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The Manchukuo Film Association and Its Afterlives: Animated Filmmaking in Wartime and Postwar Peking

ABSTRACT

Scholarship on the Manchukuo Film Association (Manying) has largely attended to documentaries, newsreels, and live-action films featuring Li Xianglan, neglecting animation. This article examines the animated filmmaking activities of the North China Film Company, a branch of Manying located in wartime Peking, by focusing on Chinese animator Liang Jin and a few Japanese animators such as Asada Isamu and Onozawa Wataru. With an animated filmmaking philosophy of territorialization and localization, Manying nonetheless created a de-territorialized world that enabled it to live multiple afterlives in socialist cinema, despite the institutional efforts to erase it from the history of Chinese cinema.

Films made by the Manchukuo Film Association (1937–1945), known as Manying in Chinese and Man'ei in Japanese, have long been considered lost. Japanese film scholars such as Yamaguchi Takeshi discovered some Manying films at the Russian State Film Archive in Moscow in 1989, brought prints back to Japan in 1994, converted them to VHS, and sent copies to

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China in 1995.¹ With the gradual rediscovery of Manying films, research interest increased. The topic of these films, though, was still under strict state surveillance in mainland China, which understandably fueled scholars' curiosity.² As Karen Thornber observes, "The present Manchukuo boom is at once driven and hampered by Chinese state censorship and restrictions in accessing Manchukuo materials."³ Most studies of Manying films focus on documentaries, newsreels, and live-action feature films revolving around Li Xianglan (Yamaguchi Yoshiko), a famous Japanese actress who could speak perfect Chinese. Few analyze the animated films produced by Manying.⁴

This article studies Manying's animated filmmaking activities in wartime Peking and tracks their legacies in postwar and early socialist cinema in China. Discussion centers on Liang Jin (?–1972), a cartoonist and animator based in Peking. One of the most mysterious Chinese animators I have encountered when I was working on Japanese animator Mochinaga Tadahito in 2008, Liang has existed as an elusive phantom, escaping the grasp of researchers. Records and materials about him are scanty. His birth year is unknown. His political positions were unstable during the wartime, postwar, and socialist years. His name does not appear in any scholarly and popular writings (in any language) about Chinese animation, except in a brief discussion about him and Manying in my book *Animated Encounters*.⁵ The only certain thing is that he was based in Peking during his most active years. Despite its political significance, Peking, like Changchun where Manying was located, was a place of marginal significance in Chinese animated filmmaking, which had been based in Shanghai since the 1920s.

Animated filmmaking in Manying and its network implies a geopolitical suspension—a rejection of fixating the films with their place of production. Such a detachment is about space and location, given that Manying, or the puppet state Manchukuo at large, occupies a curious nonplace in both Chinese and Japanese geography and historiography. It is also about a distance, no mat-

1. Michael Baskett, "Goodwill Hunting: Rediscovering and Remembering Manchukuo in Japanese 'Goodwill Films,'" in *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire*, ed. Mariko Asano Tamanai (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 120–149.
2. For existing studies of Manying and Manchukuo, see Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Michael Baskett, *The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008); Jie Li, "Phantasmagoric Manchukuo: Documentaries Produced by the South Manchurian Railway Company, 1932–1940," *positions: asia critique* 22, no. 2 (2014): 329–369; Norman Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo: Chinese Women Writers and the Japanese Occupation* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007); Karen Laura Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009); and Annika A. Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-garde Propaganda in Manchukuo* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013).
3. Karen Thornber, foreword to *Manchukuo Perspectives: Transnational Approaches to Literary Production*, ed. Annika A. Culver and Norman Smith (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019), xi.
4. The exceptions are Daisy Yan Du, "Mochinaga Tadahito and Animated Filmmaking in Early Socialist China," in *Animated Encounters: Transnational Movements of Chinese Animation, 1940s–1970s* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019), 68–113; and Jie Li, "A National Cinema for a Puppet State: The Manchurian Motion Picture Association," in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, ed. Carlos Rojas (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 79–97.
5. Du, "Mochinaga Tadahito," 86.

ter how limited, from wartime politics. Manying was not a slavish propaganda machine for imperial Japan, Michael Baskett notes, because it resisted Japanese interference and strove for independence and autonomy.⁶ Manying films, and animation in particular, created a fluid world that plays with and eschews—if not directly confronts and resists—politics, generating an animated resilience that enabled Manying to live multiple afterlives after World War II. Thus, Manying did not vanish after 1945; it instead haunted socialist cinema from within, no matter how hard mainstream histories tried to erase it and its post-war traces in socialist cinema.

COMMUNIST CONNECTIONS AND RESISTANCE CARTOONS IN PEKING BEFORE 1937

Little is known about Liang Jin's personal life, but evidence from my archival research shows that he was involved in Communist activities during his early years. In 1931, Zhang Henshui founded the North China Fine Arts Academy in Peking, and Liang was one of its graduates. In the summer of 1933, as a student at Peking Fine Arts Institute, Liang followed his teacher Wang Dandong in hosting street exhibitions and propagating anti-Japanese messages.⁷ He later became a member of the League of Left-Wing Writers (Zuolian, 1930–1935), a Communist underground organization with the famous writer Lu Xun as its spiritual leader.

Between July 3 and July 7, 1937, Liang, Sun Zhijun, Ye Qianyu, Hua Junwu, and other cartoonists launched the First Cartoon Exhibition at Zhongshan Park in Peking, aiming to expose Japanese imperialism. Many newspapers reported on the event, which presented more than 130 cartoons and was both influential and sensational. The magazine *Shibao banyue kan* (Real news semi-monthly) published a special issue featuring essays by Sun and Liu Lingcang as well as cartoons by Sun, Ye, Zhang Zhenshi, and others. The issue included a group photo of the organizers of the exhibition, Liang among them.⁸ Liang's cartoon *Changcheng richu* (The sunrise over the Great Wall) was shown at the exhibition. Several hours after the exhibition closed, a battle between the Japanese and Chinese armies—which marked the beginning of World War II in Asia and is known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident—took place. Liang, whose background was in the fine arts, became more and more interested in cartoons. Initially his work conveyed straightforward resistance themes, documenting his left-wing political views. After the war broke out, Liang wanted to leave Peking to join the Eighth Route Army in Pingxi but for unknown reasons did not.⁹

6. Baskett, *Attractive Empire*, 29.

7. *Yimei xian wenshi ziliao xuanji: diyi ji* 易门县文史资料选辑 第1辑 [Selected historical and literary materials of Yimen County: Volume one] (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Yimen Xian wei yuan hui wenshi ziliao bianji weiyuan hui, 1988), 141–150.

8. Liu Guangqun 刘光勋, “Qiqi shibian qianxi de Beiping manhuazhan” 七七事变前夕的北平漫画展 [The Peking cartoon exhibition before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident], *Lao manhua* 老漫画 [Old cartoons] 37, no. 6 (1999): 37–41.

9. Li Qiankuan 李前宽, *Renjian ziyou zhenqing zai: xin Zhongguo dianying jiaoyu kaituozhe Tian Feng zhuanlüe* 人间自有真情在 新中国电影教育开拓者田风传略 [Genuine emotions in the human world: A biography of Tian Feng, a pioneer of film education in socialist new China] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chu ban she, 2014), 7–10.

RESISTANCE IN COLLABORATION: WARTIME CARTOONS

Before 1937, Liang was portrayed as a patriot and nationalist in the scattered archival materials. After 1937, his image metamorphosed into a “collaborationist” serving the interests of Japan and its puppet government in China. For most Chinese cartoonists during this era, collaboration might simply have been a strategy to survive the treacherous times. Acquiescence and even silent resistance went hand in hand with collaboration. For a long time, cartoonists, filmmakers, artists, and writers who stayed put in occupied cities were discriminated against in mainstream histories in China. Zhou Zuoren, for instance, has been labeled a “fallen writer” (*luoshui zuojia*) because he stayed in occupied Peking and had connections with the Japanese.¹⁰

Recent scholarship, such as that by Poshek Fu, Michael Baskett, Edward Gunn, Annika Culver, Norman Smith, and Jeremy Taylor, tends to be more sympathetic, questioning the arbitrary binary between collaboration and resistance.¹¹ John Crespi goes a step further by arguing that the wartime cartoons had their own agency and desires that could go beyond their authors’ intentions and resist readers’ interpretations.¹²

Liang published many cartoons, sketches, and photos of his plastic arts in *Beijing manhua* (Beijing cartoons, July 1940–October 1943) and *Zhonghua manhua* (Chinese cartoons, January–June 1944), which were published by Wude Newspapers under the control of the Japanese.¹³ The majority of his works were distanced from the imperial and colonial agenda of the Japanese government and did not express explicit political messages. His plastic arts often portrayed daily life in an urban setting, such as city girls, night patrollers, fat men, and cartoonists. Some of his sketches portrayed the landscape, architecture, buildings, animals, lanes, courtyards, and scenery of wartime Peking; others depicted the ordinary life of Peking residents, street peddlers, bikers, actors, artists, and salarymen. Some sketches offered critiques of social problems, portraying the miserable lives of members of the underclass, such as scavengers, beggars, coolies, and starving babies. Looking at these sketches on their own, it is difficult to locate any explicit political message related to the war.

Liang’s cartoons were more exaggerated, critical, and satirical than his sketches and plastic arts. His style was heavily influenced by George Grosz, a German artist famous for his caricatural drawings and paintings of ordinary people in Berlin in the 1920s. Most of Liang’s cartoons featured ordinary people in Peking. In one, he criticized a fisherman, a henpecked middle-aged

10. Anonymous, “Why Zhou Zuoren Became a National Traitor?,” accessed June 7, 2023, <http://book.sbk8.com/lishigushi/luxun/150433.html>.

11. Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong*; Baskett, *Attractive Empire*; Edward M. Gunn, *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking, 1937–1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Culver and Smith, *Manchukuo Perspectives*; Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo*; Jeremy E. Taylor, *Iconographies of Occupation: Visual Cultures in Wang Jingwei’s China, 1939–1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2021); and Jeremy E. Taylor, “Cartoons and Collaboration in Wartime China: The Mobilization of Chinese Cartoonists under Japanese Occupation,” *Modern China* 41, no. 4 (2015): 406–435.

12. John A. Crespi, *Manhua Modernity: Chinese Culture and the Pictorial Turn* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 11.

13. Yunchao 云超, “Wude baoshe yu Riben de qinlue xuanchuan” 武德报社与日本的侵略宣传 [Wude Newspapers and the imperialist propaganda of Japan], in *Riwei tongzhi xia de Beijing* 日伪统治下的北平 [Peking under Japanese occupation] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1987), 190–193.

man who needs to support a family of five but is lazy and does not want to work; instead, every day he goes to Shichahai and Jishuitan to go fishing and have fun.¹⁴ Liang's cartoons did not directly reference the war, the country, the puppet government, the Japanese, or imperialist and colonialist ideologies.

MANYING AND THE NORTH CHINA FILM COMPANY

Manying was not an isolated studio located in Changchun but instead a hub of translocal and transnational flows of culture. In February 1938, it established the New People Film Association, its branch in Peking, which took control of film production, screening, censorship, distribution, importation, and exportation in north China.¹⁵ On December 21, 1939, the New People Film Association in turn established the North China Film Company (Huabei dianying gufen youxian gongsi), also in Peking, a national entity under the control of the Japanese, which was the largest film studio in north China (see Figure 1). Its mission, like Manying's, was to use Chinese people to produce films for the Chinese because Japanese films with explicit propaganda messages were not popular among the Chinese. On July 8, 1942, the company underwent restructuring. All Chinese department directors were replaced by Japanese directors and the number of staff was increased to 270. The company had two affiliated film magazines, *Beiping dianying bao* (Peking film pictorial, November 1940–May 1945) and *Huabei yinghua* (*The Hua Pei Movie*, November 1941–December 1944), which provided the primary resources for my research.¹⁶

Exchanges between the North China Film Company and Manying were frequent, given their kinship. When the North China Film Company was established, Manying dispatched many professional staff (especially technicians) to Peking, such as directors Liu Guoquan and Suzuki Shigekichi, scriptwriter Wang Ze, and cinematographers Ikeda Shotaro and Nie Jing.¹⁷

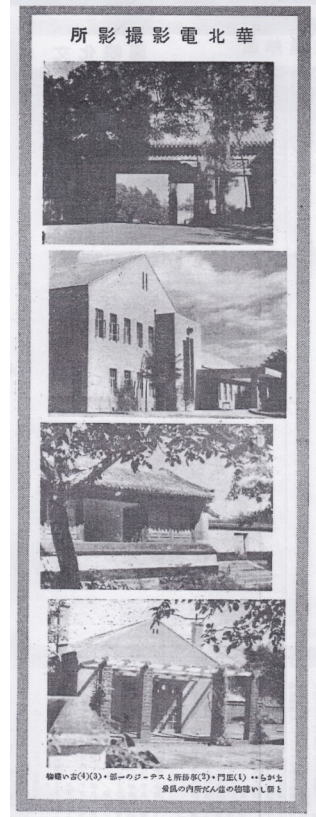


Figure 1. Buildings of the North China Film Company. Kitamura Saburō-shi 北村三郎氏 [Seize the hearts of 100 million people in north China], "Kahoku ichi oku no minshin o tsukaman" 華北一億の民心を握れ [Movie times], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 64 (November 1, 1942): 30–31. Courtesy of Yumani Shobo Publishers Inc.

14. See *Beijing manhua* 北京漫画 4, no. 8 (1943): 11.

15. Du, *Animated Encounters*, 86.

16. Lu Gang 鲁刚, *Beijing zhi: wenhua yishu juan, dianying zhi* 北京志 文化艺术卷 电影志 [Records of Beijing: Volume of Culture and arts: Film] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2000), 572–575; and Bai Andan 白安丹, *Beijing dianying lu* 北京电影录 [Records of Beijing films] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), 156.

17. Tanaka Masuzō 田中益三, *Efude to pen to ashita: Onozawa Wataru to nakamatachi no ninon/chūgoku* 絵筆とペンと明日--小野沢亘と仲間たちの日本/中国 [Paintbrush, pen,

Many Manying actors—such as Hou Zhi’ang, Wang Wentao, Cao Min, Sun Jing, and Suo Weimin—joined the North China Film Company. Some actors from the North China Film Company also joined Manying, such as Xu Cong, Bai Shan, Bai Di, Bai Mei, Zhao Yupei, and Li Xuena. As a rule, when the actors finished their training courses at the North China Film Company, they made a pilgrimage to Manying to further their learning, because Manying was considered the best film studio with the best equipment in East Asia at that time, boasting around 1,300 staff members. They called Manying the brother of the North China Film Company.¹⁸ In 1940, Manying built a club specially to host these guests from Peking and built another luxurious Lake West Resort for Amakasu Masahiko (head of Manying) for this purpose.¹⁹ When the newly graduated actors from the North China Film Company came to Manying for further study in 1944, Amakasu treated them with abundant hospitality and generosity, inviting them for a picnic outside and a party at his Lake West Resort and extending a souvenir gift to every guest.²⁰

Manying was especially interested in recruiting actors and actresses in Peking, motivated by the imperial tradition and political significance of Peking. Xu Cong, one of the most famous actors in Manying, was from Peking and studied at Peking Fine Arts Institute after his high school education.²¹ Because Liang also studied fine arts there at about the same time, it is likely that they knew each other. Another famous Manying actress from Peking was Li Ming. To attract her to work in Changchun, Manying agreed to all the terms of contract she proposed, such as her costumes being made in line with her requirements in a tailor’s shop in Peking that she favored. Li Ming and other actresses from Peking, such as Bai Mei, Bai Di, Zhao Yupei, and Li Xuena, were respectfully called “Miss Peking” in Manying.²²

Some Chinese filmmakers left Manying and played an important role in the film industry in wartime Peking. On July 7, 1938, Yu Zhenmin, a Manchurian screenwriter, founded a film studio, North China Movie Company (Huabei yingpian gongsi), the first Japanese film studio in north China. The studio made the film *Gengsheng* (Rebirth) four months later. Starring Bai Mei, *Gengsheng* was produced by former Manying directors Yu Mengkun

and tomorrow: Onozawa Wataru and friends’ Japan and China] (Tokyo: Serabi shobō せらび書房, 2011), 61; and *Changchun wenshi ziliao* 长春文史资料 [Literary and historical materials of Changchun] (Changchun: Changchun shi zhengxie wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuan hui), 11–12.

18. Zhang Yi 张奕, “Wo suo zhidao de Manying” 我所知道的满映 [All I know about Manying], in *Changchun wenshi ziliao* 长春文史资料 [Literary and historical materials of Changchun], vol. 1 (Changchun: Changchun shi zhengxie wenshi weiyuan hui, 1986), 11–20.

19. *Changchun wenshi ziliao*, 12.

20. *Changchun wenshi ziliao*, 26.

21. Zhenyu 箴雨, “Manying de hanjian da mingxing Xu Cong” 满映的汉奸大明星徐聪 [Manying big movie star Xu Cong: A traitor], accessed December 30, 2021, https://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4913c03a0100w773.html.

22. “*Dongya heping zhilu* yanyuan Li Ming nvshi canjia Manying” 《东亚和平之路》演员李明女士参加满映 [Li Ming, the actress for the film *The Path to Peace in East Asia*, joined Manying], originally published in *Xinmin bao* 新民报 [New people newspaper], August 13, 1938; and “Manying de Beijing xiaojie jieshao” 满映的北京小姐介绍 [An introduction to Beijing actresses in Manying], originally published in *Xinmin bao* 新民报 [New people newspaper], September 19, 1939. The two news items were collected in Sun Bo 孙柏 and Su Tao 苏涛, eds., *Kangzhan shiqi Beijing dianying huodong shiliao jibian* 抗战时期北平电影活动史料集编 [Anthology of film materials in wartime Peking] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2016), 35–36, 42–43.

and Gao Tianyou. When the film was screened in Tianjin, many nationalistic Chinese were angry about its pro-Japanese theme and destroyed the film prints. Because of this loss, the company was shut down in the spring of 1939. In February 1941, Yu Zhenmin established Yenching Film Company (Yanjing yingpian gongsi), also under the control of the Japanese, to produce opera films. Censorship and persecution tightened at Manying in 1943, leading to an exodus of Manying Chinese writers to north China. Among them were Jiang Yan and Shan Ding, two famous screenwriters, who moved to Peking and wrote film scripts for the North China Film Company.²³

Manying films were screened in Peking and those made by the North China Film Company were screened in Manchukuo. Neither group's films were as popular as films from Shanghai, however. To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of Manchukuo, the Manying film *Yingchunhua* (Winter jasmine, Sasaki Yasushi, 1942), starring Li Xianglan, was introduced to Peking and released at the Guanglu Theater on May 21, 1942.²⁴ Guanglu Theater premiered primarily American films but on March 4, 1938, began screening Japanese films as well, establishing itself as the first theater to do so in wartime Peking.²⁵ *Yubeiting* (The Imperial Stele Pavilion, 1942), a Peking Opera Film made by Yenching Film and the North China Film Company, was first screened at Manying and met with a positive reception. It was then, as arranged by Manying, released in Manchuria in November 1942.²⁶ According to the statistics of the turnout rate in the four major cities (Peking, Tianjin, Qingdao, and Jinan) of north China during the first half of 1942, the most popular ten films were all made in wartime Shanghai. *Tieshan gongzhu* (*Princess Iron Fan*, 1941), the first animated feature film not just in China but in all of Asia, which was made by the Wan Brothers (Wan Guchan and Wan Laiming) in semi-occupied Shanghai, was ranked second.²⁷ It was the Chinese version of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Although Manying and the North China Film Company seemed to lag behind the Japanese-controlled China Movie Company (Zhonghua dianying gufen youxian gongsi) in Shanghai, the three companies nonetheless had the same mission and were able to operate as a network. They even had the ambition of establishing a Continental Film League. If it were established, films

