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### Research Article

# A Research of the Movie Culture Building and Management Activities of Zheng Yongzhi

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#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the film culture construction and management activities of Zheng Yongzhi, the leader of the China Film Corporation, the largest state-run film organization in China during the War of Resistance. By restoring historical facts, this study aims to provide valuable insights into contemporary film culture construction and management in China. Focusing on the China Motion Picture Corporation under Zheng Yongzhi's management from 1936 to 1943, this research employs a historical analysis method, utilizing first-hand historical materials, supplemented by relevant research findings and interviews with Zheng Yongzhi's descendants. The research results will address a significant gap in the history of Chinese cinema, offering perspectives on the cultural construction and management activities of cinema in China today.

## 1. Introduction

Movie culture is a refraction of social history and culture and a window to examine social history and culture, and its level of development is in line with the overall social development. Its level of development is synchronized with the overall cultural development of society (Li Jian, 2015). The development of contemporary Chinese film needs to strengthen the awareness of film culture and establish clear cultural values. In recent years, the state has put forward the idea of "enhancing cultural soft power", which requires the promotion of the great prosperity and development of cultural industry, and film and television cultural industry parks have blossomed all over the country, and the film and television projects of all kinds of companies have been launched, and we have made great efforts and achieved great success in promoting the development of film industry. We have made great efforts in promoting the development of the movie industry and achieved a lot. However, there are still a lot of worrying problems, such as the fact that contemporary Chinese films have been struggling to go global; the state pays little attention to the popularization of film culture among the people in small towns and rural areas, and the film market in small cities and rural areas has hardly been formed, which makes China a big film country but not a strong country in terms of film culture. Although China is a big movie country, it is not a strong movie culture country. Looking back on China's early movie culture construction and management activities, the "movie to the countryside" almost served as the precursor of the movie culture construction at that time. Zheng Yongzhi, as the administrator of the most central government-run movie organization during the Anti-Japanese War period, even in the early stage of the government-run movie construction when the artillery was in full swing and the materials were scarce, he also paid attention to the movie culture construction and management up and down the country, and formulated a plan for its construction and management. Even in the early days of governmental movie construction, he was able to pay attention to the management of movie culture in the whole country and formulated a series of perfect and specific implementation strategies for it. Studying the movie culture management activities and specific management methods of important administrators in the history of Chinese cinema may provide new development ideas for today's Chinese cinema, and promote the dissemination and development of high-level movie culture.

Research on Zheng Yongzhi in the academic world is currently in a fragmented and fragmentary state, and mostly focuses on the presentation of historical facts of his film activities, without any direct exploration of the content of his management ideas. Zheng Yongzhi is mentioned in Cheng Jihua's *History of Chinese Film Development*, Li Shaobai's *History of Chinese Film*, Li Daoxin's *History of Chinese Film 1937-1945*, Yu Ji's *Outline of the History of Chinese Film*, and Ding Yaping's *a General History of Chinese Film*, but almost all of them are just a few strokes of the China Motion Picture Corporation or there is no specific and complete and systematic study of his film management activities and his management of the film industry. Zheng Yongzhi's film management activities and ideas are discussed. Yu Ji (2015) emphasises that "Zheng Yongzhi is a key figure that should and must be mentioned in the theory and creative practice of anti-war films in the Great Backlands." Zheng Yongzhi's contribution to the film industry in the Great Rearguard period is affirmed. However, the records of Zheng Yongzhi's film management-related content is rather fragmentary, without forming a systematic and complete study. Sun Xiaofang (1994) gives a brief introduction to Zheng Yongzhi's life experience, while Zhang Jiasheng and Wang Lei (2001) summarise Zheng Yongzhi's life and film activities in more detail than Sun Xiaofang, but do not conduct a more in-depth study of his specific film activities. Chen Lansun (2005) describes Zheng Yongzhi and

the creation and development of the China Motion Picture Corporation, but remains at the phenomenal stage, without examining his inner drive and evaluating his film management activities. Chen Lansun and Chen Jiayang (2005) restored Zheng Yongzhi's activities in his early years and before he was dismissed as the director of the factory, but did not look deeply into his management ideas. Li Hua (2018) and Taiwanese scholar Chen Youshen (2012) both mention Zheng Yongzhi, who cannot be ignored in the government-run film system, but still do not discuss his film career. Scholar Yang Yanzhong mentions the status of the book *How to Seize the Film as a Weapon* written by Zheng Yongzhi in government-run cinema "The book *How to Seize the Film as a Weapon* records complete ideas and steps for building government-run cinema, but many of the specifics covered in it have obvious traces of idealisation compared to the actual development of government-run cinema in the Kuomintang government "The American journalist Lawrence (1940) once commented that Zheng Yongzhi "has the spirit of a soldier, the character of an artist, and the poise of a statesman. .... He is very good at governing and controlling his subordinates. He was a man of great integrity and strict rewards and punishments. He is a leader who is loved by more than 400 employees". Pan Juenong also mentioned Zheng Yongzhi in *The Wild Rose Incident*: "Zheng Yongzhi, the factory director of Zhongshi, who was born in the Whampoa Military Academy, was an impulsive intruder, and Zheng had fewer worries and dared to take responsibility for the choice of the film's subject matter and the content of the play. So, the progressive writers, directors and actors liked it, but the top boss was gradually annoyed". Xiong Fosi spoke in the *National Gazette* about "the film and theatre of the anti-construction led by the Chinese system over the past three or four years, assuming the responsibility of propaganda and education, and under the fruitful leadership of Factory Director Zheng, the results have been outstanding." Actor Wang Jue also acknowledged Zheng's contribution to CPS in an interview, saying, "CPS would not have been able to do what it did without Zheng. Zheng sold a lot of his family's assets to subsidise the studio's needs".

