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CINEMAS, HIGHWAYS, AND THE MAKING OF PROVINCIAL SPACE: MOBILE SCREENINGS IN JIANGSU, CHINA, 1933-1937

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Abstract: In 1933, the Jiangsu Provincial Mass Education Center in Zhenjiang begun to screen educational shorts that it ordered from Shanghai's Eastman Kodak to inhabitants of the city and its rural suburbs. By 1935, it began circulating domestically produced educational films promoting national industries and sceneries, as well as select commercial features from Shanghai. This article examines how the Center's educational film screenings functioned as both spatial and representational practice. Analyzing screening illustrations and exhibition manuals circulated in educational periodicals, I argue that the Center's mobile exhibition practices, while attempting to integrate spectators into the homogenous spatial imaginary of the nation, could not but approach film screening as a heterogeneous conglomeration of different systems. As registered in the sometimes-fantastic illustrations depicting the future of "electrified education," film screenings offered a way of bringing together fragmented and often conflicting scales of experience.

The space that homogenizes thus has nothing homogeneous about it.

(Lefebvre 1991: 308)

The front matter of a 1934 special issue of *Mass Education Information* features a striking if counter-intuitive set of illustrations captioned with the neologistic title *minzhong jiaoyu dianying chang*, or "Mass Educational Cinematheque" (figure 1).¹ Comprised of three images positioned

¹ I have translated *Minzhong jiaoyu dianying chang* as "mass education cinematheque" in order to maintain the strangeness of the neologism, which was coined in order to differentiate educational screening spaces from commercial movie theatres.

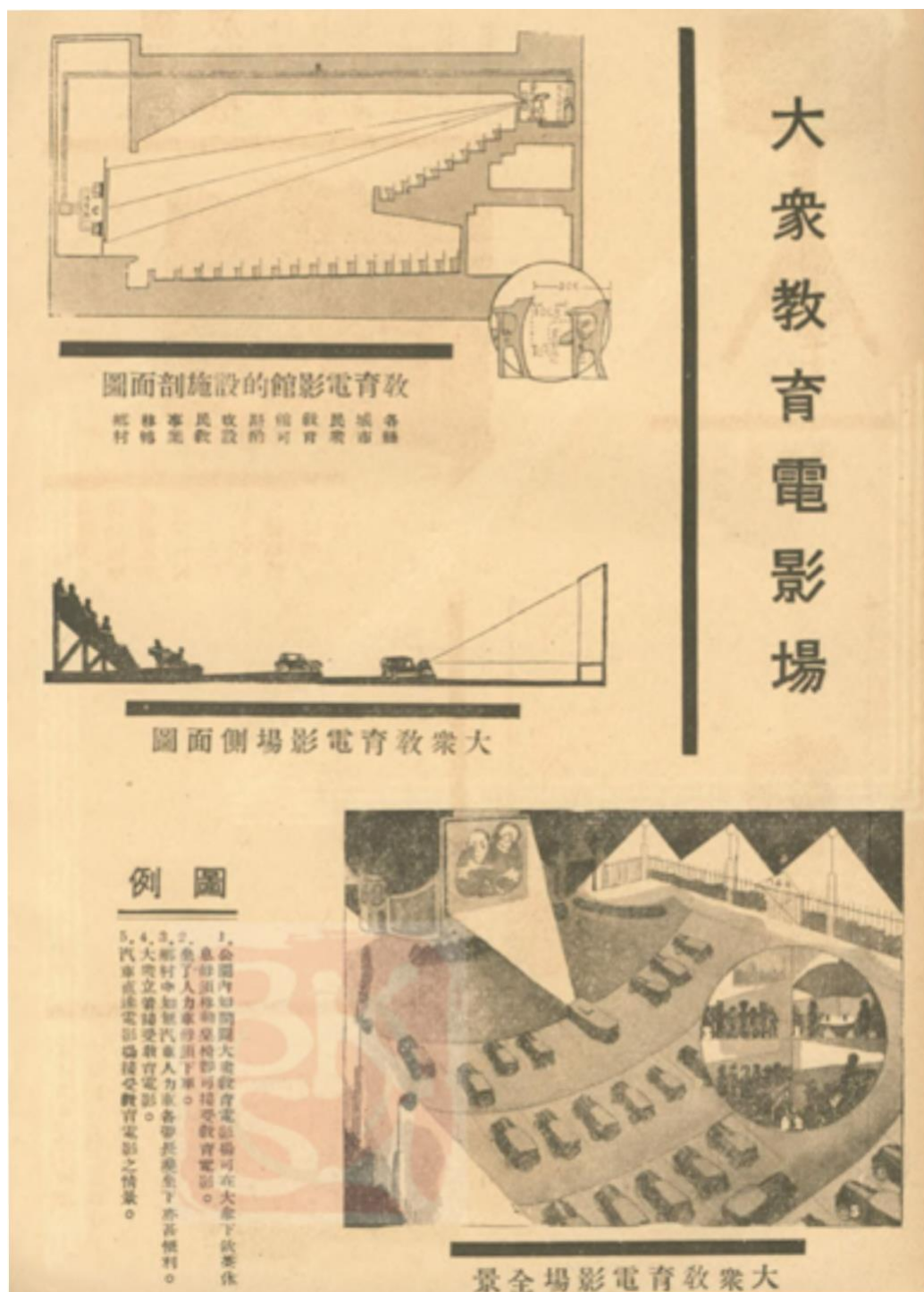


Fig. 1 "Mass Educational Cinematheque": *Minzhong jiaoyu tongxun* 3.10 (1934), n.p.

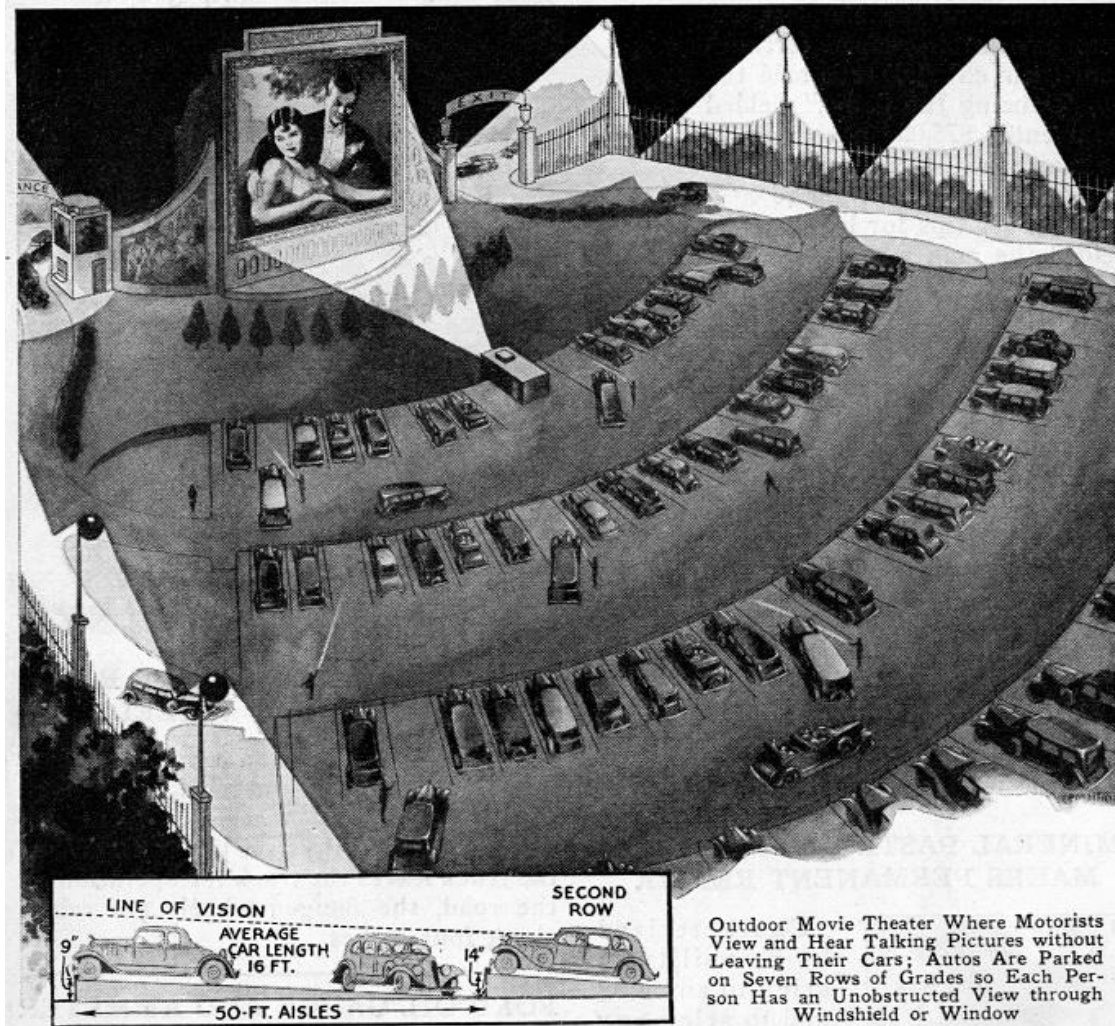


Fig. 2: Camden NJ Drive-in, Source: April L. Smith²

vertically on the page, the illustrations purportedly present a “side view,” “cross section,” and “panorama” of the same space. Conspicuously, they are incongruous. While the picture at the top appears to be the cross-section of an indoor movie theater, the bottom two illustrations depict, on the contrary, an outdoor space with an audience arriving in cars, in rickshaws, and on foot. The bottommost image, recognizable as an adaptation of a newspaper advertisement for the Drive-in

² From: "Drive-ins: A Short History," Reel East Film Festival, 27 July, 2014, <http://reeleastfilm.org/1/post/2014/07/drive-ins-a-short-history.html> , Accessed 25 October, 2016.

