. No seats were provided in these amphitheatres, as the “patron” would never know enough to go home. The pictures were projected from the back of the screen with a throw of about 30 feet. The most popular of the American and foreign films were the slap-stick variety of comedies.¹⁰⁰⁷ According to *News of the Film World*, Brodsky “conferred with associates regarding the formation of a new concern in conjunction with the interest of Ben H. Atwell and Pliny Craft, to introduce a new angel of the film business by this concern.”¹⁰⁰⁸ This new angel was to form a film trust in China. For this purpose, in September 1916 at the law offices of Schechter & Morse, a prolonged conference was held regarding the exploitation and production of motion pictures in China.¹⁰⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰¹ “Ben Brodsky, President of the China Cinema Company”, MPW 5-26 Aug. 1916.

¹⁰⁰² *ibid*

¹⁰⁰³ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁰⁴ “A trip Thru China, we are informed by Mr. H. H. Mcpike, is owned by China Cinema Company and Mr. B. Brodsky”, see MPW 3-31 Mar. 1917.

¹⁰⁰⁵ “Chinese Film Market,” *Variety*, Aug. 1916.

¹⁰⁰⁶ MPW Aug. 1916.

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁰⁸ “Chinese Film Market,” *Variety* Aug. 1916.

¹⁰⁰⁹ “Chinese Film Trust,” *Variety* Sep. 1916.

5.4.2 Chinese film production: Asiatic Company and China Cinema Company

Film production in China began almost synchronically with the introduction of cinematograph in 1897, although at that time shooting practices were carried exclusively by foreigners. It was not until in the transitional period from late Qing to the Republic of China that Chinese intellectuals participated in film production business. Film enterprises were nevertheless mostly initiated by foreign businessmen like A. E. Lauro and Benjamin Brodsky. In 1910s, there were in total five film production studios in China, i.e. Ren Qingtai's sideline venture (1905), Asia Film Company 亞細亞影片公司 (1909), Huamei (Sino-American) Films 華美 in Hong Kong (1913), Shanghai based Huanxian Film Company 幻仙 (ca. 1916) and the Commercial Press's Motion Picture Department 商務印書館 (1917).¹⁰¹⁰ As a rule, early Chinese film industry was closely connected to foreign business communities in China at that time.¹⁰¹¹

Most Chinese intellectuals involved in film production not for commercial profit but out of ideological considerations. Cinema had been an effective tool for education and enlightenment. Cinema as a form of “urban modernity” was a “politicized enterprise”.¹⁰¹² It was enlisted in the service of national reforms. The recent founded Republic government encouraged the picture business.¹⁰¹³ New intellectuals, especially those involved in drama reform, developed an interest in this line of business. Retrospectively, there was a fundamental discrepancy between foreign capitalists (e.g. A. E. Lauro and Benjamin Brodsky) and Chinese intellectuals. The former was profit-oriented and the latter mainly out of patriotism. Similar discrepancy also appeared among Chinese intellectuals. A striking example was the difference between Zhang Shichuan 張石川 (1890-1954) and Zheng Zhenqiu 鄭正秋 (1889-1935). The former stressed on commercial success and the latter paid attention to cinema's educational function. The main obstacle for Chinese intellectuals to take

¹⁰¹⁰ Zhang Yingjin, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film*, p.5.

¹⁰¹¹ Johnson, *International and Wartime Origins of the Propaganda State: the Motion Picture in China, 1897-1955*, pp.59-60.

¹⁰¹² Ibid.

¹⁰¹³ Ibid.

charge in film production was the lack of cinematographic equipments and distribution right. According to Li Minwei 黎民偉 (1892-1953), Hua Mei Film Co. in Hong Kong was controlled entirely by Brodsky and his own Renwojing Performing Club (Renwojing jütuan 人我鏡劇團) provided mere creative direction and cast, receiving a one-time fee of several hundred Hong Kong dollars.¹⁰¹⁴

Films produced in this period were mostly actualités shot by foreign cameramen, war films for foreign and domestic markets, and short comedies for the domestic market. Notable is the popularity of photoplay, indicating the completion from “cinema as an attraction” to “cinema as a narration”.¹⁰¹⁵

Asiatic Film Co.

Among foreign filmmakers who carried a film business in China, Benjamin Brodsky was the first one to set up a film production studio.¹⁰¹⁶ Asia Film Company was the first film studio in China.¹⁰¹⁷ It was widely accepted that the studio was founded in 1909 and Brodsky himself worked as producer and cinematographer. In the same year, he travelled southwards to Hong Kong and produced there a silent short *Stealing the Roast Duck*, starring Liang Shaopo and Li Beihai.¹⁰¹⁸ In 1912, Brodsky sold the Asia Film Company to Shanghai-based expatriates T. H. Suffert and “Mr. Yashell.”

Brodsky was credited with producing and financing some of the first Chinese films. Brodsky released two dramatic shorts in 1909 titled respectively *The West Dowager Empress* (Xi Taihou 西太后) and *An Unlucky Fellow* (Buxing Er 不幸兒). While the existence of these two films was in dispute, two documentaries concerning Brodsky’s sojourns in China and Japan survived. In *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, Frank Bren mentions that *A Trip through China* (ca. 1910-1915) and *The Chinese*

¹⁰¹⁴ See Li Minwei’s “Shibaizhe ziyán—zhongguo dianying yaolan shidai zhi baomu 失敗者自言—中國電影搖籃時代之保姆” (A Loser’s Memoir—the Nurser of Early Chinese Cinema), *Dianying shuang zhoukan* 26 Aug. and 9 Sep. 1993.

¹⁰¹⁵ Tom Gunning’s terminology.

¹⁰¹⁶ Zhang, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film*, p.5.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ye, *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Cinema*, p.16.

¹⁰¹⁸ For “Paul Fonoroff”, see Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.31. And for Liang Shaopo and Li Beihai, see Stockes, *Historical Dictionary of Hong Kong Cinema*, p.xxi.

Revolution (aka, *The Revolution in China*, 1912) were advertised for sale by the Oriental Film Co. in America.¹⁰¹⁹

The earliest Chinese record on Asiatic Film Co. appeared in Cheng Shuren's *Zhonghua yingyeshi* (1927). Chinese employees in Asiatic Film Co. later also published some memoirs.¹⁰²⁰ Recently two important articles relevant to the study of Asiatic Film Co. were Huang Dequan's *The Truth of Asia Film Company* and *Film Productions of Shanghai Asia Film Company*.¹⁰²¹ Huang conducts a sample survey based on advertisements from early newspapers. In this section, records about Yashell and Suffert, the owners of the Asia Film Company, as well as the hired cameraman Will Lynch will be analyzed. To give an overall picture, I will conduct an investigation on the company's origin, structure, employees, shooting activities and film productions, focusing on the special position this company occupied in the exhibition-production-distribution network that Brodsky built. The key question is how the Asia Film Company bridged the foreign capital and local civilized dramas, and eventually laid a foundation for the future Chinese film industry.

The cameramen of Asia Film Company Will Lynch later recalled that Brodsky's company ran a large studio —Asiatic Film Company— in Shanghai, specialized in producing Chinese films for Chinese audience, with native actors. Sixteen star male actors were daily posing before the camera. They were provided by Xinmin Company 新民公司, which was well-organized and had twenty-five actors. The leaders of Xinmin Co. Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu worked as film directors. There were also two interpreters working under the supervision of Will Lynch. The film studio was productive. It turned out 10,000 feet of finished film a day, which supplied for the entire country. Films were released in a modern way, the same as in America

¹⁰¹⁹ Johnson, *International and wartime origins of the propaganda state: the motion picture in China, 1897-1955*, pp.55-56.

¹⁰²⁰ To name but a few, memoirs from the director Zheng Zhengqiu, stage manager Zhang Shichuan and actors like Qian Huafo 錢化佛 and Xu Banmei 徐半梅.

