

Kyoto – The “Hollywood of Japan”

Diane Wei Lewis

On September 1, 1923, the Great Kanto Earthquake and ensuing fires and violence engulfed Tokyo in a storm of destruction. The disaster wiped out nearly 70% of all structures in the city and left more than 1.5 million homeless (Schencking 2006: 833). Tokyo alone suffered an estimated 91,000 casualties. Overall, there were nearly 120,000 missing or dead in the seven prefectures affected by the quake. The catastrophe dealt a decisive blow to Japan's film industry. Due to the disaster, the two largest film companies in Japan, Nikkatsu and Shochiku, were forced to leave the capital. Although Nikkatsu's Mukojima studio and Shochiku's Kamata studio suffered only minor damage, Tokyo's infrastructure was crippled and basic necessities were in short supply. Both studios temporarily closed their doors and moved production to the Kansai region. Shochiku quickly repaired and reopened its Kamata studio in January 1924, but Nikkatsu closed Mukojima and did not reopen a Tokyo studio until 1934. For the next ten years, Shochiku was the only major company operating a studio in Tokyo.

Prior to the earthquake, the film industry was divided between Tokyo in the east and the Kansai area in the west, where most film activity was concentrated in Kyoto. When Tokyo film workers moved to Kyoto after the disaster, it was the first time that film production was concentrated in one region of Japan. Thus, in the 1920s, during Tokyo's reconstruction, Kyoto became known as the “Hollywood of Japan.” This centralization hastened the modernization of the industry, leading to the formation of new professional organizations and technological innovation at brand-new production facilities.

This chapter will examine developments in the Kyoto film industry from the turn of the century through the 1920s, focusing in particular on the early development of Kyoto film studios and discourse on Kyoto as the “Hollywood of Japan.” In the earlier part of the century, the film industry benefitted from Kyoto's conscious efforts to modernize and reinvent its image. In the 1920s, studio

expansion strengthened associations between Japanese cinema and modernity in the Kansai region. Post-earthquake film magazines played up the connections between film and middle-class leisure, showcasing film studio tours and social visits to stars' homes. This publicity reinforced film's growing connections with respectable middle-class tastes and pastimes. A new "behind-the-scenes" culture helped film studios strategically manage the public perception of industry secrets and scandals.

Filmmaking played an important role in Kyoto's modern history, and the post-earthquake era marked a new and distinct period in the industry. As Japanese cinema transitioned from being a low-class attraction to a widely consumed form of popular entertainment, behind-the-scenes culture helped the industry promote itself through journalism on film studios and film celebrities' lifestyles. Nevertheless, there remained deep ambivalence toward the rapid social and cultural transformations accompanying modernization. Discourse on Kyoto as the "Hollywood of Japan" reflects complex attitudes toward American-style modernity in Japan.

The Early Period: The Founding of Kyoto Studios

By the time of the 1923 earthquake, Kyoto already had a long history of promoting local film production as a new, modern industry. Kyoto was the imperial capital of Japan from the beginning of the Heian period (794–1185) continuously through the end of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868) and the Meiji Restoration of 1868. In 1869, the imperial capital was moved to Tokyo, which (as Edo) had been the home of the *bakufu* (shogunate) and was now the seat of the new central government. With the relocation of the imperial family and the remaking of Japanese politics and society, Kyoto was faced with reorganizing its local economy and reinventing its image. City renewal projects led to the widening and paving of city streets, improvement of waterways, installation of electric street lighting, and introduction of new forms of transport such as city trams. Railways were extended between Kobe, Kyoto, Osaka, and Nara, and to other major cities across Japan. Regional industry and tourism increased, and by the time of the Great Kanto Earthquake, Kyoto had successfully reinvented itself as a modern tourist city by promoting its traditional landmarks, entertainment, and manufactures (Kaizuka 1979–1994).

The Kyoto film industry emerged out of these Meiji-period (1868–1912) transformations. The early film entrepreneur Inahata Katsutaro (later head of the Osaka Chamber of Commerce) was one of many Japanese sent by the Kyoto Prefectural government to study abroad in Europe during the Meiji years. After studying European chemical dyes at Lyon's polytechnic institute La Martinière Monplaisir, Inahata returned to Kyoto to introduce improvements to the local textiles industry. On a subsequent visit to France, Inahata learned that a former

classmate, August Lumière, had invented a motion picture device called the Cinématographe. Inahata quickly made arrangements to import the Lumière brothers' technology, returning to Kyoto with a Cinématographe and the camera operator François-Constant Girel. Cinématographe operators around the world made films to be shown in France and distributed to other countries. By 1903, many hundreds of films in the Lumière catalog consisted of scenic views of landscapes, monuments, cities, and peoples from around the world, including France, Italy, Spain, Egypt, Russia, Turkey, the US, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Serbia, Canada, Argentina, India, Brazil, Mexico, and Japan (Rossell 1995). The first Cinématographe screening in Japan took place in 1897 in Shijo-Kawara in Kyoto, a centrally located area of the city known for theatrical performances. Inahata Katsutaro himself can be seen together with his family in the Cinématographe film *Kazoku no shokuji / Repas en famille* (*A Family Meal*, 1897).

In 1897, after the first Cinématographe screening, Inahata bowed out of the movie business and passed on the invention to entrepreneur Yokota Einosuke, the son of another classmate from Lyon. Yokota had brought back an X-ray machine from one of his own trips overseas and was exhibiting it as an attraction in Kyoto and Osaka. He toured with the Cinématographe and eventually opened the Denki-kan, the first permanent movie theater in Kyoto.

The very first purpose-built film production studio in Japan opened in Meguro, Tokyo, in 1910 and was operated by Yoshizawa Shoten. Yokota Einosuke's company, Yokota Shokai, built Kyoto's first film studio later that year. This was erected near the southwest turret of Nijo Castle and consisted of a low wooden stage that measured approximately 3.6 by 7.2 meters. The stage was covered by an opening and closing tent, and painted backdrops were used for scenery (Nakajima 1994: 24). In 1912, Yokota built the second film studio in Kyoto in Ohigashicho, Kamigyo Ward. This was named the Hokke-do Studio after the temple just south of the site. Facilities included a stage, an office, a film developing room, a makeup and wardrobe room, and a warehouse, which were spread over an area of 1980 sq. meters. In contrast to the Nijo Castle Studio, which was covered with an opening and closing tent, one side of the Hokke-do Studio roof was fitted with glass in order to let in natural light (Nakajima 1994: 25).

