

## Images industry in East Asia : beyond the borders

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### Abstract

*The image industries in Asia are a real spearhead of a new expansion despite the ups and downs of the last 20 years, with the emerging shadow of neighbouring China, which has become a major film producer today. In this region, the image industries developed at the turn of the 1990s, in historical contexts that were certainly varied, but marked by promising economic development with cyclical crises. Our primary objectives would be to provide a new and relevant framework for reading these cross-fertilized audiovisual phenomena, based on the collection of local literature, which is often poorly deciphered, as well as on various surveys carried out over a period of five years in East Asia.*

*Under my direction, as part of a network of researchers in Europe and Asia, we published an issue of *Théorème* entitled «Les industries de l'image en Asie de l'Est (Chine-Hong Kong, Corée, Japon, Taiwan) entre mondialisation et identités locales», published by Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle in 2022, to develop another point of observation: that of Asia, based on these four converging poles: South Korea, China and Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan, never really approached from this comparative angle. This part of Asia, which could be described as East Asia, is a region which has also been less studied from the point of view of the cultural industries, and therefore remains a favourite terrain for understanding certain significant changes on a planetary scale (one individual in six in the world is now Asian, with a global population of approximately 1.6 billion inhabitants in all four zones).*

*This new economy excels today in the high-tech sector concentrated around the main urban centres in South Korea, Hong Kong/Shanghai in China, Japan and Taiwan. But these socio-cultural and economic transformations linked to the globalisation of the image industries are almost essentially perceived from the point of view of the United States. We need to analyse them differently.*

*A geopolitical reflection here on the borders of images and their circulation in East Asia, also obliges to restate that of the more porous relations between cultural industries and creative industries to measure a set of evolving and disparate practices during this Avanca conference.*

**Keywords:** East Asia, Local identities, Image industries, Media, Globalisation

The image industries in Asia constitute a real spearhead of a new expansion, despite the ups and downs of the last 20 years, with the emerging shadow of neighboring China, which has become a major film producer today. In this region, the image industries

developed at the turn of the 1990s, in historical contexts that are certainly varied, but marked by a promising economic development, always crossed by cyclical crises. Our primary objective would be to provide a new and relevant reading grid for these audiovisual phenomena, based on a collection of local literature that has often been little deciphered.

This new economy excels today in the high-tech sector concentrated around the main urban centers in South Korea, Hong Kong / Shanghai in China, Japan and Taiwan. But these socio-cultural and economic transformations linked to the globalization of the image industries are almost essentially perceived from the perspective of the United States. In this collective issue of *Théorème* 33/2021 (see below published by the University Press of Sorbonne-Nouvelle following another previous issue of *Théorème* 16/2012: *Bollywood: Images industry* ) we propose to develop another point of observation: that of Asia from these four converging poles: South Korea, China and Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan, never really approached from this comparative angle. This part of Asia, which could be described as East Asia, is a region that has been less studied in terms of cultural industries, and therefore remains a preferred terrain for understanding certain significant changes on a global scale (one out of every six people in the world is now Asian, with a global population of approximately 1.6 billion inhabitants in all four zones). The growing weight of China within this mosaic cannot erase the cultural, demographic and economic inequalities of this part of East Asia, once described as the «South Seas region» and marked in history by serious antagonisms that continue to persist between the traces of colonialism and the consequences of the Second World War in the whole region.

Working on the image industry in East Asia (China/ Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Taiwan) also invites us to take an interest in globalization as seen from elsewhere and to re-examine theories on cultural globalization from a comparative perspective. It challenges the most common analytical grid, which approaches this question from the angle of North American economic domination in Europe alone. Does the new Chinese challenge imply a more bipolar globalization in a 21st century with an Asian dimension? Or a globalization distributed differently, in which we would speak of a new process of «Easternization»? Hollywood's economic control of the world cinema market does not mean global cultural hegemony: the taste for national programs and films, the various appropriations and mediations invite us to refine the analysis at the local level. And taking into account East Asia, relatively ignored until now in research on these fields, allows

us to understand the extent to which these ever dynamic cultural industries remain divided between globalization and local identities. A geopolitical reflection on borders would also force us to rethink the more porous relations between cultural industries and creative industries in order to measure a set of evolving and disparate practices.