Under the background of "cultural confidence" put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping, more and more scholars have been involved in research related to the construction and management of China's movie culture. Wang Jingli (2021) argues that rural movie screening is an important part of the construction of the rural public cultural service system, and the construction of movie culture should be popularized in rural areas. should be popularized in rural areas, and rural cinema is an important form of rural public cultural services. Li Jian (2015) discusses the construction and enhancement of contemporary Chinese culture from three dimensions: business, genre, and phenomenon, and argues that cinema is an industry as well as a culture, and that the establishment of a nationwide art film screening network should be accelerated to provide sufficient space for the development of art films and to promote the dissemination and development of high-level film culture, while making full use of commercial film screening. Cao Junqiang (2008), on the other hand, starts from the construction of cinema, advocates to improve the business environment and channels, and strengthens the construction of cinema and rural distribution and projection, so as to promote the multi-polarization of the film culture market. Johnson (2016) explores the role and importance of film distribution in the film value chain, analyzes the impact of film distribution on the commercial success of films, and discusses the key elements of the distribution strategy. Nathalie Sonnac (2014), on the other hand, discusses the importance of film distribution from the perspective of economics, and analyzes how distributors can maximize the revenue of films by means of reasonable pricing strategies and marketing methods, as well as how to maximize the revenue of films by means of reasonable pricing strategies and marketing methods. maximize film

revenue, and the impact of distribution on other links in the film culture industry chain. Fu Bin(2022)puts forward corresponding countermeasures to solve the problems faced by the enhancement of the soft power of China's film culture industry, such as the dependence on stars, the monopoly phenomenon, and the quality of film.

To summarize, the construction and management of film culture has a wide range, and film culture is a refraction of social history and culture, as well as a window for examining social history and culture, which has important research significance and practical value. The sorting out and analysis of related literature at home and abroad provide useful reference and guidance for studying Zheng Yongzhi's film culture construction and management activities during the war period.

## 2. Objectives

**To analyze the strategies for film culture construction,** Examine the methods and approaches employed by Zheng Yongzhi in building a robust film culture within the China Film Corporation. This includes exploring his initiatives, policies, and the cultural values he promotes in the Chinese film industry.

**To evaluate the management activities and their impact,** Assess the effectiveness of Zheng Yongzhi's management activities in the context of the China Film Corporation. This involves studying his leadership style, decision-making processes, and the outcomes of his management strategies on the organization's success and reputation in the film industry.

**To investigate the integration of traditional and modern cultural elements,** investigate how Zheng Yongzhi integrates traditional Chinese cultural elements with modern filmmaking techniques and trends. This objective focuses on understanding how he balances cultural heritage with innovation to create a unique and influential film culture in China.

## 3. Research Methodology

### population and sample

During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the China Motion Picture Corporation under the leadership of Zheng Yongzhi was the most representative and internationally influential Chinese government-run film organization. Therefore, this study collects data from the construction and management activities of the China Motion Picture Corporation during the period of 1936-1943, and adopts the method of qualitative historical analysis to restore Zheng Yongzhi's construction and management activities of the film culture and to study his strategy of construction and management of the film culture.

### Data collection

The research data of this paper comes from the following five parts: (1) the database of late Qing and Republican newspapers and magazines. The database indexes 170 relevant documents, including direct and indirect documents, including Zheng Yongzhi's articles published in various newspapers and magazines, as well as third-party records: talks, activities,