23. The information in this paragraph is from Zhang Quan 张泉, "Rishi dongfang zhimin zhuyi yinghua zhan de huanmie: yi Manzhouguo manxi lisan dianyingren wei zhongxin" 日式东方殖民主义映画战的幻灭: 以满洲国满系离散电影人为中心 [The failure of Japanese colonialist film war: On the diasporic Chinese filmmakers in Manying], in *Dongtai yingxiang de zuiji: zaoqi Taiwan yu Dongya dianyingshi* 动态影像的足迹: 早期台湾与东亚电影史 [Traces of moving images: Early film history of Taiwan and East Asia], ed. Li Daoming 李道明 (Taipei: Guoli Taibei yishu daxue, 2019), 513–535.
24. "Qingzhu Manzhou jianguo shi zhounian: Yingchunhua yingpian yun Jing; jinri qi zai Guanglu yingyuan yingyan" 庆祝满洲建国十周年 《迎春花》影片运京: 今日起在光陆影院映演 [Celebrating the 10th anniversary of Manchukuo: The film *Winter Jasmine* to Peking: Premier today at Guanglu Theater], originally published in *Xinmin bao* 新民报 [New people newspaper], May 21, 1942. This record was collected in Sun and Su, *Kangzhan shiqi*, 66–67.
25. Okuda Hisashi 奥田久司, "Kahoku den'ei shi" 华北电影史 [Film history of north China], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 [Movie times] 64 (November 1, 1942): 6–14.
26. "Yanying chupin Yubeiting jiang zai Manzhou shangying" 燕影出品《御碑亭》将在满洲上映 [Yenching film *The Imperial Stele Pavilion* will be released in Manchuria], originally published in *Xinmin bao* 新民报 [New people newspaper], October 15, 1942. This record was collected in Sun and Su, *Kangzhan shiqi*, 72–73.
27. Ikeda Ichirō 池田一郎, "Kahoku den'ei no genjō" 华北电影的现状 [The current situation of north China film], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 [Movie times] 64 (November 1, 1942).

produced by the league would not be treated as foreign but as Japanese films to enjoy the same benefits with the films produced in Japan.²⁸

The exchanges between Peking and Manchukuo also took place in cartoon drawings. In “Manhua zai Manzhou” (Cartoons in Manchukuo), published in *Beijing manhua* in 1942, the author Wei Xing introduces the cartoon world in Manchukuo, mentioning that Liang’s cartoons were plagiarized by cartoonists in Manchukuo, which suggests that cartoonists and their works in Peking were introduced to Manchukuo. The cultural exchanges between Peking and Manchukuo were thus multifaceted and multidirectional, taking place in artistic, cinematic, and literary fields.²⁹

ANIMATED FILMMAKING AND SCREENING IN WARTIME MANCHUKUO AND PEKING

The puppet government in Manchukuo attached much importance to animated cartoons, seeing them as an effective propaganda tool, especially for illiterate people. Animated films were classified as “culture film” (*bunka eiga*) at Manying. A Japanese animated short, *Tenkū ryokō* (Sky travel, Nishikura Kiyoharu, 1936), for instance, was labeled a culture film in 1943.³⁰ The film features a rabbit that drives a spaceship and flies to the moon, where he is welcomed by the queen there. While dancing with the queen on the moon, the rabbit sprains his ankle and falls back to the forest on earth.³¹ The film was screened in schools in Japan and met with polarized reactions from schoolteachers. Some praised it lavishly; others regarded it as a “big trouble” and banned it.³² I first watched it at the China Film Archive in the summer of 2014. It was collected with other Manying or Manying-related films released on VHS. Some of the other films included *Huangdi meng* (Dreaming to be emperor, 1947), by former Manying animator Mochinaga Tadahito, and *Yemingzhu zhuan* (The legend of the luminous pearl, unknown director, 1943).³³ *Tenkū ryokō* was made in Japan, but it is highly likely that it was screened by Manying in Manchukuo. In addition, Manying established mobile projection teams and screened Japanese animated films at elementary and secondary schools in Manchukuo, such as *Kotori to usagi* (Birds and rabbits, unknown director, ca. 1930s), *Tsuki no miya no ōjo-sama* (Princess of the moon palace,

28. Kawakita Nagamasa 川喜多長政, Mogi Kyūhei 茂木久平, and Kitamura Saburō 北村三郎, “Zadankai Tairiku eiga renmei no kessei wo meguru” 座談会 大陸映画連盟の結成をめぐる [Symposium: On formation of the Continental Film League], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 [Movie times] 64 (November 1, 1942).

29. Wei Xing 衛刑, “Manhua zai Manzhou” 漫画在滿洲 [Cartoons in Manchuria], *Beijing manhua* 3, no. 6 (1942): 7.

30. “Shin eiga mētoru sū” 新映画メートル数 [New films’ metric length], “Bunka eiga (monbushō nintei)” 文化映画 (文部省認定) [Culture film], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 [Movie times], no. 19 (November 1, 1943): 32, 34.

31. “Tenkū ryokō” 天空旅行 [*Sky Travel*], *Eiga kyōiku* 映画教育 [Film education], no. 104 (October 1936): 44.

32. Sano Akiko 佐野明子, “1928–45 nen ni okeru animēshon no gensetsu chōsa oyobi bunseki” 1928–45年におけるアニメーションの言説調査および分析 [Survey and analysis of discourses on animation in the years 1928–45], in *Zaidan hōjin Tokuma kinen animēshon bunka zaidan nenpō 2005–2006 bessatsu* 財団法人徳間記念アニメーション文化財団年報 2005–2006 別冊 [The Tokuma Memorial Cultural Foundation for Animation Annual report 2005–2006, supplementary volume] (Mitaka: Tokuma Memorial Cultural Foundation for Animation, 2006), 10–101, 28 (quotation).

33. For the two Manying films, see Du, *Animated Encounters*, 83.

Yasuji Murata, 1934), *Mābō no Tōkyō orinpikku taikai* (Ma-bo's Tokyo Olympic Games, unknown director, 1936), and *Sora no Momotarō* (Momotarō's sky adventure, unknown director, 1931).³⁴ A Japanese animated short, *Saru kani gassen* (Monkey and the crabs, unknown director, 1927), and a Betty Boop film popular in Japan in 1936 and 1937, *A Song a Day* (*Dōbutsu byōin*, unknown director, 1936), were also screened by Manying.³⁵

In February 1939, the Japanese established the Revitalizing Asia Film Studio (Xingya yingpian zhizuosuo) and made animated cartoons for propaganda and pacification until the studio was disbanded that December.³⁶ The studio hired five Japanese animators, including Suzuki Hiromasa as the animator, Ishii Tadaaki as the screenwriter, and Shitakura Yaichirō as the cameraman. The Chinese actor Yu Mengkun was the actor for animation, probably for rotoscoping. They produced four animated shorts: *Chuntian de Beijing* (Peking in spring), *Dongya de liming* (The dawn in East Asia), *Kepa de Huliela* (The terrible cholera), and *Emo de siyu* (The demons' whispers).³⁷

Around that time in north China, the Japanese screened *Haizi de leyuan* (The children's paradise, Shochiku, unknown release year), the first Japanese film made out of pre-recorded Chinese soundtracks and slides. In six days, 923 Chinese filmgoers had seen the film, breaking the record for Japanese films released in Japanese theaters in north China.³⁸ In September of 1939, the New People Film Association hosted an outdoor film exhibition, introduced by a government official, of newsreel documentaries, Japanese scenic films, and animated cartoons.³⁹

In March 1940, Disney's first animated feature film *Snow White* was released in Peking and became an immediate hit. When Dong Yi, a university student, brought his brothers and sisters to Central Theater (Zhongyang yingyuan) at 1 p.m. on March 17, for example, the tickets were sold out (the siblings ended up watching the night screening).⁴⁰ In 1942, *Tieshan gongzhu* was introduced to the readers of *Beijing manhua*. Stills from this first Asian animated feature film were published together with a commentary in which the author Shen Mo maintains that animated cartoons could be an effective medium for children's education.⁴¹ *Tieshan gongzhu* was released in wartime Peking at Ruike Theater in

34. Kobayashi Seisaku 小林盛策, "Manshū yori ippitsu keijō—Manshū gakkō eiga no dōkō" 满洲より一筆啓上—满洲学校映画の動向 [A short note from Manchukuo—Trends in Manchukuo school films], *Eiga kyōiku* 映画教育 [Film education] no. 141 (November 1939): 34–35; "Tairiku eiga ran" 大陸映画欄 [Continental film], *Bunka eiga* 文化映画 [Culture film] 2, no. 8 (August 1939); and "Tairiku eiga ran" 大陸映画欄 [Continental film], *Bunka eiga* 文化映画 [Culture film] 3, no. 2 (February 1940).
35. Hu Chang 胡昶 and Gu Quan 古泉, *Manying: Guoce dianying mianmian guan* 满映 国策电影面面观 [Manying: Aspects of national policy film] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 73.
36. Tian Jingqing 田静清, *Beijing dianyingye shiji* 北京电影业史迹 [History of Beijing film industry] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1999), 91.
37. Okuda Hisashi 奥田久司, "Kahoku den'ei shi" 華北電影史 [History of north China film], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 [Movie times] 64 (November 1, 1942).
38. Asai Shōzaburō 浅井昭三郎, "Chūgoku jin to nihon eiga" 中國人と日本映画 [Chinese people and Japanese cinema], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 [Movie times] 64 (November 1, 1942).
39. Zhou Anhua 周安华, *Yingshi wenhua 4* 影视文化 4 [Film culture] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2011), 69.
40. Dong Yi 董毅, *Beiping riji* 北平日记 [Peking diary] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2015), 523.
41. Shen Mo 沈默, "Jieshao Zhongguo katong shengpian Tieshan Gongzhu" 介绍中国卡通声片铁扇公主 [Introduction to Chinese animated sound film *Princess Iron Fan*], *Beijing manhua* 3, no. 4 (1942).

late May of 1942.⁴² On April 4, 1942, the Anti-Communism Committee in north China made six anti-communism animated slides and cartoons and sent them to theaters in Peking for screening, including Xinxin, Ruike, and Daguanlou theaters.⁴³ These scattered animated filmmaking and screening activities provided a breeding ground for the North China Film Company to develop its own animation industry, an ambitious goal thwarted by Japan's surrender in 1945.

