

## Movie Attendance of Japanese Children and Youth The Ministry of Education's Policies and the Social Diffusion of Cinema, 1910–45

Harald Salomon, Berlin

In the early 1910s, Japanese newspapers directed the attention of their readers to a new societal phenomenon that allegedly exerted a powerful influence on the lives of urban children and youth. The popularity of motion picture exhibitions, they claimed, would result in harmful effects upon the minds and bodies of young people. Eyesight failure, headaches, and insomnia were some of the physical effects they pointed to. Even more serious, they reported, were the influences on morals and manners. Children were driven to reenact movie scenes in daily life and during times of play. In frequent cases they displayed delinquent behaviour or imitated crimes.<sup>1</sup>

Whether the so-called “problem of youth motion picture attendance” 年少者活動写真観覧問題 (*nenshō sha katsudō shashin kanran mondai*) was as widespread and serious as the contemporary press described, is questionable. The press activity does illustrate, however, that the developing practice of

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- 1 The “Tokyo Morning Sun” 東京朝日新聞 (*Tōkyō Asahi shinbun*), for example, featured two series of articles in 1912. The first was titled “Motion Pictures and Children” 活動写真と児童 (*Katsudō shashin to jidō*) and appeared in February. The second focused on the popularity of the French crime and detective film *Zigomar* (directed by Victorin-Hippolyte Jasset, 1911). It appeared in October and was widely echoed in other newspapers. The wave of similar publications illustrates the establishment of a film prohibition movement that was based on cinema’s allegedly negative influence on children and youth. Cf. HASE Masato: “Cinemaphobia in Taisho Japan: *Zigomar*, Delinquent Boys, and Somnambulism”, *Iconics* 4 (1998): 87–101.

‘going to the movies’ disquieted the ‘intelligent’ public. Cinema did provide broad segments of society with opportunities for both social experience and participation outside of the private sphere. Among other audience groups, children and youth responded with enthusiasm.<sup>2</sup>

The integration of the new recreational practice into children’s life was subjected to governmental interference from the outset. These early regulations have received some attention in the growing literature on early Japanese cinema.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to film historic approaches, this paper reviews public regulations as attempts to fashion the lives of children and youth, and follows these developments into the middle of the 1940s when they arguably reached a peak. In this way, the author hopes to contribute to the historiography of the relation between state and society in twentieth century Japan.<sup>4</sup>

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- 2 The function of early cinema as an alternative public sphere has been illustrated by film historian Miriam HANSEN for the American case. See her “Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?”, *New German Critique* 29 (Spring / Summer 1983): 147–84; *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*, Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press 1991.
  - 3 English language scholarship offers interesting views on perceived problems and counter-measures. See for instance the relevant parts in Aaron GEROW: *Writing a Pure Cinema: Articulations of Early Japanese Films*, Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1996. While not focusing on children, the research of Jeffrey DYM offers equally important information on relevant aspects. Cf. *Benshi, Poets of the Dark: Japanese Silent Film Narrators and Their Forgotten Narrative Art of Setsumei, 1896–1939*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawai‘i 1998. Japanese language research additionally provides accounts of the problem in the context of the development of film education. An example is TANAKA Jun’ichirō 田中純一郎: *Nihon kyōiku eiga hattatsu shi* 日本教育映画発達史 (A History of the Development of Japanese Educational Film), Kagyū Sha 1979. In this context NISHIMOTO Hajime 西本肇 focuses on the administrative aspect of the Ministry of Education’s activities: “Eiga to monbushō (jō). Tōsei jidai no ichi kōsatsu” 映画と文部省 (上) 統制時代の一考察 (English title: Movie, Audio-visual Education and The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Part I), *Hokkaidō Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu kiyō* 67 (1995): 259–92. For an outline of the ministry’s activities as film producer see MURAYAMA Kyōichirō 村山匡一郎: “Mō hitotsu no Shōwa eiga – Monbushō eiga” もうひとつの昭和映画—文部省映画 (Another Aspect of Showa-Era Cinema: A Short History of Ministry of Education Films), Aaron GEROW & Abe Mark NORNES (eds.): *In Praise of Film Studies. Essays in Honor of Makino Mamoru*, Yokohama, Ann Arbor: Kinema Club 2001: 176–83.
  - 4 The article draws inspiration from a number of authors, most importantly Sheldon GARON. See his *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997; “Fashioning a Culture of Diligence and Thrift: Savings and Frugality Campaigns in Japan, 1900–1931”, Sharon A. MINICHELLO (ed.): *Japan’s Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900–1930*, Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press 1998: 312–34; “Luxury is the Enemy: Mobilizing Savings and Popularizing Thrift in Wartime Japan”, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 26.1 (2000): 41–78. Cf. also Kathleen S. UNO: *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth*

Among public institutions that created policies dealing with cinema attendance such as the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Tokyo Metropolitan Police, the case of the Ministry of Education was chosen because available sources revealed continuous efforts to research and influence this aspect of children's lives. In examining the development of the ministry's policies, it is not my intention to provide a narrative of increasing governmental control. Such accounts are frequently employed in order to describe the relationship between state, media, and consumers.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, top down control is a central issue that provides valuable insights. But exclusively focusing on this type of interaction, it is argued, limits our understanding of the relations under review. In order to demonstrate the potential of alternative approaches, the development of ministerial policy will be followed in a different context: the social diffusion of cinema businesses and the practice of going to the movies.

### *Distant Relations*

#### *Early Cinema Business and the Ministry of Education*

Motion picture exhibitions started in Japan as early as 1896 when the Lumière brothers' and Edison's successful systems were presented in Kobe, Osaka and Tokyo. Largely perceived and marketed as fairground attractions, they continued to coexist with earlier imaging devices such as the magic lantern until the Russo-Japanese war. At that time, owing in part to the popularity of films on the war, movies began to compete with existing popular entertainment: "Vaudeville" 寄席 (*yose*) shows and theatre performances.<sup>6</sup> The first permanent movie facilities such as the "Electricity Hall" 電気館 (*Denki Kan*) in Tokyo (1903) and the "Sennichimae Electricity Hall" 千日前電気館 (*Sennichimae*

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*Century Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 1999 as well as Simon PARTNER "Taming the Wilderness: The Lifestyle Improvement Movement in Rural Japan, 1925–1965", *Monumenta Nipponica* 56.4 (Winter 2001): 487–520.

5 Narratives of control and coercion are not only frequent in secondary literature. They also dominate at the level of source compilation. Consider, for instance, the two essential volumes edited by UCHIKAWA Yoshimi 内川良美: *Masu media tôsei* マス・メディア統制 (Mass Media Control), Misuzu Shobô 1975 (= *Gendai shi shiryô*, Vol. 40–1).

6 IWAMOTO Kenji 岩本憲児: *Gentô no seiki. Eiga zen'ya no shikaku bunka shi* 幻灯の世紀・映画前夜の視覚文化史 (The Centuries of the Magic Lantern. A History of Visual Culture on the Eve of Film), Shinwa Sha 2002: 198–9.

*Denki Kan*) in Osaka (1907) were established, and only a decade later (1912), as many as forty-three facilities could be found in Tokyo alone.<sup>7</sup>



Line-up of cinemas in Asakusa, Tokyo, around 1915 (*Katsudô shashin zasshi* July 1915: n.p.)