Theater in Camden New Jersey (figure 2), contains an insert divided into four quadrants, each labeled with a printed caption:

- (1) In this mass educational cinematheque you can sip tea underneath an umbrella and relax without shifting the table or the chairs.
- (2) If you came on a rickshaw, there is no need to dismount.
- (3) In the rural village, where there are no automobiles and rickshaws, there are convenient benches to sit in.
- (4) Standing masses watching the educational film.
- (5) Cars can drive directly onto the site.

The illustrator provides no cues as to where the different seating arrangements depicted in the insert are to be located in the space as it is pictured. Like the two other panels, they appear as if pasted into the image, limning an abstract yet utterly non-Cartesian space in a fashion reminiscent of collage.

The same year, the cinematographic education committee at the Jiangsu Provincial Mass Education Center in Zhenjiang, also the editors of *Mass Education Information*, published a standalone pamphlet on educational cinema in which the same image was reproduced with revised captions. Here, it is specified that the projection booth is, in fact, a *vehicle*, which, “fitted with a projector, sound system and generator [...] could travel anywhere,” thus enabling the cinematheque to be “used in the summer and fall, in the city and the countryside” (Liu and Jiang, 1934, n.p). Compared to the Camden Drive-in, which celebrated the homogenous intimacy of middle-class automobility, those who envisioned the mass educational cinematheque courted an indeterminate heterogeneity.³ The audiences come in their vehicles of choosing and circumstance, from which they do not have to dismount. Read with the captions, the quadrants of the insert refer simultaneously to a locale within the represented space and to multiple mutually exclusive exhibition sites, including “a rural village” where “there are no automobiles and rickshaws.” The demands of such imagined versatility negate the very representational value of the illustration by dispersing its visible features across uneven spatiotemporal registers. The stock image of the drive-in movie theater is fragmented, made to simultaneously exist in the summer and the fall, the country and the city, assisted by the mobility of the projection car itself. Included in this dispersal are contexts in which the most prominent features of the original illustration—the cars—are no longer present.

³ In his study of drive-ins in Australia, Ben Goldsmith argues that drive-ins were veritable “temples of modernity” by confronting the culture of consumption with that of creature comfort. See Goldsmith (1999: 154).

Yet, the cinematheque diagram does not claim to be a modernist collage, intentional in its desire to create self-undermining associations. Untethered to the imperatives of verisimilitude that would have rendered a similar illustration of the Camden drive-in unpublishable, it asks to be read as an incisive if somewhat fantastic representation of Chinese mobile projection and mass education practices. This article offers one such reading by situating the diagram in the history of one of China's first mobile screening systems, operated by the Mass Education Center in Zhenjiang between 1933 and the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese war in 1937. As I argue, the Center's educational film screenings reflected on and intervened in contemporaneous spatial practices, most notably the city of Zhenjiang's transition from a dilapidated canal port into a provincial capital integrated into regional frameworks of high-speed transport. Preoccupied with the mobility of the projection device and that of the heterogeneous demographics it served, the Mass Education Center's work mapped cinema onto the contours of an infrastructural system defined by the new highways on the one hand, and the persistently used network of alleys, canals and footpaths on the other. Screening a mixed program of films depicting industry, scenery, and hygiene, the Center sought to integrate the region's large "drop-out" (*shixue*) population—the term educators often used to describe the illiterate and semi-literate adults left out by the modern school system—into a unified imaginary of nation and world.⁴ Yet, this imaginary of the nation as flat horizontal space, defined by the cinematic display of national products and prized scenery, was complicated by the very representational practices used to perpetuate it.⁵

Recent scholarship on screen practices within and outside the commercial movie theater offer inroads for elaborating the spatial specificity of the Center's audiovisual program. In his study of audiovisual education setups in the U.S. and Canada, Charles Acland describes screens as "links between dispersed spectatorial conditions," which, in turn, "compel people to move and gather together" (2009: 149). With a dual attention to the virtual mobility offered by screens, which provide surfaces on which circulating content can be shown, and the mobility solicited of audiences, who must traverse municipal and rural infrastructures to arrive at the screening space and then navigate the architectures of the space itself, the study of screen practices is coterminous with the study of the production of space as such. In the history of film studies, exhibition space research played a crucial part in challenging totalizing conceptions of the

⁴ See, for example, Chen Guofu (1975).

⁵ I am using language that refers to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983).

cinematic apparatus, enabling a shift from Jean-Louis Baudry's (1986) identification of the movie theater with metaphysics à la Plato's cave to specific investigations into how theater architectures and non-theatrical spaces offered discrete pathways for distraction, decentering, and ambulatory possibility.⁶ By defining the immobilized spectator sitting in a dark room in front of a large screen as representative of the apparatus by which cinema produces ideological effects, Baudry's approach emblemizes the tendency in film studies of the 1970's and 1980's toward unqualified claims to medium ontology, conflating the dominant commercial screening arrangements with *essential* characteristics of the medium and the spectatorial experience. Drawing on Louis Althusser's (2001) definition of ideology as an imaginary relationship to real conditions, Baudry identifies "the cinematic apparatus" with ideological closure, precluding both possibilities of imaginary excess and the instabilities that beset exhibition contexts (itself an iteration of "real conditions").⁷ As movements toward a clear, if sometimes unstated, "spatial turn" in film studies, research into non-theatrical screening spaces such as the museum, the school, the factory, and the colony, has helped undo the geographical, historical, and technological presuppositions underwriting such conflation, presuppositions still operative in a discipline that remains centered on feature-length theatrical fiction.⁸ As projects critical of established "spaces of scholarship," to use Yingjin Zhang's (2010) expression, such work calls for an unprecedented redefinition of cinema history not only along diachronic lines (as research on early cinema and the digital dispersal/convergence has done) but also spatially.

The story of how screens served, in Haidee Wasson's words, as "intimate consorts of specific material and institutional networks" is also the story of how they became integral to the multiplicity of spatial repertoires that define the modern, e.g. the school, the city, and the road, to name examples relevant to the present study (2007: 76). Here, the question of exhibition space must be made to answer not only to the concerns of screen history but also that of uneven

⁶ See, for example, Bruno (2002), Rogers (2013), the essays in Marchessault and Lord (2007), Wasson, (2005), Voci (2013), and Acland (2009).

⁷ An extensive discussion of the relationship between Althusser and Althusserian film theory will be outside of the scope of this paper. My view on this is similar to what Joan Copjec (1989) has argued in the case of Lacan and Lacanian film theory, namely, that film theorists have tended to sideline the instability and permeability of the screen in favor of an identification of screen as mirror rather than reckon with the more radical Lacanian claim that the mirror is a screen, which enables a relationship to difference rather than trapping one within the closure of centered subjectivity.

