



## TANG Xiaodan 湯曉丹 (1910.3.31–2012.1.21)

### Director

With the original name Tang Zemin, Tang was born in Hua'an, Fujian. As a child he moved with his parents to Indonesia. During the First World War, the family returned to their home in Fujian. Tang then studied at the Xiamen Jimei Agricultural Institute, but was expelled from the institute in 1928 for participating in anti-Japanese activities. He left his family and went to Shanghai the next year. He submitted manuscripts to the magazine *Dazhong Wenyi* and had a chance to acquaint the editor-in-chief Shen Xiling and other major figures in the left-wing theatre and film circles. In 1931, with the recommendation of Shen, he joined Unique Film Productions and became an art designer. A year later, Tang was set designer of *The White Gold Dragon* (1933), a collaboration between renowned Cantonese opera singer Sit Kok-sin and Unique. However, just before the shooting began, Runje Shaw, owner of Unique and director of the film, suddenly fell ill. Tang was assigned to take up the role as director and hence made his debut. It was a great success in Singapore and Malaya, and it set off a craze on Cantonese films. He then directed two more films for Unique, *Willow Blossoms* and *Drifting* (both 1933).

When Runme Shaw went to Hong Kong to establish the Hong Kong branch of Unique, he invited Tang to direct *Unworthy of Love* (1935). Subsequently Tang also shot films for Nanyang Film Company. During his six years in Hong Kong he also directed *The Bumbling Father-in-Law* (1935) for the Shanghai Yihua Production Company, ten films for Grandview Film Company Limited, including *Topsy Turvy* (1936) and *The Twelve Wives* (1937), as well as a number of anti-Japanese films for Nanyue Film Company, including *Heroes of the Times* (1937), *Shanghai Under Fire* (1938), *Little Guangdong* (1940) and *Roar of the People* (1941). In 1942 after Hong Kong had fallen to Japan, the Japanese pressured Tang to direct a propaganda film. Tang fled to Chongqing under an assumed name in no time.

When the war was over he returned to Shanghai, where he shot films such as *Dream in Paradise* (1947), *Reviver* (1948) and *The Lost Love* (1949). After 1949 when the national film studios were established, Tang worked for the Shanghai Film Studio, shooting ten films between 1950 and 1964. These include *From Victory to Victory* (co-directed with Cheng Yin, 1952), *Reconnaissance Across the Yangtze* (1954) and *Red Sun* (1963). Following the overthrow of the Gang of Four, he made *Aolei Yilan* (1979) and *The Nanchang Uprising* (1981). Tang passed away in Shanghai on 21 January 2012.