Kyoto's plan for improving local industry included opening up unused land for development, much of it along new railway lines. Film studios sprang up along the Randen Line operated by Kyoto Dento (Kyoto Electric Light Company). This city tram line (today's Keifuku-Arashiyama line) opened in 1910 and was originally operated by the Arashiyama Electric Tram Railway (Arashiyama Densha Kido) before Kyoto Dento took over operations in 1918. As Nakajima Sadao notes, “With the exception of Shimogamo Studio, all the Kyoto studios tended to be built to the west of Nijo Castle Studio. After the Taishogun Studio period (the Nikkatsu studio in operation between 1918 and 1928), studios were moved even further west, along the Keifuku Railway” (1994: 25).

From roughly east to west, the studios built close to the Randen Line included: Nikkatsu Uzumasa Studio (opened 1927), Daiei Kyoto Studio (originally established as part of Nikkatsu Uzumasa Studio), Shochiku Kyoto Studio (opened 1952, today known simply as Shochiku Studio), Arashi Kanjuro Productions Uzumasa Studio (opened 1935), Daiichi Eiga Sagano Studio (opened 1934), and Chiezo Sagano Studio (opened 1929). By 1930, there were as many as thirteen film studios along this “Satsueijo-gai” (Film Studio Corridor). Of the fifteen film studios that once existed in Kyoto, two are still in operation today: the Daiei Kyoto Studio and the Shochiku Studio. Studios changed hands many times. Detailed information about the opening and closing of Kyoto-area studios and changes in ownership can be traced using Tomita Mika’s online resource, the Makino Project (2001).

Other studios opened north and east of the Randen Line studios, nearer to the Kitano Line that began operation in 1925 and that connected to the Randen Line at Katabiranotsuji Station in 1926, gradually adding new stations over the next two decades. From roughly southwest to northeast, the studios along the Kitano Line were: Bando Tsumasaburo’s Uzumasa Studio (opened 1926, later known as the Toei Kyoto Studio); J. O. Studio (opened 1933); the Takara Pro Studio (opened 1953); the Nihon Kinema Narabigaoka Studio (opened 1928); Makino Productions’s Omuro Studio (opened 1925); Tojiin Studio (opened 1921); Nikkatsu Taishogun Studio (opened 1918); and the Hokke-do Studio (opened 1912). Relative to the studios clustered near these two lines, the Shochiku Shimogamo Studio (opened 1924), in Shimogamo Miyazakicho in the Sakyo Ward of Kyoto, was in a very isolated location.

The close proximity of studios in the western area of Kyoto can be explained in part by the career trajectory of film director and studio chief Makino Shozo, “the father of Japanese cinema” and a major force in Kyoto filmmaking (Toki and Kyoto Kinema Tantei Dan 1994: 156). Makino began making movies at Yokota Einosuke’s request. After inheriting the Cinématographe from Inahata Katsutaro, Yokota quickly expanded his business thanks to the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), which stirred popular nationalism and contributed to a theater-building boom due to the great enthusiasm for war films. After the war, Yokota turned to Senbon-za kabuki theater manager Makino to ensure a steady supply of new films. Makino’s troupe performed for a primarily working-class audience of textile industry workers in the Nishijin area of Kyoto. Performances took place at night, leaving the company free during the day to make films (Shobayashi 1994: 3). Makino’s first film was released in 1908, and the following year, he made his first film with the itinerant kabuki star Onoe Matsunosuke, an acrobatic performer who was Japan’s first movie star and went on to appear in more than 1,000 films. Makino transferred studios many times during this period, opening several studios of his own. His activities helped spur studio development in Ukyo-ku and Kamigyō-ku, the western and northern wards of the city. His movements help explain the location and histories of these studios.

Makino was initially in charge of production at Hokke-do Studio. When Hokke-do closed, Makino took charge of the newly opened Nijo Studio. When Yokota Shokai was combined with three other businesses (M. Pathe, Fukuhodo, and Yoshizawa Shoten) to form Nikkatsu in 1912, Nijo became the Nikkatsu Kansai Studio. This closed when Nikkatsu Taishogun Studio opened in 1918. After moving to Taishogun, Makino briefly left in July 1919 to make educational films but was soon persuaded to return. Next, with the help of his assistant director at Nikkatsu, Kanamori Bansho, Makino created the independent company Mikado Shokai, which he ran out of his own home. After several releases, Mikado was absorbed by Nikkatsu as an educational film unit in January 1921. In June 1922, Makino was finally freed from Nikkatsu under the condition that he not make entertainment films. In 1922, Makino opened the Tojiin Studio and resumed educational filmmaking. In 1925, after briefly working under the auspices of the larger company Toa Kinema, Makino declared independence yet again as Makino Productions and built Omuro Studio.

In addition, many nearby studios that Makino did not establish or run were also linked to this influential filmmaker. Narabigaoka Studio was established in March 1928 by technicians who left Makino Productions. It was used by actors such as Arashi Kanjuro and Kataoka Chiezo, who had also parted with Makino in order to start independent production companies. Sagano Studio was opened by Kataoka in 1929.

As indicated, Kyoto studios benefited from available space and nearby railway lines. Undeveloped land was utilized for location shooting as well as to build homes and boarding houses for workers. In some cases, land was acquired from temples and shrines that needed to sell off property to survive financial hardship (Toki and Kyoto Kinema Tantei Dan 1994: 148). Many directors and actors – including Makino Shozo, Onoe Matsunosuke, Kanamori Bansho, Susukita Rokuhei, and Bando Tsumasaburo – lived close by. This closeness facilitated collaborations. For instance, the screenwriter Susukita Rokuhei discovered Bando Tsumasaburo, the muse for his nihilistic *jidaigeki*, among the no-name actors who rented rooms in the building where he lived near the studio (Toki and Kyoto Kinema Tantei Dan 1994: 149).