⁸ In addition to some of the texts cited in the preceding note, Haidee Wasson and Charles Acland's introduction to their edited volume *Useful Cinemas* (2011) makes this point succinctly, as does Wasson (2009). For the study colonial mobile exhibition, see Larkin (2008).

development in the modern world system. For at the same time as film studies was slowly abandoning Althusserian ideology critique, French communication historian Armand Mattelart charged totalizing accounts of media reception with neglecting “the articulation of media with the whole ensemble of contradictions and structures in which they are implicated,” in particular the “link tying a medium to the historical era and geographical space in which it functions” (1994: 192). In the present context, the study of Chinese educational screening spaces cannot be separated from the historical conjunction of communication technologies with colonialism and uneven development. China, a semi-colony, was subject to extraterritoriality by the major powers but not outright colonial administration, although throughout the early twentieth century the possibility of partition appeared imminent.⁹ Like the proliferating railroad and telegraph networks owned by international interests, the movies, as Andrew Jones argues, “presented themselves to Chinese viewers not as an ineffably and unalterably foreign form, but as a technical apparatus, a system of distribution and exhibition, a mode of spectatorship, and a set of cultural products dominated by foreign financial and ideological interests” (2001: 12). Chinese elites, in turn, interpreted the international circulation of images degrading to the Chinese as a form of imperial encirclement, hence finding the control of motion pictures essential to state sovereignty and national survival (Johnson 2009; Johnson 2008). Alongside propaganda and censorship, educational filmmaking participated in emerging global norms governing the institutional use of cinema, crystallized in the establishment of League of Nations’ International Educational Cinematographic Institute (IECI) in 1928.¹⁰ The IECI, based in Rome owing to an Italian soft-power ploy, comprised an international forum for information sharing, debate, and policy recommendation, with the stated goal of integrating motion pictures into the League’s vision of international society.¹¹ IECI-representative Baron Alessandro von Sardi, also president of the Italian L’Union Cinematografica Educativa (LUCE), visited China with the League’s Mission of Educational Experts in 1931-2, where he toured the major cities of Shanghai, Nanjing, Beiping, and Tianjin, lecturing and screening LUCE titles, including films on the architecture of Italian cities, the production of salt, the laying and incubation of chicken eggs,

⁹ Lenin (1939), for example, thought the partition of China to be inevitable in 1916.

¹⁰ For a brief précis on IECI in English, see Drüick, (2007). For an extended discussion of the institute in French, see Taillibert (1999).

¹¹ For a discussion of the tension between the internationalist and nationalist dimension, see Taillibert (1998); For a discussion of how the League’s idea of international society rested on classical standards of civilization, see Bowden (2005).

and the war making capacities of the Italian military (Wang Y. 1932: 1; Sardi 1932). Wang Yudeng, the reporter who covered Sardi's lecture in Shanghai, gave voice to the mixture of allure and dread inspired by this demonstration of educational technology, concluding that the screening proved, first, that China lagged behind the rest of the world in educational cinema and cinema in general; second, that other nations were better at preserving ancient ruins; and third, that others outpaced China in scientific research and effort. The screening thus showed the audience "the low level at which our country exists," a situation that, at the root, was because "education has yet to be popularized" (2). Wang's comments are representative of the attitude held by many Chinese elites toward educational cinema, or *jiaoyu dianying*, which crystallized many of the affective intensities, technological networks, and institutional capacities at stake in the semi-colonial state's developmental dilemmas. Screened by foreign powers, educational cinema held a mirror to China's underdevelopment while glowing with the equivocal allure of international state-building models. As a tool in Chinese hands, it offered a means for redressing the developmental asymmetries produced by histories of imperialism and capital accumulation. Yet—as I will show in the ensuing pages—insofar as moving image technologies—screens, projectors, generators, celluloid and the like—were not autonomous objects but network realities dependent on globally uneven flows of equipment, talent, and design norms, the developmental dreams they enabled often became logistical nightmares, tethering their users to the very asymmetrical spatial logics that they were supposed to have overcome.

The archive of articles, translations, guides, photographs, illustrations, and reports circulated by the Zhenjiang Center in its official journal *Mass Education Information* and standalone pamphlets make visible these ambivalent developmental imaginaries. As a pioneer in the field of audiovisual teaching, the Zhenjiang Center was tasked with legitimizing motion pictures as pedagogical tools for educators wont to identify cinema with commercial movies. Constituting "educational cinema"/*jiaoyu dianying* as a new and unforeseen object with its own cognitive and affective contours, the diagrams of screening spaces played a crucial part in *producing* what they pictured. Here, Henri Lefebvre's distinction between *spatial practice*, *representations of space* and *representational space* provides a useful analytical rubric. With these three terms, Lefebvre delineates interpenetrating levels of the production of space. Spatial practices, or the embodied navigational tactics of "living" a space rely, in turn, on representational forms such as maps, horizons, skylines, and verbal descriptions. On the one

hand, scientists, planners, urbanists, technocrats, social engineers and certain artists produce representations *of* space to lay hold of it as an external reality. On the other hand, representations can also be *inhabited*, deciphered as disjunctive symbols and images, and thus transformed into what Lefebvre calls “representational space.” As thoroughly interwoven threads of a productive process, spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space are not to be distinguished as “types” of space but taken analytical categories through which the “same” space is cut up. What renders the illustration of the mass education cinematheque perplexing to certain beholders is that it quite simply ignores “the illusion of a transparent, ‘pure’ and neutral space,” grounded in the tradition of Renaissance representation, which subjected the visible to the grid of spatial perspective (Lefebvre 292). In its attempt to create a representation *of* the space of mobile film screenings, the diagram transforms itself into a representational space, undoing the verisimilitude that conceals the rough edges of its animating desire. For Lefebvre, the rationalist abstractions that define modern modes of urban planning and social engineering do not stand opposed to the disjointed figures produced, for example, by paintings of the European avant-garde. Both participate in a space that is “at once *homogeneous* and *broken*,” the former in the violence exerted by forcing historically heterogeneous segments together into the abstract overview of the plan, the latter in the reduction of the canvas to a pure surface on which the jarred edges of mutilated figures could be made to appear. As “a cohesion grounded in scission and disjointedness,” what Lefebvre calls the “contradictory space” of modernity presents itself as a doubled construct, in which the impulse to standardize and homogenize is dialectically linked to its opposite, namely, the construction of the social as a surface for mediating disjunctive segments (308). The contours of this dialectical relation are those by which uneven development generates representational indeterminacy. Uneven development, as Neil Smith (1990) and others have argued, does not follow fixed geographic contours of center and periphery, but comprises a *process*—“the development of underdevelopment”—unfolding at multiple scales, from macrocosm to microcosm. As such, it involves the dynamic relationship between macro-phenomena such as the global distribution of wealth and industrial capacity, on the one hand, and microcosmic ones, such as the texture of representation, on the other. From the disjunctive, yet cohesive, pages of the Center’s screening diagrams, the ensuing pages describe a specific figure of uneven development, one in which, as I will show, arrangements of the projector, the screen,

and the human body tarry with macrocosmic realities of national development programs and international technical networks.

In January of 1934, four years after it opened its doors, the Zhenjiang Center completed retrofitting the lecture auditorium on its main campus in the old city center for motion picture screenings (Zhao 1937).¹² The renovations were considerable, and the new space boasted a separate projection room equipped with a Bolex Model D 16mm projector and a sound system produced domestically by a Shanghai company (Liu Zhichang 1934: 23). Film screening activities, at first using Eastman Classroom Films that had been purchased by a distribution organization in Shanghai, began shortly after. Later that month a second facility was built on the Center's West campus, and the Center started mobile screenings on a subscription basis to schools, factories, and civil service institutions in and around the city (Zhao 1937: 1-2). Such beginnings took place within the framework of broader provincial and national projects to employ cinema for instructional ends, which were in turn woven into an extensive developmental agenda focused on teaching outside the confines of the school. In 1933, Chen Guofu, the older half of the famed "CC-Clique" in the nationalist party, was appointed the chair of the government of Jiangsu (Yang 2010: 271). Comprising of Chen Guofu and his younger brother Chen Lifu, the CC-clique was a key player in the factional struggles that defined politics in nationalist party-state.¹³ With their power base in the civilian bureaucracy, Chen Guofu and Chen Lifu were believers in the educational value of film and radio, which, in the older brother's words, exemplified the positive values of the "shamans of science" who "used the *yin-yang* principles of electricity to control all of humanity" (Chen Guofu 1937: 1). Both were also high-ranking members of the National Educational Cinematographic Society of China (NECS), an organization convened in 1932 after a visit by the IECI representative Alessandro Sardi. Officially recognized as the China-branch of the IECI in 1933, the NECS formed the core of what came to be known as the Chinese educational film movement, bringing together politicians, educators, and individuals with film expertise in an effort to promote cinema's pedagogical possibilities (Guo 2010: 247). Of the early programs pursued by the Society, perhaps one of the most significant was the establishment of the National Educational Film Distribution Office

¹² For a general chronology see Du Guangsheng et. al. (2012).

¹³ For a discussion of factional politics in the nationalist state, see Eastman (1974).

(*quanguo jiaoyu dianying tuiguang chu*, henceforth NEFDO), where films purchased from Eastman Kodak Shanghai and the League of Nations could be stored and distributed to educational institutions free of all but transportation fees (“Quanguo jiaoyu dianying” 1934).