¹⁰²¹ Huang, "Yaxiya zhongguo huodong yingxi zhi zhenxiang 亞細亞中國活動影戲之真相"(The Truth of Asia Film Company), *Dangdai Dianying*, issue 7, 2008; Huang, "Shanghai yaxiya yingpian gongsi chupinkao 上海亞細亞影片公司出品考" (Film Productions of Shanghai Asia Film Company), *Dianying Yishu*, issue 4, 2010.

and Europe. Beside that, the company operated two theatres in Shanghai and two or three movie picture establishments in Hong Kong.¹⁰²²

Through 1909 to 1913, Asia Film Company produced about eighteen films. During Lynch's stay in Asia Film Company, the company was making "a great opium drama with the mysterious title of 'La Ha Naung Middong', meaning 'Honey'"¹⁰²³ This film was de facto the first Chinese short feature *The Difficult Couple* (Nanfu nanqi 難夫難妻, 1913). In the pictures, the women were really men who wore wigs to make them look like women. According to Will Lynch, "there was not a Chinese woman to be found around the studios. Some of the men were very adept at imitating the women, and their acting was well liked by the theatergoing public of the dragon emblem empire".¹⁰²⁴ The company had many releases each month and "No plays were sent out of the country, but stayed in the empire for the natives, who highly enjoy the photoplay".¹⁰²⁵

In 1913, the company coproduced the war documentary *The Battle of Shanghai* (Shanghai Zhanzheng 上海戰爭), which might have included actual battle scenes taken during the "Second Revolution" against Yuan Shikai's presidency. A group of Beijing Opera and "civilized play" performers contributed to this film.¹⁰²⁶ *The Battle of Shanghai* was advertised in newspapers as "a moving shadow play without precedent" and ran for three consecutive days, commencing on Sep. 29, 1913.¹⁰²⁷

Yashell, Suffert and Lynch

As mentioned above, in 1912 Brodsky sold the trademark and equipments of Asia Film Co. to two Americans, i.e. Thomas H. Suffert (1869-1941) and Mr. Yashell. In 1913, the company put a large order through a New York City agency A. J. Corcoran

¹⁰²² "Chinese Photoplays," MPW Jan.-Mar. 1914.

¹⁰²³ Ibid. The film was probably Zheng Zhengqiu's *A Difficult Couple*.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁵ "Chinese Photoplays," MPW Jan.-Mar. 1914.

¹⁰²⁶ To name but a few, Xia Yrun 夏月潤 (1878-1931), Xia Yueshan 夏月珊 (1868-1924) and Pan Yueqiao 潘月樵 (1869-1928).

¹⁰²⁷ Johnson, *International and Wartime Origins of the Propaganda State: the Motion Picture in China, 1897-1955*, p.57.

to purchase equipments.¹⁰²⁸ The company was owned by Thomas H. Suffert till 1918.¹⁰²⁹ Suffert remained a mystery figure in Chinese film history works. He was called Safo 薩佛/ Safu 薩弗 and Huang Mao 黃毛.¹⁰³⁰ It is not clear about his nationality. He was referred sometimes as “American friend” 美国朋友 and sometimes as an English man.¹⁰³¹ According to records in NCH, he was probably an American citizen.¹⁰³² Suffert was considered as “an expert on China”.¹⁰³³ He appeared in Shanghai as early as 1895.¹⁰³⁴ His whole name appeared in NCH in 1911.¹⁰³⁵ Suffert stayed in China until 1936.¹⁰³⁶ He was an active member of Shanghai American community and for many years, he acted as clerk for Shanghai Rowing Club.¹⁰³⁷ From 1902 onward, Suffert worked mainly as an operator in shares. His intention in the matter was “to enter upon a purely speculative venture”.¹⁰³⁸ He became rich in a period when there was a so-called boom in stocks in Shanghai.”¹⁰³⁹ In regard of the Asia Film Company enterprise, Suffert was probably the investor.

¹⁰²⁸ “Asia Film Company,” MPW Apr.-Jun. 1913.

¹⁰²⁹ “List of persons duly qualified to vote at the Annual Meeting of Ratepayers, on Wednesday, March 27, 1918: Asiatic Film Co. T.H. Suffert”, see NCH 30 Mar. 1918, volume 143, issue 2642.

¹⁰³⁰ In Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu’s “Ziwo daoyan yilai” (1935), Suffert’s Chinese name was Safo/Safu 薩佛/薩弗. In Qian Huafo’s interview, he recalled him as “Huangmao 黃毛”. See Zheng Zhengqiu, “Ziwo daoyan yilai 自我導演以來”, *Minxing* volume 1, issue 1; Zhang Shichuan, “Zi wo daoyan yilai 自我導演以來,” *Minxing banyuekan* 1.3 (16 May 1935): 10-14; ZWD. p.401; Qian Huafo 錢化佛, Zheng Yimei 鄭逸梅, “Yaxiya yingxi gongsi de chengli shimo 亞細亞影戲公司的成立始末” (The foundation of Asia Film Company), *Zhongguo dianying* 中國電影, 1956, issue 1.

¹⁰³¹ Zhang and Zheng remembered him as “Meiguo ren 美国人/ Meiguo pengyou 美国朋友” while Qian referred him as English.

¹⁰³² “American Association of China,” NCH 28 Dec. 1906, volume 98, issue 2055; “Befreo the Hon. L. R. Wilfley, Judge. Toeg & Read v. T. Suffert. Judgement”, NCH 6 Sep. 1907, volume 101, issue 2091.

¹⁰³³ Qian Huafo 錢化佛, Zheng Yimei 鄭逸梅, “Yaxiya yingxi gongsi de chengli shimo 亞細亞影戲公司的成立始末” (The foundation of Asia Film Company), *Zhongguo dianying* 中國電影, 1956, issue 1

¹⁰³⁴ We could not be sure if this “Thomas Suffert” is T.H.Suffert. See NCH 2 Aug. 1895, volume 72, issue 1461.

¹⁰³⁵ “Per str. Chikuzen Maru, Apr. 25, For Nagasaki, Thos. H. Suffert”, NCH 29 Apr. 1911, Volume 116, issue 2281; “Per str. Tenyo Maru. Apr. 29, From San Francisco, Thos, H. Suffert”, NCH 6 May 1911, volume 116, issue 2282.

¹⁰³⁶ NCH 11 Nov. 1936, volume 201, issue 3614.

¹⁰³⁷ For instance, he was a member of the Race Club in 1907. See NCH 5 July 05, 1907, volume 101, issue 2082; “Shanghai Rowing Club, Clerk of the Course: T.H. Suffert,” see NCH 9 Jun. 1917, volume 140, issue 2600.

¹⁰³⁸ NCH 6 Sep. 1907, volume 101, issue 2091.

¹⁰³⁹ NCH 5 Jul. 1907, volume 101, issue 2082.

The other owner of the company was Yashell. According to Chinese records, he was the one in charge. His Chinese name was Yi shi'er 依什尔/依什儿. His identity was no less mystery than his name. According to Cheng Shuren's *Zhonghua yingyeshi*, Yashell was an American film critic who came to China mainly for the Panama-Pacific Exposition.¹⁰⁴⁰ The American government had announced the news of the exposition in Feb. 1912. It was possible that Yashell came to China shortly thereafter. The other film historian Zheng Junli 郑君里, however, referred Yashell as the manager of Shanghai Nanyang Insurance Company 上海南洋人寿保险公司.¹⁰⁴¹ The recent study identifies Yashell as the American Citizen Arthur J. Israel (1875-1948), the treasurer and director of Shanghai Insurance Co. back then.¹⁰⁴²

The third foreign figure in Asiatic Film Co. was Will H. Lynch. Lynch came from California and he worked as Shanghai manager of the Asia Film Company, responsible for filmmaking.¹⁰⁴³ Lynch first appeared in Zhou Jianyun 周劍雲's *Yingxi gailun* 影戲概論 as "Weilian lingqi 威廉灵契" and he was recorded as the company's cinematographer.¹⁰⁴⁴

First Chinese film company in Shanghai: Xinmin Co. and *A Difficult Couple*

Asia Film Co. was founded by Benjamin Brodsky in 1909 and was sold to Yashell and Suffert in 1912. Shortly after they took over the company, Yashell and Suffert made contact with Chinese intellectuals Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu. It explained why Chinese source materials often mistook that Asia Film Co. was established in 1912. As regards Yashell and Suffert's initial contacts with Zhang Shichuan, there were two versions of stories.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Cheng, "*Zhonghua yingye nianjian*."

¹⁰⁴¹ Allegedly Zheng's assertion was based on a speech of Zheng Zhengqiu given in 1934 at Y.C.M.A, Shanghai. However Zheng and Zhang's own accounts on Yishell were simply "our American friends."

¹⁰⁴² Fu, "Movie Matchmaker: The Intermediaries between Hollywood and China in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of Chinese Cinema* 9 (1):8-22.