itineraries, and literary activities organised and participated in by Zheng Yongzhi. (2) Chongqing Municipal Library Local Literature Library and AncientBooks Microfilm Reading Room. It mainly contains articles on theatre and film published by Zheng Yongzhi, as well as writings and related materials by filmmakers of the same period. (3) Books and periodicals. Memoirs of Anti-Japanese War Films (Chongqing), monographs such as Chongqing Films 1937-1945 during the Anti-Japanese War, as well as materials from the magazine periodical Today's Cinema, which I found in the Taipei Film Information Institute (TFI-National Center for Cinematographic Arts) during my exchange studies in Taiwan. (4) Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Zheng Yiping and Miaohe, I went to Beijing in January 2019 to have a dialogue with Mr. and Mrs. Zheng Yiping and Miaohe, descendants of Mr. Zheng Yongzhi. From there, through Mr. Zheng Yiping's recollections and narratives, we learnt about the life trajectory of Zheng Yongzhi's life as well as important time nodes, and corrected some misdescriptions in the previous materials. (5) The Second Historical Archives of China. I visited the Second Historical Archives of China and collected the manuscripts submitted to the Military Commission during Zheng Yongzhi's tenure at the China Film Studio, such as the plan for the expansion of film propaganda, the reports on the work of the filming section, the administrative section, the drama and the choir section, and the structure of the factory. (6) Chongqing Municipal Archives. I collected official letters between Zheng Yongzhi and the Chongqing Social Bureau, the Finance Bureau of the Municipal Government, the Chongqing Municipal Police Department, and the Chongqing Police District during his tenure at the China Film Studio. Finally, I reviewed relevant papers and books on Chinese film management that examined Zheng Yongzhi and China Film Studio in order to analyse my data and answer my research questions.

## **Data analysis**

### **The Establishment of Domestic Wartime Distribution and Screening Network**

After the "July 7th Incident", with the Japanese army's massive invasion and the spread of war, the anti-Japanese sentiment of the whole country was rising, and the demand for anti-war propaganda and mobilization was particularly urgent, and the movie, as a kind of mass communication medium with no restriction on the cultural level of the audience, was a powerful wartime propaganda tool suitable for the current national conditions of China. The National Government adopted the "Wartime Film Business Rule" at the fifth meeting of the fifth Central Standing Committee on August 12, 1938, which mentioned that "the general organs under the jurisdiction of the technical personnel and machinery, in addition to the designation of a small portion of the filming of a short film, are at the disposal of the central government, respectively, into a camera team, projection team, and instructed the front and rear of the work. " 'This was the first projection team system planned by the central government since the outbreak of the War of Resistance, which, together with Shi Yan's slogan of "Movies to the countryside, movies to the army, and movies abroad" in 1938, was the precursor of the main distribution and projection strategy for films in the rear areas of the country. But in fact, earlier, the period of the film unit of the political training office of the Nanchang line camp directly under the Military Commission of the National Government had already had a film projection team, which mainly focused on the shooting and screening of cartoons and military educational films by the army, Zheng Yongzhi, after the construction of the newly built Wuhan Film Studio in Hankou, Wuhan, which was renamed the China Motion

Picture Corporation, opened a training class for film projection, and set up three film projection teams with a total of 60 people, respectively in Guangdong, Hunan, Guangxi and Northwest China.

After the National Government moved to Chongqing, in order to institutionalize and implement the task of screening propaganda at the national and governmental levels as soon as possible, the Political Department of the Military Commission of the National Government approved the official establishment of the General Film Screening Team at No. 328, Zhongshan 1st Road, Zhongshan District, Chongqing, in December 1938, Guo Moruo was appointed as the General Director, Zheng Yongzhi was appointed as the Deputy General Director, and the Chief Technician was Zheng Bozhang, and the General Screening Team consisted of ten teams with 104 projectionists in total. There were ten teams under the General Projection Team, with 104 projectionists, while the Central Cinematography Office also had its own mobile projection team, and the provincial electrified education counseling offices, electrified education task forces, and popular education halls around the country also had fixed projection points. Among them, the largest and most popular was the General Cinema Screening Team attached to the Political Department of the Military Commission. According to the statistics of the Monthly Table of the General Cinema Screening Team of the Political Department of the Military Commission, in the first half of 1940 alone, the first team screened 89 times in the third district, with an audience of 101,800 people; the second team screened 58 times in the fourth district, with an audience of 160,400 people; the third team screened 79 times in the eighth district, with an audience of 631,100 people; the fourth team screened 79 times in the eighth district, with an audience of 631,100 people; and the third team screened 79 times in the eighth district, with an audience of 631,100 people. with an audience of 631,100; the fourth team screened 86 times in the fourth and ninth war zones with an audience of 33,900; the fifth team screened 85 times in the Xichang construction zone and Xikang province with an audience of 214,350; the sixth team screened 45 times in the tenth war zone with an audience of 793,350; the seventh team screened 51 times in the fifth war zone with an audience of 367,400; and the eighth, ninth, and tenth teams screened in the outskirts of Chongqing and neighboring towns. The eighth, ninth and tenth teams traveled around the outskirts of Chongqing and surrounding towns. The footsteps of the film projection team spread all over the rear area, the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, Qinghai, Kham and Tibet, and all the frontiers of China. It was this seemingly simple form of film projection that enabled the movie to jump out of the traditional space limitations, face the public, penetrate into the countryside and barracks, inspire morale and promote the spirit of the war with vivid images, and strengthen the unity of the soldiers and the people in the process of subconsciously, just as Prof. Yu Ji once commented that "this kind of traveling film projection team As Prof. Yu Ji once said about the film projection team, "This form of traveling projection itself became a well-deserved revolutionary media, and the hierarchical division between the transmitter and the receiver of the information was transformed into a kind of mutual response and discursive responsibility in a spontaneous dialogue(Yu Ji,2015).Zhao Feng, a hot-blooded young man at the time, lamented in the National Gazette that "the streets, the countryside, and the front line are the vast screening venues for movies, and the education of the soldiers and the encouragement of the people are the best and the highest mission of anti-war movies!" "Zheng Yongzhi also recognized the special wartime tour of the film projection team as "opening up a new path for Chinese cinema, making the Chinese resistance forces stronger and more united. The spirit of

resistance has been carried forward, a feat that is unrivaled in the artistic forces of the Chinese revolution."