Upon appointment as governor, Chen began an ambitious “new government” program, aimed at overhauling the state and social mores, including education. On the one hand, Chen somewhat unsuccessfully attempted to curtail the humanities and expand the sciences and vocational disciplines (Yang 2010: 311). On the other, Chen put significant resources into expanding social and mass education programs, addressing the province’s “drop out” (*shixue*) population of adolescent and adult illiterates. “Mass education” (*minzhong jiaoyu*) was a term essentially coined by the Nationalist (*Guomindang*) regime, but it had precedents in earlier practices of popular education (*tongsu jiaoyu*) and Confucian uplift (Zhou 2012: 24). With the Qing imperial court’s abolition of civil service exams in 1905, modern schools took over the role originally given to the *sishu*, or the private halls in which a single instructor taught small groups of students in the Confucian classics.¹⁴ Popular education, referring to the intersecting system of popular lecture halls, literacy schooling, traveling libraries, and pedagogical theater troupes emerged alongside the schools, serving, as Zhou Huimei observes, to shore up the failures of “new education” to meet the needs of the rural masses, who found the insularity of the modern school confounding if not threatening (Zhou 2013: 35). As a mechanism of “political tutelage” (*xun yu*), which Sun Yat-sen had defined in a 1918 essay as the preparation of the people for self-rule, the Guomindang’s mass education reforms unified previously scattered private initiatives into a comprehensive system (Zhu 2013: 39; Sun Yat-sen 1953). Between 1928 and 1932, the provincial governments, in concert with the Ministry, completed a nationwide infrastructure of literacy schools and education centers addressing the considerable population of individuals ranging from ages 16 to 40 who had never received formal schooling (Zhou 2013). Institutions such as the Zhenjiang Center were tasked with a variety of activities, including remedial schooling, organizational training, local self-government, hygiene education, entertainment, production activities, and government propaganda (Li Donghui 2010: 95).

As governor, Chen allocated funds to jump-start an educational film and radio program, which would be directed out of the Social Education section of the Bureau of Education (Zhu

¹⁴ This transition was by no means even. A 1923 study found that the number of primary students in *sishu* equaled those in modern schools. See Pepper (1996: 77).

2012: 322). The Social Education section managed the province's considerable mass education infrastructure, in which the first experiments in film exhibition and radio broadcast were to be staged. Simultaneously, the Bureau sought to create a film production group, circulating, in 1934, a call for educational film scripts. That year, Chen Guofu himself submitted a script for *Water Hygiene/Yinshui weisheng*, which Shanghai's Mingxing Company then shot on the Bureau's commission (Liu and Jiang 1935: 5). Alongside other pioneering institutions such as the Jiangsu Provincial Teaching Academy, Jinling University (The University of Nanking), and the Shanghai Daxia University, the Zhenjiang center was among the first to take advantage of this broader momentum.

Before consistent domestic educational film production began in 1935, the Zhenjiang Center sourced its films from NEFDO. Later, educational films produced by Jinling University, provincially produced newsreels, and select Shanghai commercial features of educational import were integrated into the screening programs. The programs themselves were intermedial in nature, featuring motion pictures, magic lantern slides, lectures, calisthenic exercises, and gramophone-led sing-alongs. On June 19, 1936, for example, activities included magic lantern lectures on the general Ma Zhanshan, who resisted the Japanese in Manchuria, a lecture on hygiene, a gramophone-led sing along led by the voice of popular actress Li Minhui, a screening of the Eastman documentary *Coffee* (George Hoke, 1931), the performance of the one act play *Backstage Drama*, and a concluding sing along of *Song of The Nationalist Party*.¹⁵ Itineraries were planned on a semi-weekly basis, during which the projection team traveled between the two screening sites and other locations in the Center's service district. Within this broader program, motion pictures served a specifically referential function. As the Center's director of exhibitions Liu Zhichang wrote in "Preliminary Implementation of Cinematographic Education," moving images supplied the lecturer with an object of reference where otherwise speech and writing left audiences indifferent. Observing that "when carrying out mass education, what one fears the most is empty talk (*kong kou shuo baihua*)," Liu argued that educational films filled in the referential absences with "entirely real material" and thus offered the "easiest way of earning the masses' sympathy (*tongqing*)" (1934: 21). Specifically, the referential absences of "empty talk" were the product of a fractured experiential horizon, made visible by the failings of standardized textbooks in formal and mass education. "Although our country is vast, transportation is

¹⁵ This was the program for June 19, 1936. See Zhao (1937).

inconvenient,” Liu writes, “often the northern wares spoken of in books are never found in the south; similarly, southern customs are drastically opposite of those in the north. These facts lower significantly the value of books” (20). Meant to introduce school-aged students and adult illiterates to a repertoire of objects, customs, and practices from various parts of the nation, textbooks designed to cultivate a shared national imagination floundered on the disjunctive horizons of reference produced by infrastructural unevenness.¹⁶ Here, mass educators seized on cinema’s ability to “create real impressions,” which they thought to be more compelling than printed illustrations and projected magic lantern slides (Liu Zhichang 21). “If I wanted to speak of the propagation of a certain kind of bacteria, the lives of people in a foreign land, or the motivations of a great historical figure, then no matter how delicate the drawing or verbal description, no matter how eloquent the speech, it will not be as real as cinema,” writes Liu (20).

Cinema’s referential power also addressed a second challenge faced by popular lecturers in the early half of the twentieth century, namely the problem of “empty talk,” which linked the pedagogical situation to a broader cultural crisis. The “talk” (*baihua*) of the expression “empty talk” (*kongkou shuo baihua*) exploited the equivocal range of meanings the word connoted in this period, including “wasted speech,” “plain speech,” as well as the newly adopted written vernacular. In 1920, the sitting national government adopted *baihua* as the official language of instruction, replacing the classical Chinese previously sanctified by the imperial examination system.¹⁷ Educated in school systems that taught in the *baihua* vernacular, lecturers in the 1930s addressed their audiences with speech patterns saturated with neologistic borrowings from Japanese *kanji*, missionary translations, and haphazardly translated or transliterated terms from European languages.¹⁸ Whereas in formal educational settings, such discourse was reinforced with textbooks, classroom discipline, and examinations, in the context of mass education, the effects of its enunciation were far less predictable, confronting speakers with the unparalleled anxiety that their words were empty of both meaning and referent.¹⁹ Educational film,

¹⁶ For a discussion of textbooks, see Zarrow (2015).

¹⁷ The *baihua* vernacular movement elevated plain speech to the prestige of literature, yet the largely non-phonetic character of Chinese writing and dialectal heterogeneity meant that the pronunciation, grammatical and lexical elements of *baihua* still had to be worked out by experiments in literature, high profile committee meetings, and pedagogical practice. In other words, the institutional shift to the vernacular involved more than a mapping of writing onto existing speech, but also the invention of a new style of speech capable of serving as vernacular. For a discussion of *baihua* and the textbook industry, see Culp (2009).

¹⁸ For a discussion of *baihua* and written style, see Gunn (1991).

¹⁹ The best cinematic illustration of this can perhaps be found in the Mao-era film *Dong Cunrui* (Dir. Guo Weizhi, 1955), which features a scene where a May Fourth style intellectual attempts to educate Eight Route soldiers with an

understood as a support for pedagogical speech, transformed anxieties of public speaking and pedagogy into a logistical problem by rerouting the pedagogue's enunciation through a series of visual aids, the availability of which depended on film supply, transportation, and electricity infrastructure, among other contingencies.

The educational situation thus described corresponds, with qualifications, to what Paul Virilio (1989) calls the "logistics of perception." As Virilio shows, cinema and war are part of the same logistical problem, where the ability to transform the heterogeneity of lived geographies into manageable visual interfaces comprise matters of life and death. For war planners, social managers, and commercial film conglomerates alike, motion pictures serve an essential—and essentially warlike—function: namely, to transform the fragmented perception of embodied individuals into a shared picture on which they can act, or put differently, to "light the surrounding world without seeing it" (50). In the context of Republican era intellectual discourse, Liu Zhichang's choice of the word "sympathy" (*tongqing*) inflects this logistical function of the moving image with a specific developmental resonance. As Haiyan Lee points out, the term "sympathy" was taken up in Chinese modernity in opposition to the figure of the callous spectator, thematized by outside observers and nationalist commentators as emblematic of a key flaw in the Chinese national character (2007: 235). Such a figure appears in a well-known scene described by the writer Lu Xun where the author, while in Tokyo for medical school, encounters a "newsreel slide of a number of Chinese, one of them bound and the rest standing around him" (1996: 239). Studying medicine with aspirations to save his country with physical strengthening, Lu Xun reports being taken aback by the fact that, in the image, the Chinese who had arrived on the scene to watch the execution of one of their compatriots were "sturdy fellows but appeared completely apathetic" (239-40). In the developmentalist discourse of Republican Chinese intellectuals, the figure of the overstimulated city dweller underwriting Virilio's description was replaced by that of the numbed and ignorant spectator, incapable of feeling or recognizing what was happening in front of him. If, for Virilio, cinema's logistical function was to order the "visual chaos" endemic in cities and modern warfare, in Liu's

effete neologism filled lecture. To this, the film opposes the rustic discourse of the commanders and the experiential learning of physical training, war and military democracy.

