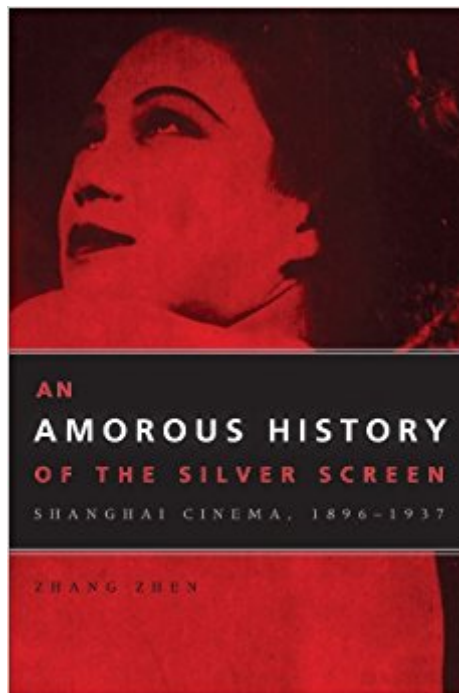




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# An Amorous History Of The Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937 (Cinema And Modernity)



## Synopsis

Shanghai in the early twentieth century was alive with art and culture. With the proliferation of popular genres such as the martial arts film, the contest among various modernist filmmakers, and the advent of sound, Chinese cinema was transforming urban life. But with the Japanese invasion in 1937, all of this came to a screeching halt. Until recently, the political establishment has discouraged comprehensive studies of the cultural phenomenon of early Chinese film, and this momentous chapter in China's history has remained largely unexamined. The first sustained historical study of the emergence of cinema in China, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen* is a fascinating narrative that illustrates the immense cultural significance of film and its power as a vehicle for social change. Named after a major feature film on the making of Chinese cinema, only part of which survives, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen* reveals the intricacies of this cultural movement and explores its connections to other art forms such as photography, architecture, drama, and literature. In light of original archival research, Zhang Zhen examines previously unstudied films and expands the important discussion of how they modeled modern social structures and gender roles in early twentieth-century China. The first volume in the new and groundbreaking series *Cinema and Modernity*, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen* is an innovative and well illustrated look at the cultural history of Chinese modernity through the lens of this seminal moment in Shanghai cinema.

## Book Information

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"An Amorous History of the Silver Screen will be an instant classic. This lively yet rigorous work of original scholarship reconfigures the field of Chinese silent cinema. It constitutes an exciting new work at the cutting edge of the emergent transnational field of Chinese cinema studies." (Chris Berry, editor of Chinese Films in Focus)"Splendid. This is a rich and comprehensive review of the early Chinese movie industry, most eloquently written by a scholar whose amorous attachment to the silver screen is just as deep as her academic commitment. It will become a primary source for anyone in the English-speaking world interested in Chinese cinematic history." (David Wang, Harvard University)"Essential reading for anyone studying Chinese film history or early cinemas in general. . . . The richness of Zhang's archival discoveries is admirable: her success in piecing together once-lost cinema culture from traces she has unearthed is astonishing. . . . Scholars and critics can now finally begin to grapple with the breathtaking sweep of a freshly exposed cultural landscape that this book opens before us." (Shelly Kraicer Cineaste)"[Zhang] has written a history which will quickly become essential reading for those interested in Chinese cinema. . . . It is not so much an introductory survey, but rather a book whose value is its intensive analysis of key films, its detailed cultural geography of a city-based industry, and its use of previously untranslated material to open these films up to the cultural contexts and intellectual debates from which they sprang." (Mike Walsh Screening the Past)"This book is indispensable for anyone interested in Chinese cinema and will certainly stand as a definitive book in the field. . . . Without question the most eloquently written, tightly argued, thoroughly researched, and richly detailed book on early Chinese cinema. The book incorporates the insight of two fields, namely, Chinese literary and cultural studies and early film studies, and remains open methodologically to anthropology, urban studies, and social theories of modernity. . . . It is a tour de force in both fields and makes a cogent case of how non-Western cinema and modernity shall remain the centre, not periphery, in the question of modernity." (Weihong Bao Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film)

Zhang Zhen is assistant professor of cinema studies at New York University.

Although not the easiest read, it is perhaps the best book I've read on the emerging/ pre-communist cinema in China.

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