ANIMATED FILMMAKING AT THE NORTH CHINA FILM COMPANY

Like Manying, the North China Film Company tried to develop its animation department. In 1941, it experimented with *Da duhui* (The metropolis), a shadow play film. In 1942, it produced a second shadow play film, *Kuaile de pengyou* (Happy friends; see Figure 2). To create it, the artists thinned the skins of donkeys or horses to paper-like sheets, colored them, used them to make puppets, and recorded the puppets' performances and movements using a live-action camera. The puppet performance in *Kuaile de pengyou* was conducted by Deshun Shadow Play Club (Deshun yingxi she), which consisted of a father and his six children in Peking. The director was Yoshimura Misao, and the cameraman was Hara Yoshikatsu. Commissioned by the Intelligence Bureau of north China with the aim of propagating counter-espionage messages, the film tells the story of two rickshaw drivers who discover a spy and thwart her scheme. The puppets could move their hands and legs but not their heads; the puppet of Monkey King, however, could move his eyes and mouth. The film is interlaced with wartime scenes of the Naval Battle of Malaya, portraying the power of the Japanese air force and the sinking of the British battleship *Prince of Wales*.⁴⁴ The two films are not stop motion animation but did demonstrate the company's interest in experimenting with animation and related art forms, which paved

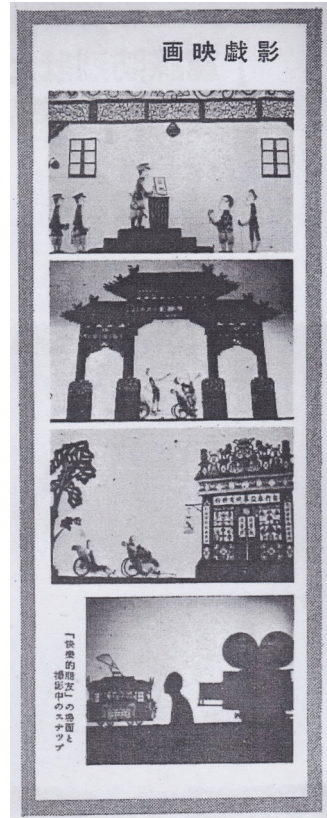


Figure 2. Scenes from *Kuaile de pengyou* (Happy friends, 1942). Kitamura Saburō-shi 北村三郎氏, “Kahoku ichi oku no minshin o tsukaman” 華北一億の民心を掴まへ, *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 64 (November 1, 1942): 30–31. Courtesy of Yumani Shobo Publishers Inc.

42. Huang Wei 黄伟, “Lunxian shiqi Huabei dianying gongsi zai Beiping de dianying huodong yanjiu” 沦陷时期华北电影公司在北平的电影活动研究 [Study on the activities of the North China Film Company under Japanese occupation], *Beijing dianying xueyuan xuebao* 北京电影学院学报 [Journal of Beijing Film Academy], no. 10 (2020): 53–65, 61.

43. Zhou, *Yingshi wenhua* 4.

44. Suzuki Jusanrō 铃木重三郎, “Enkyō jūya” 燕京十夜 [Ten nights in Peking], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 [Movie times] 64 (November 1, 1942).

the way for the rise of stop motion puppet animation in China in the late 1940s and in Japan in the 1950s.

No written records survive about why, how, and when Liang joined the North China Film Company, but it was likely after the decline of cartoon culture in Peking in 1943. Around that time, in response to tightened censorship and controls under Japanese occupation, many members of the Beijing Cartoon Association stopped their artistic work, changed career paths, or left Peking. In October 1943, *Beijing manhua*, a magazine affiliated with the association, suspended its publication, and the association was gradually dissolved due to poor management and the lack of enthusiasm among the Chinese. As a result, few professional cartoonists were drawing cartoons in Peking by 1944.⁴⁵

The memoirs of Onozawa Wataru, a Japanese leftist cartoonist who joined the proletarian arts movement in Japan in the 1920s and 1930s, give a clue as to when Liang joined the North China Film Company. Onozawa went to Peking in the winter of 1939, started work at *Beijing manhua*, and became a close friend of Liang. In 1943, worried that he would be drafted into the Japanese army if he continued to work freelance, he joined the North China Film Company to work on art design and met Liang there.⁴⁶ It would seem, then, that Liang joined the North China Film Company before Onozawa.

Manying had always been active in making animated films in Changchun because, as I have written elsewhere, “animation was not a minor or lightweight art form, but instead a crucial product of—and also a defining agent—in empire building and the historical and artistic development of Manchukuo.”⁴⁷ A source from 1940 documents that Manying in Changchun had done tremendous research in animated filmmaking and established an Animated Film (*manga eiga*) Research Committee within its production department, enabling it to launch full-swing animation production. The committee’s guiding philosophy was to make animated films with distinct local Manchurian flavors.⁴⁸ The Manying films made in Changchun, such as *Mai-you* (Purchasing oil, unknown director, 1940) and the puppet film *Yemingzhu zhuan*, all exhibit a distinct local character of northeast China.⁴⁹ The emphasis on localness was also evident in Liang’s cel-animated short *Fengzheng* (The kite, 1944), which is characterized by a striking Peking flair. The localness of *Fengzheng* did resonate with Manying’s animated filmmaking philosophy.

On July 8, 1942, when the North China Film Company was restructured to become more Japanized, Asada Isamu became the head of its special effects department.⁵⁰ He worked in Manying in Changchun and published an essay

45. Han Mengli 韩梦利, “Beiping lunxian shiqi wei manhua shetuan fazhan shimo” 北平沦陷时期伪漫画社团发展始末 [On the cartoon associations in Peking under Japanese occupation] (MA thesis, Zhejiang Normal University, 2018), 13.

46. Onozawa Wataru 小野沢亘, “Wo zai Huabei dianyingdui de rizi” 我在华北电影队的日子 [My life at the North China Film Team], *Dianying chuanguo* 电影创作 [Film creation], no. 5 (1996): 68–73.

47. Du, *Animated Encounters*, 80.

48. “Tairiku eiga ran” 大陆映画欄 [Continental film], *Bunka eiga* 文化映画 [Culture film] 3, no. 2 (February 1940): 29.

49. For detailed analyses of these Manying animations, see Du, *Animated Encounters*, 80–83.

50. “Huabei dianying gongsi gebu zhiyuan biangeng” 华北电影公司各部职员变更 [Changes of staff job positions in all departments of North China Film Company], originally

about how animated films were made there, which he published in 1939 in Manying's affiliated magazine *Manzhou dianying* (Manchuria film).⁵¹ In fact, before he joined Manying in 1939, Asada was a famous amateur animator in prewar Japan. Beginning in 1932, he taught himself to make animated shorts, and his animation skills even exceeded the professionals. He has been forgotten in history because his animated shorts are no longer extant.⁵² Asada's Manying connection may have also played a role in his erasure from the history of Japanese animation. Given his animation background, it was highly likely that Asada and his department (animation was often used as special effects in early live-action cinema) provided Liang with technological and infrastructural support.

In fact, a wartime Japanese report proves that Asada did begin to make an animated film titled *Fengzheng* at the North China Film Company in 1943, and it did not mention Liang's name at all.⁵³ The wartime Japanese record presented Asada as the sole creator of *Fengzheng*, while the film credits and the Chinese reports at that time only mentioned Liang and other Chinese names, erasing Asada in all Chinese contexts to make the film localized and look more Chinese: "*Fengzheng*, the first animated film made by the North China Film Company, was drawn by renowned painters Liang Jin, Wang Lan, He Shaojun, Yu Xiyuan, and others. Nan Zhihe was the cinematographer. It took them almost half a year to finish the film. The film was completed recently. It is around one thousand feet long. The film will be distributed to theaters everywhere for public release soon. It is said that they will make a new animated film soon, with Wang Lan as the scriptwriter. They will start the drawing next month."⁵⁴ Another Chinese report was more succinct: "After Liang Jin completed the animated film *Fengzheng*, there were high expectations of him in the society. It is said that Liang Jin is currently preparing a new animated film."⁵⁵ The new film would be titled *Lü qinshi* (The green luthier). According to another report, from 1945, "*Lü qinshi*, the second animated cartoon of the North China Film Company, was adapted from a fairytale titled *The Grasshopper*."⁵⁶ Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any additional information about *Lü qinshi*. It may not have been completed, or it may have been completed but was later lost in the chaos when the war ended.

Liang's two teammates for animated filmmaking, He Shaojun and Wang Lan, were also cartoonists active in Peking at the time and published in *Beijing manhua*. It is possible that they joined the North China Film Company

published in *Xinmin bao* 新民报 [New people newspaper], July 10, 1942. This news was collected in Sun and Su, *Kangzhan shiqi*, 140–141.