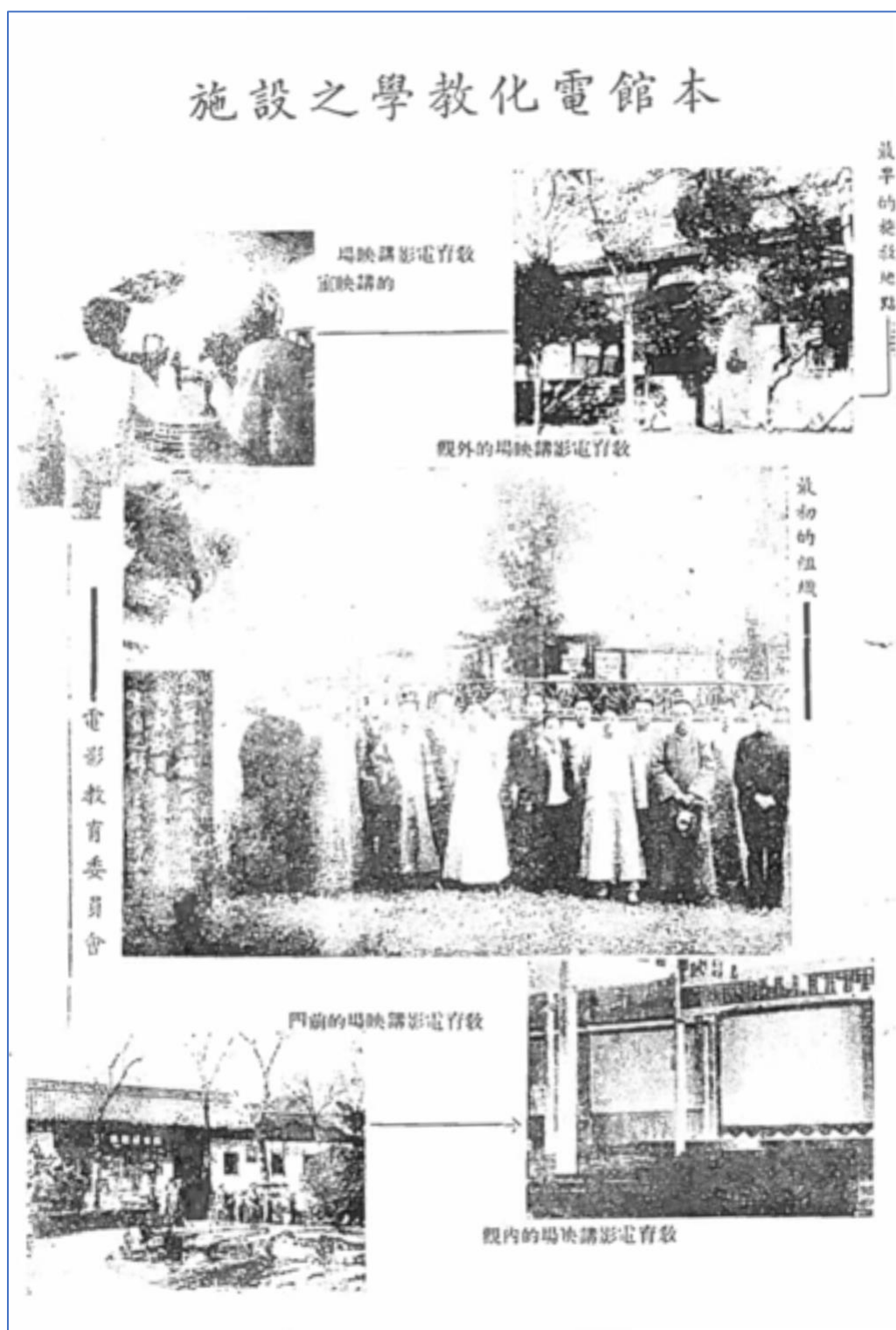


Fig. 3: Main Campus Screening Space, Source: Zhao Hongxian²⁰

²⁰ Jiangsu shengli Zhenjiang minzhong jiaoyu guan dianhua jiaoyu gaishu (Zhenjiang: Jiangsu shengli minzhong jiaoyu guan, 1937), n.p.

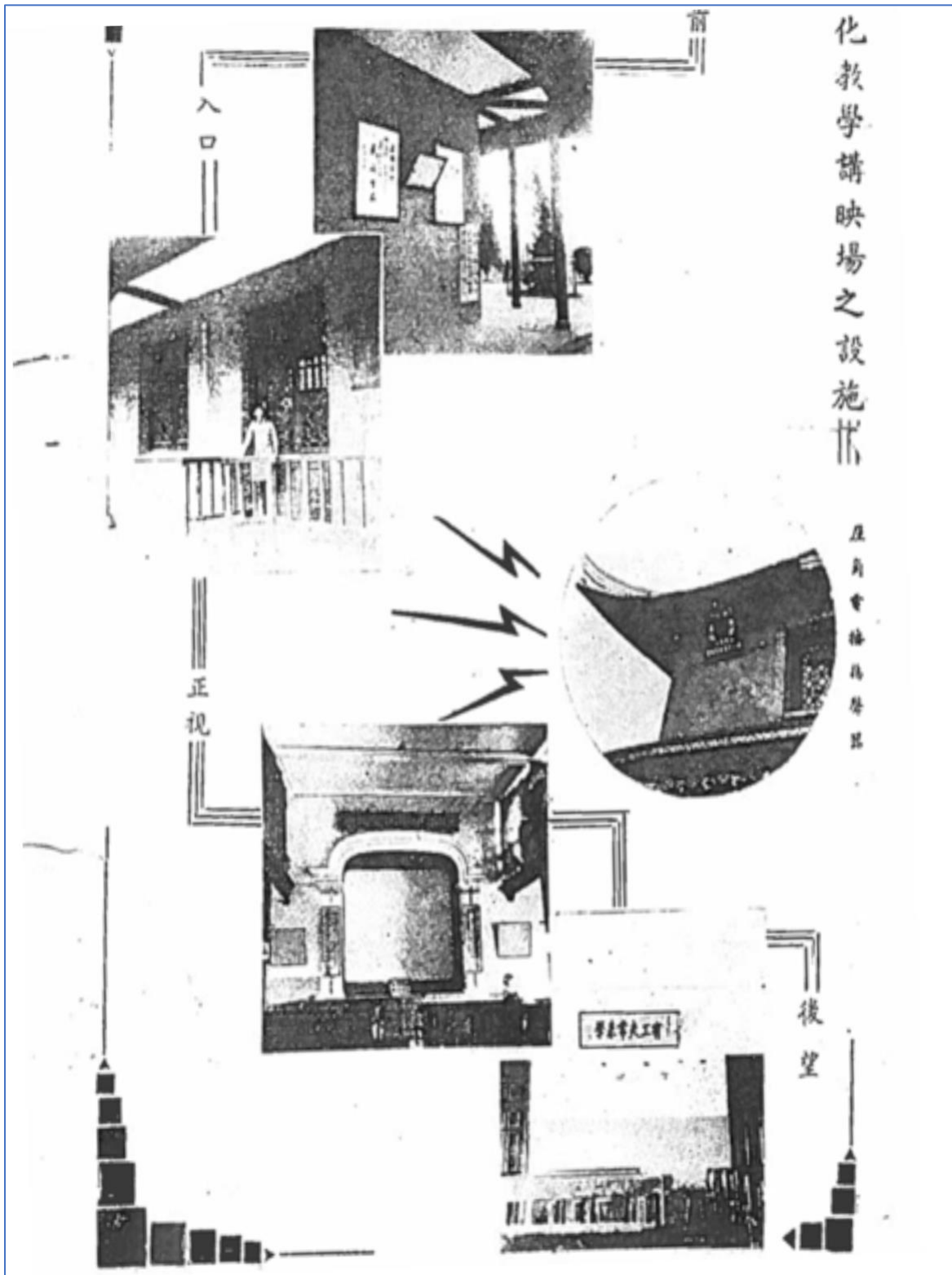


Fig. 4: West Campus Screening Space, Source: Zhao Hongxian

discourse, cinema's function was *sympathetic* because it both knocked masses out of their callous complacency and created the means by which their newfound feelings could be ordered by pedagogical address. The notion that cinema could overcome the apathy of the masses also drew on a second line of usage, which Weihong Bao (2015) discusses in her study of affect in Republican-era film culture. As Bao observes, terms such as "sympathy" and "resonance" (*gongming*) were among the vernacular media concepts taken up by Chinese critics to describe a spectator caught between multiple interfaces. Bao characterizes "sympathy" as a state of "positive receptivity, a mode of perception and relationality that connects one to the world to achieve a physical transformation from one state of the body to another" (103).²¹ Similarly, "resonance" evinced a state in which the spectatorial body *becomes* a medium, like the television user who must adjust the speed of the rotor in order to stabilize the image to meet the physiological constants of the human eye.²² The "sympathy" that technological media provided thus relied less on content or their realism than their capacity to transform the body into a continuation of the media link, where the very distinctions between subject and representation, media channels and their reception, become porous.

