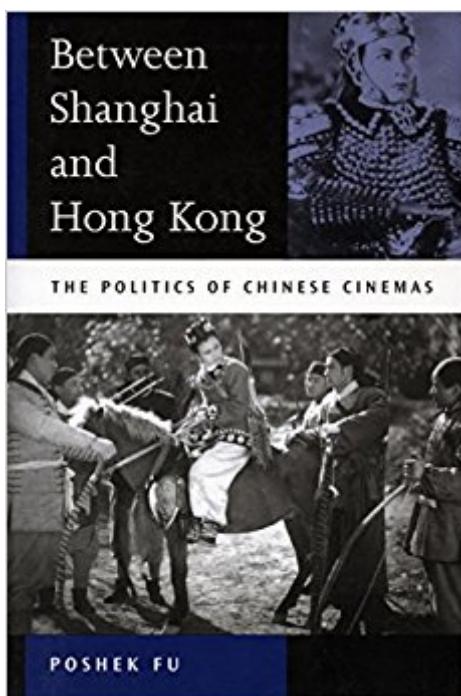


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# Between Shanghai And Hong Kong: The Politics Of Chinese Cinemas



## Synopsis

Based on meticulous archival research and a repertory of rare films, most of which were believed lost, this book is a pioneering critical study of the Chinese cinemas in Hong Kong and Shanghai and their complex interconnections. The years 1935-50 were a period of ceaseless violence in China, of war, occupation, civil war, and colonialism, leading to mass displacements of millions of people and extreme poverty. Both the cinema and the broader popular culture of this period have been little studied, partly because access to research materials is so difficult, partly because of the political problems involved (most films produced during the war have been considered pro-Japanese and their makers traitors). This study brings to light the humanity of the filmmakers, writers, and business people; the many facets of the historical situation in which they worked; and the complex politics of the films they made. This is also an original and important study of the regional networks, diasporic connections, and border-crossing movement of goods, capital, and people that drew Hong Kong and Shanghai together in an intercity nexus that sustained the survival and even flourishing of popular cinema during this tumultuous period.

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## Customer Reviews

"Fu's steadfast refusal to resort to simplistic binarism in his characterizations of World War II popular culture will be a breath of fresh air for all professional historians interested in the Japanese occupation, cinema, and identity construction." (Laura A. McDaniel National Committee on U.S.-China Relations)

Based on meticulous archival research and a repertory of rarefilms, most of which were believed lost, this book is a pioneering critical study of the Chinese cinemas in Hong Kong and Shanghai and their complex interconnections. The years 1935-50 were a period of ceaseless violence in China, of war, occupation, civil war, and colonialism, leading to mass displacements of millions of people and extreme poverty. Both the cinema and the broader popular culture of this period have been little studied, partly because access to research materials is so difficult, partly because of the political problems involved (most films produced during the war have been considered pro-Japanese and their makers traitors). This study brings to light the humanity of the filmmakers, writers, and business people; the many facets of the historical situation in which they worked; and the complex politics of the films they made. This is also an original and important study of the regional networks, diasporic connections, and border-crossing movement of goods, capital, and people that drew Hong Kong and Shanghai together in an intercity nexus that sustained the survival and even flourishing of popular cinema during this tumultuous period.

Review, Between Shanghai and Hong Kong, The Politics of Chinese CinemasBy Poshek FuPoshek Fu writes that, born in an island off Hong Kong, he often attended films in Cantonese locally and his parents regularly took the family to see Cantonese, Mandarin and even Hollywood films in the Central District. This early exposure expanded his knowledge of languages and began a lifelong fascination with Chinese cinema in all its facets. The author pursued his interest in what he describes as unexpected places such as flea markets, finding primary source material in the form of old film magazines and reviews, and also in the 1930s and 1940s Shanghai film programs which gave a précis in several languages of the motion picture being shown. Professor Fu further researched Chinese film history, using his many connections in academia and also in the media and field of film criticism. Thus the author is both an academic at the University of Illinois taking an interest in the subject as a focus for his career, and is also an individual with a life-long passion for Chinese motion pictures backed by eclectic research. As such, Poshek Fu is uniquely qualified to write Between Shanghai and Hong Kong, The Politics of Chinese Cinemas. He begins with a fascinating account of cinema in semi-occupied Shanghai: how it survived and even boomed. There were the frantic trips to Hong Kong (for supplies and the loan of studios, and even to sell the Nationalist contact there a few films) and Chongqing to try to explain their actions to the Nationalists. Here, the sheer terror of the tight-rope the film makers, notably Zhang Shankun, walked comes through clearly. On the one hand they were making a living and keeping up the morale of their compatriots through entertainment, and on the other they were potentially being

murdered as traitors during or after the war because of the necessary accommodations with Japanese suppliers and film distributors. The text continues by revealing the real story behind the development of Hong Kong cinema since its inception jointly with the cinema of Shanghai around 1909, through the action of an American entrepreneur, Benjamin Brodsky. After sound came in, Hong Kong became the leader in Cantonese films and their distribution, drawing talent away from Shanghai, in particular after the Japanese invasion of Shanghai in 1937. The Shanghai refugees tended to despise Hong Kong as not up to their standards in culture. However, by then Hong Kong had developed its own distinctive culture in print and other media. After the fall to the Japanese in 1941, the Hong Kong film makers asserted themselves either by fleeing or by refusing to co-operate with their conquerors, leading to the collapse of motion pictures there. Differently from Hong Kong film makers, in occupied Shanghai Zhang Shankun continued to produce films via his terrifying balancing act, but by the end of the war he had been arrested by both the Japanese and Nationalist military police and was fortunate to escape with his life. When the usual post-war witch hunt for traitors developed with Zhang as a prominent target, he left Shanghai for Hong Kong. There, having helped in various major initiatives, until his death he remained true to his roots in a revived Xinhua studio catering to the Taiwanese market. Unlike many others, Zhang was not seduced by the rewards of turning to Beijing. Through this excellent and well written book, in a whole new way, Poshek Fu has opened up a little-known period in Chinese cinema and in particular the Shanghai film scene of the semi-occupation and occupation by the Japanese spanning 1937–1945. He has included new archival and previously undiscovered film materials. Combining his skills both as a historian and as an expert in film, this author has clarified the way in which Chinese films of that era and beyond reflected the political and personal struggles of the Chinese people in times of turmoil. In writing this book, professor Fu has successfully challenged the previous received wisdom on this complex period in Chinese cinema. Reviewer: Margaret Blair, author, *Gudao, Lone Islet, The War Years in Shanghai* and *Shanghai Scarlet*

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