51. Du, *Animated Encounters*, 77–80.

52. Nishimura Tomohiro 西村智弘, *Nihon no animēshon wa ikani shite seirisu shita no ka* 日本のアニメーションはいかにして成立 [How did the Japanese animation come to be?] (Tokyo: Shinwasha 森話社, 2018), 136–139.

53. "Kahoku eiga tsūshin" 華北映画通信 [News from North China Film Company], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 [Movie times] (March 1943).

54. "Manhua yingpian Fengzheng wancheng" 漫画影片风筝完成 [The completion of the animated cartoon film *The Kite*], *Zhonghua zhoubao* 中华周报 [China weekly news] 1, no. 8 (1944).

55. "Yingcheng huaxu" 影城花絮, *Zhonghua zhoubao* 中华周报 [China weekly news] 1, no. 8 (1944).

56. "Yingcheng huaxu" 影城花絮, *Zhonghua zhoubao* 中华周报 [China weekly news] 2, no. 4 (1944).

together after the dissolution of *Beijing manhua* in 1943. *Fengzheng* had different authors in Chinese and Japanese contexts. I speculate that Liang, He Shaojun, and Wang Lan designed the images and made the drawings, while Asada and his special effects department helped with animation technology and cinematography. *Fengzheng*, as well as *Lü qinshi*, was a product of both Chinese and Japanese animators. It was officially presented as a Chinese animated film in China because of the localization policy of Manying.

Liang's *Fengzheng* stood out in sharp contrast to the Wan Brothers' *Shu yu wa* (The mouse and the frog, cel, 1934), which was made in Shanghai. The most notable difference between the two films is that *Shu yu wa* was heavily influenced by American animation, whereas Liang's *Fengzheng* looks very Chinese. The influence of Shanghai, the place of production for *Shu yu wa*, is difficult to detect in the film. By contrast, it is easy to see traces of Peking in *Fengzheng*. This emphasis on "localness" echoes the animated filmmaking practice of Manying. Existing histories of Chinese animation often locate the rise of the National Style in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but a distinct Chinese animation style already existed in wartime Peking, a Chineseness that, ironically, was made possible by the Japanese.

The title sequence of *Fengzheng* features a few still paper cutouts for window decoration (*chuanghua*), which are popular in north China. The film opens with a typical old Peking courtyard house on a windy day. The spring couplets on the doors suggest that it is the time of the Spring Festival. A dragon appears in the sky and brings snow to the human world, which then becomes quiet and desolate, a theme accentuated by slow and moody background music. The dragon is the personification of winter, inanimation, destruction, and death. A kite-flying boy, wearing a cotton gown, hat, and shoes, jumps into the scene with merriness and breaks the deadly quiet—a harbinger of life, indeed. The boy's costume is typical of the clothes worn by children in Peking at that time. A baby god, riding a legendary beast Kirin in the sky, slides down the string of the kite and possesses the boy. The dragon appears again and tries to stop the kite flying. In desperation, the kite undergoes metamorphosis and fights against the dragon with its newly grown hands. It then shapeshifts into a spinning sharp gearwheel and cuts the dragon into pieces. More children come out to watch the kite flying, further breaking the quiet of the winter. The goddess of spring, whose image is based on traditional Chinese paintings of beautiful women, comes and dances with the kite. She makes a garland for it as a token of recognition and scatters flowers in the sky, bringing spring to the human world. The film ends with beautiful Peking spring scenes, such as one image of Beihai Park. The use of traditional Chinese instrument music further accentuates the "Chineseness" of this film.

Existing histories of Chinese animation have long focused on the city of Shanghai and ignored other places of production, such as Beijing, Chongqing, and Canton areas. When the Wan Brothers in Shanghai were trying to nationalize Chinese animation by making *Tieshan gongzhu*, Liang, Asada, and their colleagues in Peking made a "Chinese" animation. The Wan Brothers tried to convey a secret anti-Japanese message by allegorizing the Bull Demon King as a symbol of Japan; Liang's *Fengzheng* was more ambiguous and elusive, rejecting any ideological capture. The dragon can be easily regarded as a symbol of

China, given the imperial palaces and parks that appeared in the film, but the dragon is portrayed as a villain. Did Liang collude with the Japanese by suggesting that China would be defeated by Japan? Is the kite then a symbol of Japan? But the kite is a typical Chinese-style kite popular in Peking at that time, and its owner is a Chinese boy. Does it mean that the Chinese people collaborate with the Japanese and defeat the Chinese dragon, who is a stand-in for the Chinese emperor and his government? Or does the dragon represent Japan and all the others—the kite, the boy, the god boy, Kirin, and the goddess—represent China, with the death of the dragon symbolizing the triumph of the Chinese? Like Liang's wartime cartoons, *Fengzheng* is ideologically elusive, difficult to pin down and territorialize. The film seems to be engaging in what Thomas Lamarre calls "wartime speciesism"—namely, the use of animal images to refer to a country to deliver a message of racism during the war—but the meaning behind that speciesism eludes straightforward interpretation.⁵⁷

Rather than dwelling on the animal images in *Fengzheng* and their allegorical meanings, I submit that the sheer animated "plasmaticness" of the film can function as a playful protest against political oppression and control. Here I draw on the Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's concept of plasmaticness, which refers to the elasticity and fluidity of the outlines of animated cartoon characters, whose bodies can be inflated, deflated, stretched, deformed, mutated, distorted, and transformed with ease—"a rejection of once-and-for-ever allotted form, freedom from ossification, the ability to dynamically assume any form."⁵⁸ It also refers to the protean personalities of animated characters, in that a villain can be turned into a hero and vice versa.⁵⁹ I have expanded Eisenstein's concept of plasmaticness to refer to the ideological fluidity of animation, in its capacity to adapt to new political environments. Writing elsewhere, I describe this as animation's propensity for "squeezing into and out of any political framework, as does a malleable animation character."⁶⁰ Plasmaticness can be regarded as a protest against reified forms, categories, norms, standards, and fetters. Eisenstein celebrated the dissident and revolutionary potentials of plasmaticness as a welcome flight away from the mechanization and standardization of society: "In a country and social order with such a mercilessly standardized and mechanically measured existence, which is difficult to call life, the sight of such 'omnipotence' (that is, the ability to become 'whatever you wish'), cannot but hold a sharp degree of attractiveness."⁶¹

Plasmaticness and metamorphosis provide a much-needed escape and chart a new path for freedom and an alternative existence. This escape is most welcome by the audience precisely at the moments of greatest standardization and oppression in a society because plasmaticness transcends reified categories and confinements. With regard to the liberatory and even revolutionary potentials of plasmaticness, Eisenstein provides a few examples, such as "the United States as it is for the petrified canons of world-outlook, art and philosophy of eighteenth century Japan" and "the starch-bound and tuxedoed habitué

57. Thomas Lamarre, "Speciesism: Part I: Translating Races into Animals in Wartime Animation," *Mechademia* 3 (2009): 75–95.

58. Sergei Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*, ed. Jay Leyda (London: Methuen, 1988), 21.

59. Eisenstein, 21–22.

60. Du, *Animated Encounters*, 22.

61. Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*, 21.

of nightclubs who feasts his eyes upon the boneless elastic figures, who know nothing of the rigid spine and stiff corset of high society.”⁶² I would like to add wartime China to Eisenstein’s list. Interestingly, Eisenstein wrote about plasmaticness during his own psychological and geopolitical suspension, or a state of uncertainties, when he was evacuated to Alma-Ata due to the impending German invasion of the Soviet Union. The concept of plasmaticness may be regarded as Eisenstein’s unconscious response and even resistance to the war.⁶³

In *Fengzheng*, the kite is plasmatic and undergoes metamorphosis. This metamorphosis takes place at the most critical and oppressive moment in the film’s story, when the dragon tries to capture and destroy the kite. In desperation, the kite metamorphoses into a sharp, spinning gearwheel and grinds the dragon into pieces with a sudden outpouring of energy (see Figure 3). This type of visual spectacle of metamorphosis can only be seen in animation at that time, as live-action film could not portray such a spectacle. It may explain

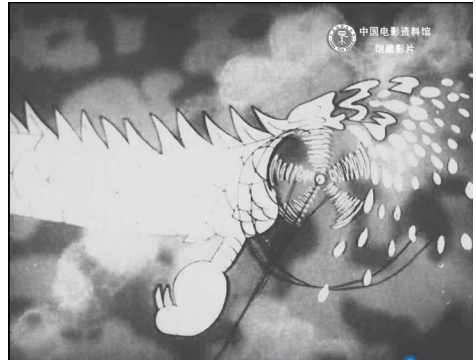


Figure 3. The kite metamorphoses into a sharp, spinning gearwheel and grinds the dragon into pieces in *Fengzheng* (The kite, 1944). Courtesy of the China Film Archive.

why *Fengzheng* was popular in wartime Peking and *Tieshan gongzhu* in wartime Shanghai, paralleling people’s excitement about plasmatic early Disney shorts in Tayloristic America, as Eisenstein has noted.⁶⁴ The more standardized and oppressive the times, the more imperative and welcome the plasmaticness and metamorphosis because they have the potentials to shatter existing forms, constraints, categories, and political controls, providing a channel for freedom, liberation, and alternative existence. The kite is emblematic of animation’s power in troublesome times. Suspended in the air, the celestial kite is the center of a plasmatic and extraterritorial world that is distanced if not divorced from wartime China and Japan.