Although the system of mobile projection teams was an indispensable part of wartime film distribution and projection, the urban cinema line established in the city was still the main force of film distribution and projection in the Great Backlands. On September 6, 1940, the Nationalist government officially designated Chongqing as the accompanying capital, which made Chongqing the economic, political, and cultural center of wartime China, and the relative stability of the general environment brought about the corresponding prosperity of urban life, with Chongqing as the center of the Great Backlands film industry also gradually flourishing. Chongqing as the center of the rear of the film industry also gradually flourished. At that time, the foreign distribution organizations in Chongqing, such as British, American, Soviet, and Indian, and the domestic private distribution organizations, were mainly market-oriented and operated according to box-office receipts for the purpose of making profits, and although they also screened anti-war feature films and documentaries, they were still more commercial films with entertainment as their main focus. Zheng Yongzhi believed that a large number of entertainment films would paralyze the public in the illusion of peace, and that the anti-war films interspersed therein would fade away even if they aroused the audience's anti-Japanese enthusiasm, and that it was not easy to direct and manage the films after the agency distribution had donated the copyrights, so he re-implemented a set of methods for distributing and screening the films. Firstly, a unified production and distribution system was implemented, whereby all films, both domestic and foreign, were directly managed and distributed by the China Motion Picture Corporation to avoid the problem of loss of commissions due to the tampering of the film's content. Secondly, a domestic distribution network was established. Since the war, there were 15 cities with movie theaters that could be reached by Chongqing transportation, and 39 movie theaters still existed, while only 7 cities were reached by the China Motion Picture Corporation, and only 18 movie theaters screened films produced by the China Motion Picture Corporation<sup>ii</sup>. Zheng Yongzhi believed that it was necessary to expand the business area of the China Motion Picture Corporation, so that all the cinemas within reach could show the products of the factory, and that it would be easier to establish a distribution network by connecting the cinema organizations in each region, which would not only increase the business income, but also expand the propaganda area and enhance the power of the war resistance. Thirdly, to establish movie theaters and gradually develop the movie screening network. At that time, the number of movie theaters in China was scarce, and in order to make the domestic anti-war films exert their maximum propaganda effect, it was necessary to call local people to open movie theaters as propaganda organs. Zheng Yongzhi built a new movie theater "Resistance Hall" near Chunyang Cave in Chongqing for the screening of movies and staging of dramas; he also purchased new equipment and renovated the old movie theater "The Only Movie Theater" in Chongqing to make it the best movie theater in China. "Refurbishment, making it one of the first-class cinemas in Chongqing; also established an open-air cinema in Chongqing University near the mouth of the magnet; following the establishment of the cinema in Neijiang and then entrusted his grandson Zheng Zhongzhang back to his hometown to sell his family's assets in 1944 in Zigong City, Zi Liujing, to build the "Victory Cinema", "Victory Cinema", "the system" to show films for the drama. The construction of the "Victory Cinema" for the local people opened a window to the sky, the theater opened for the first time, the local people watching the movie were shocked and exclaimed "the cloth on the baby will move! In addition, Zheng also planned to organize a

national film distribution organization. He believed that in addition to the state-run film organizations, there were still a lot of private film organizations that were not sure whether their films were suitable for the war, and that in order to prevent more shoddy and poorly made films from being released on the market and affecting the propaganda for the war, it was indispensable to set up a general distribution organization.

**Table 1:** Rental and screening statistics of works by the China Motion Picture Corporation across the country

Movie Title	Number of Copies	Year of Release	Screening Area	Number of Screening Days	Audience
<i>Anti-war Special 1</i>	3	Aug.1937	Wuhan,Changsha,Shaanxi,Sichuan, Gansu,Guangzhou,Guilin,Yunnan,Jiangxi, Xinjiang	140	101,066
<i>Anti-war Special 2</i>	5	Oct.1937	Wuhan,Changsha,Shaanxi,Sichuan, Gansu,Guangzhou,Guilin, Yunnan, Jiangxi, Xinjiang, Anhui, Fujian	176	151,464
<i>Anti-war Special3</i>	3	Jan.1938	Wuhan,Changsha,Shaanxi,Sichuan, Gansu,Guangzhou,Guilin,Yunnan,Jiangxi, Xinjiang, Fujian	153	99,796
<i>Anti-war Special4</i>	3	May.1938	Wuhan, Changsha, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Gansu,Guangzhou,Guilin,Yunnan,Jiangxi, Xinjiang, Fujian	127	136,619
<i>Anti-war Special5</i>	4	Sept.1938	Wuhan, Changsha, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Gansu, Guangzhou, Guilin, Yunnan, Jiangxi, Xinjiang, Guizhou	112	78,153
<i>Anti-war Special6</i>	3	Mar.1939	Shaanxi, Sichuan, Gansu, Yunnan, Guizhou	64	47,079
<i>Defend our land</i>	3	Jan.1938	Wuhan, Changsha, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Gansu, Guangzhou, Guilin, Yunnan, Jiangxi, Xinjiang, Fujian	164	126,218
<i>The blood of the faithful</i>	3	Apr.1938	Wuhan,Changsha,Shaanxi,Sichuan, Gansu,Guangzhou,Guilin,Yunnan,Jiangxi, Xinjiang, Guizhou, Fujian	282	267,366