A regular production of Japanese films began roughly five years after the exhibition business had established itself. Yoshizawa Shôten 吉沢商店, a company formerly dealing with magic lantern slides, set up its first studio in 1908. In the same year, the company M. Pathé, an established motion picture importer, set up production facilities in Tokyo's Ôkubo district.<sup>8</sup> Until the

7 *Nihon eiga jigyo sôran. Shôwa go nen ban* 日本映画事業総覧・昭和五年版 (General Survey of Japanese Film Business in the Year 1930), Kokusai Eiga Tsûshin Sha 1930: 161. Other sources document more than seventy facilities as early as 1909. Cf. *Yorozu chôhô* 万朝報, July 31st, 1909. The differing numbers are explained by varying definitions of a permanent motion picture exhibition facility. The *Denki Kan* in Asakusa, a facility originally established in order to introduce aspects of the phenomenon of electricity, is considered to be the first cinema in Tokyo. More permanent facilities did not follow until 1907, when two movie theatres in Tokyo and the first Osaka facility began operations. TANIKAWA Yoshio 谷川義雄: *Nenpyô eiga hyaku nen shi* 年表映画百年史 (Chronology: History of One Hundred Years of Film), Fûtô Sha 1993: 22, 30, 34.

8 *Ibid.* 1993: 32.

middle of the 1910s cinema programs consisting of foreign and Japanese feature films as well as a variety of short films became frequent.<sup>9</sup> A major attraction were *benshi* 弁氏, film narrators who acted as guides for the duration of a program and provided characteristic interpretations of its elements.

The cost of admission was comparable to the cheapest train fare – about five Sen – for early cinema audiences. For a longer period after this time, tickets amounted to about ten Sen,<sup>10</sup> and sources suggest that admission of children was significantly cheaper. For neighbourhood cinemas in poorer areas of Tokyo, prices of two Sen, the equivalent of one sweet pastry, are documented until the early 1930s.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, going to the movies did not represent an exclusive form of entertainment. It was well within the means of children and youth of differing social backgrounds, and their response was enthusiastic. While contemporary documentation of large numbers of children in cinemas is consistent, their general share among audiences should not be overestimated. It seems appropriate, however, to assume that primary school children – alone, with friends, or accompanied by guardians – dominated in the later hours of the afternoon and in particular on Sundays.<sup>12</sup>

9 Aaron GEROW: “One Print in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Film Industry and Culture in 1910s Japan”, *Screening the Past* 11 (November 2000), online journal: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr1100/agfr11e.htm>.

10 ISHIMAKI Yoshio 石巻良夫: “Honpô eiga kôgyô gaikan” 本邦映画興行概観 (An Outline of Film Exhibition in Japan), *Nihon eiga jigyo sôran: Taishô jûgo nen ban* 日本映画事業総覧・大正十五年版 (General Survey of Japanese Film Business in the Year 1926), Kokusai Eiga Tsûshin Sha 1926: 43.

11 See the report of Jesuit missionaries working in Tokyo: H. HELLWEG & J. SCHÜTTE: *In der Bannmeile Tokyos: Soziale Pionierarbeit junger Katholiken* (In the Precincts of Tokyo. Pioneering Work of Young Catholics), Saarbrücken 1933: 51.

12 A newspaper article of August, 1909, for instance, estimated that primary school-age children composed seventy percent of Tokyo's cinema audiences. Cf. “Katsudô shashin no eikyô (ge)” 活動写真の影響 (下) (The Influence of Motion Pictures, Part Two), *Yorozu chôhō*, August 9th, 1909. Four years later, a contribution to another newspaper suggested that fifty percent of audiences were primary-school children, while another forty percent were women and children. Cf. *Jiji shinpô*, June 30th, 1913. Quoted after TAISHÔ NYÛSU JITEN HENSAN IIN KAI 大正ニュース事典編纂委員会 (ed.): *Taishô nyûsu jiten* 大正ニュース事典 (Dictionary of Taisho [Era] News), Vol. 1, Mainichi Komyunikê-shonzu 1986: 87. Generalizations based on contemporary sources are problematic because references to the composition of audiences and the ‘unrefined’ or ‘infantile’ nature of the form of entertainment under review are frequently conflated. The first statistical surveys undertaken during the late 1910s and early 1920s qualified earlier statements. See n. 20 for a study on the situation in Tokyo. Statistical evidence on the situation in Osaka is presented by ÔBAYASHI Sôshi 大林宗嗣: *Minshû goraku no jissai kenkyû. Ôsaka shi no minshû goraku chôsa* 民衆娯楽の実際研究・大阪市の民衆娯楽調査 (Studies on the

The large number of children represented was a frequent argument for governmental intervention in motion picture exhibitions almost as early as they began. Referring to legal measures used to regulate theatres, exhibitions and fairground attractions, prefectural police and administrative institutions restricted the operation of businesses as well as content, duration, and other aspects of programs individually or on a local scale. In contrast, circles associated with the Ministry of Education apparently saw no need to deal with the new medium independently for the first one and a half decades after its appearance. The decision to finally focus on the phenomenon was influenced by a public discussion of the problem of children's cinema attendance. At this time, alleged evidence for the causal relation between film consumption and delinquent behaviour was provided. The formal introduction of the ministry's involvement, however, arose in the context of the early 1910s efforts to promote "popular education" 通俗教育 (*tsûzoku kyôiku*) in addition to school education.<sup>13</sup>

Initiated by the contemporary Minister of Education, Komatsubara Eitarô 小松原英太郎, the "Popular Education Investigation Committee" 通俗教育調査委員会 (*Tsûzoku Kyôiku Chôsa Iin Kai*) was established in 1911 in order to develop new methods of aligning popular attitudes with basic assumptions of the political system. Among popular literature, public lectures, and lantern slides the committee began to investigate motion pictures as a medium whose educational potential was promising. Problems were numerous, however, including hygienic conditions and morals in theatres, exposure to 'improper' Western customs, uneducated film interpreters, and 'indecent' songs. Thus, the members of the committee concluded that cinema attendance of children should be prevented whenever possible.<sup>14</sup>

On a more positive note, the committee's work led to the adoption of the "Provisions for the Inspection of Lantern Slides and Motion Picture Films".<sup>15</sup>

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Actual Condition of Popular Entertainment. An Investigation of Popular Entertainment in the City of Osaka), Ôhara Shakai Mondai Kenkyûjo 1922. Reprinted as Vol. 3 of ISHIKAWA Hiroyoshi (ed.): *Yoka / goraku kenkyû kiso bunken shû, dai ikki* 余暇・娯楽研究基礎文献集・第I期 (Collection of Basic Literature on Leisure and Entertainment Research), Ôzora Sha 1989.

13 MAKINO Mamoru: "On the Conditions of Film Censorship in Japan Before Its Systematization", GEROW & NORNES 2001: 47–50.

14 The establishment of the committee by Imperial order had been stimulated by discussions of the topic in the diet, a few years earlier. It largely united bureaucrats, politicians and educators, among them contemporary Prime Minister Katsura Tarô 桂太郎. TANAKA 1979: 29–31.