Developing a problematic around the sole axis of «globalization» seemed to us to be rather restrictive and not very operational in so far as popular cinema in East Asia has succeeded in diversifying its filming locations and languages by relocating according to the crises of these production poles (as is the case in Hong Kong and then in Taiwan with China). Today, this filmic culture is much more a matter of fragmented than complementary poles, concerned with preserving local and specific cultural entities, while at the same time being part of this general context of globalization. As elsewhere in the world, popular Asian cinema retains a certain attractiveness, but must face strong competition from television and Internet networks that broadcast it in the region. In this respect, East Asia offers a unique field of experience crossed by profound diversities, which fragment the market of its cultural industries. Many filmmakers, for example, target their works to primarily local audiences, and contrary to some preconceived notions, Asian cinema is multifaceted, divided among different regional poles. Much of the available and recent literature addresses these issues from a rather «auteurist» perspective, without necessarily including commercial productions. This research project aims to fill this scientific gap in a critical perspective. It therefore seemed appropriate and essential to reflect collectively within the framework of a network of researchers already existing and actively working on these questions in order to pool our thoughts in order to develop comparative analyses and also to measure their limits. The aim was to identify the mechanisms and main actors of this industrial shift in East Asia, to understand its regional impact and the transformations it has brought about, to analyze the phenomena of convergence and to understand new uses on the scale of accelerated globalization. This is perhaps the challenge and the originality of this issue, based on a cross-section of views from Asia and Europe.

### **Between globalization and local cultural identities**

Based on concrete case studies, we consider these four production/distribution poles in an international dimension by taking the culture of images in the broad sense of «filmic culture» within the framework of the media industry (cinema, television, video games), striving to understand the interactions and evolutions of demand in relation to a communication market that is always innovative and in full growth. The cyclical vitality of Asian economies has always made the most of this context of cultural creativity. But since the beginning of the 1990s, with the end

of the speculative bubble in Japan, these flows have gradually shifted from Japan to South Korea and Taiwan, and now to China, which has become a strong player in the audiovisual system. From this point of view, East Asia appears as a heterogeneous and multicultural continent, but stimulated and unified by a deep belief in its own cultural and identity referents, and whose lever of change emanates essentially from an entrepreneurial pole strongly connected to the civil society. It is on the basis of local entrepreneurs and most often independently of any state aid, except in China, that these four entities, themselves competitors, have developed their filmic activities to circulate them around large multimedia groups (Samsung, Sony, TCL, Daewoo, Huawei...). The transnational organizational models of these conglomerates also encourage a transnational circulation of content to promote the growth of these large groups. In a context where their strategies, which are an expression of the power relations and tensions in this Asian region, have become as much financial as industrial. In these four dominant Asian countries, capitalism and national cultural identities have intertwined to give birth, often in a pioneering way, to a specific image industry, to which the majority of the inhabitants subscribe.

From this angle, we can see that models of societies anchored in tradition and involving forms of community solidarity are gradually sliding towards individualistic and consumerist models. The dominant Hollywood blockbuster industry is often at odds with a China that has become hegemonic in the region, using Hong Kong or Taiwan as a new identity issue to establish its soft power. All the more so since this relatively open and offensive Anglo-Saxon model anticipated an Asian model that was rather compartmentalized and hierarchical within communication conglomerates, organized vertically and now forced into convergence and transversality. For the whole of this industrial system of images, marked by productivism and the random character of the value produced, also functions on cyclical crises and strong uncertainties. It is made of loans must spread its risks throughout the area to maintain itself, differentiate itself and better circulate, permanently subjected to technological innovation. The industrial mutations thus oblige to reassess the status of the author, returning these last decades to more collective conceptions of the creation. Isolated and on the bangs, an auteur cinema struggles to exist above all in international festivals. Rather, it looks westward to obtain in recent years a recognition of choice in Cannes with the awarding of a Palme d'Or to the Japanese Kore-Eda Hirokazu (2018) and then to the Korean Bong Joon-ho (2019) while in 2019 six Chinese films were selected at the Festival in all sections while the Prize for directing had in the past been awarded to the Taiwanese Hou Hsiao-Hsien (2015) and that of the screenplay to Chinese Jia Zhangke (2013).

How can we integrate the specificities of these Asian film cultures, if we also try to understand the local stakes (impact on distribution and exploitation, on the

DVD derivative industries and the rise of VOD, mobile telephony and the Internet) in the face of globalization processes? For the specificity of these filmic cultures and their respective circulations interfere at several levels to be relayed by the Policies and to be now at the service of new Soft-Power to promote them in the process of globalization. They benefit from cultural predispositions and their populations are inclined to negotiate a hyper-technologized daily life with a cultural imaginary anchored in often strictly local traditions.