¹⁰⁴³ A Clarke Irvine published an article "Chinese Photoplays," recalling his encounter with Will H. Lynch, see MPW 1914.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Zhou Jianyun 周劍雲, "Yingxi gailun 影戲概論" (An Introduction on Drama and Play), published in Xu Gongmei 徐公美's *Dianying fada shi* 電影發達史.

According to the company's actor Qian Huafo 錢化佛's memoir, Yashell stayed then in Shanghai at Kalee Hotel and he first met Zhang's uncle Jing Runsan 經潤三, an employee in foreign trade firm.¹⁰⁴⁵ Yashell told Jing Runsan that he planned to shoot Chinese films. Jing Runsan then introduced Yashell to Zhang Shichuan, who was running the amateur drama club at that time. Yashell and Zhang Shichuan's initial plan was to shoot the popular drama *Victims of Opium* 黑籍冤魂, which was then performed at New World (Xin shijie 新世界), a popular entertainment venue in Shanghai. For this purpose, Zhang Shichuan consulted Zheng Zhengqiu, a professional drama critic who had close connections with New World.¹⁰⁴⁶ The deal of *Victims of Opium* failed because New World asked for a high price.¹⁰⁴⁷ Yashell and Zhang Shichuan therefore decided to produce films on their own. Zhang Shichuan and his amateur drama club, together with the dramatist Zheng Zhengqiu, cofounded Xinmin Company to assume film production for Yashell and his Asia Film Co.

The other version differed slightly. According to Zheng Zhengqiu's memoir, Yashell and Suffert, who were interested in making films about Chinese life with Chinese casts, first hired Zhang Shichuan to manage this new business and later approached Zheng Zhengqiu because of his rich experience in drama affairs. The four then went to watch a new drama show. After that, Yashell and Suffert invited some actors of civilized dramas to Astor House Hotel for a dinner and explained that they had recently taken over the Asia Film Company and planned to shoot Chinese films.¹⁰⁴⁸ The negotiation failed because of money issues. Yashell hence changed his mind and asked Zhang Shichuan to hire some actors for film production. Zhang Shichuan therefore contacted Zheng Zhengqiu and commissioned him to write a play

¹⁰⁴⁵ Jing Runsan also got involved in Mooser brothers' Zhang garden enterprise in 1905 and the latter brought up a lawsuit against him.

¹⁰⁴⁶ According to Qian Huafo's interview, Zheng Zhengqiu was writing the *Liliso juping* 麗麗所劇評 at that time and he was well connected with the actors of New World like Xia Yueshan 夏月珊 and Xia Yuerun 夏月潤.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Some film historians resumed that it might also because of the story of *Victims of Opium* 黑籍冤魂 was mainly against opium trade.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Ziwo daoyan yilai 自我導演以來", *Minxing* volume 1, issue 1.

for the shooting. Zheng Zhengqiu then wrote the play *A Difficult Couple*, a social satire.¹⁰⁴⁹

Cinema in its infancy already created a new profession but was short of professional film actors. Actors in early film history were often hired from theatrical industry. For instance, in America vaudeville actors were hired to perform in front of a camera.¹⁰⁵⁰ In China, early picture actors came mostly from civilized drama actors. Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu's Xinmin Co. contracted with Yashell's Asia Film Company for producing *A Difficult Couple*. Xinmin Co. had probably twenty-five actors and they were half-professional and half-amateur new drama actors. Most actors came from Zhang Shichuan's amateur drama club Minmingshe piaofang 民鳴社票房.¹⁰⁵¹ Most actors of the club were actors of civilized drama, which was very popular at that time. Civilized drama was de facto a premature combination of traditional Chinese opera and modern Western drama, initiated mainly by Chinese intellectuals who formerly studied in Japan.

In the process of shooting *A Difficult Couple*, Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu developed a director-unit style.¹⁰⁵² Zheng Zhengqiu was the brain and director. Zhang Shichuan acted as producer, handling general affairs.¹⁰⁵³ The former was in charge of the performance and the latter of the camera. The camera was set in a fixed position, filming the ongoing performance on the stage without stop until the 200 inch-roll ran out. Although some Měi ès-style magic trick effects were noticed during the filmmaking, Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu did not give special attention to them.¹⁰⁵⁴

Zheng Zhengqiu was aware of the power of film from the very beginning. In contrast to drama, which can only be showed at one time in one place, cinema could

¹⁰⁴⁹ Later Zhang Shichuan's memoir confirmed Zheng Zhengqiu's story. See "Yishu chenjiu de duanpian 一束陳舊的斷片" (A bouquet of old films), *Wanxiang* 萬象, volume 4, issue 3, 1934.

¹⁰⁵⁰ "Actors and the Cinema", NCH 11 Apr. 1914, volume 128, issue 2435.

¹⁰⁵¹ Xu, Chihen 徐恥痕. *Filmdom in China* 中國影戲大觀, n.p.

¹⁰⁵² Zhu Ying, *Art, Politics, and Commerce in Chinese Cinema*, p.19.

¹⁰⁵³ "Ku Zhengqiu laoge 哭正秋老哥" (Mourning for brother Zhengqiu), *Minxing*, 2.2 (1935).

¹⁰⁵⁴ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Ziwo daoyan yilai 自我導演以來", *Minxing* volume 1, issue 1

be screened in many places and enjoyed by a large number of audiences at the same time. For Zheng Zhengqiu, cinema was hence an effective tool for education, affecting people and improving their moral standard. Out of this consideration, Zheng wrote the social satire *The Difficult Couple* (1913). After he finished shooting this film, Zheng Zhengqiu went back to civilized drama business because Asia Film Co. stopped film production business due to the lack of films.¹⁰⁵⁵

In the field of early Chinese film study, there are many debates regarding the relationship among Minming She, Xinmin Co. and Asia Film Company. According to Gu Jianchen 谷劍云's *Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi* 中國電影發展史, the Xinmin Co. equals Asia Film Co. It was an obvious mistake. Xinmin Co. was a contracted production studio for Asia Film Company. The Xinmin Co. employed actors from Minmingshe piaofang. Many researchers mistook the Minmingshe piaofang here as Minming Club 民鳴社. They argue that it is impossible for Minming Club to provide actors for Xinmin Co. because the Club was founded later than Xinmin Co.¹⁰⁵⁶ The fact was that, before the foundation of Minming Club Zhang Shichuan had already organized the Minmingshe piaofang, the amateur drama and pictorial newspapers organization.

With the aid of Xinmin Co., the Asia Film Company produced in 1913 a series of Chinese short films, including *New Camellia*, *Bride Meets Ghost*, *Mascot is Coming Here*, *An Overnight Fidget*, *The Silly in Town God's Temple*, *A Deal*, *Bicycle Accident*, and *Family's Blood*.¹⁰⁵⁷ The company went out of business in 1914 when the outbreak of WWI cut off the supply of German film stock in China.¹⁰⁵⁸

¹⁰⁵⁵ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Ziwo daoyan yilai 自我導演以來", *Minxing* volume 1, issue 1.

¹⁰⁵⁶ The Minming Club was officially founded on 28 November 1913.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ye, *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Cinema*, p.16.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

First Chinese film production in Hong Kong: Huamei Co. and Van Velzer

It remains unknown when Brodsky sold his Variety Film Exchange to Chinese Cinema Co, Ltd, but it was surely around 1913.¹⁰⁵⁹ The Chinese Cinema Co. headquartered at Hong Kong and had branches at various trade ports in the Orient. After selling the Shanghai film studio Asia Film Company to Yashell and Suffert in 1912, Brodsky worked as the president and general manager of the China Cinema Co. While Brodsky was still running his Asia Film Co. (ca. 1909-1912), the company shot *Wapen shenyuan* 瓦盆伸冤 and *Tou shaoya* 偷烧鸭 (Stealing the Roasted Duck) in Hong Kong.