Kyoto’s filmmaking industry created alluring and stirring images of the city that helped promote tourism. Both filmmaking and tourism grew with the expansion of new intra-urban and inter-city railway lines. By the early 1930s, studio executives sat on municipal planning boards alongside local government officials, department store owners, industrial magnates, and entrepreneurs. In her research on the Kyoto industry, film scholar Tomita Mika strongly emphasizes the transfigurative power that cinema had for Kyoto. She describes cinema as a mirror that politicians, businessmen, craftsmen, and filmmakers used to present Kyoto’s best face to the world. Film was a “para-experiential medium” through which Kyoto both grasped its own identity and consciously manipulated how that identity appeared to outsiders. Exploring the connections between Kyoto’s history as a

“film city” and the revitalization of Kyoto during the Meiji Period, Tomita observes that modernization policy not only created urban renewal projects and the encouragement of local industry but also cultural projects and publicity efforts that used modern media to convey a rich, sensory experience of the city. As a result, Meiji-era Kyoto was a “crucible for the modern senses” (Tomita 2004: 42). These projects also made it possible for Kyoto’s film industry to thrive.

Images of Kyoto in Early and Silent Film

Cinema helped shape Kyoto’s image as a traditional city and tourist destination. In the decades prior to the Great Kanto Earthquake, actualities and fiction films shot on location in Kyoto created enticing images of its famous monuments and landscapes. Writing on early cinema and travel, Tom Gunning observes that, “In the modern era the very concept of travel becomes intricately bound up with the production of images. The image becomes our way of structuring a journey and even provides a substitute for it. Travel becomes a means of appropriating the world through images” (2006: 27). This modern desire for images of attractive, faraway places – in Kyoto’s case, images not only of temples, shrines, and the red-light district but also the “distant” feudal past – helped drive the development of Kyoto’s modern film industry even as filmmaking enhanced Kyoto’s image as a traditional city.

In particular, Kyoto’s image as a historical city, replete with beautiful traditions, cultural treasures, and mythic heroes, was reinforced by studios specializing in *jidaigeki* (period films). Swordfighting (*chanbara*) and ninja (*ninjutsu*) films were shot in temple districts, wide open fields, and wooded landscapes. These films gave viewers a taste of Kyoto’s historical charm even as they commodified these landscapes, turning them into consumable spectacles that transported the viewer through time and space.

Tomita (2004) observes that, in addition to *jidaigeki*, the novelty exhibition format known as the *rensageki* (chain drama) enhanced the dramatic qualities of Kyoto’s city space. *Rensageki* became popular in major cities throughout Japan around 1914, peaking in popularity around 1917. It was characterized by a mixture of filmed and live-action scenes performed on stage. In the form popularized in Osaka, filmed landscapes sometimes took the place of painted backdrops, and actors performed in front of the motion picture screen. *Rensageki* in Tokyo more frequently alternated live performance and filmed sequences of events that could only be represented with difficulty on a theatrical stage.

In Kyoto, the most popular and representative *rensageki* troupe was the Kubota Seiichi Theater that performed at the Kyoto-za in the Shin-Kyogoku entertainment district. The shooting locations and times for Kubota’s productions were advertised in the daily papers. According to Tomita, these locations corresponded to the most popular tourist destinations in the city, which were also frequently found in the so-called “red-light literature” of contemporary authors such as

Nagata Mikihiro. These included: the area of the Kamo River between Shijo and Gojo streets; behind the pleasure quarters of Ponto-cho, along the west bank of the Kamo River between Sanjo and Shijo streets, as well as Miyagawa-cho, on the east side of the Kamo River south of Shijo; the temple precincts of Kitano Tenmangu; Kiyomizu, in the environs of Kiyomizu-dera temple, east of Gojo-dori; Takao, a resort in the northwestern mountains and popular spot for maple viewing; Toribeyama; Lake Biwa; and the Arashiyama hot springs Rankyo-kan (a famous inn). Tomita suggests that on-location film shoots awakened spectators to the hidden thrills of everyday landscapes that might at any moment turn into a setting for dramatic action. This was apparent to both the spectators who attended the advertised film shoots as well as the theater audiences who viewed the finished films. Kyoto's famous locations provided striking cinematic backdrops while film-making infused the city landscape with drama, enhancing its beauty and fascination (2004: 43).

Writing in a similar vein, Nakajima Sadao (1994) – screenwriter, director, and emeritus chairman of the Kyoto International Film and Art Festival – describes two kinds of cinematic locations: sites that are so distinctive that they are symbolic of Kyoto and can never pass as other places (for instance, the Kiyomizu-dera temple and the Yasaka-no-to pagoda) and sites that are used generically, either as no place in particular or as a substitute for the diegetic location (for instance, locations along the Kiyotaki River or in the ancient Tadasu no Mori forest, which are beautiful and atmospheric, but not so distinctive as to be recognizable). Both types of locations enhanced Kyoto's image as a “film city,” a city of dreams and multiple worlds. Famous, distinctive spaces promoted Kyoto as a stage for adventure and drama, while atmospheric but nondistinctive spaces transported the viewer to an imaginary place and time.

Tomita and Nakajima emphasize important links between cinema and Kyoto's image as a historical city. This association can be traced to the very earliest years of Kyoto film production. Developments after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake inaugurated a new phase in Kyoto's film industry. There has been far less attention to how the relocation of Tokyo film workers after the Great Kanto Earthquake affected Kyoto's image as a “film city” and gave rise to a new image of Kyoto as the “Hollywood of Japan.” It is to this aspect of Kyoto's film history that we now turn.

“Hollywood of Japan”

As related above, Meiji modernization policy played an important role in stimulating the Kyoto film industry. In turn, early filmmakers shaped the modern image of Kyoto by utilizing its natural landscapes and traditional architecture in historical dramas. However, despite Kyoto's long history of filmmaking, it was only after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake that Kyoto became known as the “Hollywood of Japan.” This appellation first appears after the relocation of Tokyo

studios to Kyoto. The term, thus, refers specifically to the transfer of the Tokyo industry to Kyoto and the consequences (both real and imagined) of this move.

The term “Hollywood” was a relatively new term, having only acquired general English usage circa 1920 following the rise of filmmaking in Los Angeles during the 1910s. From about 1913 on, American film companies began to establish permanent production facilities around Los Angeles, where mild weather made it possible to film outdoors all year long and there was ample space for building studios. Here, companies could also escape Thomas Edison’s litigious trust, the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC). Although there was thriving film activity in several American cities – including New York and Chicago – Los Angeles would emerge as the first real center of American film production (Stamp 2004: 334). “Hollywood” came to refer collectively to Los Angeles-area companies and the local filmmaking community. Gradually, “Hollywood” came to stand for American cinema as a whole.