Our approach to these image industries is both multidisciplinary and empirical, depending on our respective disciplinary anchors but around different audiovisual objects. This approach combines ethnographic or sociological exploration, economic analysis and socio-political decoding of the media in order to combine the relationship between globalization and cultural identities, but also to perceive its limits. The in-depth study of these four main cultural areas identified for production/dissemination includes a comparative dimension, through concrete field studies (micro-scale analysis) in order to analyze the intersecting effects of globalization and this fragmented Asian identity (macro-scale analysis). The collection of information from complementary field surveys has often made up for the initial lack of qualitative and quantitative data on these subjects. Given the complexity of this exercise, we wanted to propose readable and homogeneous indicators, although the sources (private or public) remain heterogeneous. Sectoral as well as international comparisons are sometimes difficult to make, as cultural services for the most part fall within the scope of activities that have become immaterial and are under-valued, or are not applicable to all fields for related markets.

## From global to local?

How to analyze contemporary Asia by taking into account the heritage and the concrete impact of a globalization before its time at the beginning of the 20th century on the whole of this cinematographic sector? A *historical look* is necessary (Axis I). In the 21st century, most of these countries have adopted a common neo-liberal framework that contributes to the strong deregulation of their audiovisual and cinematographic framework. In this perspective, both comparative and historical, one resumed the stakes of diversified cultural policies in a fragmented East Asia (China, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore), which was first marked by a conflicting historical heritage and dissensions, before seeking for some regulatory models and often deploying late in a space of neo-liberal or mixed economy, as in China. The evolution in terms of creative industry echoes here the great heterogeneity of these different media flows in order to understand all the current consequences and analyze all the distortions in a process of competitive globalization. Based on cases in the history of three cities/studios already connected in networks (Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore), one

invites us to reflect more particularly on the concrete forms of a cultural hybridization, made of reciprocal borrowings, economic and artistic exchanges in which these connected audiovisual poles already participate. It is a question of resituating the audiovisual history of Asia in this dimension of constant exchanges, but also of apprehending it in its discontinuity in order to understand today these interactions between the global and the local, such as we find them today. How to measure the heritage of audiovisual poles in terms of networks and connections?

But how can we also measure the status of an auteur cinema, recognized in international festivals but badly treated today in Asia. Starting with the Japanese case of the 1980s and 1990s, at the turning point of the industrialization of culture, one chapter looks back at the evolution and debates of auteurism to point out the status of an auteur cinema caught in the constraints of the star system. One article traces the pioneering history of the distribution of Japanese auteur films in France. However, throughout Asia, early cinema and then the studios once tried to promote them. What remains today of the history of this auteur cinema? One of the common points is to analyze in this section the respective situation and the state of the audiovisual archives in each of these countries. The safeguarding and promotion of filmic heritage reveals paradoxes in China in this brief history of archives, then in South Korea as described, or in Japan, and finally in Taiwan, all of which identify situations that are sometimes similar in relation to a badly treated cinema. The archives appear to be the guardians of a visual memory in a context of extensive industrialization of culture. In a context where these institutions in charge of all these issues have belatedly become active in safeguarding their respective heritages of images long denied. It is now a question of promoting them better and of making them circulate today since they also participate from now on in a process of exchanges. Asia is thus imposed as a space of mediation, marked very early by this *circulation of films* (Axis II). What about the still lasting impact of the Hollywoodian industry in East Asia, abused by Japan in 1980-1990 and now by China?

Should we decript the history of this «Far East» phenomenon by evaluating it in the face of the dynamism of these new actors who have successively appeared in East Asia to compete with Hollywood? Thus, based on numerous field investigations, we measure the stakes of documentary in terms of production and distribution in China. Escaping the domination of the cultural industries and state censorship, the documentary makes it possible to affirm a counter-analysis of the social evolutions in progress. In counterpoint this time, we study the new transformations of the industry and the status of the cinema creation in Taiwan, anchored in local stakes while being dependent on its Chinese neighbor. One article also shows the limits of a revival of Korean cinema, divided between the constitution of an industrial model and more regional perspectives. Faced with the rise of the middle classes and new

consumption models, these audiovisual companies are seen as a highly profitable sector for the future. One chapter returns to the audience of TV series in East Asia to analyze this massive circulation of Korean audiovisual products and understand the phenomena of cultural proximity specific to Asia while measuring its distortions. These questions are taken up again under another angle but this time to understand the impact of Japanese visual popular culture in Europe and the criteria of success of animation. In this respect, in an economy of flow and mass culture, it is a question of better understanding the notion of author which has become crucial. Developments in piracy and copyright have affected in multiple ways the relationships between states, societies and communication markets, as described, pointing to the antiquity and extent of these underground audiovisual exchange flows in East Asia.