These provisions entitled producers, distributors, and exhibitors to have the educational value of films investigated. The titles of suitable films were published by the “Official Gazette” 官報 (*Kanpô*), and the owners were authorized to advertise their products with the ministry’s seal of approval.<sup>16</sup>

The ministerial recognition of films deserves attention as a first measure to guide business practices and audience behaviour outside a framework of censorship and regulation. On the other hand, the initiative to approve certain products was left with businesses, and specific measures to promote cinema attendance as an educational experience among predominantly entertainment seeking audiences did not materialize. Even the approval of motion pictures itself confronted the ministry with problems. When the approval process first began in 1911, the ministry had neither adequate equipment nor relevant expertise. Screenings were made with a projector donated by the company M. Pathé. Acquiring the skills to operate the machine that used a gas lamp as a light source was reportedly a challenge.<sup>17</sup>

### *Focusing Children’s Cinema Attendance*

While the Ministry of Education continued to devote minimal attention to the phenomenon, the spread of cinema businesses and the practice of moviegoing gained further momentum. Until the year 1920, an annual average of about

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15 通俗教育調査委員会幻灯及活動写真フィルム審査規定 (*Tsûzoku Kyôiku Chôsa Iin Kai gentô oyobi katsudô shashin firumu shinsa kitei*), adopted by notification of the ministry as of October 11, 1910. MONBUSHÔ SHAKAI KYÔIKU KYOKU 文部省社会教育局 (ed.): *Honpô eiga kyôiku no hattatsu* 本邦映画教育の発達 (The Development of Film Education in Japan), Monbushô 1938: 53. For an English translation of the regulations, see MAKINO 2001: 52–3.

16 Approved films began to be announced in January 1912. According to TANAKA Jun’ichirô, the exhibition of “Noted Places of Japan: The Scenery of Kyushu” 日本の名勝・九州の山水 (*Nihon no meishô. Kyûshû no sansui*) was one of the first films advertised with the seal of ministerial approval. TANAKA 1979: 30.

17 Various mishaps such as an explosion on the property of the person in charge, Hoshino Tatsuo, are documented. He had been trained in the popular literature approval section and, as he later noted during an interview, had never been to the movies again since he had graduated from school. It was only after his new appointment that he turned to the study of the film exhibition situation in Asakusa. HOSHINO Tatsuo 星野辰男 & GONDA Yasunosuke 権田保之助: “Taidan kai: Monbushô no eiga taisaku no rekishi” 対談会・文部省の映画対策の歴史 (Conversation: The History of the Ministry of Education’s Film Policies), *Nippon eiga*, November 1939: 172.

forty additional permanent movie theatres began operating in Japan, while the age groups among audiences displayed increasing variety. In contrast, diversification did not occur as rapidly in relation to the social profile of film consumers. Due to reduced working hours and the introduction of holidays in stores, cinemas had become entertainment facilities for worker families and their children.<sup>18</sup> The “class of the people’s masses” 民衆階級 (*minshû kaikyû*), reports an anonymous journalist, welcomed motion pictures enthusiastically. The “privileged class” 特権階級 (*tokken kaikyû*), on the other hand, despised them like “dog excrement” 犬糞 (*kenpun*) and considered them to be “particularly harmful” 殊に有害 (*koto ni yûgai*).<sup>19</sup>

The preoccupation with the problem of children’s cinema attendance became more systematic in early 1917. With authorization from the “Imperial Education Association” 帝国教育会 (*Teikoku Kyôiku Kai*) and financial support from the ministry, an investigation team was formed that included the noted social scientist Gonda Yasunosuke 権田保之助. The group conducted surveys on primary school-aged children’s film consumption in different areas of Tokyo. Roughly, it followed three directions: examining the general situation in cinemas, interviewing children in schools, and investigating supposed relations between film consumption and delinquent behaviour. Gonda and his assistants produced rich evidence for actual problems, and attributed it to the circumstances of movie exhibition which were exclusively guided by intentions to maximize profit.<sup>20</sup>

Influenced by initial results of the survey, a proposal was presented to the Imperial Education Association that called for regulations and emphasized the need to clarify the relationship between children and motion pictures. Before the research project was concluded, the association decided to seek cooperation with officials from the Home Ministry and the Tokyo Metropolitan

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18 HEIHOAN KACHÔ 平保安課長: “Katsudô shashin torishimari kisoku kaisei ni tsuite” 活動写真取締規則改正に就いて (Concerning the Revision of the Provisions for the Regulation of Motion Pictures), *Katsudô kurabu* 3.1 (January 1920): 66.

19 ICHI KISHA 一記者 (An Anonymous Journalist): “Puropaganda yô no katsudô shashin” プロパガンダ用の活動写真 (Films for Propaganda Use), *Katsudô kurabu* 3.5 (May 1920): 36.

20 HOSHINO & GONDA 1939: 173. The results of the study were published as part of his *Minshû goraku mondai* 民衆娯楽問題 (Problems of Popular Entertainment), Dôjin Sha Shoten 1921. At the age of 36, Gonda was noted as a survey-oriented social scientist and a film expert. He worked for the Ministry of Education in various functions, also involving the production of educational films. In 1923, he apparently left the ministry because of disagreements with superiors.



Police in order to work out a system of regulations. But, the latter, already under attack by the press and other figures of public life for not asserting their censorship function, single-handedly passed far-reaching regulations in August 1917.

Although the system of regulations for the Tokyo area was enacted by another institution, some officials in the Ministry of Education apparently took credit for their content. In fact, many of the regulations were modelled on German predecessors that Yuhara Gen'ichi 湯原元一, head of the Imperial Education Association at the time, had introduced to the Japanese context.<sup>21</sup>

Undoubtedly, comparing the “Provisions for the Regulation of Motion Picture Exhibition Establishments” 活動写真興行場取締規則 (*Katsudô shashin kôgyôjô torishimari kisoku*) with a proposal that the Imperial Education Association had presented to the Ministry of Education does reveal many similarities. This is true for the unification of censorship as well as for the introduction of a licensing system for film interpreters whose influence on audiences was considered particularly pernicious. Also in accordance with the ministry's demands was the restriction of children's admission to theatres. Additionally, separate seating sections for men and women were introduced, and among other regulations, the duty to reserve one seat during exhibitions for a police officer.<sup>22</sup>

The restriction of children's cinema attendance relied on the classification of featured movies. Type A (甲 *kô*) films were to be restricted to customers aged fifteen and older, whereas type B (乙 *otsu*) productions could be enjoyed by all age groups. The duration of entertainment programs was limited to four (A type) and three (B type) hours.

Representatives of film business explicitly welcomed the restriction of program duration as the end of ruinous exhibition practices that fierce compe-

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21 A survey of the German situation was subsequently published by the ministry. *Kyôiku to katsudô shashin* 教育と活動写真 (Education and Motion Pictures), Monbushô Futsû Gakumu Kyoku 1918.