The burgeoning Los Angeles industry drew thousands of new residents who made a living making movies or who were employed in related trades, such as film equipment and developing, costuming, journalism, catering, or publicity. The film workers’ culture was so distinct that existing residents referred to the new transplants as “the movie colony” and the studios as “camps” (Stamp 2004: 334). Shelley Stamp points out that articles in popular magazines – from *Everybody’s Magazine* to *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Scientific American* – contributed to the image of a film settlement by emphasizing “the vast tracts of land occupied by the companies, their extraordinary facilities, and the enormous workforce they employed” (2004: 335). With the birth of Hollywood, the American film industry was both localized and highly visible as never before.

American film studios attracted the public’s interest by marketing their facilities and workforces as communities (e.g. Universal City) and as tourist destinations. Drove of visitors paid to go on studio tours. According to Stamp, in the mid-1910s Los Angeles studio tours drew between 500 and 1,000 visitors per day (ibid). Stamp notes, “Celebrations of opulent living in the filmmaking community were part of a broader glamorization of Los Angeles fostered by an aggressive promotion of the city at the turn of the century” (2004: 337). Fascination with Hollywood was also enhanced by existing associations connecting the West, self-transformation, and the American dream. Stamp observes that the emergence of Hollywood coincided with a general trend westward that was evident for at least a decade prior. Southern California was famous for its active outdoor lifestyles, culinary variety, and beautiful landscapes (ibid). Hollywood took advantage of these existing associations to promote the industry’s relationship with health, youth, and modernity.

The emergence of Hollywood provided a ready-made framework for post-earthquake Japanese studio publicity. The relocation of Tokyo film workers drew comparisons to the establishment of Hollywood. The retreat from a crowded, eastern metropolis and resettlement in the West reinforced this

comparison. Although companies’ administrative headquarters remained in Tokyo, it was the studios that inspired public fascination with movie making. As *Kinema junpo* observed in January 1924, for the first time, all four major Japanese film companies – Shochiku, Nikkatsu, Teikine, and Makino – were operating in the same region of Japan (Tanaka 1924). Phrases such as “Hollywood,” “film-land,” and “film city” began appearing in film magazines as early as spring 1924. Starting that year and for the remainder of the decade, Kansai’s annual film production would surpass Tokyo’s output by approximately three times the number of titles put out each year.

“Hollywood of Japan” emphasized not only the similarities but also the differences between Japanese and American cinema. By referring to a location and film-making culture, and not simply business practices or film style, the moniker drew attention to the lifestyles associated with modernity in Japan. For instance, the behind-the-scenes column “Memo from a Fan: From Kyoto, Hollywood of Japan” in the magazine *Nihon eiga* (*Japanese Film*) examined new developments in the Kyoto film industry and reported the latest film gossip. A correspondent called “Y.” related anecdotes that proved “Kyoto is becoming more and more like Hollywood in every way” (1924a: 42). According to Y., “the Hollywood of Japan, Kyoto” deserved to be regarded as a “film capital” (*eiga no miyako*) because of the progressiveness of local film censors (1924b: 40). Y. claimed that in Kyoto, films were rarely banned from being shown. He pointed to the Kanamori Bansho *jidaigeki Chi ni kuruu mono* (*Crazed with Blood*, 1924), which remained faithful to Susukita Rokuhei’s provocative script by experimenting with “explicit depictions.” It was such a “splendid success” in this regard that even the filmmakers expected it would be banned; much to everyone’s surprise, *Crazed with Blood* passed censorship in Kyoto with few cuts (1924b: 41). Y. also offered gossip that was “worthy” of “Hollywood” Kyoto, such as actors Okada Tokihiko and Natsume Kayoko’s public love affair. The couple was frequently observed holding hands and strolling together until their sudden breakup. Natsume subsequently “kicked up a fuss, pointed herself toward Tokyo, and disappeared.” Y. savored the controversy, quipping, “New divorces and separations are befitting of Hollywood [*Horiuddo rashikute*] – hurrah!” (ibid).

Other articles on the “Hollywood of Japan” took a less sanguine view, warning against the materialism of the film industry and the vanity of fans who day-dreamed of becoming stars. In particular, between the years 1925 to 1928, newspapers and film magazines were flooded with articles about young women from rural areas of Japan who left their homes without permission to become movie stars. According to newspaper reports, aspirants did not realize that film companies were overwhelmed with applicants who would be turned away. Sensational reports described how aspiring actresses (*joyushigansha*) were robbed, raped, or kidnapped in the course of their misadventures and ultimately forced to return home. This panic was similar to the “movie-struck girl” phenomenon in Britain and the US (Stamp 2000, 2004; Kenaga 2006; O’Rourke 2014; Anselmo-Sequiera 2015).

Articles on the aspiring actress panic were part-reportage and part-sensational entertainment. *Asahi* newspaper reporter Matsumoto Yoshiro compiled numerous examples of aspiring actress exploits for *Nikkatsu gaho* (*Nikkatsu Illustrated*) – articles such as “Miserable Aspiring Actresses Lured by the Hell of Vanity!” (February 1, 1926) and “To the Depths of Hell: Descending Throng of Aspiring Actresses, Linked to Many Crimes” (October 1, 1926). Each article provides multiple anecdotes of young women running away to become stars, only to find themselves stranded in Kyoto and targeted by police, sex traders, and con men. Matsumoto blamed the women themselves for “destroying their very bodies and souls, sinking to the lowest of the low” (1926:12). An October 1926 article by “Hakumen Kuroko” called “Private Details of Stars’ Lifestyles” includes many of the phrases typically found in ambivalent writing about the “Hollywood of Japan,” including descriptions of young men and women “seduced by a glamorous lifestyle” (*hanayaka naru seikatsu ni akogarete*) who become “somnambulists” (*muuyubiyosha*) as a result. The article warns that boys and girls who come to the “special kingdom of film” (*eiga no tokushu okoku*) to become kings and queens will ultimately be a burden on their families instead of striking it rich (42).