Two photo collages introducing readers to the Center's screening spaces demonstrate the way in which practitioners such as Liu Zhichang understood sympathy, and hence cinema's experiential supplement to language (figures 3 and 4). Published in an illustration-laden 1937 report on audiovisual teaching penned by the Center head Zhao Hongxiang, both diagrams arrange their constituent photographs according to a path demarcated by an arrow, as if reconstructing a virtual campus tour. Beginning with the caption "the earliest teaching location," the line passes through an exterior then interior view of the projection booth, a view of students filing out of the front door, and finally an empty "educational film lecture space," photographed in the direction of the screen. Read as montage, the images suggest the end of a screening: the projectionists unspool the film, the students leave, and the auditorium is empty. In the center is pasted a large group portrait of the Center's film committee, standing outside the campus wall. Significantly, the group portrait is not linked to the tour, occupying more the place of an emblem. In the second collage, a similar dynamic is established, except here in different terms.

²¹ Moreover, Tongqing was closely connected to the idea of datong, a utopian society in which all differences were effaced described by the great Qing dynasty reformer Kang Youwei. See Kang Youwei (2010).

²² "Resonance" was a vernacularized derivation of Japanese literary theorist Kuriyagawa Hakuson's Bergsonian ruminations on interiority. After having been transposed into Chinese, the term became widespread in the lexicon of the popular press (Bao 66-7).

The path takes the viewer around the corner of the building, through the front door, and into a view first of the screen and then the benches. To the right of the path is a photograph of the eaves; the caption indicates that inside them is installed a speaker. Electrical bolts emanate from the speaker, as if serenading the virtual guest with electrical sound, most likely that of a radio lecture. In both collages, then, the line is juxtaposed against an unmoving point, generating the effect of movement and, in the second case, the synesthesia of sound and vision.

As Weihong Bao points out in her reading of similar photomontages, such a visual repertoire is addressed to the sympathetic or resonant spectator. Organized, in part, by conventions of film viewing, the collage posits the spectator/reader as an intermedial link, who “experiences the photomontage informed by conventions of reading, viewing, and film watching” (108). In the photomontages of figures 2 and 3, this spectator/reader finds the educational cinematheque not as dark room with immobilized spectators but as a space in which bodies circulate. The virtual tourist does not move along with the masses leaving the theater, but enters into and shares their space. This experience of movement, however, does not take place in concretely represented space but in the blank abstract space between the photographic blocks, where only words and directional lines guide the visitor, as if inviting their imagination to resonate in the interstice. In this way, the photomontages appear as if to thematize the experience of a spectator caught between distinct unsutured media surfaces. He must negotiate between unsynchronized information flows: the projected motion picture, the lecturer’s voice as it booms over the loudspeaker, the lecturer’s body as he sits on the chair in front of the screen, the columns blocking the screen, and the inscriptions above and on both sides of the proscenium arch. As opposed to the figure of the viewer situated at the ideal point in which perspectival lines converge, one finds a spectator who, like the reader of the illustration, must crane her neck, move and focus in order to cut out her own perspective. What may otherwise be considered failures of design are, in another light, spaces in which human bodies *become* media in navigating what is opaque to them. What, however, does this mode of spectatorship entail? To push this account forward, it will be necessary to situate such media practices within the specific history and spatiality of the mass education center.

Historically speaking, the spatial logic of the mass education center offered a counterpoint to the enclosed spatiality of the modern school, continuing older practices of popular enlightenment (*jiao hua*), which envisioned education as continuous with the role of rural gentry in elevating local culture and religious rites (Zhou 2013: 37). An essential feature of the *sishu* that the modern schools replaced was that the former's doors were always open to the public, whereas modern schools barred entry to "idlers and unconcerned persons" (37). Rather than being a porous space molded on generalized uplift, the school became an enclosure that taught a specialized and counter-intuitive curriculum.²³ As in the colonial Egypt described by Timothy Mitchell, in the modern Chinese school "learning was now to be separated from the practices in which it was entwined, assigning it a distinct place, the school, and a distinct period of life, that of youth" (1988: 88). Popular education initiatives, at first run by progressive gentry and urban intellectuals and later integrated into state-run mass education centers, offered an alternative. According to Li Zhen, a Columbia University graduate and professor at the Jiangsu Provincial Teaching Academy, rural inhabitants were to view mass education centers as their own property, where they could assemble for both learning and leisure (Zhu 2012: 43). By their nature as open spaces for public entry, Mass Education Centers were thus opposed to the bounded school, which intellectuals in the 1930s increasingly suspected of fracturing rather than uniting the polity. By the 1930s, the public education system—in fact a haphazard concatenation of provincially funded and privately-run institutions—had acquired a distinct stratification, serving the privileged youth of the gentry class who, in turn, could rarely find occupations that fit their academic training (Pepper 1996: 38). When the League of Nations' mission of educational experts left China at the end of 1931, their final report described "an enormous abyss between the masses of the Chinese people, plunged into illiteracy, and not understanding the needs of their country, and the intelligentsia educated in luxurious schools and indifferent to the wants of the masses" (League of Nations' Mission 1932: 21).²⁴ Mass education was envisioned as a corrective to this situation, addressing the broad population without access to formal schooling. Reformers often referred to this group by citing the alarming figure of eighty percent illiteracy.²⁵ Mass education centers addressed this population with literacy education, on the one hand, and

²³ For an account of suspicions regarding curriculum and mob attacks of schools, see Bailey (1990).

²⁴ The report, however, was quite positive on China's practices of adult education. Also see Pepper 37-9.

²⁵ The figure is cited, for example, in Wang Pingling (1991). In Zhejiang, it was estimated that there were 250,000 illiterates. See Zhu Yu, 54.

by circulating “experiential” object lessons: product exhibits, vocational trainings, hygienic examinations, and military-style drills, on the other (Zhu 54). Film and radio extended these practices, offering them, as it were, in a miniaturized and “economic” form. In Chinese intellectual circles, motion pictures had been long valued for their logistical “economy” in the context of popular education practice. As early as 1915, former minister of education Cai Yuanpei described the electric shadowplay as the “lightest and most expedient” (*yi qing er yi*) form of theatre (2013: 61), a point further reiterated in Gu Kenfu’s “Foreword” to the 1921 *Shadowplay Magazine* and other early film writings. Gu’s essay, today recognized as one of the first Chinese film theory texts, stressed the degree to which cinema would reduce to a minimum the expenses used for meals, travel, and lodging of theatrical troupes, as well as energy expended to entertain the actors, not to mention the effect of their high salaries on ticket prices. Projected in many places at once, a single film could reach a larger audience than a single theatrical performance (2000: 10-12). In the context of the unevenly developed road system that obstructed the generalized flow of goods and services across the country, cinema provided a form of vicarious “experience” that could be mass-produced and easily transported.