MOBILE ANIMATED FILMMAKING WITH THE COMMUNIST NORTH CHINA FILM TEAM

Asada Isamu may have returned to Japan shortly before the war ended on August 15, 1945. A colleague of Asada published an essay in 1998, in which he recollected that Asada heard and celebrated the Japanese emperor Hirohito’s surrender broadcast (in August 1945) on the rooftop of the Yahata/Yawata Iron Works in Japan.⁶⁵ When the war ended, the Eighth Route Army

62. Eisenstein, 21.

63. For the relationship between plasmaticness and Stalinist aesthetics, see Philip Rosen, “Eisenstein’s Marxism, Marxism’s Eisenstein: Utopian Spectatorship and Aesthetic Collectivity,” *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 7, no. 4 (April 2017): 480–487.

64. Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*, 21.

65. Saki Ryūzō 佐木隆三, “Mou hitotsu no seishun 15” もう一つの青春15 [Another youth part 15], *Tosho* 図書 [Books] (June 1998): 47.

adopted a policy of protecting and welcoming Japanese people from diverse backgrounds who were willing to support the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and therefore opened a special job channel for them. With the army's help, Onozawa Wataru, Liang Jin, Sakai Tokuzō, Mori Shigeru, and others left Peking and arrived at Gaoyakou, a village meeting point under the control of the Eighth Route Army, where they stayed for a couple weeks before moving to Zhangjiakou in November.⁶⁶

In early 1946, the Communist leader and filmmaker Wang Yang, under the instruction of Nie Rongzhen (the party secretary of the Central Bureau in Shanxi, Chahar, and Hebei), left Zhangjiakou with thirty colleagues for the Northeast Film Company to secure infrastructural, technical, and personnel support to establish a filmmaking team in north China. The Northeast Film Company, the first film company controlled by the CCP, was transformed from Manying by the CCP after the war.⁶⁷ Wang successfully secured the equipment for a feature filmmaking team and a newsreel documentary filmmaking team, which constituted one-third of the equipment at the Northeast Film Company. He also mobilized three Japanese and eight Chinese technicians to relocate to north China. The three Japanese technicians were sound tuner Mitsumoto Toyo (Gao Min), recording engineer Kiyoshima Takehiko (Qin Yan), and Sasaki Yūkichi (Zuo Shan).⁶⁸ They all took Chinese names to make the films they made look purely “Chinese.”

In June 1946, Wang led the team and the newly acquired equipment back to Zhangjiakou. They arrived in August, but Zhangjiakou had become a battlefield for the Nationalist Party (KMT). On September 15, Wang and his team retreated to Zhanggezhuang in the Laiyuan County of the Hei-bei Province. On October 15, they established the Political Department of Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei Military District Film Team there. The team consisted of twenty-seven people, with Wang as its head, Hu Xu as vice head, and Su Heqing, who had returned from the Soviet Union in 1945, as the only cameraman. In 1948, the team changed its name to the Political Department of North China Military District Film Team, known in short form as the North China Film Team (not to be confused with the North China Film Company).⁶⁹ The cameras, recorders, film stocks, film printers, film processing machines, lighting equipment, and other equipment, in addition to the technicians brought from Northeast Film (the former Manying), played a crucial role in laying the foundation for the socialist film industry in north China.

66. Onozawa Toshiko 小野澤俊子, “Chūgoku no hitobito no kokoro ni kizamareta ‘kōseki’: Ten’an mon sakuraue wo dezain shita gaka Onozawa Wataru” 中国の心と心の心に刻まれた「功績」天安門桜上をデザインした画家 小野澤亘 [Legacy carved into the hearts of Chinese people: The artist who designed the Tiananmen gate tower, Onozawa Wataru], official website of Nihon Chūgoku Yūkou Kyōkai 日本中国友好協会 [Sino-Japanese Friendship Association], March 13, 2010, accessed February 1, 2022, <https://www.jcfa-net.gr.jp/shinbun/2010/100315.html>; and Tanaka, *Efude to pen*, 64–66.

67. See Du, *Animated Encounters*, 69–75.

68. Fang Wen 方文 and Ma Yuyin 马玉印, “Zai zhanzheng zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui” 在战争中成长的华北电影队 [The North China Film Team that thrived during the war], in *Zhanhuo zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui* 战火中成长的华北电影队 [The North China Film Team that thrived during the war], eds. Wang Yang 汪洋 and Ma Yuyin 马玉印 (Beijing: Bian zhe zi kan, 1997), 45–59, 47.

69. *Zhongguo dianying nianjian* 中国电影年鉴 [Year book of Chinese cinema] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1997), 294.

Histories of socialist cinema often begin with 1949, but socialist filmmaking had started long before the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. In March 1938, the Shaanxi Gansu Ningxia Border Area Anti-Japanese Film Association was established, indicating the importance of film for the Communist cause. In August 1938, Yuan Muzhi and Wu Yinxian, with a camera donated by Dutch documentarian Joris Ivens and filmmaking equipment bought in Hong Kong, went to Yan'an and founded the Yan'an Film Team, the first filmmaking team in Communist-controlled areas. It made a few documentaries about the Eighth Route Army and established mobile film projection groups, screening both its homemade documentaries and Soviet films.⁷⁰ In October 1947, the Northwestern Film Engineering Team was established in Caijiaya in the Xing County of the Shanxi Province. Renowned filmmakers such as Zhong Jingzhi, Ling Zifeng, Cheng Mo, and others worked there. This team sent its staff to the Northeast Film Studio (known as the Northeast Film Company before October 1, 1946) for technical training. The Northwestern Film Engineering Team also invited the Japanese technicians at the North China Film Team (former Manying technicians) to come to teach its staff filmmaking techniques and technologies.⁷¹ The three mobile filmmaking teams—Yan'an, Northwestern, and North China—were all affiliated with the Communist military forces, making and projecting films at Communist bases.⁷² They were the precursors of the socialist film studios that mushroomed in post-1949 China.

During the civil war in the late 1940s, the North China Film Team traveled with the Communist army. Given the unstable situation, the team primarily projected films and made documentaries. It first established a film projection group and later a newsreel documentary filmmaking group, whose job was to follow the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and film documentaries about the battles. To better facilitate mobile filmmaking, the North China Film Team used a wagon pulled by two mules to transport equipment (see Figure 4), gaining the group the nickname “Film Company on a Mule Wagon.” As the Communist Party gradually took the upper hand in the war,



Figure 4. North China Film Team, 1948. Fang Fang 方方, *Zhongguo jilupian fazhanshi* 中国纪录片发展史 [History of Chinese documentary film] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2004), 159. Courtesy of Houlang publishers.

70. For the role of Yan'an in socialist cinema, see Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 25–28.
71. Zhong Jingzhi 钟敬之, “Xibei dianying gongxue dui zai xingjun zhong” 西北电影工学校在行军中 [The Northwestern Film Engineering Team is marching on], *Dangdai dianying* 当代电影 [Contemporary cinema], no. 3 (1984): 132–141; and Zhu Die 竹蝶, “Wojun zaoqi de dianying huodong” 我军早期的电影活动 [The early filmmaking activities of our army], *Dianying pingjie* 电影评介 [Film review], no. 8 (1981): 27.
72. The Northeast Film Studio had two mobile film projection teams in the beginning and seventeen in September 1948. Zhang Huijun 张会军, *Zhongguo dianying zhuanyshe shi yanjiu: dianying zhipian faxing fangying juan* 中国电影专业史研究 电影制片 发行 放映卷 [History of Chinese cinema: Volume of production, distribution, and screening] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2006), 84.

the North China Film Team expanded its crew; at its peak, one hundred people worked as part of the film team.⁷³ Later, in November 1947, after the CCP took over Shijiazhuang, it confiscated filmmaking equipment from the KMT and expanded its team to include five mobile projection groups, including a female mobile projection group, the first in the history of Chinese cinema.⁷⁴ It primarily screened Soviet films and the company's own documentaries to PLA soldiers, peasants, and Communist officials in north China.

Tina Mai Chen, Chenshu Zhou, and Jie Li have analyzed the mobile film projection teams in socialist China after 1949, but such activities also existed well before 1949.⁷⁵ As the example of the North China Film Team shows, even filmmaking—not just film projection—could be mobile and nomadic prior to 1949, reinforcing the ties between mobile filmmaking and military forces. In January 1938, the Japanese army in north China established its first mobile projection team in Tianjin to screen films for its own soldiers as well as the Chinese. The number of filmmaking teams associated with the Japanese army in north China increased to fifteen in 1939, thirty in 1941, and fifty in 1942. Other Japanese organizations—such as the North China Film Company, the New People Association, North China Transportation, and North China Government Affairs Committee—also established mobile projection teams, but the scale of these film projection teams was smaller than the teams affiliated with the Japanese army. In 1942, for instance, the North China Film Company had only three mobile projection teams.⁷⁶

In March 1947, when the North China Film Team temporarily set up operations at a deserted peasants' yard in Zhongyang Village in Anguo County, Liang Jin, Onozawa Wataru, and Zhang Xin (Liang Jin's wife) in the team and began to make animated cartoons.⁷⁷ They transformed a deserted mill near the east wall into a "fine arts studio," the function of which was to serve as a space for making animated cartoons, maps, and credits.⁷⁸ On June 30, they made a sound newsreel documentary titled *Ziwei zhanzheng xinwen diyi hao* (News of the self-defense war: Number 1), which included four parts: *Gangtie diyi ying shouji-ang shi* (The flag-giving ceremony of the Iron First Battalion), *Jiefang Dingxian* (The liberation of Ding County), *Zhengding dajie* (The victory of Zhengding),

73. *Zhongguo dianying nianjian*, 294.

74. Fang Wen 方文 and Ma Yuyin 马玉印, "Zai Zhanzheng zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui" 在战争中成长的华北电影队 [The North China Film Team that thrived during the war], *Dangdai dianying* 当代电影 [Contemporary cinema], no. 6 (1995): 106–111, 108; and Ma Yuyin 马玉印, "Fangying zhanxian yizhi hua: yi woguo diyige nüzi fangying zu" 放映战线一枝花: 忆我国第一个女子放映组 [A flower in the battlefield of film screening: On the first women's mobile film projection team in China], in Wang and Ma, *Zhanhua zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui*.