22 The proposition of the Imperial Education Association to the Ministry of Education is reprinted in MONBUSHÔ SHAKAI KYÔIKU KYOKU 1938: 13–4. The content of the “Provisions for the Regulation of Motion Picture Exhibition Establishments” is summarized in TANAKA Jun'ichirô: *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi* 日本映画発達史 (A History of the Development of Japanese Film), Chûô Kôron Sha 1993, Vol. I: 405–6. A more detailed summary and reactions by the film business are presented in *Jiji shinpô* of July 13, 1917. Cf. *Taishô nyûsu jiten*, Vol. 3: 84–85. In six sections, the provisions referred to the definition of cinemas, the design of exhibition facilities, censorship, licenses for film interpreters, conditions of film exhibition, and penal regulations.

tition among enterprises had brought about.<sup>23</sup> The age restriction, however, was not accepted as many cinemas registered decreases in the number of customers of up to fifty percent. At the same time, a new interest in opera houses among children was reported. In order to prevent the implementation of the regulations, Tokyo's exhibitors formed a lobby, the "Association of Like-minded People in Motion Picture [Business]" 活動写真同志会 (*Katsudô Shashin Dôshi Kai*).<sup>24</sup> Reacting to lasting opposition by exhibitors and obvious indifference to the production of B-films, the restriction was finally abolished in 1920.<sup>25</sup>

#### *The Introduction of the Film Recommendation System*

One aspect that the regulations of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police largely ignored was the relation of movies to issues of social education. In contrast, officials of the Ministry of Education began to invent policies in order to make active use of the popularity of the medium. The introduction of a "film recommendation system" 映画推薦制度 (*eiga suisen seido*) in 1920 demonstrates a newly developing attitude towards the social relevance of entertainment in general, and cinema in particular. A public statement explained the introduction of the system as follows:

It is a matter of course now, that the purification of popular entertainment, the elevation of the taste of the nation, and the completion of its ways of recreation are some of the most important matters from the point of view of social education. This is the reason why this ministry has come to embark on the movement to improve popular entertainment. As, at the same time, the enormity of influence that, among popular entertainment presently operated, particularly the motion pictures exert on society is generally recognized, the planning of their improvement and development represents the pressing need of the hour.<sup>26</sup>

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23 *Jiji shinpô*, July 13, 1917.

24 ÔBAYASHI 1922, appendix: 36.

25 Examples of protest actions are provided by TANAKA 1993 I: 406–7. An official in the Metropolitan Police Office hoped that entrepreneurs in cinema business would reward the abolishment of restrictions by improving content of films and circumstances of their exhibition. Fathers and elder brothers, he argued, should be able to accompany children to the movies joyfully, also from an educational point of view. HEIHOAN KACHÔ 1920: 66.

26 「国民娯楽を純化し国民の趣味を向上し其の慰安の途を全からしむるは社会教育

By publicly recommending films, the ministry intended to guide production strategies of studios, the programming of cinema managers, and the viewing choices of audiences. Therefore two sets of labels were introduced that classified selected films as mainly “entertaining” 娯乐的 (*goraku teki*), “educational” 教育的 (*kyôiku teki*), or as “[aesthetically] pleasing” 鑑賞的 (*kanshō teki*), and specified their suitability for the age groups “adults” 成人向け (*seijin muke*), “youth” 青年向け (*seinen muke*), and “children” 児童向け (*jidō muke*). Additionally, an annual award (medal) for production excellence was established (優良映画賞牌 *yûryō eiga shōhai*).

The selection of films for recommendation was first taken over by the small “Social Education Investigation Committee” 社会教育調査委員会 (*Shakai Kyôiku Chōsa Iin Kai*). The members of the committee – including Gonda and, for example, a censor in the Metropolitan Police Office – actively contacted studios and screened entertainment programs in order to find relevant works. Recommendations were announced in the gazette of the ministry, and special screenings of promoted works were recorded even during the earliest phase.<sup>27</sup>

As an important element of contemporary programs, the film narrators were another focal point of the ministry’s new activities. While the narrators were often criticized publicly for their extravagant lifestyle or their inclination to alcohol, officials in the ministry were particularly worried by their poor educational background. For this reason, lecture courses on topics such as the artistic value of films and the social influence that narrators exerted on audiences were introduced.<sup>28</sup>

Recommendation activities and the training of film narrators were accompanied by attempts to communicate the ministry’s concerns to entrepreneurs and employees in movie business. An example is the “Motion Picture

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上最も重要な事項の一つなることは今更言ふ迄もない。是即ち本省に於いて民衆娯楽改善運動に着手するに至った所以である。然るに現在行はれて居る民衆娯楽の中でも活動写真が一般社会に及ぼす影響の甚大なることは普く世の認める所で之が改善発達を企図することは刻下焦眉の急務である。」 Reprinted in GONDA Yasunosuke: *Goraku kyôiku no kenkyû* 娯楽教育の研究 (The Research of Entertainment-Education), Shôgaku Kan 1943: 31.

27 MONBUSHÔ SHAKAI KYÔIKU KYOKU 1938: 31–2; HOSHINO & GONDA 1939: 178.

28 TANAKA 1993 I: 409–10. The educational background of film interpreters continued to be an object of ministerial surveys until the end of the period under review. See for example MONBUSHÔ SHAKAI KYÔIKU KYOKU 文部省社会教育局 (ed.): *Genkô eiga kôgyô to kyôiku to no kankei ni kan suru chōsa gaiyō* 現行映画興行と教育との関係に関する調査概要 (Outline of the Investigation Concerning the Relation of Present Film Exhibition and Education), Monbushô 1928: 12.

Exhibition” 活動写真展覧会 (*Katsudô Shashin Tenran Kai*) which was organized under the auspices of the ministry during November and December of the year 1921. It also served as a way to campaign for acknowledgement of the ministry’s work relating to popular education by the political establishment. The fact that the Prince Regent was among the more than ten thousand daily visitors to the exhibition hall in Ochanomizu, Tokyo, was widely interpreted as a singular event that helped to advance the cultural status of cinema.<sup>29</sup>

A detailed analysis of the question, how the early policies of the ministry interacted with the Japanese movie business of the 1920s remains to be undertaken. Interestingly, there is evidence that enterprises adopted elements of the popular education discourse as part of a strategy to further their particular business goals. The entertainment trust Shôchiku 松竹, for instance, announced in 1920 that, by moving into film business, it intended to “offer refined entertainment and a fresh taste to an even larger audience as well as to contribute as much as possible to the elevation of the nation’s thought and the enrichment of its life”.<sup>30</sup> Public statements such as this intersected with attempts to raise admission prices and to gentrify amusement districts in urban centres. Entrepreneurs, it can be concluded, had discovered the social formation of white collar workers as future clientele.

### *Expanding Business and Diversifying Audiences*

In the following two decades until the late 1930s, the growth of cinema business and audiences continued. The annual increase in permanent movie theatres more than doubled. On average, ninety-six new cinemas opened doors to Japanese movie patrons annually until the year 1930, when economic crisis apparently affected the market and a decrease was registered. The years until 1940 witnessed the change from silent film to sound film and an

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29 The visit was documented in a contemporary newsreel. Cf. IWAMOTO Kenji: “Eiga tenran kai no kiseki to eiga hakubutsu kan e no yume” 映画展覧会の軌跡と映画博物館への夢 (Traces of the Film Exhibition and Dreams of a Film Museum), KAWASAKI SHIMIN MYÛJIAMU 川崎市民ミュージアム: *Shinema no seiki. Eiga tanjô hyaku nen hakuran kai* シネマの世紀・映画誕生百年博覧会 (The Century of Cinema. An Exhibition on the Occasion of Film’s 100th Birthday), Kawasaki Shimin Myûjiamu 1995: 9–10.