In this context, the strange logistical definition of educational cinema found in the pages of the 1934 guide acquires its significance. “The regular film is shown at a fixed location, requiring the installation of a large projector, while the educational film can be shown in a fixed site, it also travels to many places,” reads the guide (Liu Zhichang 23). Citing the portability of 16mm film technology vis a vis the ponderous 35mm gauge, Liu’s definition matter-of-factly defines the educational *as* mobile. Portability, as Haidee Wasson points out, cannot be read outside of the protocols by which cinematic technologies are inserted within specific institutional forms (Wasson 2013: 244). Writing in the context of the U.S. Army’s motion picture use during the Second World War, Wasson elaborates how the lightweight and durable physical qualities of the JAN P-49 projector enabled it to be integrated seamlessly into a global network of military screens, in turn leading to a generalized protocol of postwar platform versatility. Whereas for the U.S. military, institutional needs determined engineering protocols, for Chinese educators with little access to the networks of equipment design and production, off-the-shelf products determined the contours of institutional capacities. The embrace of the 16mm gauge by Chinese politicians, educators, and filmmakers in the 1930s reflected the degree to which technological protocols both bolstered and frustrated institutional demands. Confronting a situation in which,

as Chen Lifu expressed, “the transportation difficulties in the inland and the underdevelopment of our electrical industries make it impossible for Chinese films to appear in front of the masses,” 16mm films powered by mobile generators offered its users the image of a fully saturated inland “national projection network” (1934: 95). As Jin Qingyu, one of the heads of the leading Shanghai studio the United Photoplay Service (Lianhua), complained at the 1935 National Educational Cinematographic Society meeting, the 1930s boon in Shanghai commercial features with educational quality had entirely overshoot “true peasants and workers,” who had little opportunity to see the films that claimed to represent them (1935: 60). As remedy, Jin called for the state to fund mobile projection teams using the substandard gauge, either 16mm or 8mm.²⁶ Film technician and studio head Luo Jingyu pushed the point further when, at a 1941 roundtable, he envisioned building an expansive system of nationally owned “small scale cinemas” using 16mm projectors and seating an audience of 3,000 to 4,000 (Sun Shiyi et. al. 1941: 13). The small format, Luo wrote elsewhere, was nothing short of a “revolution in film technology,” offering Chinese cinema the opportunity to overcome both the high capital investments required for 35mm projection and foreign entrenchment in the commercial film market (Luo 1941: 78).²⁷

For its part, the mass education center in Zhenjiang found the 16mm gauge essential to both its mobile and fixed exhibition practices. Yet, even with its portability, the gauge fit awkwardly within the Center’s institutional context. In a page entitled “Bringing Electrified Education to the Countryside” published in its 1937 report, Center staff included a wide array of photographs and illustrations depicting outdoor screenings and men carrying, setting up, and transporting audiovisual equipment (figure 5). Due to rough environs and the fact that only thirteen of the fifty schools in its rural service district had electricity, the text lays out three protocols for the technology used in educational work: (1) that the machines be solidly constructed, light, and able to withstand jostling; (2) that they be “inexpensive and effective”; and (3) that they use less electricity and are capable of being powered by battery rather than gas generator (Zhao 1937: n.p).

²⁶ Although Jin mentions the 8mm gauge, 16mm was the standard gauge later adopted for educational film work. In part, this was a result of the dependence of Chinese practitioners on U.S. distributors based in Shanghai, especially Eastman Kodak. A more thorough survey of the 16mm gauge’s market penetration into China remains to be done, however the general narrative moves from sporadic uses by foreign-based institutions in the 1920s (such as Jinling University and the YMCA) to the widespread institutional use achieved by the Educational Film Movement by the mid-1930s. U.S. logistical involvement during WWII further solidified this gauge dependency.

²⁷ For a further discussion of Luo’s essay, see Bao (2015): 278-282.



Fig. 5: "Cinematographic Teaching goes to the Countryside," source: ibid

As of 1937, the center was working on a 16mm projector capable of running on a six-volt battery, but the war arrested this effort. For the time being, however, it used a gas generator carried by two persons or affixed to a hand drawn cart.

In order to overcome the difficulties involved in transporting a film projector, films, a screen, black curtains, radio equipment, a generator, and an amplifier to various screening sites, the Center commissioned China Autoworks in Shanghai to make its first ambulatory teaching van. Built on a Mercedes-Benz truck chassis, the van was completed in 1937 and equipped with “every kind of electrified education [audiovisual education] implement (generator, sound



Fig. 6: Distance and Fuel Chart Source: ibid

amplifier, film projector, and radio receiver)” and stocked with “foodstuffs and lodging accessories for [our] personnel, as well a cabinet of all types of educational accessories” (Zhao 12). More than screening films, the ambulatory team also carried out a wide range of other

functions, such as broadcasting lectures and radio programs, transporting mass reading materials and exhibits, teaching the masses to distinguish between domestic and foreign-produced goods, performing medical examinations, and offering photography services for locals (Ibid). One publication called it a “small-scale mass education center” (“Yiyue jian” 1937: 26). The use of the vehicle highlighted the degree to which the Center’s film screenings had become extensions of existing transport infrastructure. The Center’s 1937 report makes a point to show off the vehicle’s travel data in a table delineating its main routes, travel distances, number of stops, and diesel mileage (figure 6). With its emphasis on a numerical and thus abstract visualization of scale, the diagram can be read as the mirror image of recent construction projects that, in the preceding years, had connected Zhenjiang to a high speed regional network.

In 1927, the newly consolidated Nationalist regime declared Nanjing, once the provincial capital, the seat of the national government (Liu and Xu 1930: 93). In 1929, Zhenjiang, then a dilapidated backwater, was designated the new provincial seat. That year, concrete floors were laid in a defunct Confucian academy in the historic center of the city in what would soon become the provincial mass education center. In order to make Zhenjiang into the image of a capital city, the government ordered a set of large-scale building projects, filling in defunct canals, widening roads for automobile traffic, erecting parks, and dismantling the city wall to make way for new road construction (Yang and Qiu 2001). Modeled off the construction projects in Nanjing, with wide boulevards and comprehensive zoning, the projects sought not only to achieve the benefits of central planning, but also to create the impression that everything was planned (Kirby 2000: 139-43). “What distinguished the Nationalist regime was its confidence in its ability to plan, first for the capital and then for the entire country, on an international technological standard,” writes the historian William C. Kirby (141). Transforming the city from a dilapidated fortress into a transportation hub, the reconstruction efforts linked Zhenjiang to a new high-speed circuit in the lower Yangtze region: Traveling by automobile along the newly built Shanghai-Nanjing highway, Nanjing, Changzhou, and Wuxi were less than two hours away; a trip to and from Shanghai could be completed in a day (Yao 1933; Strand 2000: 99).

New infrastructure, however, superimposes on older routes. Underneath the highways, a capillary system of narrow paths, alleys, and canals sustained the everyday travel of ordinary workers, peasants, and merchants (Strand 103). Indeed, the modern reconstruction of Zhenjiang disrupted the latter, as canal blockages caused frequent floods due to poor drainage (Yang and

Qiu 26). If in David Strand's words, Zhenjiang was linked to "the framework of a common urban reality connected by camel, boat, horse or mule cart, car, train and plane that also extended into the countryside and out into the world," this shared urbanism was defined by the intersection of radically different speeds, which in turn was demarcated along the lines of class and geography (99). The Mass Education Center's work took place on these superimposed grids of mobility, which in turn defined its institutional and architectural thinking. In late 1930, the Center opened a Western campus on the edge of the newly built Boxian Park. Driving on Sun Yat-sen Boulevard, which was built in 1929 on top of the dismantled city wall, one could travel between campuses in less than thirty minutes (Yang and Qiu 24).²⁸ However, the Western campus was explicitly built out of concern that the old city was inaccessible to the residents of the more populous Western neighborhoods, residents who were less likely to capitalize on the newly built thoroughfare designed for automotive travel (Zhao 1936). As a spatial practice, hence, the Center's work was addressed to the difference between its own access to the urban and that of the populations it served. In a certain sense, the very meaning of its educational work, which sought to bring residents out of their narrow alleyways and into wide-open spaces such as the public park, was defined by this differential.

How the ambulatory car intervened in this difference can be glimpsed in returning to the illustration of the mass education cinematheque with which I began. One finds it once again recaptioned in the Center's 1937 report, where it is pasted on the page titled "Future Aspirations," alongside depictions of waterborne projection and wired radio. The new caption reads:

Situated alongside the road, each automobile station will be equipped with a space for lecture-screenings. Our center's ambulatory teaching cars will circulate at scheduled times to implement the educational [program]. Each county may, if it has them, prepare a park or public square for screening in order to facilitate the ambulatory cars' timely setup.

(Zhao 1937: n.p.)

The 1937 iteration of the captions indexes the transformations in educational film practice that had taken place in the intervening years. While the illustration remains constant, the captions arrange its multiple screening situations according to a regularized spatiotemporal articulation. While the earlier version advertises the projection vehicle's capacity to "travel anywhere," the latter districts this dream of mobility according to administrative demarcations situated at the

²⁸ Travel estimate from google maps, rounded up generously.

county-level; county governments are to prepare screening sites in order to facilitate “timely setup.” “City” and “country” were no longer vague slogans for the mobility of the audiovisual apparatus; they had acquired administrative, and thus operational, consistency.

