

“Red” Movies? Trendy Movies? “Left Wing Cinema Movement” in 1930s China

The 1930s "Left Wing Cinema Movement" has been a canonized story in Chinese film history. We are told that at this time of grave national crisis, the Chinese film industry began to produce movies on "serious" themes and with "socially conscious" qualities due to the involvement of "left-wing" intellectuals. This project re-examines the "movement" through the prism of "trend" and popular culture. I would argue that making films containing "left-wing" ideologies, usually referred to as "red" movies (*chise dianying*), became a trend sweeping the film industry of the day and served the interests of both the film studios and political activists and intellectuals. This trend had been a result of cultural flows between China, Soviet Union and Europe and involved an intricate interplay between the political forces, commercial imperatives and intellectual discourses. In so doing, my project addresses these questions: How did different forces come into play to forge this trend? Which route did this trend take when flowing between Soviet Union, Europe and China? In which ways did the trend merge politics with aspects of consumption as well as popular visual and print culture? How did these trendy "left-wing" movies impact on the popular political opinion in 1930s China?