The aspiring actress panic was not simply a tabloid sensation. As the magazine *Eiga jidai* (*The Film Age*) reports in 1927, Kyoto film studios and social services were overwhelmed by runaways. The Kyoto City Homen-iin Kai (District Commissioners Association) developed prevention measures for presentation to the Kyoto City Social Bureau.

Since the city of Kyoto is home to Toa Tojiin, Nikkatsu, Makino, Bantsuma, and Shochiku Shimogamo studios, an extremely large number of aspiring actors come to Kyoto, and since the vast majority are runaways, it is no easy matter controlling their kind. However, the Kyoto District Commissioners Association has developed a prevention plan in collaboration with the studios. The plan includes the following provisions, which were first shared with the Kyoto City Social Bureau: all relevant prefectural authorities and ministries will submit a request for prevention to elementary schools, middle schools, and girls’ schools, as well as to city, town, and village authorities (provided that school authorities reprimand students and their guardians upon graduation as well as at other appropriate occasions); the programs distributed at film theaters will carry a basic warning message; a basic warning message will be inserted in the films and advertisements projected at film theaters; in the future, college study trips to film studios will be refused. (126)

According to the District Commissioners Association, in a single year approximately 2,000 aspirants had come to Kyoto hoping to find acting jobs in the film industry. As the prevention plan indicates, most of these aspirants were youths. Accordingly, the District Commissioners Association suggested the city place two or three full-time social workers in each Kyoto school district to help assist with prevention.

Film journalists fanned the controversy, writing thrilling articles on film-related crimes and scandals. These articles helped sell magazines while warning inexperienced aspirants to stay away. An antecedent to the aspiring actress panic can be found in the Meiji- and Taisho-era delinquent schoolgirl panic. Turn-of-the-century newspapers and magazines carried sensational fiction and news reports about the dangers of urban life and its corrupting effects on impressionable youth, especially schoolgirls. The moral panic surrounding misbehaving schoolgirls reflected anxieties about Tokyo’s swelling population and the social upheaval caused by rural migration to the city. Articles on Tokyo crime and filth attempted to dissuade women from developing fanciful notions of the city and abandoning their rural homes to come to Tokyo. Impressionable schoolgirls who were being educated in their new modern roles as “good wives and wise mothers” (*ryosai-kenbo*) were warned not to imitate the corrupt aspects of modernity (Karlin 2014). In the mid-to-late 1920s, film journals and newspapers adopted similar language, describing Kyoto as the “depths of hell,” in order to paint a vivid picture of the dangers girls would encounter in “the Hollywood of Japan.”

It may seem surprising that such stories were published in studio fan magazines such as *Nikkatsu gaho*, but there were several reasons for film studios to embrace the aspiring actress panic. As a “what not to do” discourse, the panic complemented more affirmative descriptions of film actresses and fan behavior, allowing studios and journalists to shape the conversation on women and cinema as well as celebrate “good” film fans. Stereotypes of wayward “movie-struck girls” helped legitimate the hard work and skill of actual working actresses.

Ambivalent writing about the Kyoto as the “Hollywood of Japan” extended and elaborated on existing ideas about Hollywood. Ito Yasuo’s series of articles for *Eiga jidai*, “Hollywood Symphony Music,” paint a wry portrait of Hollywood as a land of contradictions. Ito described Hollywood as “a bright sadness – a bright depression”; for despite ever-cheerful weather, the atmosphere of Los Angeles is thick with the misery of extras who have no hope of becoming stars (1928a: 36). Regarding Hollywood’s obsession with images, Ito observed, “The Hollywood lifestyle is publicity itself” (1928b: 40). Stars stroll the streets at night wearing gaudy clothes and exhibiting eccentric behavior. Actors pay tribute to the moon with affected words and gestures as if they were playing film roles. “Should we call this despicable or should we call it sad? I feel sorry for them, for if they don’t go to these lengths to throw themselves into publicity, they won’t make it into the cast,” Ito writes (1928b: 41). Actors must buy up several hundreds of production stills for their own personal publicity. The extent to which stars “suffer from a publicity lifestyle” (*senden seikatsu*) is demonstrated by Jackie Coogan cutting his hair (1928b: 41). When Chaplin’s sidekick in *The Kid* grew up and lost his childlike appeal, the shearing of his trademark bob was used as a publicity stunt to smooth his transition into adulthood. Ito’s article includes a picture of Coogan surrounded by photographers as the haircut is staged outside a luxurious home on Wilshire Blvd.

Ito notes that the publicity lifestyle is not specific to Hollywood, but is a general American trait. Just as every Hollywood studio claims it is the largest or most fully equipped, New York theaters boast the “MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRLS IN THE WORLD.” Ito examines the phenomenon of studios such as First National or Universal advertising their production studios as “cities.” These “cities” sometimes consist of just a single street and a few narrow alleys between buildings, but they are decked out with street signs and may have a gas station, café, or candy store. Universal City may be “shabby,” but it is large enough to have parking lots and accommodate crowds of extras, in addition to a golf course, a zoo, mountains and rivers, and even a Mexican town. Hollywood’s smaller studios – Mack Sennett, FBO (Film Booking Offices of America), Fine Arts Studio, Vitagraph – aren’t much different from Japanese studios, but even these smaller studios are sign-posted like “cities.” Ito points out that for these smaller companies, such boasting is more sport than actual publicity. Nevertheless, Ito emphasizes, this is yet another example of how Hollywood never forgets about publicity (1928b: 44).

Despite having an established film industry by the time of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, Kyoto only became known as the “Hollywood of Japan” after the disaster. This moniker attested to the new importance of the Kyoto industry, but specific usage of the term also reveals deep ambivalence toward American-style modernity and commercial culture. This ambivalence carried over from discussion of American Hollywood to the discourse on “Hollywood of Japan.”

Eiga jidai and “Sightseeing” Journalism

The relocation of the film industry to Kyoto and growth of the Japanese studio system inspired a travel literature of film studio sightseeing, location diaries, Japanese film celebrities’ Hollywood travels, and reports on domestic publicity tours. Typical articles included “Guide to Kansai Studios,” which was published in the June 1924 inaugural issue of *Nihon eiga* (*Japanese Cinema*) and introduced readers to the characteristic features of each studio. The guide was written by Yamamoto Rokuha, a frequent contributor to *Kinema junpo* and a founding editor of *Kamata* film magazine. It provided detailed directions on how to get to each studio, descriptions of each studio and its personnel, and comments on the local environs. Yamamoto profiled Makino Kinema Studios and Nikkatsu Studio, describing the temple precinct of Tojiin, Shimogyo Ward; Shochiku Kinema Shimogamo Studio in Shimogamo; Teikine Studio in the Osaka suburb of Kosaka; and the not-yet-opened Toa Kinema Studio, located in Koyo park in Taisha-mura, Buko Ward, Hyogo Prefecture.