What relations do the media induce abroad in issues that are often similar or of nationalistic withdrawal today in a whole part of East Asia? Although this image industry is also guided by its exporting ambitions in terms of co-productions, in order to understand their new production methods, such as the circulation of films online. This image industry is articulating and converging with other creative industries around digital platforms. How to define these *innovative clusters* (Axis III) One article shows how the digital distribution of films in China today participates in the emergence of a new soft power and the organization of real competitive platforms. The deployment of these digital platforms defines new relationships upstream and downstream. As explained, the rise of online networks also teleguides new communities of audiences concerned with downloading films beyond China's national borders.

If this issue proposes to identify a whole series of paradoxes as well as mediations that are still little analyzed in this context of a fragmented globalization, to measure new innovative interactions between the main cinema and audiovisual poles, to better apprehend the power relations under this angle in these different cultural areas, *Theorem* allows us to conclude in terms of intercultural perspectives. The borders assigned in the post-war past by various then hegemonic actors, from Japan to the United States, have today become porous and crossable.

In this changing Asian audiovisual landscape, new frontiers seem to be emerging, echoing the words of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai where «*everywhere I go in the global, I meet the local*».

### **A geo-political angle on media landscape**

This research, *The Image Industry in East Asia: Between Globalization and Local Identities (China/ Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Taiwan)*, revisited here from a more geopolitical angle, does not have the ambition to be exhaustive, but wishes in this pluridisciplinary or plural approach, to bring together different questions

posed around research objects that are not often crossed. If the cinema, vector of imagination, seems to transport us in its relationship to the territory, seeing a film often supposes to conciliate at the same time its imagination with a presumed place or in a predisposed place. The cinema obliges to traverse diversified spaces and allows us to revisit new territories or to confront us again as spectators with interior spaces. In a way, the cinema is already an elsewhere. But the cinema is not only a representation of the territory or the space that it would be a question of traversing. It always has a very symbolic value in a collective imagination. But without doubt Asia, object in itself as a homogeneous entity, does not exist and would refer to a simulacrum so much the cultural differences are fundamental there. What would it mean, for example, to film Asia or to film in Asia, an Asia modernized through the prism of all its differences? Has globalization contributed to accentuating or revealing these differences, when in this collective work, we evoke a globalization at grips with reinforced local identities? In this proposed cartography of East Asia, the audiovisual sector would be part of these different issues through the prism of a fragmented globalization. Cinema was born there at the beginning of the 20th century, in the context of societies that had barely emerged from feudalism or colonialism. A rather Western import at the beginning, the audiovisual media has contributed to the profound transformation of these societies until today. Traveling to Asia for a European spectator, implies crossing in history, a whole series of imaginary and varied territories, populated with as many landscapes as characters. Without forgetting that this global history of Asia, conjugated from their respective maritime frontages, testifies of hostile terrestrial conquests to be transformed nowadays in imaginary filmic narratives. Do all these modalities allow us to revisit today, when we speak of the image industry, these Asian dragons (to use a traditional formula applied to new industrialized countries considered in the past as emerging countries)? How can we reconcile the question of territories with those of their images, or their apparently antagonistic visual regimes? As a researcher, is it a question of crossing new frontiers or of freeing oneself from them, in order to transgress them?

This *Theorem* wished to articulate in three distinct parts, these questions of histories and filmic forms with the space of circulation of films to finally show these innovative issues through the emergence of new audiovisual poles. Also in this research program undertaken in 2015, the expected crossing between «territories and images» is not only conceptual since it has allowed to confront different approaches and disciplines (anthropology, economics, aesthetics, history, sociology, film studies and communication ...) around researchers, often isolated around their only objects or their own cultural areas of predilections, but gathered here in an issue that we wished to be pioneering if not innovative both on the image industry in East Asia as on their circulation. In our plural reading

grids, it was therefore a question of taking up several challenges, as much on the regime of these images as on the analysis of their territorial stakes in the context of a fragmented globalization process.