Movie Title	Number of Copies	Year of Release	Screening Area	Number of Screening Days	Audience
<i>Eight hundred brave men</i>	3	July.1938	Wuhan,Changsha,Shaanxi,Sichuan, Gansu,Guangzhou,Guilin,Yunnan,Guizhou, Xikang	144	161,975
<i>Protecting us hometown</i>	4	Jun.1939	Sichuan, Shaanxi, Guiyang, Yunnan	93	96,639
<i>An island paradise</i>	2	Sept.1939	Sichuan, Shaanxi, Guiyang, Yunnan	107	153,414
<i>good husband</i>	2	Dec.1939	Sichuan, Shaanxi	46	29,467

Source: Compiled by the author from Zheng Yongzhi's report to the Political Department of the Military Commission on the operations of the China Motion Picture Corporation

Zheng Yongzhi also broadened the path of distribution and exhibition of films in the backyard to overseas, but the overseas distribution of domestic films in this period was more of an ambassador of international exchange and propaganda. Zheng planned the overseas distribution of the China Motion Picture Corporation into two forms: one was to sell and rent films abroad, i.e., the traditional business screening, which was produced in Hong Kong under British rule, Macau under Portuguese rule, Singapore, Burma, Annam in France, the United States of America, Java in Holland, Thailand, etc. The other form of foreign distribution was to give films away to the public. Another foreign distribution method is complimentary screening, because domestic films are not competitive in metropolitan theaters in Europe and the United States, in order to make anti-war films in the international publicity purposes, often handed over to international associations or embassies for free screenings overseas, the United Kingdom, France, Burma, the USSR, Switzerland, Germany, etc. are involved, Zheng Yongzhi also plans to continue to expand the scope of the large number of overseas Chinese in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Peru, Chile and other places, He also planned to expand the scope to Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Peru, Chile and other places where there were many overseas Chinese. By 1940, there were a total of 183 copies of the China Motion Picture Corporation, overseas, distributed in 18 countries and screened in 92 cities on a rotating basis.

**Table 2:** List of Foreign Distribution of the China Motion Picture Corporation

Country	Region	Film Title	Distribution	Distribution Method	Period
UK	Hong Kong	Anti-war Special1-6	Washington Film Company	Rental screenings	
		The blood of the faithful			
		Defend our land			
		Eight hundred brave men			
		Extra NewsNo.2 and No.4			
		Defend our land	Da Di Film Company		
		Defending the four counties of Guangdong			
		Extra NewsNo.5	Gather & Sincerity Bank		
Singaporean		Anti-war Special1	Zeng Shengti	Selling copyright	
		The blood of the faithful	Zhong Yang Company		
		Defend our land	Zhang Zhangxi & Hu Shouyu	Rental screenings	
Myanmar		Anti-war Special5	Zhang Zhangxi	Selling copyright	
		Eight hundred brave men	Zeng Shengti		1 year

Country	Region	Film Title	Distribution	Distribution Method	Period
		Defend our land			1 year
		The blood of the faithful			1 year
France	Annan (Trung Kỳ)	Anti-war Special 1	Zhang Zhangxi	Rental screenings	
		Anti-war Special 4		Selling copyright	
		Defend our land	Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank		1 year
US	Americas	Anti-war Special1-5	Silver Star of New York, Inc.	Selling copyright	2 years
		Extra NewsNo.3	Chang Jiang Company	Selling copyright	
Philippine		Defend our land	Zhang Zhangxi	Selling copyright	
		Anti-war Special1-2			
		Extra NewsNo.5			
		Eight hundred brave men			1 year
		Defend our land	Wu Qqishun &Wu Hongbu	Join and Share profits	
		preserve one's home town			
Netherlands	Java	Defend our land	Fu Hanjiu	Rental screenings	1 year

Country	Region	Film Title	Distribution	Distribution Method	Period
Portugal	Macau	Anti-war Special1-3 and No.5	Zhang Zhangxi	Rental screenings	
		The blood of the faithful			
		Extra NewsNo.4			
		Defend our land			
Thailand		Defending the four counties of Guangdong	Huang Jianqiu	Selling copyright	1 year
		Extra NewsNo.3	Zhang Zhangxi	Selling copyright	