Using travel imagery, commentators were able to strengthen the associations between Japanese cinema, Kyoto, middle-class lifestyles, and leisure. In the mid-to-late 1920s, the film magazine *Eiga jidai* helped pioneer this kind of film journalism.



Figure 1.1 Kikuchi Kan with silent film actress Kurishima Sumiko. *Eiga jidai*, July 1927.

Eiga jidai was a middlebrow film magazine founded by the writer and entrepreneur Kikuchi Kan (Figure 1.1). Kikuchi's first journal, established in 1923, was the successful *Bungei shunju* (*Literary Seasons*). *Bungei shunju* began as a coterie magazine for the literary establishment (*bundan*) and went on to become one of the most important *sogo zasshi* (general interest magazines) by the end of the decade. *Bungei shunju* powerfully shaped the idea of the middle-class reader during the rise of the new urban white-collar class in Japan (DiNitto 2004). *Eiga jidai* was launched in 1926. It published film reviews, scenarios, articles on the culture of the industry, and roundtables with film professionals, artists, and intellectuals, reflecting cinema's rising social and cultural profile. The first issues of *Eiga jidai* coincided with the release of the *shinkankaku-ha* (Neo-Perceptionist) film *Kurutta ichipeiji* (*A Page of Madness*), which was written by the modernist author Kawabata Yasunari and filmed in an avant-garde style by Kinugasa Teinosuke. Kikuchi had nourished the *shinkankaku-ha*, but the relationship became strained when Kawabata, Yokomichi Riichi, and their peers established their own literary journal, *Bungei jidai* (*The Literary Age*), in 1924. The new journal was heralded as an important new platform for “upcoming writers” (*shinshin sakka*) and a “counter-*bundan*.” In 1926, the participation of *Bungei jidai* writers in *Eiga jidai* discussions of *A Page of Madness* and

Japanese cinema affirmed the bond between Kikuchi and *shinkankaku-ha* writers while generally reflecting the increasing interest in film, modernism, and popular culture among intellectuals.

Eiga jidai promoted Japanese cinema as middle-class culture and tried to foster a popular, respectable film discourse by encouraging alliances between Japanese filmmakers and intellectuals, particularly literary celebrities. In the late 1920s, many *Eiga jidai* articles used “studio sightseeing” as a prompt for essays that surveyed developments in the industry and explored social aspects of Japanese cinema. Filmmakers and critics were invited to write about their travels, and writers and intellectuals were guided around Kansai studios and asked to express their opinions on the film industry.

In its first few years, *Eiga jidai*’s wide-ranging coverage of Kansai studios affirmed the importance of cinema to middle-class culture. *Eiga jidai* articles emphasized the social and cultural aspirations of the expanding Japanese industry. On the one hand, the magazine often depicted Japanese filmmakers as a ragtag community of struggling entrepreneurs and artists. On the other hand, its travel-themed articles on cinema were written by prominent filmmakers and intellectuals who supported these struggles while promoting the idea of “cultured living” (*bunka seikatsu*).

Many intellectuals contributed “studio sightseeing” articles to the magazine. *Eiga jidai* arranged for the novelist and playwright Ikeya Shinsaburo to take a guided tour of Kyoto studios led by Kinugasa Teinosuke in May 1926. Ikeya was accompanied by Kawabata Yasunari, who ultimately wrote up the article himself, which was published August that year. In the same issue, *Bungei shunju* editor Kondo Keiichi wrote about his trip to film studios in Kyoto and Nara, where he visited Shochiku Shimogamo, Toa Tojiin, Nikkatsu’s Uzumasa Studio (under construction), and the Japan Film Production studio in Nara (Kondo 1927). In January 1927, *Eiga jidai* published a special collection of essays called “Touring Kansai Studios” that included contributions from *Kinema junpo* co-founder Tanaka Saburo, novelist and playwright Kume Masao, actress Okada Yoshiko, film critic Mori Iwao, Kondo Keiichi, and comedian Furukawa Roppa. The contributors (with the exception of Okada) made rounds together to Shochiku Shimogamo, Toa’s Tojiin studio, Makino Production’s Omuro studio, Bantsuma Productions’s Uzumasa studio, and Nikkatsu’s Taishogun studio before writing up their individual impressions. The articles were tied to a special evening of film lectures that *Eiga jidai* convened in Osaka. In July 1928, *Eiga jidai* reported on the dedication ceremony held for Nikkatsu Uzumasa on April 29. Several pages of photo spreads and an essay explained the layout and facilities of the new studio.

Nevertheless, much like other reports on Kyoto as “Hollywood of Japan,” *Eiga jidai* articles expressed a variety of attitudes toward Hollywood and Japanese film. Kawabata confessed that he knew very little about filmmaking and neither he nor Ikeya Shinsaburo were particularly inspired by their tour (1927: 12). In his article “Strolling through Film Land: Osaka Souvenirs,” novelist and playwright (and

later film producer) Kawaguchi Matsutaro transcribed a conversation with Tanizaki Jun'ichiro in which Tanizaki expressed interest in working in film again. However, Tanizaki's comments on the industry itself were oblique and reserved. In his commentary, Kawaguchi chided Japanese filmmakers:

What today's film studios need most is more accomplished directors.

To say so is probably very rude, but today's studio directors are no better than technicians or brash literary fanboys. There is not a single accomplished figure nor able man of letters in the bunch. Filmmakers reject the *bundan*, but unfortunately, a filmmaker's general knowledge doesn't even reach the lowest level of what a member of the *bundan* knows. Above all, their biggest problem is the very meagerness of their lives (*seikatsu naiyo no hinjakusa*), and it's comical that they try to make movies about aristocratic living when they don't know a thing about the aristocratic lifestyle. (1927: 67)

Kawaguchi went on to complain that there was not a single Lubitsch or Griffith working in Japan, and that if a talented literary figure like Tanizaki expressed interest in making movies again, the Japanese film industry had better show its appreciation (*ibid*).