Brodsky terminated his Shanghai film venture in 1913 and planned to return to the United States via Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, he and his cameraman Van Velzer 萬維沙 met their former college Li Beihai 黎北海 (1889-1955) and Li's brother Li Minwei 黎民偉 (1893-1953). Brodsky and Li Beihai had known each other while shooting *Stealing the Roast Duck* (1909), a short comedy in which Li Baihai acted the part of a policeman. The film was generally regarded as the first film produced in Hong Kong.¹⁰⁶⁰ Li brothers had rich experiences in drama affairs. They hence proposed to found the production company Huamei Co. 華美影片公司 (China America Co.) in Hong Kong, for manufacturing photoplays for the domestic film market, with Chinese actors, stories and settings.¹⁰⁶¹ According to Velzer, the purpose of Huamei Co. was "not only to manufacture pictures, but to establish a circuit of theaters in which to show them".¹⁰⁶²

Li Minwei was the son of a large merchant family. He was born in Japan and later returned to Hong Kong as a student at Queen's College and St. Paul's Teacher's College. Li Minwei was a member of the pro-revolutionary organization *Qingpingle baihua jushe* 清平樂白話劇社 (Qingpingle Vernacular Drama Society) since 1911. As a firm supporter of Sun Zhongshan, he later became a documentarian for the

¹⁰⁵⁹ R.E.Hasbrook joined the Variety Film Exchange Co. in 1913. The fact shows that the company lasted at least to 1913. See "The visitor from Oriental," MPW 1915.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ye, *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Cinema*, p.7.

¹⁰⁶¹ "Film Conditions in China," MPW Jul.-Sep. 1914.

¹⁰⁶² *Motography* Jan.-Jun. 1917

Nationalist Party.¹⁰⁶³ In 1913, Li Minwei established Renwojing Performing Club to train actors for Huamei Co.

After Brodsky and another American put up the necessary funds, Li brothers produced their debut film “*Zhuangzi Tests His Wife*” (Zhuangzi shiqi 莊子試妻, 1913), which was credited as the first dramatic short film produced in Hong Kong.¹⁰⁶⁴ Adapted from the Cantonese opera *Zhuang Zhou’s Butterfly Dream* (Zhuang Zhou mengdie 莊周夢蝶), the film told the legendary story of the ancient philosopher Zhuangzi. Li Minwei wrote the script, and his brother Li Beihai worked as the director.¹⁰⁶⁵ It was the first Chinese film that had a female cast member. Li Baihai played the philosopher Zhuangzi and Li Minwei played as the sage’s pretty young wife. Li Minwei’s wife Yan Shanshan 嚴珊珊 (1896-1952) took a supporting role as a serving girl.

Beside Li brothers, the other prominent figure in Huamei Co. was Van Velzer.¹⁰⁶⁶ Velzer was “formerly a journeyman camera operator and now the active head of Huamei Co. He came to China at the end of 1913”.¹⁰⁶⁷ Velzer was initially hired by China Cinema Co. to build and operate a laboratory in Hong Kong and train Chinese helpers. While the job disappointed him and he was planning to go back to America, Li brothers came ask him to consider an offer to stay for the future Huamei Co.¹⁰⁶⁸ Velzer accepted. In an interview with MPW, Velzer vividly described how Chinese plays were produced in Huamei Co. The actors came from Li brothers’ Renwojing amateur dramatic club.¹⁰⁶⁹ According to Velzer, “At first they are camera-shy and

¹⁰⁶³ After participating in the unsuccessful Huanggang Uprising in Guangzhou, Li became a member of the Revolutionary Alliance and the Chinese Revolutionary Party. See Johnson, *International and Wartime Origins of the Propaganda State: the Motion Picture in China, 1897-1955*, p.57.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Law, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*, p.31.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Zhu, *Historical Dictionary of Hong Kong Cinema*, p.xxx.

¹⁰⁶⁶ The Chinese name was Law Kar’s translation.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Van Velzer later returned to American and in 1917 he was the factory manager of the Vitagraph Company. He stayed in the film industry through 1920s and worked for the Rex laboratory. See *Motography* Jan.-Jun. 1917; *Vitagraph Promotions and Exhibitors Trade Review*, Dec. 1921- Feb. 1922.

¹⁰⁶⁸ According to Velzer, Huamei Company was also called “the South China Film Manufacturing Company”. See “Film Conditions in China,” MPW Jul.-Sep. 1914.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Velzer called Renwojing jutuan “The Mirror Dramatic Club of Hong Kong” by Velzer. Ibid.

inclined to giggle, yet they have fine facial expression and a little patience will bring it out.”¹⁰⁷⁰ During Velzer’s stay, Huamei Co. produced in total four subjects, i.e. *The Defamation of Choung Chow* (aka. Zhuang Zhou’s Butterfly Dream), *The Haunted Pot*, *The Sanpan Man’s Dream* and *The Trip of the Roast Duck*. Among them, *The Trip of the Roast Duck* was a rough ‘chase’ picture and *The Defamation of Choung Chow* was the most famous. Velzer recalled that *The Defamation of Choung Chow* “turned out well and when shown in public proved to be wonderful drawing card. It packed theaters every night for a month, being the only picture on a European bill that held over from day to day”.¹⁰⁷¹ The film’s great popularity, according to Velzer, was “because it was a Chinese entirely”.¹⁰⁷² *The Defamation of Choung Chow* was later taken to the United States by Brodsky and became the first Chinese movie shown in North America.”¹⁰⁷³

At that time, there were two classes of exhibitions/audiences in Hong Kong. The first was given in the early evening for Europeans at a relatively high price and later the same program was shown to the natives for a cheap price.¹⁰⁷⁴ Velzer recalled that all Huamei productions had phenomenal runs at the native theatres but he, Li brothers and Chinese actors were poorly paid. He hence decided to go home to America. The Huamei Co. was short-lived. Like Asia Film Company, the company’s film stock supply was cutted off with the onset of WWI.¹⁰⁷⁵

Retrospectively, Chinese intellectuals’ initial filmmaking was undercapitalized and they had to rely on foreign capitals. Li brothers’ film production practices in Hong Kong nevertheless inspired the earliest dramatists-turned-directors in Shanghai. Chinese intellectuals gradually grew into the dominant force in film production business in the following years.

¹⁰⁷⁰ “Film Conditions in China,” MPW Jul.-Sep. 1914.

¹⁰⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷² Ibid.

¹⁰⁷³ Ye, *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Cinema*, p.94.

¹⁰⁷⁴ “Film Conditions in China,” MPW Jul.-Sep. 1914.

¹⁰⁷⁵ The colony had come to depend on Germany as its sole source of film stock and the outbreak of WWI made such goods unavailable. Films would not be made in Hong Kong again until early twenties. See Zhu, *Art, Politics, and Commerce in Chinese Cinema*, p.19.

Conclusion

In the field of early cinema study, it is widely accepted that early cinema should be contextualized and conventionalized in its sociopolitical, economic, military and cultural milieu. The spreading of cinema in China prior to WWI is heavily influenced by the late Qing colonial context. Initially, film exhibitions are usually given by foreign travelling showmen in a sporadic and mobile way. This kind of instability and fluidity make them particularly vulnerable to late Qing social milieu. Major political and military events have considerable influences on exhibition activities. Boxer Rebellion and Russo-Japanese War, for instance, severely disrupt cinematograph exhibitions and large-scale film screenings are missing for about five years. The wars disrupt the initial film spreading. It is not until the end of Russo-Japanese War that film exhibitions resume and a quasi film industry emerges in China.

In retrospect, the introduction and the development of cinema in China prior to WWI is closely connected to the colonial process, especially the expansion of concessions. Notable is that both rounds of expansions are accompanied by a new round of progressive reforms, which creates a friendly social environment for Western learning and modern inventions, with an inclusion of cinema. In late Qing China, there are two rounds of large-scale concession expansions. The first appears after *the Treaty of Shimonoseki* in 1895. It clears the way for the arrival of cinema. In aid of Manchu court's Hundred Days' Reform, cinematograph exhibitions develop rapidly thereafter. The other round appears after *the Treaty of Portsmouth* (1905), which marks the end of the Russo-Japanese war. This round of expansion creates a large demand for foreign entertainments and hence lays a foundation for the incipient film industry in China. It is no accident that in China cinema's spreading route overlaps spatiotemporally with the increasement of foreign powers and the expansion of concessions. Film business thrives first in large trade cities in the coastal part of China. Most permanent cinemas are located in settlements and concessions. From there, cinema then spread to the interior part. With the establishments of missionary outposts, cinema also reaches remote areas.