30 「更に多数の看客に高尚なる娯楽と、清新なる趣味とを提供し、力めて国民思想の向上と、その生活の充実とに資し」, cf. “Shôchiku no eiga seisaku” 松竹の映画製作 (Shôchiku’s Film Production), *Shôchiku nanajû nen shi* 松竹七十年史 (A History of Seventy Years of Shôchiku), Shôchiku 1964: 238.

even faster increase. Climbing nationwide at a rate of more than 105 annually, a total of 2,362 cinemas was reached, employing more than 22,000 people and visited more than 405 million times.<sup>31</sup>

While this development was certainly fast-paced, an international comparison reveals that Japan lagged behind countries such as France, England, Germany, and especially the United States.<sup>32</sup> The comparatively low number of permanent cinemas is explained in part by the fact that a large number of facilities continued to offer other forms of entertainment on the side. In 1927, for example, there existed 1,436 theatres that alternated movies with variety and stage attractions – often within the same program – in addition to 1,043 actual cinemas.<sup>33</sup> Already vanishing in Tokyo and Osaka, such facilities still formed the majority in other large cities and were typical in rural areas until the end of the reviewed period.

Another explanation for the modest total of cinemas lies in the fact that the majority of the Japanese population continued to live in rural settings that did not permit the profitable operation of permanent exhibition facilities.<sup>34</sup> The nationwide distribution of cinemas did in fact follow the patterns of urbanization. By the year 1927, the prefectures of Tokyo (191), Osaka (89), Fukuoka (61), Kanagawa (56), Hokkaido (56) and Aichi (41), having densely inhabited areas, occupied the first ranks in the hierarchy, representing nearly half (47.3%) of all cinema businesses. At the other extreme were the prefectures of Okinawa and Shiga with two and three cinemas respectively. A larger number of prefectures such as Fukui, Tokushima, Kagoshima and Ishikawa offered little more than five facilities.<sup>35</sup>

The overrepresentation of cinemas in the most urbanized areas changed only gradually. In the year 1940, the six prefectures with the highest number of cinemas continued to register more than forty percent of all facilities

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31 *Eiga nenkan. Shōwa jūshichi nen ban* 映画年鑑・昭和十七年版 (Film Yearbook 1942), Nihon Eiga Zasshi Kyōkai 1942: 6.19, 6.29.

32 As early as 1929, the number of cinemas in the US had reached 22,500. Germany, England, and France registered 5,266, 4,426, and 3,113 facilities respectively. *Nihon eiga jigyō sōran Shōwa go nen ban* 日本映画事業総覧・昭和五年版 (General Survey of Japanese Film Business in the Year 1930), Kokusai Eiga Tsūshin Sha 1930: n.p.

33 MONBUSHŌ SHAKAI KYŌIKU KYOKU 1928: 8–9.

34 According to the census of 1935, 66.2 % of the Japanese population were living in rural districts. The distribution of cinemas as of 1937 followed the opposite pattern, with only 35.4 % in rural districts. *Eiga nenkan* 1942: 6.14.

35 MONBUSHŌ SHAKAI KYŌIKU KYOKU 1928: 8–9.

(43.6%).<sup>36</sup> Film eventually became the most popular pastime, also among the rural population and especially its youth, but demand was not satisfied. The connection between cinematic entertainment and urban life becomes even more obvious, when the size of cinemas, the number of programs, and the number of actual customers are considered. Tokyo, for instance, not only boasted as many as seventeen picture palaces that could entertain more than a thousand people at a time, such as the “Japan Theatre” 日本劇場 (*Nippon Gekijō*). It also featured a higher number of cinema visits per person. The statistically average Tokyoite went to the movies nearly fourteen times per year, while his compatriot in distant rural Akita was seen in cinemas little more than twice per year.<sup>37</sup>



*Nippon Gekijō*, middle of the 1930s (BUREAU OF SOCIAL EDUCATION 1937: 7)

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36 Tokyo (316), Osaka (207), Hokkaido (182), Fukuoka (116), Shizuoka (111), and Hyogo (105). *Eiga nenkan* 1942: 6.11–6.13.

37 *Ibid.*: 6.19–6.21.

The spread of cinemas and the practice of moviegoing remained closely tied to the workers' milieus. Rapidly developed settlements of largely industrial workers attracted more movie facilities than older urban settlements with established entertainment structures. This characteristic does not only hold true when comparing greater urban areas such as Fukuoka and Kyoto, but also extends to so-called "provincial cities" 地方都市 (*chihô toshi*). An example is Kure 呉, close to Hiroshima. As one of the largest naval bases of the Japanese Empire, Kure had extensive dockyards and armories. In 1941, no less than seventy percent of about 270,000 inhabitants consisted of workers of those facilities and their families. According to a nationwide investigation of the entertainment situation in provincial Japan undertaken by a national newspaper in the same year, the city offered one small theatre featuring performances in the recital art of *Naniwa bushi* 浪花節 and one variety hall. The number of cinemas, on the other hand, amounted to eleven, one of them exclusively exhibiting newsreels. Another theatre had not been rebuilt after a fire years earlier – a fact related to the control of building materials as much as to insufficient demand. Instead of more cinematic entertainment, Kure's inhabitants were asking for children's playgrounds and adequate sports facilities, absent in the rapidly developed naval base.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, the entertainment districts of metropolitan Japan underwent changes that left cinemas with socially diversified audiences. A commentator on movie audiences presents the following observations in one of the first yearbooks dedicated to Japanese movie business, published in 1926:

There have been times, when motion pictures were perceived as nothing more than an entertainment for children. But before we knew it, also adults and even retirees began to attend cinemas joyfully, and today's audiences encompass various classes. The fact that [attending motion picture] is advancing from infantile to popular entertainment and that it is even aspiring to progress further into [a form of] artistic appreciation, entails that the quality of audiences is improving.<sup>39</sup>

38 ASAHI SHINBUN CHÔSA IIN KAI 朝日新聞中央調査会: "Chihô goraku chôsa shiryô" 地方娯楽調査資料 (Materials on Regional Entertainment), MINAMI Hiroshi 南博 et al. (ed.): *Kindai shomin seikatsu shi* 近代庶民生活史 8: *Yûgi to goraku* 遊戯と娯楽 (The History of Common People in the Modern Age 8: Play and Entertainment): San'ichi Shobô 1988: 149–50.

39 「活動写真は児童的娯楽に過ぎぬと見られてゐた時代もあるが、何時の間にか大人も隠居さんも喜んで常設館へ出掛けるやうになり、現在の観客は雑多な階級の人々を網羅するに至った。児童的娯楽より民衆的娯楽へと進み、更らに又芸術的鑑賞にまで進まんとしてゐるのは、即ち観客の質の向上を意味する。」 ISHIMAKI

Contemporary observers had various explanations why going to movies gained such popularity. An official in the Ministry of Education suggested that the practice was particularly suitable to the lifestyle of people in larger cities. “Modern people” 現代人 (*gendai jin*), he argued, demand excitement and variation. Both are supplied by cinemas at a comparatively inexpensive price. Staying for an hour or only for one’s favourite scene is still worth the expense. Thus, customers are able to make flexible use of their time. Moreover, he noted, the enjoyment of movies requires little education or previous knowledge. In contrast to theatre performances, movie patrons simply attend the program and enjoy.<sup>40</sup>

While the age profile of audiences actually changed, children and youth continued to occupy an important share of audiences. According to the statistics of the Home Ministry, thirty-six percent of paid cinema visits in 1929 were made by children. By the year 1940, children still amounted to about fifteen percent of all paid cinema visits, which also represented an economically significant segment of contemporary audiences.<sup>41</sup>

#### *Studying Popular Practice and Devising Alternatives*

The Ministry of Education continued to investigate the social spread of movie-going and the expansion of cinema business. Reacting to a discussion in the House of Representatives on a proposal to ban the cinema admission of children under the age of fifteen, the Social Education Section undertook a survey of the film consumption patterns of children and youth in April 1927. In the course of the survey, more than 27,624 primary school students, 14,364 middle school students, and 11,795 senior girls high school students in and around Tokyo and Osaka were questioned. Although variations existed according to gender, age, and family background, the compilers concluded that movies were closely related to the lives of children, and called for related policies.<sup>42</sup>

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1926: 53.