Tensions between the film industry and literary establishment were also evident in filmmakers' contributions to *Eiga jidai*. In his article on filmmakers Murata Minoru and Ushihara Kiyohiko for the July 1926 inaugural issue, film critic Mori Iwao mentioned that he, Murata, and Ushihara all ridiculed the *bundan* for regarding film as a vulgar entertainment and only belatedly embracing the medium when its potential as a mass art was blatantly obvious (1927: 8).

In 1926, *Eiga jidai* reported extensively on actor Kamiyama Sojin's Hollywood career and the Hollywood travels of Mori Iwao and Ushihara Kiyohiko. It published related essays by Mori and Ushihara, as well as Ushihara's annotated correspondence with Sojin (as he was affectionately known) and Yamakawa Uraji, Sojin's wife. The group's shared reminiscences and letters emphasized the social aspects of Japanese film culture. In addition, Sojin, Yamakawa, Mori, and Ushihara were presented as global citizens who were connected to the world through their work with film. Photographs document Mori and Ushihara's travels, showing the two together under the “Hollywoodland” sign (as it was then, before “land” fell off and was never replaced), and Ushihara with Josef von Sternberg and Edna Purviance (Figures 1.2 and 1.3). Film journalist Tanaka Saburo played up the conceit of global tourism by describing Ushihara and Mori's favorite Hollywood anecdotes as “souvenirs” (*miyagi*). Tanaka relayed Sternberg's enthusiasm for period film star Bando Tsumasaburo and reported that, according to Sternberg, Bando's film *Orochi* was “the greatest, most accomplished ‘sword play’ in the world” (1926: 15). Sternberg regularly viewed films at Japanese theaters that played weekly rotating Japanese film programs accompanied by *benshi* (Japanese silent film narrators).

These *Eiga jidai* articles showcased the aspirations of Japanese cinema and played up its associations with cosmopolitanism and American-style modernity, while at the same time underlining the distance between America and Japan. Ushihara confesses to



Figure 1.2 Mori Iwao (right) and Ushihara Kiyohiko (left) pose in Hollywood. *Eiga jidai*, October 1926.



グアパンアダニシフセヨ・氏原牛・スンアピアバ・ナドエらか右

Figure 1.3 Ushihara, flanked by Josef von Sternberg and Edna Purviance. *Eiga jidai*, October 1926.

weeping while reading a letter from Yamakawa, writing, “Whenever I think of these brave soldiers [Sojin and Yamakawa] fighting their lonely battle to break new ground in the Hollywood film world, I can’t help but feel powerfully moved” (1926a: 26). According to Ushihara, Sojin and Yamakawa “represent the Japanese...in the Hollywood film world, where people from countries all over the world are waging a slow and steady fight in a foreign land thousands of miles away from home” (1926b: 31).

In comparison to Ushihara, Mori (1927) was far more pessimistic about Japan’s “film pioneers” and their exploits abroad. Before meeting Ushihara in Hollywood, Mori traveled in Europe with Nikkatsu director Murata Minoru, who hoped to secure European distribution for his film *Machi no tejinashi* (*The Street Juggler*). Viewers in Paris and Berlin panned the film, with some Japanese spectators at a Japanese club in Berlin pronouncing the film a “national disgrace” (Mori 1927: 5). A buyer in Paris said the film was too dark. A manager at a Parisian cinema was disappointed that the film was “not Japan” but an “imitation of the West”: “Where’s Mt. Fuji and geisha and paper lanterns?” (ibid: 4). Editor-in-chief of *Ciné Miroir* Jean Vignaud said that the overall tempo was too slow, the image was too dark, and the film was “too European” (*Oshu-kusai*). He advised that “a specific country ought to produce a specific national flavor” (ibid: 5). Through it all, Mori writes, Murata continued to accept criticism patiently with a smile but became severely depressed. Murata was “certainly not the type of man to shed tears,” but Mori conjectures that the night of the Japanese club screening, he must have cried himself to sleep. Mori describes Murata losing his passion for European culture and sleeping through meals, finding solace only in drink. Murata decided to leave Europe and head to Russia, sending Mori on to America alone. On the eve of his departure, Murata bitterly raged:

What use was it coming to Europe? In the future, if someone wants to come here, I’ll do my best to stop them. I’ve learned nothing I can use in Japan. What’s the use making films for export? Japanese should make films for Japanese. If they want Japanese films, Westerners can go to Japan. If there’s any kind of plan to export Japanese films, I’ll do everything I can to prevent it. (1927: 6)

For his part, Mori found it troubling that whenever they consulted with Europeans, he and Murata were treated as representatives of Japanese culture and Japan (ibid: 7). In Los Angeles, Ushihara’s films faced a similar reception:

They watched with interest, as we might watch a film from China or India. They made faces as if they were interested. Some people yawned. Some people walked out... They were courteous and respectful, especially because of the formal invitation they had received, but they had no genuine interest at all. It was just as it had been with *Machi no tejinashi*. (ibid: 9)

According to director Paul Sloane, the films merely imitated the American lifestyle and the American way of making films, “But what we demand is Japan, the real Japan. The Japan of cherry trees. The Japan of Madame Butterfly” (ibid: 9–10).

Finally, using the theme of “sightseeing” to take readers behind the scenes, *Eiga jidai* contributors were able to introduce their own personal reflections, social context, and other insights into the public discourse on filmmaking. In 1927, *shingeki* (New Theater) star and pioneering film actress Hanayagi Harumi wrote “Report on Visiting Nikkatsu Kansai Studio,” in which she described traveling to Kyoto to visit friends in the film industry during a break from performing. Many of Hanayagi’s old acquaintances from theater, such as the film director Murata Minoru and former Tsukiji Shogekijo actors Nakano Eiji and Takeuchi Ryoichi, were now famous for their movies. The old friends met and reminisced, and Hanayagi was awed by their successes. The narrative of “Report on Visiting Nikkatsu Kansai Studio” alternates between detailed descriptions of Hanayagi’s interactions with others and intimate observations regarding her own solitary lifestyle. Hanayagi’s narrative emphasizes the interpersonal aspects of filmmaking, as well as the manifold social connections between the Japanese film industry and theater. At the same time, in her most personal asides, Hanayagi repeatedly describes herself as “alone.” She repeatedly draws comparisons between real life and the roles that she has played. By contrasting her life onstage in the public eye and her lonely existence offstage, Hanayagi adds additional layers of meaning to the essay’s “behind-the-scenes” concept. The frame of “visiting a film studio” allows Hanayagi to examine differences between the film world and theater, her past and her present, and public life and private life (Hanayagi 1927).