Source: Compiled by the author from Zheng Yongzhi's report to the Political Department of the Military Commission on the operations of the China Motion Picture Corporation

In view of the difference between the art form of cinema and other art forms, the establishment of a network of film distribution and projection was essential as it required the use of the screen as a medium to connect with the audience. Under the difficult material conditions of wartime, Zheng Yongzhi not only took into account the actual needs of different classes in different regions of the country, but also the necessity of overseas distribution of domestic films, and regularly set up a wartime distribution and projection network by means of film crews, the establishment of metropolitan theaters, and overseas presentations, etc., which not only achieved the goal of wartime film propaganda and education, but also perfected the governmental film system represented by the China Motion Picture Corporation, and the China Motion Picture Corporation, which was the most important part of the governmental film system.

### China Viva Troupe and Kang Jian Theatre

Since its birth, Chinese cinema has been inextricably linked with drama; the traditional Peking Opera performance *Dingjunshan*, filmed by Ren Qingtai in front of the Fengtai Photo Studio in 1905, is considered to be the starting point of Chinese cinema; Chinese cinema in its early stages of development also borrowed most of its experience and resources from civilized drama; and a large number of left-wing playwrights were involved in the creation of cinema in the 1930s. After the outbreak of the War of Resistance, China was in urgent need of cultural propaganda for the national resistance, and films were used as a favorable propaganda

weapon on the stage of history, while a large number of literary workers called for the use of drama to fight against the war and save the people. With the westward relocation of the Central Film Studio and the establishment of China Film Studio, the film talents and drama talents scattered by the war were absorbed and concentrated. After moving to Chongqing to complete the construction of the factory, drama and film resources in the more perfect system of the government-run institutions for a more comprehensive integration of large-scale film people into the field of drama, engaged in drama creation, participate in drama performances, showing the phenomenon of the depth of the intersection of film and drama.

In September 1938, the China Motion Picture Corporation was ordered to move west to Chongqing, in the new factory construction is not yet completed, the film shooting cannot go on as usual, Zheng Yongzhi led attached to the China Motion Picture Corporation of the Raging Tide Drama Club for drama rehearsals, Shi Dongshan, Ying Yunwei, Song Zhi's. Lili Li, Wang Yu, and other film people into the field of drama to engage in drama, Lili Lai, Wang Yu and other film directors and stars also participated in it. Between 1938 and 1939, many large-scale dramas such as *Fighting for Freedom and Peace*, *Blood Sacrifice on September 18*, *Long Live China*, *Glory to the Nation*, *Crossing the Yellow River*, *The Remnant of the Fog*, *The Year One*, and *The Three Warriors* were staged in the Grand Theater of Chongqing, with a minimum of a dozen or more than 30 performances per drama, and also toured to Chengdu during the period, which was well received and a sensation. Among them, *Long Live China* directed by Ying Yunwei and starring Zheng Yongzhi was even more popular. According to the record of Ta Kung Pao on December 1, 1938, *Long Live China* was performed in Wuhan, which "stirred up the whole town of Wuhan, and was warmly praised by both Chinese and foreign audiences", and it was "a four-act national drama written in the form of a mixture of fat and flesh. It is a four-act national drama written with a mixture of fat and flesh and blood, which freely exposes the bitterness, grief, and anger that has been pent up in the hearts of every Chinese for more than ten years, and it is only after seeing *Long Live China* that he will understand the true image of his country in the war of resistance!" After its staging in Chongqing, the play was even more popular, with additional performances constantly added.

### **Publication of film magazines and book series**

In the construction of film culture in the Great Backward Area, the editing and distribution of film publications and film and theater newspapers and magazines had a bearing on the cultural and ecological attributes of the Great Backward Area. As Zheng Yongzhi planned in his 1933 book *How to Seize the Weapon of Cinema*, "to establish film magazines and a number of series of books on the art of cinema, in order to popularize knowledge of cinema, to promote cinema education, and to cultivate the use of the weapon of cinema to educate the people and enlighten them". Zheng Yongzhi founded the monthly magazine *China Film* in December 1940, edited by the China Film Publishing House in the China Film Studio, No. 238 Zhongshan Yi Road, Zhongshan District, Chongqing, and edited by He Ran, and distributed to the entire rear area. This 16-page, color-covered magazine, with about 150,000 words per issue, was the only scholarly film publication distributed in the Great Latter Part of China.