40 MONBUSHŌ SHAKAI KYŌIKU KA 文部省社会教育課 (ed.): *Eiga kyōiku* 映画教育, Monbushō 1928: 10–14.

41 *Nihon eiga jigyō sōran* 1930: 4; *Eiga nenkan* 1942: 6.19–6.21.

42 MONBUSHŌ SHAKAI KYŌIKU KA 文部省社会教育課 (ed.): *Seishōnen no eiga kōgyō kanran jōkyō chōsa gaiyō (I)* 青少年の映画興行観覧状況調査概要 (Summary of the Investigation of the Youth Film Attendance Situation), Monbushō 1929: 56.



The survey also recorded the opinions of educators at the 124 schools examined. It appears that about ninety percent of teachers noticed repercussions of movie attendance on their students. Their nature varied greatly. “I only notice bad influences”, wrote a primary school teacher in Tokyo and echoed claims of the early film prohibition movement by listing “losing sincerity”, “becoming impertinent”, “foolishly imitating film interpreters”, “boys acquire a special taste for adventures”, “being precocious in sexual matters”, “getting addicted to cinema”, “getting into bad company”, and lastly “decline of scholastic ability and destruction of scholastic ambition”.<sup>43</sup> Accusations such as these were contrasted by more sophisticated arguments. An educator working in a primary school in Osaka wrote:

As the projected motion picture scenes change so fast, a new situation already appears, before the previous one can be interpreted. In this way, it is almost impossible to judge correctly. Children that habitually attend movies are therefore knowledgeable, but lack clear judgment and settled opinions.<sup>44</sup>

In the following year, a meeting was arranged that united educators, bureaucrats, and representatives of film business in order to discuss problems and to work out proposals for their alleviation (全国教育映画事務担任者講習会 *Zenkoku Kyôiku Eiga Jimu Tannin Sha Kôshû Kai*). The resulting proposals were formulated by the National Education Association and presented to the ministry. They recommended that children be forbidden to attend entertainment programs. Whereas film contact of children under the age of six was to be prevented in general, alternative opportunities for school-aged children to attend educational films were to be provided. To this end, public institutions and studios were to hold meetings. In addition, the establishment of children’s cinemas and the distribution of educational films were demanded.<sup>45</sup>

As a stimulus for a film education movement that united local officials and educators, the meeting was influential. The “Children’s Film Day” 児童映画日 (*Jidô eiga [no] hi*) in Tokyo illustrates that the movement sought to improve the so-called “evil practices of film exhibition” 映画興行の悪弊 (*eiga kôgyô no akuhei*), while recognizing the legitimacy of children’s “desire

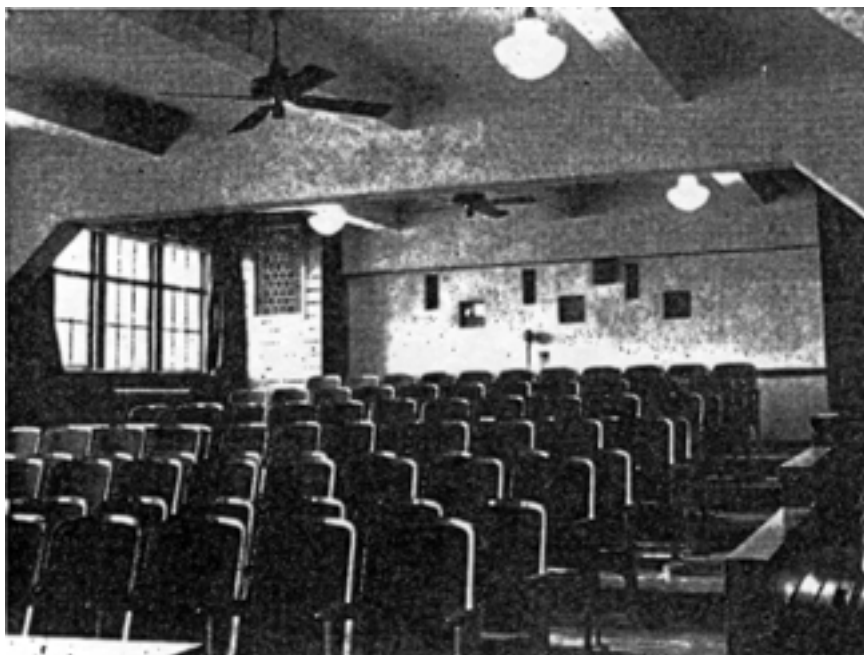
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43 Ibid.: 68–9.

44 「活動写真の光景は如何にも迅速に変転するから、一つの場面に対して判断を生じ得る前に、既に他の場面が現れるといふ風で正確に判断を作るといふことは殆ど不可能である。活動癖の児童は所謂物知りであるが、判断力微弱で定見がない。」 Ibid.: 74.

45 BUREAU OF SOCIAL EDUCATION 1937: 14–5.

for entertainment” 娯楽欲求 (*goraku yokkyū*) at the same time. The cooperation of private businesses, however, was lacking. Introduced by the Social Education Department of the municipality, the first Children’s Film Days took place on the second and fourth Sunday mornings of May, 1928. The organizers initially secured the cooperation of thirty-nine motion picture theatres. In all likelihood due to unsatisfactory management and lack of profitability, the number of participating cinemas dropped sharply soon after. It was only following reorganization of the event that seven theatres could be convinced to cooperate in the middle of the 1930s.<sup>46</sup>



Test-viewing room in the Ministry of Education (DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL EDUCATION 1937: 27)

Further research represented one of the Ministry of Education’s official policies reacting to the expansion of cinema business and the practice of moviegoing.

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46 MONBUSHŌ SHAKAI KYŌIKU KYOKU 1938: 47.

Areas of interest that surveys followed until the late 1930s were the exhibition situation in urban and rural Japan, the influence on social and school education, the content of entertainment programs, and the relation to delinquent or criminal behaviour.<sup>47</sup>

Another core activity during that time was film recommendation. As of 1927, more than 250 theatrical movies had been recommended, the majority being foreign productions. The promotion system underwent a number of administrative changes. In 1931, for instance, recommendation was taken over by the “Popular Entertainment Investigation Committee” 民衆娯楽調査委員会 (*Minshû Goraku Chôsa I'in Kai*). In general, however, the line adopted in the 1920s was followed until the regulations of the film law redefined the relationship of the Ministry of Education to film business and audiences.