In the mid-to-late 1920s, behind-the-scenes discourse helped articulate the new social and cultural importance of cinema in Japan. The magazine *Eiga jidai* used the language of tourism and sightseeing in its profiles of Japanese studios, linking Japanese cinema – and the Kansai industry in particular – to middle-class leisure and cultured living. Articles on filmmakers and actors abroad used imagery of travel and exploration to examine the place of Japanese filmmaking in the world (Figure 1.4). The tensions expressed in these articles can be explained by *Eiga jidai*’s editorial policy, which promoted cooperation between the Japanese film industry and the *bundan*. Despite *Eiga jidai*’s efforts, this relationship remained fraught, with filmmakers and writers often openly criticizing each other’s worlds. Despite images of travel and leisure, behind-the-scenes discourse did not always revolve around attractive aspects of the industry. Yet these essays gave their authors an opportunity to manage public perception of Japanese cinema by strategically framing its weaknesses and strengths. Assessments of the Japanese industry could be quite negative, but behind-the-scenes articles allowed the film industry and its supporters to cast these deficiencies in a new light. Personal exposés promised to reveal aspects of movie making that the public had never seen before. The conceit of “sightseeing” provided a flexible and generally positive framework for delivering these insights.

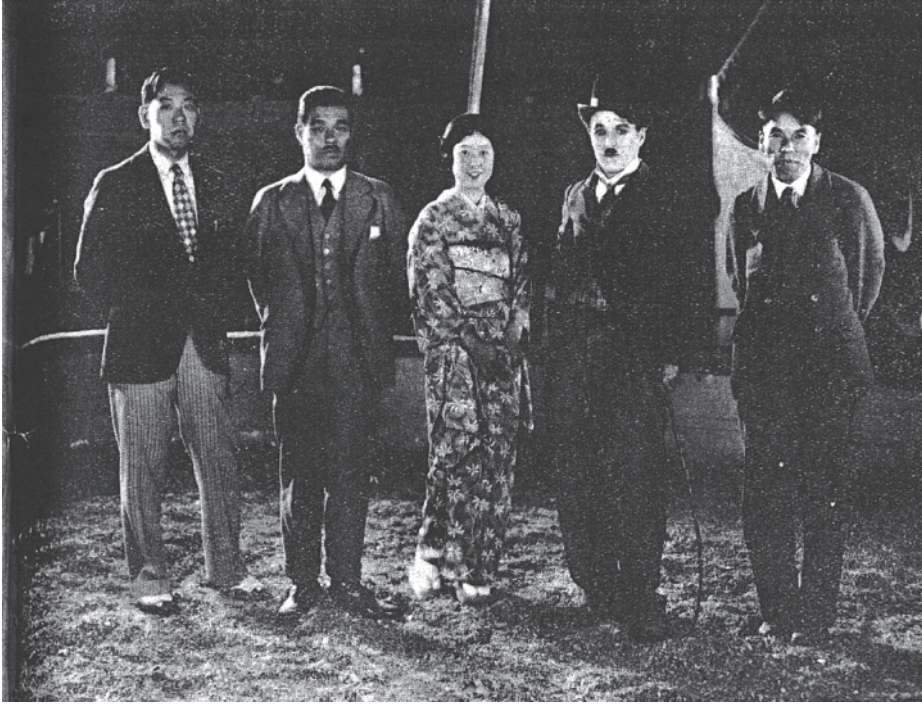


Figure 1.4 From right to left, Ushihara poses with Charlie Chaplin, actress Mizutani Yaeko, her husband the playwright and director Mizutani Chikushi, and Chaplin’s long-time assistant Toraichi Kono. *Eiga jidai*, October 1926.

Conclusion

Scholars such as Tomita Mika have examined the intimate connection between Kyoto’s film industry and Meiji modernization, emphasizing the mutually constitutive relationship between film and the city’s image as a tourist city and cultural preserve. According to Tomita, Kyoto deserves the appellation “film city” because of the important role cinema played in the redevelopment of the former imperial capital after the Meiji Restoration. In addition, Kyoto acquired the image of the “Hollywood of Japan,” a nickname that it earned after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, which referred specifically to the transfer of Tokyo film workers to Kyoto after the disaster. This marked a new era in Kyoto’s film industry. For the first time, Japan’s major film companies all operated studios in the same region of Japan. From 1924, Shochiku was the only major company to operate simultaneously in the Kansai region and Tokyo until Nikkatsu opened the Tokyo Tamagawa Studio in 1934. As many scholars have pointed out, Shochiku’s

Hollywood-influenced films occupy a central place in the discourse on modernity in interwar Japan. However, it would be a mistake to identify 1920s Shochiku as synonymous with “Hollywood”; this distinction belongs to Kyoto.

Still, articles on Kyoto as “Hollywood of Japan” expressed ambivalences toward American cinema and American-style modernity. Discourse on the film city reflected diverse attitudes toward commercial culture and facilitated comparisons between Japanese cinema and American cinema, and Japan and the West. It may seem surprising that many film journals, from *Nikkatsu gaho* to *Eiga jidai*, openly expressed hostility toward American cinema, Japanese cinema, and aspiring actresses in Japan. However, the “behind-the-scenes” discourse allowed filmmakers and journalists to manage the perception of cinema’s bad influence and low status. *Eiga jidai* in particular played a crucial role in promoting Japanese cinema as a respectable popular entertainment, fostering dialogue between the film industry and the literary establishment.

In the 1920s, as the Japanese industry expanded and Hollywood came to dominate the globe, cinema was increasingly tied to American-style modernity as well as middle-class tastes. In film journalism, travel imagery reinforced connections between cinema and leisure. In order to appreciate this important transitional period, it is necessary to acknowledge the impact of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, Kyoto’s role in sustaining Japanese studios, and the importance of film journalism in shaping public perception of Japanese film.

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