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On one hand, the colonial context greatly facilitated the spreading of cinema in China. On the other hand, cinema becomes an embodiment of the colonization. The association with commercial and cultural invasions heavily impedes the development of cinema in China because of conservative gentries' hostility against foreigners. Most Chinese gentries are skeptical towards foreign popular entertainments. Cinema is considered demoralizing and despicable. Meanwhile, average Celestials are superstitious and they are intuitively against this form of visual illusions. For them, cinema is tricky and dangerous. Given the circumstance, foreign exhibitors are forced to adopt a series of localization strategies, with an emphasis on cinema's educational function. In the initial round of cinematograph exhibitions, cinema is already promoted as an advanced modern technology and an embodiment of Western learning. In the following wartime, propaganda films come to many Chinese intellectuals' notice and the sales point of cinematograph is consequently turned to the accentuation of cinema as an effective means for educating and enlightening population. Cinema is hence included as a part of constitutional reforms. In the early Republic of China, the government notices cinema's commercial value and makes efforts to nationalize the film industry. Consequently, a film trust with unprecedented capital scale is planned.

In contrast to the seemingly passive contextualization by the colonial process in late Qing China, cinema actively participates in modernizing and urbanizing China. There have been a number of discussions on the modernity and urbanization of China (esp. Shanghai) in 1920s and 1930s. As a matter of fact, cinema prior to WWI already epitomes this process. As an example of the advances in technology and science, cinema itself is an embodiment of modernity. The spreading of cinema in late Qing China is inevitably an integral part of urbanization. The luxury palace cinemas, for instance, are usually exemplary Western architectures, with electrical fittings and air ventilations. From the viewpoint of cinema as commodity, film production, distribution and production all embody modern commercial business and capital investment.

In addition, cinema as a form of entertainment participates in constructing a public sphere which breaks the strict segregation of race, social class, gender and alike. In

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foreign concessions, moving picture theatre usually functions as a social centre and this form of socialization soon saturates into Chinese society. Although the first film audiences consist of Europeans and local elite, they soon expanded to include other strata of the urban and semi-urban population.¹⁰⁷⁶ In China, cinemas are among the few social spaces where the races came together at all.¹⁰⁷⁷

Pre-cinema stage and magic lantern

Developed “within an atmosphere of intermediality,” early cinema can be seen as “the culmination of several different media” and its earliest reception was therefore “partly determined by the context within which it was viewed.”¹⁰⁷⁸ Accordingly, early cinema can be treated as “a long tradition of visual illusions” and “part of the entertainment world, vaudeville circuit films”.¹⁰⁷⁹ In this regard, the introduction of cinema in late Qing China is not an isolated event but a historical incident woven in a complicated social milieu and is strongly conditioned by the existing entertainments.

As this study shows, the pre-cinema stage provides necessary practice, knowledge and psychological preparations for the coming cinema. Although those preparations are mostly circumstantial and their scales are limited, they exert a long-term influence, which proves pivotal for cinema to root in Chinese soil. Among all forms of entertainments in the pre-cinema stage, magic lantern contributes most. Half a century’s lantern practices in China pave the way for the film introduction by providing a system of exemplary spreading patterns and functional models. When cinema enters the picture, it conveniently rents existing venues of lantern shows and inherits lantern’s three major functions, i.e. educational, entertaining and miscellaneous. In addition, pre-cinema reforms like Self-strengthening Movement help modify Celestials’ general attitude towards “foreign”, and Western learning becomes popular in Chinese society. As a result, many Chinese become open-minded

¹⁰⁷⁶ Abel (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, p.458.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ibid. p.591

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ibid. p.467.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Ibid.

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to foreign entertainments, including cinema. Cinema also borrows lantern's localization strategy and becomes associated with Western learning and progressive reforms.

In practice, when Maurice Charvet first arrives in Hong Kong, beside the Cinematograph, he also has a Kinetoscope, a peepshow device similar to magic lantern. His Cinematograph exhibition bears a high similarity to pre-cinema lantern exhibition. Cinema functions mainly as a "filler" for variety shows. Welby Cook, the other early film exhibitor, tours Shanghai in rented localities like Astor Hall and Zhang garden. Like magic lantern, his "Animatoscope" exhibition features a high flexibility, which allows it to appear on various occasions. Carl Hertz's Cinematographe exhibition is a direct emulation of Vanek's lantern exhibition in 1894. Like Vanek's magic lantern, Hertz' film screening is an integral part of the magic show. In contrast to these entertaining shows, E.F.G. Hatch's film exhibitions inherits lantern's educational tradition and was employed for fundraising and other social occasions.

As a rule, late Qing China is a recipient of the nascent cinema. Film business is monopolized by foreigners of various nationalities. As regards film spectatorship, the first film audiences are exclusively foreigners. Before 1906, cinematograph exhibitions are mainly designed to entertain foreign residents in International Settlements and concessions. Those exhibitions have no essential differences from variety shows or other social entertainments, e.g. race contest. Due to Foreign-Chinese-Separation policy, cinematograph exhibitions are generally confined inside foreign communities and they rarely touch upon Chinese society. Because of the small number of foreign population in China, the scale of those exhibitions is modest. Cinematograph exhibitions are usually given by itinerant showmen and the exhibition context is similar to variety shows', i.e. with music accompaniment or as an integral part of a broader repertoire. Instead of film contents, the main attraction is the novelty of movie machines.

During the following disruption stage (1900-1905), the only active sector is film production. In Boxer time and Russo-Japanese War, dozens of foreign cameramen are

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dispatched to China for filming war scenes. Western countries discover cinema's propagandistic function and cinema develops into a mass medium rapidly. After the wars, China becomes further colonized and more concessions are ceded. The rapid concession expansion and the growth of foreign population create a huge demand for recreations. It attracts a bunch of foreign adventurers. Some of them became successful film pioneers. They monopolize film market with a focus on exhibitions and establish a quasi film industry in China. Foreign film businessmen are usually closely associated with their national consular and rely on latter's protection. Taking advantage of the colonial status quo in late Qing China, with tax and legal favors, they soon monopolize Chinese film market. Their film activities are profit-oriented and the commercial value of cinema is exploited.

Foreign monopoly, nationality and internationality

Early cinema, as recent researches in this field show, is characteristic of internationality. It is indisputable that in regards film business, the late Qing China is mainly a recipient. Film activities in China are carried out by foreigners from a wide variety of nationalities.

The first round of cinematograph exhibitions is given by Maurice Charvet and Welby-Cook in 1897. According to streamline records in NCH, Charvet is likely a French origin and Welby-Cook a British or American. A year later, the long established America magician Carl Hertz screens films at the end of his magic shows. Shortly thereafter, the globetrotter English celebrity E. F. G. Hatch gives cinematograph shows for fundraising. The French cameraman Gabriel Veyre also gives a lecture on cinematograph, in which film is also screened. In the Boxer and Russo-Japanese wartime, cameramen are dispatched to China from various countries, including Japan, France, Great Britain, America, Italy etc.

After the wars, film exhibition business resumes. Numerous foreign adventurers rush in China and participate in film business here. Among them, some film pioneers establish permanent cinemas, monopolize film market and build an incipient film industry in China. Those film pioneers come from different nationalities. The Spanish

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merchant A. Ramos builds a cinema circuit and his manager B. Goldenberg is a Russian. A. E. Lauro, who actively gets involved in film exhibition, distribution and production business, is an Italy origin. The film mogul Benjamin Brodsky, who directly takes part in producing Chinese films, is a Russia born American. In regarding foreign film companies, Pathé Chine and Eclipse branch in China. American film companies also manage to transport American films into Chinese market.

In late Qing China, foreign film pioneers' nationality is particularly important. To some extent, their success in picture business depends on it. In order to gain political protection as well as economical favors, foreign businessmen are usually in association with their own Consular in China. They also play an active role in foreign business community for accumulating social resources. Their foreign nationalities assure them tax and legal favors, which greatly enhance their commercial competitiveness. In this sense, their monopoly of film business is heavily dependent on their "foreign" identity. This dependence notwithstanding makes them and their enterprises vulnerable in China. Large sociopolitical changes can affect their business easily. For instance, the outbreak of WWI immediately put an end to the European monopoly in Chinese film market. Most film pioneers fold their enterprises with the onset of the war.

Constituent elements of film industry hence feature a strong "internationality" and "mobility". Early itinerant exhibitors and globetrotter filmmakers travel among different regions and countries. Their film practices vividly embody the "mobility" and "internationality" of early cinema. Even after an incipient film industry in this part of world is built and film activities become gradually stabilized and standardized, the lack of a real Chinese film production unit makes the film industry incomplete and unreal. In this sense, the pre-war film industry in China is a quasi film industry. The basis of this industry is not film production but film exhibition. The core of the work is film exchange, which is also characteristic of mobility and internationality. The entire film industry hence relies totally on oversea film market. To some extent, film importation directly decides the fate of this industry.