#### *The Film Law and War Factor*

The further development of the ministry's policies intersected with demands for an active state policy towards the media that unfolded after the outbreak of the ‘Manchurian Incident’. Next to their colleagues in the Home Ministry, officials in the Social Education Bureau established themselves as principle actors in the movement for a “film law” 映画法 (*eiga hô*). The campaign for the law that was to regulate many of the problems identified since the 1910s followed a double strategy. The “Film Control Committee” 映画統制委員会 (*Eiga Tôsei I'in Kai*), on the one hand, coordinated efforts of the authorities, identified problems, and studied international film regulations. The “Greater Japan Film Association” 大日本映画協会 (*Dai Nippon Eiga Kyôkai*), on the other hand, served as a platform where bureaucrats, representatives of film business as well as film press could meet to debate the future of Japanese film. To this end, the association published the journal “Japanese Film” 日本映画 (*Nippon eiga*) and arranged round-table conferences on related issues.

Reviewing the course of these conferences – many of them were published in the journal of the association – reveals numerous intersections of ministerial goals and the intentions of businesses in the motion picture industry. Criticism of the Americanizing influence that Hollywood imports exerted on the younger generation, for example, were met with calls for the protection of Japanese

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47 Extensive documentation of relevant surveys were published as *Eiga kyôiku kenkyû shiryô* 映画教育研究資料. Cf. Shakai Kyôiku Kyoku, 1928–37.

studios that had to compete with large-scale American productions on their home market.<sup>48</sup>

Although consent between public and private actors emerged in many areas, the film law only received support among higher levels of the government, when the war with China further escalated in 1937. Finally enacted in October 1939, it introduced far reaching regulations such as a licensing system for all businesses and the pre-production censorship of scenarios. Most importantly, the responsible ministries were authorized to carry out future reorganization of production, distribution and exhibition of films.<sup>49</sup>

In contemporary publications, the film law was widely welcomed as a contribution to the development of “national culture” 国民文化 (*kokumin bunka*). Officials of the involved ministries and representatives of the industry praised the regulations, as they promised a new level of social esteem and protection from competitors in the fast changing business environment.<sup>50</sup>

One criticism, however, was that the guiding activity of the Ministry of Education remained obscure.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, on the basis of the new regulations, the influence of the ministry on general entertainment programs and the cinema attendance of children took on a new dimension. The film law legislated the promotion activities and entitled the ministry to recommend works which contributed to the “elevation of national culture” 国民文化の向上 (*kokumin bunka no kôjô*). Recommended films now represented a pre-selection for the Minister of Education Prize and the Special Prize, awarded annually and granting a financial award to the producer. Combined with the prospect of higher attendance, attaining the ministerial recommendation be-

48 See “Monbu Daijin ni manekarete Nippon eiga o kataru” 文部大臣に招かれて日本映画を語る (Talking about Japanese Film at the Minister of Education’s Invitation), *Nippon eiga*, August 1936: 38–43.

49 The film law and the implementation regulations are reprinted in UCHIKAWA 1975, Vol. 2: 234–36 a. 251–58. For a detailed contemporary interpretation of the law see Fuwa Suketoshi 不破祐俊: *Eiga hô kaisetsu* 映画法解説 (Commentary on the Film Law), Dai Nippon Eiga Kyôkai 1941.

50 SATÔ Tadao 佐藤忠男: “Kokka ni kanri sareta eiga” 国家に管理された映画 (State Administered Film), IMAMURA Shôhei 今村昌平 et al. (eds.): *Kôza Nihon eiga* 講座日本映画 4. *Sensô to Nihon eiga* 戦争と日本映画 (Lectures on Japanese Film. War and Japanese Film), Iwanami Shoten 1986: 4–5. See also SHIMIZU Akira: “War and Cinema in Japan”, Abe Mark NORNES & FUKUSHIMA Yukio (eds.): *The Japan / America Film Wars: World War II Propaganda and Its Cultural Contexts*, Chur et al.: Harwood Academic Publishers 1994: 53.

51 SEKINO Yoshio 関野義雄: “Eiga kyôiku o ika ni haaku subeki ka” 映画教育を如何に把握すべきか (How to Grasp Film Education), *Eiga hyôron*, March 1939: 48.

came a production strategy that was advertised early on in new film projects. Based on the law, the compulsory integration of non-fiction “culture films” 文化映画 (*bunka eiga*) – documentaries whose educational value had to be certified – and newsreels in entertainment programs was decreed. Specifically related to children, the ministry began to screen films for their suitability for “general use” 一般用 (*ippan yô*). Children under the age of fourteen were prohibited to attend programs that featured unsuitable films. Thus, a significant share of entertainment programming was closed to students until they reached the third grade of middle school.<sup>52</sup>

In 1940, for instance, 103 or roughly twenty percent of new releases of Japanese or foreign origin were labelled as unsuitable. The following years this percentage rose even higher. The reasons for banning juvenile audiences were various. In 1941, most cases (14) had aroused official disapproval because of the rather vague fear that the works might lead to misunderstandings in ethical or general questions on the part of the children. Other frequent reasons included improper portrayals of marriage and love (9), arousal of fear or horror (9), and promotion of disrespect towards seniors and superiors (8). Productions of Japanese origin dominated among these works, although some of the last American films shown before Pearl Harbor such as the Western *Arizona* were also included.<sup>53</sup>

The ban of films was followed by promotion activities focusing on children. Starting in 1940, the ministry selected films whose theatrical consumption



“This week also children are admitted”  
(*Eiga hyôron* March 1942: 57)

52 Based on § 17 of the law and the respective implementation regulations (no. 46 a. 47). Exempted were children until the age of five in the company of a legal guardian. *Masumedia tôsei*, Vol. 2: 257–58.

53 *Eiga nenkan* 1942: 3.26–3.27.

was considered beneficial for the education of primary and middle school students 児童生徒向け映画 (*jidô seito muke eiga*). The reasons for selection were published, targeted age groups specified, and consumption encouraged. As the generally recommended works (*Monbushô suisen eiga*), this group represented a diverse mixture of Japanese and foreign films, in fact they were identical to a large degree. Among the 38 productions selected in 1940, numerous shorter culture films were mixed with large scale feature films that had been awarded the prize of the Minister of Education. An example is the infamous “The Story of Tank Commander Nishizumi” 西住戦車長伝 (*Nishizumi sensha chô den*), recommended for the older grades in primary schools and middle school students for its convincing portrayal of Japanese soldiers in China and the capacities of the mechanized forces. Overt national policy films, however, were complemented by Hollywood productions such as *Young Tom Edison*, a work chronicling the inventor’s boyhood, and a film version of Miyazawa Kenji’s tale “Matasaburô the Wind Imp” 風の又三郎 (*Kaze no Matasaburô*).

In May 1941, following the reorganization of elementary schools as “National Schools” 国民学校 (*kokumin gakkô*), the ministry modified its promotion system by introducing labels that specified films suitable for youth, films suitable as teaching tools in National Schools, and films for use outside of class instruction. Thus, the demands of the film education movement – among them the promotion of cinema attendance as a rewarding activity complementary to class instruction – were officially recognized.