75. Tina Mai Chen, "Propagating the Propaganda Film: The Meaning of Film in Chinese Communist Party Writings, 1949–1965," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 15, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 154–193; Chenshu Zhou, "The Versatile Film Projectionist: How to Show Films and Serve the People in the 17 Years Period, 1949–1966," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 10, no. 3 (2016): 228–246; and Jie Li, "Cinematic Guerrillas in Mao's China," *Screen* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 207–229.

76. Murao Kaoru 村尾薫, "Kitashigun no junkai eisha tai," 北支軍の巡回映寫隊 [The mobile film projection teams of the army in north China], *Eiga junpō* 映画旬報 64 [Movie times] (November 1, 1942).

77. Fang and Ma, "Zai Zhanzheng zhong," *Dangdai dianying*, 108.

78. Wang Yang, "Zhuang zai yiliang dache shang de dianying zhipian chang" 装在一辆大车上的电影制片厂 [The film company in a wagon], *Dianying chuanguo* 电影创作 [Film creation], no. 5 (1996): 64–67.

and *Xiang shengli qianjin* (Marching toward final victory). Screened on July 1 as a tribute to celebrate the birthday of the CCP, it was the first film made by the North China Film Team. The directors were Wang Yang and Hu Xu. The cameraman was Su Heqing. Liang and Onozawa worked together as art designers. The sound recorder was the Japanese technician from Manying, Kiyoshima Takehiko (Qin Yan), and the sound tuner was Mitsumoto Toyo (Gao Min).⁷⁹

The part of the newsreel titled *Jiefang Dingxian* opens with two animated maps made by Liang and Onozawa. Because they had no animation filmmaking equipment at that time, they made use of the instruments and gadgets available. Liang used two glass panels (see Figure 5), one fixed in a wooden frame. Whenever he drew a stroke, the cameraman Su Heqing took a photograph. Because the film company had no electricity in Zhongyang Village, they used natural outdoor lighting. To avoid reflection, Su covered himself and the camera with a piece of black cloth and photographed the drawings frame by frame. Because it was summer and the temperatures were high, Su sweated a great deal. The two men spent two days from dawn to dusk producing an animated film fifty feet long.⁸⁰ During the recording process, to reduce the background noise, the filmmakers threw stones at the frogs croaking in a nearby pond, even capturing some of the frogs.⁸¹ All kinds of bricolage and improvised methods like this were used. Liang and Onozawa also designed the logo for the North China Film Team, which features a soldier, a peasant, and a worker (see Figure 6). For the best effect, Liang and Onozawa used filtered mud fines in the village to sculpt the images again and again.⁸²

Later, the studio recruited a woman assistant named Gong Lian, who eventually became the vice director of today's China Film Archive in Beijing in 1962. She likely joined Liang and Onozawa at the North China Film Team in



Figure 5. Liang Jin animating war maps. Public domain image, courtesy of Shebo Photography (<http://www.shebo.net>).

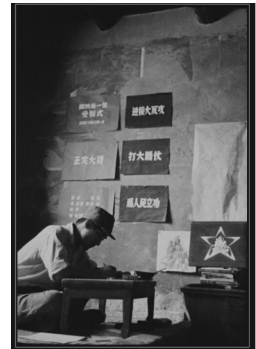


Figure 6. Onozawa Wataru working on the logo at the Fine Arts Studio of the North China Film Team. Public domain image, courtesy of Shebo Photography (<http://www.shebo.net>).

79. *Ziwei zhanzheng xinwen diyi hao* (News of the self-defense war: Number 1) was also recorded as *Huabei News: Number 1*.

80. Wang and Ma, *Zhanhuo zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui*, 67, 94–298.

81. Wu Yuzhang 吴玉章, *Xinghuo liaoyuan: di ba ji* 星火燎原 第8集 [A spark starts a prairie fire: Volume 8] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1997), 117.

82. Wang and Ma, *Zhanhuo zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui*, 55.

the fall of 1947.⁸³ At that time, Liang and Onozawa were making a propaganda film titled *Huozhuo junzhang Luo Lirong* (Capturing the KMT commander Luo Lirong alive, ca. 1948), an animated short that was based on the battle of Qingfengdian, which had occurred on October 21 of that year. This battle marked the decisive victory of the CCP in north China; on November 12, the CCP took over Shijiazhuang. Information about this animated short was recorded in detail in Gong's memoir. According to her, Wang Yang, head of the North China Film Team, was very supportive of the project. It would have been impossible to make a cel-animated film in Zhongyang Village, given the labor-intensive nature of cel-animated filmmaking and the lack of cels and other equipment in the countryside. The turning point came when the North China Film Team relocated to Shijiazhuang in the spring of 1948. They finally had electricity, and the studio was given a spacious room with abundant paper, cels, and paint, which had been confiscated by the CCP from the KMT.⁸⁴

Onozawa drew the images of the PLA for *Huozhuo junzhang Luo Lirong*. The soldiers' faces were modeled on Chinese folk mud sculptures of gods, with straight noses, square mouths, bright eyes brimming with radiating vigor, and raised eyebrows. In the film, when confronted, the soldiers, fierce and awe-inspiring, smash their enemies. Liang drew the image of Luo Lirong, who was represented as short, fat, and stupid, with a dispirited look in his eyes. Carrying a big parcel with guns, cannons, and bullets on his back, he curls up, gets on his hands and knees, and crawls to his final destination, only to be captured by PLA soldiers and to present his parcel as a tribute to strengthen the military power of the PLA. The animated short lasts for three minutes and includes more than 4,300 drawings. Liang and Onozawa drew images on paper first. Gong Lian's job was to copy their images to cels and do the inking and painting. Liang and Onozawa always gathered to discuss character design and movements. The three animators decorated the walls of the studio with original drawings and cels to demonstrate their progress and solicit suggestions from visitors. Working jointly, the three finished the film in three months.⁸⁵ The film might have been lost to the war, but records about it can be found in Gong's memoir.

After the war, Manying exerted its impact on socialist filmmaking in north and northeast China. Liang Jin and Onozawa Wataru worked for the North China Film Company, a branch of Manying. Mochinaga Tadahito was an animator at Manying in Changchun. After the war ended, they all worked for the CCP, made animated propaganda films, and helped establish the animation industry in early socialist China. *Huozhuo junzhang Luo Lirong* should be understood in relation to the animated propaganda films made by Mochinaga and his Japanese, Chinese, and Korean colleagues in northeast China: *Huangdi meng* (Dreaming to be emperor, puppet, 1947) and *Weng-*

83. Gong noted May 1948 as the date she joined the North China Film Team, but it should be the fall of 1947. Gong Lian 龚莲, "Nanwang de wangshi: ji zai Huabei dianying dui de yiduan shenghuo" 难忘的往事 记在华北电影队的一段生活 [Unforgettable memories: On my life at the North China Film Team], in Wang and Ma, *Zhanhuo zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui*, 142–147.

84. Kiyoshima Takehiko 清岛竹彦, "Zai Huabei dianying dui de riri yeye" 在华北电影队的日日夜夜 [Days and nights at the North China Film Team], in Wang and Ma, *Zhanhuo zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui*, 71–77, 75; and Gong, "Nanwang de wangshi," 143.

85. Gong, "Nanwang de wangshi," 143–144.

zhong zhuobie (Capturing the turtle in the jar, cel, 1948), which mocked and caricatured KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek. Communist animated filmmaking activities in postwar north and northeast China benefited from Manying's and its network's infrastructure, equipment, facilities, technicians, and personnel. Manying did not disappear after the war; instead, it merged into postwar Communist filmmaking activities and its staff ghost-animated the cinematic scenes of the socialist era.

According to Gong Lian, Liang Jin was an expert in animated filmmaking and had done tremendous research on Disney animation. To explore the techniques, he drew many cartoon animals in a small notebook. When the pages were flipped, cartoon animals seemed to move.⁸⁶ Without information about how, when, and where Liang mastered the techniques he did, I speculate that he received institutional and technological support from Asada Isamu and the special effects department at the North China Film Company. The role of Asada at the North China Film Company was like that of Mochinaga at the Northeast Film Studio: providing animation technology and training Chinese animators.

Wang Yang, the head of the North China Film Team, had begun his filmmaking career as an animator. He had wanted to make animated films since he was young. While working as an intern at the library of Ji'nan University, he presented some of his animation design drafts to Li Gongpu. Moved by Wang's passion for animation, Li Gongpu introduced him to the film director Shen Xiqin, who introduced him to Zhou Jianyun, the head of Mingxing Film Studio. Zhou Jianyun thought the young man seemed promising and recruited him. In June 1935, Wang joined the Mingxing Film Studio in Shanghai to make animated films under the leadership of the Wan Brothers. To his disappointment, however, the Wan Brothers were unwilling to teach him the real skills of animated filmmaking. He later left the animation team and joined the art department, working as an assistant for set designs. Wang nonetheless acquired basic animated filmmaking techniques during his stay at Mingxing.⁸⁷ He supported the animated filmmaking activities of Liang and Onozawa in part because of his passion for animation.

