Wong, Anna May (1905-1961) Encyclopedia Article

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Anna May Wong was the first Asian American actress to achieve Hollywood film star status and an early outspoken critic of Holly-wood's racist attitudes. Born Wong Liu Tsong in Los Angeles, she was third-generation Chinese-American. Her first role was as an extra in *The Red Lantern* (1919), and her first lead was in the first Technicolor film, *Toll of The Sea* (1922). Her most memorable part was in *Shanghai Express* (1932), which starred Marlene Dietrich. Although she won critical acclaim for her acting in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), Wong grew tired of stereotyped casting and emigrated to Europe, where her stage and film work were well received. A gifted linguist, she played roles in several languages. After she returned to the United States, she declined, on principle, to consider playing the role of the concubine in *The Good Earth.* In the early 1950s, she starred in a short-lived television series. Her last film was *Portrait in Black* (1960).

Further Reading:

Parish, James Robert, and William T. Leonard, editors. *Hollywood Players: The Thirties.* New Rochelle, New York, Arlington House, 1976.

Zia, Helen, and Susan B. Gall, editors. *Notable Asian Americans.* Detroit, Gale Research, 1995.