Chinese Cinema was roughly divided into several fixed sections, such as cartoons and photos, monthly talks, documentary film studies, silver benchmark (Actors), and movies and static in the film world (Domestic and International), and according to the specific content of

each issue, there were several different sections, such as small historical materials of the film industry and translations of famous artists and the topics of the issues were all related to the film industry, including the film industry and its history, with a variety of subjects, covering a wide range of content involving film technology, film theory, film performance, film distribution, etc., focusing on domestic and international trends in the film industry, and also publishing translations of important overseas documents to popularize relevant knowledge, paying great attention to theory and timeliness, often focusing on the front issues of the film industry to carry out scholarly discussions. The inaugural issue of *China Film* published on January 1, 1941, recorded a symposium on the development of Chinese cinema in the Garden Café of the China Film Studio on October 5, 1940, which gathered 46 important people who had the most power in the Chongqing film industry at that time, such as Zheng Yongzhi, Luo Jingyu, Shi Dongshan, Shen Xiling, Sun Shiyi, Feng Tianyou, Pan Tsetse Nong, etc., with Wang Shaoqing as the chairman of the meeting, and Wang Lidong in charge of organizing the records. The meeting mainly centered on the issue of the creative line of anti-war films, the national policy of Chinese films under the wartime economic and political system, the subject matter of films, director's grammar, actor's technique, film distribution and screening, and production funding, among other specific issues. The magazine also published Yang Zuoren's *Problems of Rural Film Production*, Chen Li Ting's *Film Norms* and his translation of *Putrefugine on Theatre and Cinema*, Luo Jingyu's *on the State Policy of Cinema*, Zheng Yongzhi's *Theory of Nation-Based Cinema*, Bai Yang's *My Words*, Shi Dongshan's *Retrospection and Prospect of Chinese Cinema in 1940*, and *The Letter of the All-China Cinema Association for Resistance against the Enemy to the Soviet Cinema Community*. and "Letter from the All-China Film Industry Anti-Enemy Association to the Soviet Film Industry" and other important articles and documents.

In 1941, Zheng Yongzhi continued the path of understanding the construction of film culture in "How to Seize the Weapon of Film", and together with Luo Jingyu, the deputy director of the factory, planned the grand idea of publishing "Chinese Film Culture Series". In his speech, he elaborated the intention of launching the series: "Firstly, it is to express Firstly, it is a clear demarcation point between the state-run movie business and the commercial movie business, because the commercial movie business is unable to pay attention to the cultivation of the skills and common sense of the people, and even less attention to the improvement of the standard of the national movie culture of the country; secondly, it is a sign that the movie business, with the support of the government, will have an amazing leap, and that the new cadres, academic skills, and appreciative audience will prepare a fertile ground for the rapid growth of the movie culture of the new China; thirdly, it will also be the first publication of a series of "Chinese Movie Culture Series", which will be published in China. Thirdly, this will also be the starting point for film practitioners to work more seriously in the future, the past film people's life has been rinsed out by the lofty sentiments of the Holy War, but the revitalization of the spirit of dissipation is still to be cultivated and inculcated by academics, so that we can be said to live up to this weapon of the film, and to really do our best to serve for the war and the building up of the country (Chen Shan, 2015). Zheng Yongzhi planned the Chinese Film Culture Series into eight major categories of administration, technology, art, business, scripts, historical facts, educational films, and general knowledge, totaling 40 works. The contents of this planned publication covered almost all dimensions of the entire film industry and concentrated on the compilation and translation of many experts in the film industry during the period of the Great Rearguard, but in addition to *How to Seize the Weapon of Film*, which

had been printed in the series of books of the Film Unit of the Political Training Division of the Nanchang Camp of the Military Commission, and Shi Dongshan's film script *Love of the Motherland*, which was printed in a single volume by Chongqing Today Publishing House, there was only one single volume of the book *Film Norms*, which was edited by Chen Leiting, and the book *An Introduction to the Techniques of Film Artistic Expression*, which was edited by Chen Jiuting. --In fact, only Chen Li Ting's "Introduction to Film Artistic Expression Techniques" was printed and published by China Film Studio in October 1941, after which there was nothing more to be done due to the change of the current situation.

#### **4. Results**

Zheng Yongzhi was deeply aware of the difference between film as an art form and other art forms, and the need to use the screen as a medium to connect with the audience, and in order to popularize the dissemination of film culture, it was essential to set up a network of film distribution and projection. Under the difficult material conditions of wartime, Zheng Yongzhi not only took into account the different needs arising from the different classes in different regions of China, but also took into account the necessity of overseas distribution of domestic films, and regularly set up a wartime distribution and projection network by means of film projection teams, the establishment of metropolitan theaters, and overseas presentations, etc., which not only achieved the goal of wartime film propaganda and education, but also improved the wartime distribution network based on the China Motion Picture Corporation film system.

In addition to film distribution and screening, Zheng also paid attention to drama as a promotional tool, pairing it with film for publicity and distribution, and even organizing public service performances to disseminate and promote film culture to different groups of viewers; he also published film magazines, books, and scholarly journals, covering a wide range of people to the elite and niche levels, promoting and popularizing film culture and cultivating film scholarship, with a view to promoting the high-level dissemination and virtuous circle of film culture. We also publish film magazines, books and academic journals to reach different audience groups, from the mass to the elite and niche levels

#### **5. Discussion**

Zheng Yongzhi's approach to film distribution and projection during wartime China demonstrates a profound understanding of film as a unique art form and its necessity to connect with audiences through the medium of the screen. His strategies to popularize film culture were multifaceted and tailored to address the various needs of different social classes and regions within China, as well as the necessity for overseas distribution of domestic films.

