BFI WORKSHOP on DECOLONIZATION AND ASIA AS PROBLEMATICS

In recent years, ‘decolonizing theory’ has been a catchphrase in film studies. But decolonizationdoes not simply mean incorporating critical debates on the cinema from Asia, Africa, and other regions that were formerly overlooked by Euro-American scholars into our existing theoretical discourse. This is because historically, such a discourse has been debated and canonized by either Euro-American scholars and practitioners or by those who have been trained to read, write, and think through the lens of the Euro-American episteme. The process of *incorporating* critical debates from outside Europe and North America is therefore inevitably a process of *rewriting* them in order to fit the Euro-American framework itself.

Yet, it does not mean that knowledge production in Asia can ever be studied as a self-contained entity. Asia has its own inter- and intra-continental colonial histories, whose impact on the way we think and produce knowledge not only in Asia, but also in Europe and North America, has been grossly underestimated. Meanwhile, since the sixteenth century, many philosophical concepts and ways of thinking in Asia have been in dialogue through intercultural translations with European discourses and practices or have been reinterpreted under Euro-American colonialism. By the time the cinema was critically discussed in the twentieth century, there was no such thing as an *indigenously Asian* body of knowledge. In fact, there has never been one.

In this workshop, we will look at and discuss the various issues that render decolonization as a *problematic* and Asia itself as a *theoretical problem.*

The workshop will be led by Victor Fan (Reader in Film and Media Philosophy at King’s College London).

This will be an interactive session with film clips and the opportunity for attendees to engage and debate.

**Further Reading Suggestions:**

Bao, Weihong. *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915–1945.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Chen, Kuan-hsing. *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010).

Fan, Victor. *Cinema Illuminating Reality: Media Philosophy through Buddhism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022.

Gerow, Aaron. ‘Introduction: The Theory Complex’. In *Decentering Theory: Reconsidering the History of Japanese Film Theory, Review of Japanese Culture and Society,* no. 22 (December 2010): 1–13.

Spivak, Gayatri Charkravorty. *Other Asias.* Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Steinberg, Marc and Alexander Zahlten. ‘Introduction’. In *Media Theory in Japan.* Eds. Steinberg and Zahlten. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017.