In December 1936, the Ministry of Education passed two decrees, which were to be implemented at the municipal and provincial level. The first, the “Cinematographic Education Implementation Plan” called for provincial governments to demarcate educational film screening districts and to designate an institution—usually an educational institution—responsible for operating mobile film projection in each district (“Ge Sheng shi” 1936: 5-6).²⁹ A second plan concerning radio included similar requirements. Put together, the two orders were called the “electrified education laws” (*dianhua jiaoyu fagui*), a crystallization of several years of theoretical discussion, publicity campaigns, and local implementation programs aimed at inserting the electrically powered teaching aids into the national educational debate. At the level of the Zhenjiang Center’s practices, the decrees forced a shift to a regularized screening schedule. The previous screening procedure arranged for schools and civic institutions in Zhenjiang and its surrounding area to request either individual screenings or semester-long subscriptions (Zong 1937: 302). According to the new regulations, the Center’s mobile projection teams were now required to visit the Zhenjiang municipality and the eight counties in its projection district at regular intervals, following a predetermined itinerary decided in advance (“Ge shengshi” 6). Although no one from the Center’s electrified education committee grumbled in print about the new arrangements, evidence of the difficulties introduced by compulsory regularized screening can be discerned from verbiage concerning the ambulatory teaching van.

In the 1937 report, Center director Zhao Hongxiang complains, “The greatest difficulties of ambulatory teaching work was logistical inconvenience: the slow pace of travel on foot and difficulties in [securing] food and lodging” (1937: 10). That the audiovisual workers could not expect consistently to be fed and housed by their local contacts is telling as to the relationship between the Center and the communities it served. With the 1936 laws, the screenings were no longer done at the invitation of local teachers and administrators, who might then be expected to show some degree of hospitality to their guests. Teams were also expected to travel between counties for weeks at a time without returning to the Center, something hardly sustainable

²⁹ The Plan was passed and distributed to municipal Social Bureaus and provincial Education Bureaus on August 22, 1936.

without stable expectations of food and shelter. “In rural villages, there are very few restaurants and hotels; when they do exist, they are rarely clean. Under these conditions, our employees are often cold and hungry. This is not good for their health. The results of our work have thus suffered” (n.p). The successful circulation of educational motion pictures in rural China depended on the presence of an economy that commoditized basic needs, and moreover food and shelter that met the hygienic standards of the urban educated instructor. The mobile self-enclosed environs resolved this palpable asymmetry, replacing independent variables of economic relationality (hospitality gifted or exchanged for money) with those of technological infrastructure: wide roads and available diesel. Auspiciously, the van provided enough storage space to carry foodstuffs, lodging, and fuel onboard. Detachable equipment rendered the teams versatile, able to disembark and travel via canals and small roads. The van, as Zhao observed, “invigorated our Center’s ambulatory [screening] activities, breaking open the limits of space and time, and expanding the specific capacities of mass education” (1937: 10). Or, put more bombastically and with reference to the vital May Fourth distinction between a “dead” classical Chinese and the “living” vernacular, the van “takes a dead mass education center and gives it life, allowing it to get closer to the masses, to go among them [*shen ru min jian*], and to break the limits of space and time that had previously afflicted our work” (Ibid).

Inserted within the diagram of the future mass educational cinematheque, the ambulatory teaching vans—here imagined in the plural—enable a dynamic system formed out of the coordination of multiple mobilities. The screening space so envisioned exists only provisionally at the intersection of audiences who travel to the site and the ambulatory teaching vehicle that meets them at a scheduled time. “Breaking open the limits of space and time,” this coordination of mobilities extracts both from their basis in a fixed locale; space and time become abstract, existing only in the superimposition of administrative demarcations, travel itineraries, and local screening schedules. If the final itinerary remains the product of a correspondence between the Center and local authorities, it is no longer grounded in that correspondence; the times and places are determined according to a spatiotemporal totality that can be mapped on the timetable, on the one hand, and the fuel chart, on the other. This deterritorializing momentum, and its fatigue, was furthered as the Ministry of Education commandeered the Zhenjiang center’s ambulatory projection van at the opening of the war of resistance against Japan, renaming it “National Projection Team One” (Li Wuzhou 2011: 5). Between 1937 and 1945, the car, with Liu

Zhichang at the helm, circulated between Hunan, Guizhou, Yunan, and Sichuan for tours that lasted five months at a time (“Jiaoyu bu” 1938: 22).



Fig. 5: Portrait of Going to the Countryside (magnified)
Source: ibid

As a counterpoint to the car’s vision of a mobile screening as a smooth abstract space representable in timetables, distance, and fuel charts, the copper plate illustration depicting individuals pulling a hand-drawn cart (on the middle right of figure 5) offers an image of spatial disjunction subtended by human labor. In it, individuals wearing caps and with bared legs pull a cart of film equipment while educators dressed in black follow with

their suitcases containing portable amplifiers. Hand drawn carts were, after all, still essential to mobile projection work despite the advent of the car due to the prevalence of narrow alleys and footpaths inaccessible by motorized transport. “Because the rural populace suffered from the interruption of their education and the boredom of their environments,” the caption reads, “in the first semester of the twenty fourth year of the Republic [1935] our Center began to operate electrified teaching in the rural villages.” Next to the caption, an inscription, written in the cadence of a literacy rhyme, eulogizes the physical effort involved in bringing knowledge to the people:

Pull Hard! Push Hard!
In the name of the peoples’ intellectual hunger
This is our great educational responsibility
Not afraid of the wind or the frost, the rain or the snow
Not afraid of the grueling hardships
Comrades!
Forward March!
Forward March!

The poem is written as if to give encouragement for the mobile team in the picture as well as to the readers who are in a position to put themselves in their shoes, all in the name of a rural population depicted, as elsewhere, in the negative, as if their schooling had been brutally interrupted. But to whom in the image is the poem speaking in particular? The hatted men with bare legs form a stark contrast with the men in black with suitcases, evidencing a distinction

between the technical/instructional staff and hired coolies, “mental” and “manual” labor. Is it latter whom the poem tells to “pull hard” and “push hard,” to bear the brunt of “educational responsibility”? Making visible a peculiar configuration of technological unevenness, in which human labor comes to subtend gaps in the transport and electrical infrastructure that lend modern media their speed, the image, in addition, divides. Like the lecturer’s voice or the captions to the educational cinematheque illustration, the motivational inscription appears to lose its unified enunciation, speaking differentially to all who may read or hear it. The human carriers, themselves differentiated into suited and bare legged figures, mediate between dissynchronous systems: on the one hand a set of roads too narrow or windy for automobiles, and on the other, cinema and radio equipment that its users claimed could “break open the limits of space and time.”

Three implications can be drawn from this concluding freeze frame, which, in turn, open further lines of inquiry. The first concerns the degree to which the mobility of the cinematic apparatus infects the structure of its representation, such that the Center’s diagrams of exhibition spaces tend, as a rule, toward heterogeneous signifying relations—Lefebvre’s “representational space”—as opposed to the illusory transparency of perspective or the unified abstraction of the architectural plan. In these diagrams, captions do not “represent” the image but modify, disperse, and expand it. Secondly, such disjunctive and additive relations between text and image may, on the one hand, evidence peculiarities in the Chinese reception and transplantation of international models; on the other, they reflect the fragmentation brought about by the uneven fit between motion picture technologies, infrastructures, architectural configurations, and the structure of pedagogical address. The generalized signifying process involved in the diagrams corresponds to that of the lecture-screenings themselves, where spectators moved between unsutured information surfaces (film, magic lantern, gramophone, lecturer, and written inscriptions) in multi-use spaces where the lecturer relied on a supply of images in order to sustain the authority of his speech. Third, the actual logistics of transporting film images across the differentiated regional infrastructures turned the ensemble of available motion picture technologies into ambivalent sites of imagination and pragmatic adaptation. Human labor remained an essential element in transitioning between the different speeds of the automobile road, the footpath, and the canal. Like the spectator-students, who were called upon to adjust their bodies in order to create resonant relations with multiple media, a divided labor sustains resonance between the

machines themselves. The logistics of cinema pedagogy thus presents itself as a heterogeneous assemblage in which the articulation between speech, writing, image, technology, and roads are constantly in play. Unlike the disciplinary enclosure of the school, where as Michel Foucault observed, activities such as reading, writing, speaking, and picturing are buttressed by a “permanent and continuous field” of surveillance, the mass education cinema points toward different, perhaps incommensurate, articulations of bodies, space, and discourse (Foucault 1995: 177).³⁰ If, as some have argued, communication and control have superseded discipline as the new forms that power takes in the twentieth century (Deleuze 1995), the educational film occupies an essential, if awkward, place in this transition.

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³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), 177.

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