These developments took place against the backdrop of a further reorganization of the relationship between the state, film industry, and audiences. It was planned in the context of the establishment of an “Advanced National Defence State” 高度国防国家 (*kôdo kokubô kokka*) that reacted to the prolongation of the war against China. Soon after the “Information Bureau” 情報局 (*Jôhō Kyoku*) took over a leading position in coordinating and strengthening the propaganda and public information efforts late in 1940, the construction of a “New System for the Film [Industry]” 映画新体制 (*eiga shin taisei*) was undertaken. Enterprises producing feature films, documentaries, and newsreels were unified, and the vertical integration of the industry was targeted. A public corporation took over distribution, and the more than 2000 cinemas of the nation were divided into two chains that featured changing programs on a weekly basis.

In the framework of the “New System for the Film Industry”, a number of public organizations – some of which were guided by the Ministry of Education – established connections between studios and audiences. The goal was not

only to reform content and circumstances of film exhibitions. A deliberate effort was made to change the association of film consumption with urban lifestyles and to promote film consumption as an element of a national lifestyle, thus bridging the distinction between urban and rural Japan.<sup>54</sup>

The sum of the ministry's activities relating to cinema attendance of children seems impressive at this point, but many factors subverted the implementation of policy. Since 1940, the number of theatrical movie releases decreased dramatically, while the number of promotions stayed relatively stable. Of 497 theatrical releases of Japanese fiction films, 18 were recommended. Of the 46 releases in 1944, ten were promoted. Early on, film educators complained that the decreasing number of theatrical releases contained few productions that actually qualified for promotion.<sup>55</sup> Conditional recommendations therefore became frequent. Rather than excellence, the label *Monbushô suisen eiga*, for instance, began to certify a certain sufficiency as film in times of decisive war.

Other hindrances to the policies' implementation included the viewing preferences of audiences and incompetent management on the part of the authorities. The reluctance of many audience segments to follow the ministry's recommendations is evidenced by the fact that films classified as unsuitable for general use, on average, drew larger audiences than officially promoted works.<sup>56</sup> Incompetent management can be observed in the arrangement of weekly programs where films unsuitable for children were combined with productions that were promoted for children. In effect, parents and their children were locked out, when works produced on their behalf played inside.<sup>57</sup>

Most importantly, due to the rapidly changing war situation, the nature of urban life and cinema entertainment began to change. As early as 1943, the distribution corporation observed a decrease in cinema businesses.<sup>58</sup> The

54 GONDA Yasunosuke: "Kokumin bunka rinen no kôyô to bunka mondai no tenshin" 国民文化理念の昂揚と文化問題の展進 (The Raising of the Idea of National Culture and the Expansion of the Culture Problem), *Gonda Yasunosuke chosaku shû* 権田保之助著作集 (Selected Writings of Gonda Yasunosuke), Bunwa Shobô 1974: 393.

55 SEKINO Yoshio: "Eiga kyôiku to kyôiku eiga" 映画教育と教育映画 (Film Education and Educational Films), *Eiga nenkan* 1942: 5.2.

56 In 1943, for instance, they received 30% more spectators than the average of all releases.

57 OGAWA Ichirô 小川一郎: "Shô kokumin eiga no kôsatsu" 少国民映画の考察 (An Examination of Films for the Younger Nation), *Eiga hyôron*, April 1943: 12.

58 In the Kantô area fifty-four businesses had either closed doors or showed only theatre performances over the course of the year. TSUMURA Hideo 津村秀夫: "Shôwa jûhachi nen sôhyô: eiga seisaku" 昭和十八年総評・映画政策 (General Commentary on the Year

decline was accelerated by the “Emergency Measures for the Decisive War” 決戦非常措置 (*kessen hijô sochi*) that the Cabinet had passed in February 1944. Among other measures, the suspension of luxury entertainment was severely felt by the population.<sup>59</sup> As industrial workers were to become the new focus of film policy, the facilities close to factories were dramatically improved. In picture palaces such as the “Japan Theatre”, on the other hand, female volunteer corps took over the place of the spectators and began the production of balloon bombs.<sup>60</sup>

Further regulations were invented to deal with the raw film shortage. As a result, about forty percent (731) of the remaining cinemas closed doors nationwide by the end of 1944. In the following year, air raids interfered seriously with film exhibitions. Thus, in June 1945, when the remaining businesses in film production and distribution were restructured into a single corporation – the “Public Film Company” 映画公社 – (*Eiga Kôsha*) – going to the movies was disappearing from urban life.

### Conclusions

What can these observations contribute to our knowledge of the Ministry of Education’s policies towards the movie attendance of children and youth during the period under review? Examining the ministry’s policies in the context of the social diffusion of cinema businesses and the practice of moviegoing qualifies our idea of who the policies actually interacted with. In the beginning of the period, primary school children in urbanized areas of the country, and in particular those of families in the lower strata of society, represented the majority of individuals addressed. While the socioeconomic background diversified with the growing acceptance of moviegoing, governmental policy continued to deal with the lives of the smaller group of urban children and youth. Even when theoretically addressing the whole of the “younger nation” 少国民 (*shô kokumin*) or the “following nation” 第二国民 (*dai ni kokumin*), the rural component was excluded to a large degree, as their access to this form of entertainment did not change dramatically.

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1943: Film Policy), *Eiga hyôron*, February 1944: 11.

59 TSUMURA Hideo: “Kessen hijô sochi to eiga kai” 決戦非常措置と映画界 (The Emergency Measures for the Decisive War and the Film World), *Eiga hyôron*, April 1944: 4.

60 SHIMIZU 1994: 53.



From another perspective, it is interesting to note that the ministry's policies were directed towards a segment of contemporary audiences whose relative importance (but not their absolute number) steadily decreased due to the diversification of the age groups attending cinema. Considering this fact, the continued preoccupation with children seems remarkable.

The invention and implementation of the ministry's policies suggest that the relations between governmental actors and society were more complex than narratives of increasing governmental control allow. Of particular interest is the process of interaction that developed between ministerial policy and contemporary urban lifestyles. In the course of this process, officials in the ministry were influenced by the increasing social acceptance of the practice of moviegoing and the rising cultural status of film business. Until the late 1910s, the Ministry of Education had been considered an adherent to movements advocating far-reaching restriction of cinema attendance by children. Equipment, a regular budget as well as expertise to deal with the diagnosed problem were virtually missing and the agents employed were bureaucrats and educators, distinguishing themselves from audiences. After only two decades, however, the same institution was valuing much more than the educational use of film alone. It screened the new releases of a year entirely in light of their suitability for children, published detailed recommendations for suitable works, and actively promoted their consumption by children and youth in schools and cinemas as an element of a new national life style. In order to accomplish its goals, the ministry did not only support film related activities with a growing budget. It had become a major producer and distributor of educational films in its own right, and had screening and reduplication facilities in the precincts of the ministry at its disposal. Officials of the Ministry of Education had become part of movie audiences and a growing number of committee-members were being hired from among people with cinema-related backgrounds.

A variety of interactions can be further observed on the level of policy implementation. The described relations between ministerial policy and business strategies of private enterprises, for instance, qualify patterns of coercion and unwilling cooperation that have been frequently used in order to describe the relation of public and private actors in early Showa Japan. Even when the Ministry of Education turned into an agent of a "system of film control" 映画統制 (*eiga tōsei*) in the 1940s, the implementation of policies relied upon private businesses. When room for private initiative was increasingly suffocated, public actors effectively curtailed their own scope of action. The

legally impressive tools of control were largely used in order to administrate the growing shortcomings of the system.