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From the geographical viewpoint, Chinese film market is only a chain of a broader Pan-Asia film network. The aforementioned film mogul B. Brodsky, for instance, founds the Variety Exchange Co., which centres in Honolulu. Although Brodsky mainly works in China, his company has branches and agencies in various Asiatic countries, including Japan, Philippine Islands, Singapore etc. In this regard, early cinema in China prior to WWI should be put into the world film study from the starting point.

Historical views and future extensions of early cinema study

For the convenience of narration and in order to present an overall picture of pre-WWI cinema in China, like most early cinema studies, this research adopts a linear narrative on this part of history. Chronologically five historical periods are mapped out, with an emphasis on spatiotemporal continuity and causality. The general aim of this study is, of course, to articulate the blurry and long-ignored history of pre-war cinema in China. Through the thorough exploration on these five periods, I would like to consider that the basic aim is achieved.

However, it does not mean that this section of history is unilateral and could be unionized as a generality. On contrary, the history of early cinema in China is uneven and amorphous, full of mobility, arbitrariness and uncertainty, and a grand narrative could hardly cover it. Film activities in China are, for the most part, sporadic, unorganized and heavily dependent on sociopolitical status quo. Cinema in its earliest years takes the form of itinerant exhibition, which is mostly mobile and non-institutionalized. Although later an incipient film industry is formed, it is only a quasi film industry and by no means truly institutionalized. The Manchu court issues no film regulation and censorship. Late Qing China is de facto a dumping ground for second-hand short films. A systematic industry standard is hence missing. Given the circumstance, most film activities are carried out by private businessmen whose commercial success relies largely on their social resource, capital capacity and management skill.

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While analyzing this section of history, a dialectic method should be adopted. Notable is the interaction among the three sectors of film industry, i.e. production, distribution and exhibition. At the first glance, the disruption caused by wars through 1900 to 1905 seems disastrous to film exhibition, however the arrival of numerous foreign cameramen in turn greatly promotes “China” in the world. China and its oriental scenic views become a popular subject matter. The disruption, to some extent, paves a road for the rapid development after 1906 in terms of film industry, especially in the sectors of film exchange and production. After the war, foreign cameramen who once shot war films and scenic views in China continue to attribute to the film business in China. Although they leave China after the wars, they bring back to Western countries more than war films and oriental scenic views. They function also as cultural messengers, bringing back information about China, which facilitates foreign film companies to enter film business in China. A prominent example is Robert Rogers, a cameraman dispatched by Charles Urban to shoot war films with Russian side during the Russo-Japanese war. Rogers is before this commission the manager of the Paris branch of the company. After the war, he leaves Urban and establishes Eclipse Film Company in Paris. Despite its limited scale, Eclipse actively takes part in the film exhibition, exchange and production in China, which has a great deal to do with Rogers’ personal connections and previous shooting practices in China.

In this sense, the study of early cinema can be enriched on three aspects: archival, regional and conceptual creativity. After the Brighton Conference, the archival work diverts partially to early trade press. Alongside the electronization of early newspapers and film magazines, in regards early cinema in China, an extensively large number of resource materials should be collected. The three “first” issues relevant to the introduction of cinema to Chinese should be further rethought. Film activities of Chinese businessmen should be supplemented and some autobiographical studies on them should be carried out.

In regard of the spreading of early cinema in China, there is a huge regional imbalance. For instance, status quos of cinematograph exhibition differ from locality

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to locality. Film business centres in coastal trade cities like Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tianjin and in the Interior film activities rarely appear. Regional case study is therefore in need. Late Qing China can be roughly divided into several foreign protectals, such as Indo-China under French influence, British dominance in Hong Kong and Guangdong, the American forces in the Pacific Ocean and islands (e.g. Manila and Hawaii), the Russian and Japanese power in Northeast China, German concession in Shandong province, etc. Beside those major protectals, missionaries and Y.M.C.A. also saturate into the interior. They sometimes screen films around outposts or give instructive lectures with cinematograph illustrations. In the study of regional film activities in China, issues like imperialism, colonialism and regionalism are hence unavoidable, which in turn impart various cultural meanings to the study. The regional film study should also be put in a larger picture, viz. a broader regional territory. Film exchange networks in Asia-Pacific as well as in a global context already emerge in the pre-WWI era.

In addition, Manchu government's lassitude coincides with the inceptive film introduction. This kind of overlap incites the discussions on "what is cinema?" Some epistemological and ontological rethinking is therefore in need. In this sense, the introduction of cinema provides an exemplary case for observing how the nascent cinema as a foreign form of entertainment roots in Chinese soil. Cinematograph exhibition in China begins as an attachment to the existing forms of entertainments but after about two decades' development, prior to WWI, its subjectivity has already been secured. Cinema's identity in late Qing social milieu is notwithstanding not fixed. It goes through three basic stages, i.e. from mechanic novelty to mass medium, to commercial commodity. In most cases, cinema's three identities/stages coexist and it in turn makes cinema a synthetic form of entertainments.

Appendix I: Tables

Table I.

Maurice Charvet	Welby-Cook
<p>April:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 23rd: arrived at Hong Kong per Str. Peru from San Francisco. ➤ 26th: gave private Cinematograph exhibition at City Hall. ➤ 27th: cancelled the first public show due to mechanic malfunction. ➤ 28th: gave successful public show at City Hall. 	
<p>May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4th, continued film exhibition at City Hall in Hong Kong. Screening lasted one hour, with five shows per day. ➤ ...continued shows till end of May 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 22nd: gave first Animatoscope exhibition at Astor Hall, Shanghai. ➤ ...continued shows at Astor (25th, 27th, 29th, ...till 3 June)
<p>June:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 12th: left Hong Kong for Shang Hai per Str. Ravenna. ➤ 25th: left Shanghai for Tianjin per Str. Haeshin with Johnson and Welby-Cook ➤ 26th: gave film exhibition at Tianjin Lyceum Theatre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4th: (Dragon Boast Festival)—ca. 13th: gave film screenings at Arcadia Hall (Zhang Garden), showing 20 titles. ➤ 12th—: continued shows at Astor Hall. ➤ 25th: per Str. Haesin to Tianjin

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ...continued the shows there. 	<p>with Charvet and Johnson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 26th: gave shows at Gordon Hall
<p>July:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 9th: left Shanghai for Hankow per Wuchang and was soon back. ➤ 31 Jul.— 2 August: gave shows at Tianhua teahouse in Shanghai. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 1st: gave screening at Sir Claude Macdonald's dinner party in Beijing. ➤ 2nd–12th: gave one public exhibition at Legation Theatre, two at English Legation, one at Spanish Legation etc. ➤ 16th & 17th: was back in Tianjin and gave shows at Gordon Hall. ➤ ca.30 Jul.: left Tianjin and was back in Shanghai, per Str. Liengshing. ➤ 29th: gave shows at Astor Hall.
<p>August:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 14th–18th: continued shows at Tianhua teahouse, screening 16 titles. ➤ probably also gave shows at Qi garden. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 3rd: continued shows at Astor Hall. ➤ 5th: gave screening at Shanghai Recreation Club, on their ground. ➤ 14th: gave show at Club's Smoking Concert ➤ ca. 20th: left Shanghai for Singapore per Str. Bayern. ➤ 21st–: exhibited for a short season at City Hall, HK.
<p>September:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 8—15: renewed titles and gave 	

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<p>screenings at Shanghai Lyceum Theatre, with 20 titles.</p> <p>➤ 18th: screened local scene (Bubbling Well Road) at Lyceum theatre.</p>	
<p>October:</p> <p>➤ 23rd: (Double Ninth Festival)—25th gave shows at Tongqing teahouse.</p> <p>➤ 16th: gave shows at Royal Theatre, Hong Kong.</p>	
<p>1898: left Hong Kong for Marseille on 13 Feb.</p>	<p>On 23 January: gave show at 5 Arsenal Street (Hong Kong), under the proprietorship of Naftaly Bros.</p>

Table II (T-ii): Charvet's 16 titles before he changes films:

“Tianhua Chayuan” advertisement in SB, 26 Jul. 1897	Advertisement in <i>Peking & Tientsin Times</i> , June 26, 1897	Possible Films
俄國皇帝遊歷法京巴里府之狀	<i>The Arrival of the Czar in Paris</i>	<i>The Czar's Arrival in Paris</i> (Path é 1896)
羅依弗拉地方長蛇跳舞之狀	<i>Loie Fuller's Serpentine Dance</i>	<i>Loie Fuller Serpentine Dance</i> (Edison, Gaumont, or Lumière?)
馬鐸尼鐸名都街市之狀	<i>Street Scene in Madrid</i>	<i>Bois de Boulogne</i> (aka, <i>Porte de Madrid</i> , M é i è s, 1896)
西班牙跳舞之狀	<i>Spanish Dancers</i>	<i>Carmencita</i> (Edison) or <i>Annabelle Dance</i>

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騎馬大道之狀	<i>Passing of Cavalry</i>	<i>The cavalry Sham Battle</i> (French, 1896)
母里治地方跳舞之狀	<i>Moorish Dance!</i>	<i>Dance de Ventre</i> (USA, 1894)
托里露比地方人民睡眠 之狀	<i>Hypnotic: Scene in</i> “ <i>Trilby</i> ”	<i>Trilby and Little Billee</i> (AM&B, 1896)
辣搏魯里地方農民跳舞 之狀	<i>La Bour ée, a Peasant’s</i> <i>Dance</i>	<i>Parisian Dance</i> (Edison, 1897)
法京巴里演武場練兵之 狀	<i>Soudanese at the Champs</i> <i>de Mars</i>	
印皮（度）人執短棍跳 舞之狀	<i>Indian Short Stick Dance</i>	<i>Short stick dance</i> (Edison, 1894)
以劍術賭輸贏之狀	<i>Fencing Bet: “Pini and</i> <i>Kirschoffer”</i>	
俄國皇帝遊歷巴雪依魯 地方之狀	<i>The Czar going to</i> <i>Versailles</i>	<i>Cort ège du Tsar allant à</i> <i>Versailles</i> (M éi ès, 1896)
以拳術賭輸贏之狀	<i>Boxing Bet: “Corbett and</i> <i>Mitschell”</i>	<i>Boxing bet: Corbett vs.</i> <i>Mitschell</i> (Edison)
騾馬困難之狀	<i>A Donkey in Difficulty</i>	
西方野番刑人之狀	<i>Lynching Scene in Far</i> <i>West</i>	
和蘭大女子笑柄之狀	<i>Little Jake and the Big</i> <i>Dutch Girl</i>	<i>Clog Dance</i> (Edison, 1896)

Table III: Film screened at T.J. Stevenson’s Imperial Bioscope exhibitions

Records in print press	Possible Films
King Edward VII driving to the opening of Parliament	<i>King Edward VII Opens His First</i> <i>Parliament</i> (British Path é, 1901)
The funeral Procession of Queen Victoria	<i>Funeral of Queen Victoria</i>

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	(British Path é 1901)
The Derby of 1901	<i>The Derby</i> (Warwick Trading Co., 1901, two parts)
The Transvaal War	
A view from a traveling express train	
Cinderella	<i>Cendrillon</i> (Melies Star-Film, 1899)
The Serpentine Dance	
The Water Carnival	<i>A Water Carnival</i> (Warwick Trading Co, 1901)
The views of the Shanghai Police Force	
The performances of the wonderful Cragg family of acrobats,	<i>The Cragg Family</i> (Edison, 1901)
The Boxing Bout of Gordon Sisters	<i>The Gordon Sisters Boxing</i> (Edison, 1901)
Love in a Hammock	<i>Love in a Hammock</i> (Edison, 1901)
The young kiss& the Old kiss	<i>The Kiss (1900) and May Irwin Kiss (1896)</i> (Edison)
Edison, 1900 The Kiss &1896 May Irwin Kiss	
The coronation pictures	<i>Coronation of King Edward VII</i> (British Path é)
Passion Dance	<i>Passion Dance</i> (Edison, 1896)

Appendix II: Filmography

F-I: “Occidental and Oriental Series”, James White and Fredrick Blechyden’s films shot in China (Hong Kong, Guangdong, Macao, Shanghai). Films were released in Jun. 1898. Each title is 50 ft and sold \$7.50.

1. *Hong Kong Wharf Scene*: Coolies unloading Macao steamer. Chinese passengers make their way down the wharf. Two chair bearers are soliciting fares, but without any success.
2. *Street Scene in Hong Kong*: View in the Chinese quarter of the city, showing the strange business signs, reading up and down. Chair bearers pass by with passengers at a very rapid gait.
3. *Government House at Hong Kong*: Guests are arriving in chairs at the pillared gates, to attend a garden party in honor of Prince Henri, of Prussia. This was a very fashionable function.
4. *Hong Kong Regiment* (No. 1): A splendid infantry regiment raised in India, composed of Punjabis, Paithans and Hindoostanis. They march forward and wheel by companies.
5. *Hong Kong Regiment* (No. 2).
6. *Sikh Artillery, Hong Kong*.
7. *Tourists Starting for Canton*: Shows a party of English people in their chairs. This is the only safe way of getting about in Canton, as the streets are indescribably filthy.
8. *Landing Wharf at Canton*: An immense number of strange shaped river and canal boats are seen. One half the population of Canton lives on the water in these floating houses.
9. *Canton River Scene*: The large boats are used as freight carriers. The smaller boats carry passengers. They are the Sampans, the rickshaws of the water traffic. Women row them, as well as men.
10. *Canton Steamboat Landing Chinese Passengers*.

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11. *River Scene at Macao, China*: Here are great warehouses and a forest of masts, indicating the enterprise of this Portuguese settlement. At anchor in the foreground lies a Chinese Junk with its high poop.
12. *Shanghai Police*: Just coming from Inapaution at the government office. Europeans, l'unjabis, and Chinamen, both mounted and afoot. Crowds of open mouths spectators watch the parade.
13. *Shanghai Street Scene (No. 1)*: The principal business street of this great city. The unique feature of the view is the Chinese wheelbarrow, a conveyance peculiar to Shanghai and the vicinity.
14. *Shanghai Street Scene (No. 2)*: A great number of wheelbarrows are seen in this picture. Some tourists are enjoying the novelty of riding in them, along the principal street of the city.

F-ii: “*The War in China*”, films Ackerman shot in China, AM& B catalogue number and descriptions. (*the original text is blurry)

1. *Russian Sharpshooters—Tien-Tsin, China*. (No. 1732, 25 ft): Lieutenant General Linevitch and staff at the head of the 9th and 10th Sharpshooter Regiments of Russians, Col. Roznatoski, commanding. Passing in review before Field Marshall Count von Waldersee on the plain before TienTsin.
2. *Russian Artillery—China* (No. 1733, 25 ft): Field Marshall Count von Waldersee reviewing the 2nd and 4th Russian Artillery, 3rd Siberian Brigade, and a battery of Maxim guns.
3. *Charge of Reilly’s Battery-Pekin, China* (No. 1738, 27 ft): Furious charge of Capt. Reilly’s Light Battery “F”, 5th Artillery, to take position for the bombardment of the gates of the “Imperial City” of Pekin. Commanded by Lieut. Lewis R. Burgess; Lieut. C. P. Summerall, and 2nd Lieut. Manus McClasky*
4. *Von Waldersee and Staff—Pekin, China* (No. 1742, 27 ft): Field Marshall Count von Waldersee and his International Staff proceeding to the grand review of the allied forces at Pekin.