The fine arts studio of the North China Film Team later expanded again by recruiting another animation assistant, a woman named Tang Na. Together, Tang and Gong assisted Liang and Onozawa in making animated films, battle maps, film credits, and logos. In early animation worldwide, women were often placed in a subordinate position to male animators, working as their assistants and stuck at the bottom of the hierarchy. On February 5, 1949, the North China Film Team completed *Ziwei zhanzheng xinwen disan hao* (News of the self-defense war: Number 3) in Shijiazhuang, which included *Huozhuo junzhang Luo Lirong*.⁸⁸ When this documentary and the animated short were screened in theaters in Shijiazhuang, they became

86. Gong, 146–147.

87. Wang Linli 汪林立, *Hongse dianying shiyejia Wang Yang* 红色电影事业家汪洋 [Red film tycoon Wang Yang] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2016), 2–3; and Su Shuyang 苏叔阳 and Shi Xia 石侠, “Beijing: Mei yici xintiao dou wei le ni” 北影 每一次心跳都为了你 [Beijing Film Studio: Every heartbeat is for you], *Dianying chuanguo* 电影创作 [Film creation], no. 3 (1998): 27–39, 32.

88. Wang, *Hongse dianying shiyejia Wang Yang*, 55.

immediate hits.⁸⁹ Only Liang and Onozawa were credited for the animated short, however, relegating women animators to obscurity.

BEIJING FILM STUDIO

In November 1947, the North China Film Team temporarily settled in recently “liberated” Shijiazhuang. The following March, it became the Shijiazhuang Film Studio. Later, on April 20, 1949, the Shijiazhuang Film Studio was transformed into the Peking Film Studio. At that time, 130 staff members, along with filmmaking equipment from the Shijiazhuang Film Studio, were all relocated to Peking, leaving behind only mobile projection teams.⁹⁰ Liang Jin, Onozawa Wataru, and the other three Japanese technicians from Manying left Shijiazhuang and joined the Peking Film Studio, which also absorbed a film shooting team and a news team from the Northeast Film Studio. In addition, Peking Film Studio assimilated the Central Film Studio controlled by the KMT, which had been the formerly Japanese-controlled North China Film Company.⁹¹ On October 1, 1949, Peking Film Studio changed its name to Beijing Film Studio and chose Wang Yang as its first president.

Liang was an art designer at Beijing Film, working on film credits, animated maps, and cartoons. In the documentary *Baiwan xiongshe xia Jiangnan* (Millions of lions going to the south, 1949), a male third-person voice-over talks about the failed Peking Peace Talks in April 1949: “although the Nationalist delegation accepted the terms, the war criminal Chiang Kai-shek and his reactionary government in Nanjing refuted the terms firmly.” At this moment, an animated cartoon shows a pair of coarse hands pushing away a brochure titled “Domestic Peace Terms” across the diagonal of the frame. As the hands keep pushing, we see the cuffs of the military uniform of the KMT. The hands represent Chiang Kai-shek and his government. This cartoon was notable because it vividly demonstrated the failure of the peace talks and justified the reasons that the CCP launched the full-scale war across the Yangtze River in the south. When describing how the PLA soldiers chased the Nationalist Army southward, the film presents an animated map. The scattered black spots on the map represent the defeated Nationalist Army, and the white belts and arrows represent the PLA soldiers. The powerful arrows chase and surround the black spots, until all of the black spots are circled in Changxing, like trapped beasts. The animated map was used as a special effect to portray a panoramic bird’s-eye view of the war. It illustrates the progress of the battles much more effectively than live-action documentary footage.

Later, Liang made animated special effects for three other documentaries: *Dazhan Hainandao* (The Battle of Hainandao, 1950), *Hongqi manjuan xifeng* (Red flags swept in west wind, 1950), and *Da Xi’nan kaige* (The triumph of the southwest, 1950). However, his name disappeared forever in the films made by Beijing Film Studio and Central Studio of News Reels Production, and his activities in Beijing were frozen in 1950, for he must have left Beijing

89. Wang Chen 王琛, “Buke momie de gongxian” 不可磨灭的贡献 [Indelible contribution], in Wang and Ma, *Zhanhua zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui*, 93–102, 100.

90. Shan Wanli 单万里, *Zhongguo jilu dianying shi* 中国纪录电影史 [History of Chinese documentary film] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2005), 101.

91. Shan, 102.

in 1950. His job as the art designer in Beijing was taken over by Tang Na, the assistant to Liang and Onozawa at North China Film Team, who made her debut in a documentary film titled *Jiefang Xizang dajun xing* (The long march to liberate Tibet, 1951). Liang might have relocated to Xi'an and joined the Xi'an Film Studio as an art designer in 1951, together with his wife Zhang Xin, who had been his coworker at the North China Film Team. I make this speculation because he later died in Xi'an. In the materials for a nationwide book-binding and illustration exhibition in 1959, Liang's name appeared as the illustrator for a children's book titled *Zhuomuniaoyisheng* (Dr. Woodpecker). The cover art shows a cartoonish woodpecker wearing a nurse's cap and a pair of glasses, carrying a medicine box with her legs. Liang's art design was highly praised at the exhibition.⁹² In 1976, he passed away following an illness.⁹³

Onozawa, together with Liang, made the first logo for the Beijing Film Studio, which is similar to the one they designed for the North China Film Team. Onozawa and Mori Shigeru designed the eight gigantic red lanterns hanging on Tiananmen for the founding ceremony of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. In 1953, Onozawa returned to Japan and joined the Japanese Communist Party in 1960. He passed away in 1995. Mori also returned to Japan in 1953. Kiyoshima Takehiko and Mitsumoto Toyo worked at the Beijing Film Studio and returned to Japan in 1953. Manying animator Mochinaga Tadahito, after working for the socialist animation industry in Changchun and Shanghai after the war ended in 1945, returned to Japan in 1953 and later joined the Japanese Communist Party.⁹⁴ Sasaki Yūkichi, however, became a Chinese citizen and worked at the Beijing Film Studio until his retirement.⁹⁵

CONCLUSION

The Japanese government and its puppet regime in wartime Peking promoted cartoon associations, magazines, exhibitions, and artistic activities, reflecting their belief in the effectiveness of cartoons for propaganda purposes. A distinct cartoon culture flourished in Peking, providing a breeding ground for collaborative work in animation. Despite colonial controls, cartoonists and animators such as Liang Jin adopted a strategy of survival and navigated politics through collaboration, escapism, acquiescence, and silence, complicating our conventional understandings of either collaboration or resistance in wartime China. After the war, they worked for the CCP but did not become members. They were instead elusive chameleons resisting any political capture.

Having evolved from prewar cartoons, animation in wartime Peking can be seen as an extension of the animated world created by Manying in Changchun. This fantasy world was torn between tendencies toward both territorialization

92. Qiu Ling 邱陵 and Lin Hua 林华, *Shuji zhuangzhen yishu shi* 书籍装帧艺术史 [Book binding design history] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1990), 121.

93. Ma Yuyin 马玉印, "Huabei dianyingdui yigu ren yuan mingdan" 华北电影队已故人员名单 [A list of the names of the deceased staff at the former North China Film Team], in Wang and Ma, *Zhanhuo zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui*, 245.

94. Du, *Animated Encounters*, 89.

95. Wang and Ma, *Zhanhuo zhong chengzhang de Huabei dianying dui*, 229; and "Yuan Huabei dianyingdui de siwei Riben pengyou" 原华北电影队的四位日本朋友 [Four Japanese friends at the former North China Film Team], *Dianying chuanguo* 电影创作 [Film creation], no. 5 (1996): 74.

and deterritorialization. On the one hand, Manying emphasized the representation of localness in animated filmmaking. Liang's *Fengzheng*, like other Manying films, is characterized by a distinct Peking flavor. On the other hand, Manying animation constructed a deterritorialized world distanced from the wartime realities of China and Japan, creating a geopolitical suspension that resists fixating the films with their place of production. This is embodied in the metamorphosis of the celestial kite, which, at the moment that it experiences the most oppression, breaks away from its fetters, transcends former identities, and assumes an alternative existence. Such plasmaticness and metamorphosis may have escapist, dissident, and even revolutionary implications according to Eisenstein, given the cruel and oppressive realities of wartime Peking.

The animated world of Manying did not vanish after 1945; instead, it stretched and compressed, inflated, and deflated, becoming diminished and scattered. In northeast China, Mochinaga Tadahito and other Manying animators joined the Northeast Film Studio and later the animation division of the Shanghai Film Studio (which became the Shanghai Animation Film Studio in 1957), making propaganda and fairytale animated films for early socialist China. In north China, Liang Jin, Onozawa Wataru, Mori Shigeru, and other Manying technicians such as Kiyoshima Takehiko, Mitsumoto Toyo, and Sasaki Yūkichi, joined the North China Film Team and later Beijing Film Studio, making animated propaganda and maps. In both cases, Manying provided crucial infrastructural, technological, and personnel support, laying a solid foundation for the socialist film industry. Although mainstream histories of Chinese cinema have tried to erase Manying and its afterlives in socialist cinema, like a plasmatic cartoon character, Manying squeezed into the new postwar political framework and kept haunting socialist cinema from within. The animated fantasy world of Manying endures and strikes back, despite political controls and regime changes.

This is the first article about Liang Jin and Asada Isamu, whose names have been absent in all existing writings (in all languages) about Chinese and Japanese animations. The idea of this article can be traced back to 2008, when I was researching Mochinaga Tadahito. I thank Winnie Fu for arranging a private screening of *Fengzheng* for me at the Hong Kong Film Archive in the spring of 2014. I also thank Liu Wenning and the China Film Archive for screening *Fengzheng* at the Inaugural Conference of the Association for Chinese Animation Studies in March 2021. My thanks go to the librarians Ma Xiaohu and James Cheng for their assistance during my stay at the Harvard-Yenching Institute in 2017–2018. I am indebted to Deborah Rudolph and Jianye He, librarians at the University of California, Berkeley, for their hospitality during my stay there in the summer of 2019. Thank you also to Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, Hudziyeva Yauheniya, and Muyang Zhuang for their generous help during the pandemic. I am grateful to the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments. I also thank the *JCMS* editors, Caetlin Benson-Allott and Bo Ruberg, for their editorial expertise. The research of this article was funded by the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong (GRF 16600417 and 16601823).

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