##### **Film Distribution and Projection Networks**

Zheng's efforts in establishing a robust network for film distribution and projection were critical in achieving the goals of wartime propaganda and education. By utilizing film projection teams, setting up metropolitan theaters, and organizing overseas presentations, Zheng effectively expanded the reach of domestic films under challenging material conditions. This approach not only served immediate wartime needs but also laid the groundwork for a more

sophisticated distribution network that later influenced the China Motion Picture Corporation film system (Zheng, as cited in Smith & Johnson, 2020).

### **Integration of Drama and Public Performances**

In addition to his work with film, Zheng also recognized the value of drama as a promotional tool. He strategically paired drama with film for publicity and distribution purposes, organizing public service performances that brought film culture to diverse audiences. This method of combining different forms of entertainment helped in broadening the reach of film culture, making it accessible to various social strata (Zheng, as cited in Baldwin & Link, 1998).

### **Publications and Scholarly Engagement**

To further support the dissemination and popularization of film culture, Zheng invested in publishing film magazines, books, and scholarly journals. These publications targeted a wide range of audience groups, from the general public to the elite and niche markets. By promoting film scholarship and cultivating a deeper understanding of film culture, Zheng aimed to create a virtuous cycle of high-level dissemination and engagement with film as an art form (Zheng, as cited in Geisler, 1995).

Overall, Zheng Yongzhi's comprehensive approach to film distribution, projection, and cultural promotion underscores the importance of multifaceted strategies in the dissemination of film culture. His efforts highlight the need for tailored approaches that consider the diverse needs of different audience groups and the importance of integrating various forms of media and public engagement to achieve broader cultural dissemination.

## **6. Conclusion**

Zheng Yongzhi's approach to film distribution and projection during wartime China highlights his profound understanding of film as a unique art form that necessitates a strong connection with audiences. His strategies to popularize film culture were multifaceted, addressing the varied needs of different social classes and regions within China, and extending to the necessity of overseas distribution for domestic films.

### **Film Distribution and Projection Networks**

Zheng's establishment of a robust network for film distribution and projection was crucial in achieving the goals of wartime propaganda and education. By deploying film projection teams, setting up metropolitan theaters, and organizing overseas presentations, he significantly expanded the reach of domestic films under challenging material conditions. This approach not only met immediate wartime needs but also laid the foundation for a sophisticated distribution network that later influenced the China Motion Picture Corporation film system (Smith & Johnson, 2020)

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## **Integration of Drama and Public Performances**

Zheng's recognition of drama as a promotional tool further exemplifies his strategic acumen. By pairing drama with film for publicity and distribution purposes and organizing public service performances, he broadened the reach of film culture to diverse audiences. This integration of different forms of entertainment made film culture more accessible to various social strata (Baldwin & Link, 1998).

## **Publications and Scholarly Engagement**

Zheng's investment in publishing film magazines, books, and scholarly journals further supported the dissemination and popularization of film culture. Targeting a wide range of audience groups, from the general public to the elite and niche markets, these publications promoted film scholarship and cultivated a deeper understanding of film culture. Zheng aimed to create a virtuous cycle of high-level dissemination and engagement with film as an art form (Geisler, 1995).

In conclusion, Zheng Yongzhi's comprehensive approach to film distribution, projection, and cultural promotion underscores the importance of multifaceted strategies in the dissemination of film culture. His efforts demonstrate the need for tailored approaches that consider the diverse needs of different audience groups and the integration of various forms of media and public engagement to achieve broader cultural dissemination.

## **7. Suggestion**

### **Expanding the Examination of Film Distribution Network**

Future research should delve deeper into Zheng Yongzhi's establishment of robust film distribution and projection networks. Analyzing his strategies in deploying film projection teams, setting up metropolitan theaters, and organizing overseas presentations can provide insights into how these efforts met wartime propaganda needs and laid the groundwork for the modern China Motion Picture Corporation film system. A comparative study with other wartime film distribution efforts globally could further contextualize Zheng's impact.

### **Exploring the Integration of Drama and Film in Cultural Promotion**

Investigate Zheng Yongzhi's innovative use of drama and public performances to enhance film publicity and distribution. This approach not only broadened the reach of film culture but also made it accessible to diverse audiences. Research could focus on the effectiveness of these strategies in different regions and social strata, examining how the combination of various entertainment forms contributed to the popularization of film culture during that era.

### **Analyzing the Role of Publications in Film Culture Dissemination**

Examine Zheng Yongzhi's investment in publishing film magazines, books, and scholarly journals as a means of promoting film culture. This research could explore how these publications targeted different audience groups, from the general public to elite and niche markets, and how they contributed to a deeper understanding and appreciation of film as an

art form. Additionally, studying the long-term impact of these publications on film scholarship and cultural engagement would provide valuable insights.

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