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5. *Von Waldersee's Review—Pekin, China* (No. 1743, 25 ft): Filed Marshall Count von Waldersee and Staff reviewing the Bengal Laneers in Pekin.
6. *Bengal Laneers—Pekin, China* (No. 1744, 25 ft): A detachment of the 1st Bengal Laneers, Capt. Griffin, commanding. These troops did splendid work with our own 6th Cavalry in following up the Boxer hordes after the capture of Pekin.
7. *Japanese Infantry—Pekin, China* (No. 1750, 32 ft): Japanese Infantry in an assault upon a Chinese mud wall fortification during the siege of Pekin.
8. *British Light Artillery, Near Pekin, China* (two parts, No. 1751 & 1752, 32 & 38 ft): British Royal Light Artillery on the advance to Pekin. Brig-Gen. Lorne Campbell in command. An unusually fine picture photographically.
9. *Bombay Cavalry—Pekin, China* (No. 1753, 25 ft): Third Bombay Cavalry (British Indian Troops) in their dashing advance with the allied forces upon Pekin.
10. *An Army Transport Train—Pekin, China* (No. 1754, 32 ft): The American transportation train of army wagons and mules which made the entire march to Pekin during the fighting. This was the only transportation train among the allied forces, the U.S. Army being ahead of all others in this respect.
11. *Coolies at Work—Tien-Tsin, China* (No. 1755, 50 ft): Coolies loading a junk hired by the United States in the American concessions, on the Pei-Ho River at Tien-Tsin.
12. *Ruins of Tien-Tsin-Tien--Tsin, China* (No. 1756, 27 ft): Panoramic view of the ruins of Tien-Tsin from the river, after the bombardment by the allied forces.
13. *A British Donkey Train—Tien-Tsin, China* (No. 1758, 25 ft): A party of high caste Indian Sikhs, subjects of Great Britain, guarding a donkey train on the river front during the occupation by the allied forces. Chinese shipping in the background.
14. *British Rajputs—Shanghai, China* (No. 1762, 16 ft): Volley firing and bayonet charge by a detachment of the 7th regiment of Rajputs, British Indian troops.

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15. *Assault on the South Gate—Pekin, China* (No. 1763, 16 ft): Sixth United States Cavalry, Lieut. Col. Theo. J. Wint, assaulting the South Gate of the city of Peking. Skirmishers fire to clear the wall; Capt. Cabal's troop charges through the gate, which has previously been battered down. Capt. Forsythe commands the squadron. An historical scene of great interest.
16. *Review of German Troops—Tien-Tsin, China* (No. 1769, 25 ft): Review of the 5th and 6th Infantry, German Asiatic Corps, at Tien-Tsin, on the occasion of the presentation of flags from Emperor William. Gen. Von Lessel, commanding.
17. *Review of German Troops—Tien-Tsin, China* (No. 1770, 39 ft): A continuation of No. 1769.
18. *The German Contingent—Tien-Tsin, China* (No. 1771, 30 ft): Gen. Von Lessel, commanding the German Forces in Peking, receiving the congratulations of his officers on the occasion of the presentation to his corps of battle flags from Emperor William.
19. *Cossack Cavalry—Near Peking, China* (No. 1779, 46 ft): General Linevitch, commanding the Russian forces in Siberia, advancing at the head of a squadron of Cossack Cavalry to the relief of Peking.
20. *The Evacuation of Peking—Peking, China* (No. 1788, 42 ft): The 14th United States Infantry, Col. Doggett commanding, marching past the ruined legations on the occasion of the withdrawal of the troops from the Chinese capital.
21. *9th Infantry, U.S.A.—Peking, China* (No. 1789, 92 ft): Robe at the head of the gallant 9th Infantry, U.S.A. marching through the Gate of the Temple of the Agriculture, Peking. This regiment had been in the hardest fighting of three days within two years. Second in line in this picture is the Company under Capt. Connell, which was afterwards massacred on the Island of Samar.
22. *Fourth Ghorkhas—Shanghai, China* (No. 1791, 43 ft): Bayonet exercises by a detachment of the 4th Ghorkhas Regiment. These British Indian Troops have a most distinguished record for valor, having served in the Indian Mutiny. They are not subjects of Great Britain, but are independent volunteers from Nepal.

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23. *Charge by Lancers –Pekin, China* (No. 1793, 27 ft): A charge made by the Bengal Lancers, the British Indian Mounted troops who played hare and hounds with the Boxers after the fall of Peking.
24. *First Bengal Lancers—Pekin, China* (No. 1795, 36 ft): A parade picture by this famous regiment of British Colonial Cavalry.
25. *Second Queen’s Rajputs—China* (No. 1796, 56 ft): Taken on the Recreation Ground, Shanghai. This regiment has a distinguished record for fidelity and bravery during the Indian Mutiny, and ranks high in the British-Indian Army.
26. *The fourth Goorkhas—Shanghai, China* (No. 1797, 52 ft): This is one of the most famous branches of Great Britain’s colonial forces and has been termed by Earl Roberts, “The Flower of the Indian Army”. The men are not subjects of the King, their country, Nepal, being an independent kingdom. This regiment served with great gallantry throughout the Indian Mutiny and took part in Earl Robert’s famous march to Kandabar. Photographed in parade formation.

F-III: Films Kate bonine shot in China.

1. *An Oriental Highway—TienTsin, China* (No. 1739, 25 ft): A street scene on the Taku Road, Tien-Tsin, during the occupation of the city by the allied forces. Showing the primitive methods of transportation and a Chinese street cleaning department at work.
2. *The Taku Road—TienTsin, China* (No. 1740, 25 ft): A scene on the famous Taku Road, Tien-Tsin, during the occupation of the city by the allied forces.
3. *Street Scene- TienTsin, China* (No. 1741, 46 ft): Street Scene in TienTsin. United States officers in Jinrikishas. Characteristic life during the foreign occupation.
4. *French Bridge, Tien-Tsin—China* (No. 1757, 27 ft): An interesting view of the French bridge at Tien-Tsin during the foreign occupation, showing

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people of many nationalities and types. The traffic at this point in China is said to be the heaviest to be found anywhere in the world.

5. *The French Bridge—Tien-Tsin, China* (No. 1759, 38 ft): A remarkable gathering of representatives of various nations on the French Bridge over the Pei-Ho, Tien-Tsin, China. Taken during the advance on Peking.
6. *Tien-Tsin—Tien-Tsin, China* (No. 1760, 29 ft): A panoramic view of Tien-Tsin from a launch on the Pei-Ho river. Very severe fighting occurred at this point.
7. *On the Pei-Ho—China* (No. 1761, 29 ft): Panoramic view of the bank of the Pei-Ho River at Tien-Tsin. This picture is full of local color, showing old Chinese opium junks with their crews, etc., and is quite stereoscopic in its photographic effects.
8. *A Chinese Market—Peking, China* (No. 1764, 28 ft): Showing Chinese street merchants vending their wares to the soldiers of the allied armies during the foreign occupation of the city.
9. *The Forbidden City—Peking, China* (No. 1765, 27 ft): Panoramic view in the Forbidden City, or private palaces of the Emperor of China, from the Wu-Men Gate, showing the building reserved for the exclusive use of the Emperor, and the court-yard in which millions of dollars of treasures were buried at the time this picture was taken, during the flight of the Chinese court.
10. *The Forbidden City—Peking, China* (No. 1766, 43 ft): Another panoramic view, showing the Tai-Ho-Men or Great Harmony Gate, with its surrounding palaces. This scene gives a very adequate idea of the ruin caused by neglect of the magnificent buildings and courts of the Forbidden City during the foreign occupation.
11. *Street in Shanghai—Shanghai, China* (No. 1781, 26 ft): Every-day traffic in the cosmopolitan city of China. A British Sikh policeman stands at attention in the foreground.

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12. *Street Scene in Shanghai—China* (No. 1782, 36 ft): A very interesting view in a busy Chinese thoroughfare. A squad of Sikh policemen march through the street, and give added color to an already picturesque scene.
13. *Street Scene, Shanghai-China* (No. 1783, 36 ft): Another very interesting view in The Bund, the principal business street in the English section of Shanghai. The picture is full of local color, and is of high photographic value.
14. *Shanghai from a Launch-China* (No. 1785, 51 ft): The Bund, English side, showing the magnificent public buildings and private residences.
15. *In Old China-Shanghai, China* (No. 1786, 49 ft): A panoramic view of “The Bund”, Shanghai, from a steam launch, showing a part of the French quarter and a number of abandoned opium junks. Very fine photographically.
16. *In Old Hong Kong—China* (No. 2021, 25 ft): A panoramic street scene in the “China Town” of Hong Kong. Well arranged and interesting.
17. *The Queen’s Road-Hong Kong, China* (No. 2022, 27 ft): A street scene, well laid out and interesting from start to finish.
18. *Arrival of Tongkin Train-Tien-Tsin, China* (No. 2051, 27 ft): Showing the arrival of a Chinese passenger train at the station.
19. *The Chien-Men Gate-Pekin, China* (No. 2052, 27 ft): Through which the International forces entered the city. Showing native vehicles, etc., thoroughly characteristic of China.
20. *Harbor of Shanghai—China* (No. 2053, 26 ft): A running panorama of the harbor of Shanghai showing the shipping, native boats, and shore line.

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