### Fragmented globalization?

More broadly, the production of images in Asia, on the scale of a continent, has prompted us to reflect on these new issues of globalization. Our approaches, taking into account both the criticism of «national cultures», had to be parsimonious in order to understand the reinforcement of local identities in the face of a globalization that we would describe here as fragmented. These Asian Dragons, although disparate if not antagonistic (China/Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Taiwan), appear today among the leading nations of film lovers, winning prizes in international festivals, endowed with a noria of television channels, reinforced by a music industry in full vitality, massively broadcasting their video-clips on the Internet, contributing since the 1990s to the development of a culture of leisure and entertainment on a large scale thanks to their multimedia groups, but in which cinema continues to play a significant role. If this *Theorem* has made it possible to give an account of a context that is often misunderstood, this collective and transversal reflection on the status of images in East Asia has invited us to take an interest in different territories and audiovisual objects. Different media have built up an original and diversified culture of images in the history of Asia. As proposed in this issue of *Théorème*, we had to understand the specific place of each of these objects in a process of interactivity and exchange. In view of the globalization of audiovisual exchanges that the Asian continent is going through, how can we re-evaluate certain issues, including that of «soft power», in order to re-examine the theories in vogue on cultural globalization? And how to perceive this globalization seen from Asia in our approaches?

Or what kind of economic globalization are we talking about if, from the American point of view, this one, initiated in the post-war period, had already been able to combine very different logics and dynamics, both from the point of view of financial deregulation in the 1970s and of the circulation of capital in 1980? From the Chinese point of view, this globalization rather reconciles contradictory interests, practicing, as the second world economy, a strong exchange control, while its industrialization has so far been the result of a state-productivist policy, not really indebted to an uncontrolled power of foreign multinational groups? From the Korean point of view, split into two parts as a result of the partition established in 1945 between the USSR and the USA, and the consequences of the Cold War, globalization would imply diametrically opposed economic developments? From the Japanese point of view, when the Meiji era after 1860 opened the island to the world, this globalization is declined on a Westernized modernization but marked by Chinese influence? From the Taiwanese point of view,

which emerged from Japanese colonization, where globalization after 1949 implies above all joining the Western bloc and catching up with Western nations, whereas Hong Kong is confronted with Chinese domination today after having freed itself from its British tutelage? So many different perceptions in the respective histories of these countries, of a globalization that is ultimately culturally fragmented, at the opposite end of the spectrum from the triumph of a global market that would disregard these local identities? This globalization has been reinvented in Asia within the framework of a certain pragmatism and rules of protection and international cooperation in which professional audiovisual networks have been particularly active. Certain dominant theses often weaken, due to the lack of field investigations that we have been able to carry out in recent years in these different Asian countries, the current analytical grids around the sole domination or economic subordination to the United States. Here, but more than elsewhere, the globalization of trade has been accompanied by an international division of production, combined in China with a relatively low cost of labor, but also with a massive development of means of communication throughout Asia. It should not be forgotten that most of their economies were emerging from the ravages of war, from a state of decay in the middle of the 20th century, if not, as in the case of China, from a quasi-emerging economy at the beginning of the 21st century. And if the forces of this cultural area are sucked in by the Chinese hegemony, despite the economic domination of Hollywood on the world film market, Japan, Korea or Taiwan in terms of investments are still quite far behind the United States, Europe or India. The global turnover of the commercial or entertainment film market is estimated at \$104 billion worldwide, of which \$15 billion is in East Asia alone and more than \$20 billion in the United States.

In addition to this, there are nearly 8.3 billion in sales for video game programs alone in East Asia, which are widely distributed among hundreds of millions of consumers. A sector that is much more profitable than the movie industry. Nearly a thousand fiction films are produced annually in China without necessarily being distributed internationally, where the American majors, producing half as many, export their blockbusters with a turnover double that of China. Faced with the rapid rise of China, a hegemonic actor for two decades in the region in terms of the arrangement of stages in film production and distribution in Asia, this division of labor on the international scene, involving increased competition between weak and strong actors, raises other questions in the region, notably on the scale of these specific image regimes and their subsequent evolution.

### Image regimes

All the more so since it was often necessary to decompartmentalize our approaches to better cross the diversity of our objects. But today, the taste of these



respective audiences for their own programs and their domestic films, the reciprocal borrowings from other great cinematographies and the mediations filtering the viewer's gaze also invite us to reconsider these re-appropriations of images. Asia in its complexity, prone to the common recourse to the delocalization of its own audiovisual productions, has become a major stake in the reconfigurations of these audiovisual landscapes as we noticed during international film markets in Hong Kong and elsewhere. In this massive process of circulation of images of all kinds (downstream Korean series broadcast in various television stations around the world, pink eiga or Japanese novel-porn on the Internet, films from international documentary and fiction festivals in Asia, the dissemination by active networks of Japanese anime and manga fans or Korean dramas in Europe, upstream to the relocation of films, notably from Taiwan to China, the financing of various productions in Hong Kong or Singapore as a counterpoint to the increased competition from Korean and Japanese multimedia groups, etc.), this Asian continent appears to be truly active and dynamic on the international scene of the image industry. In parallel to this mass audiovisual production, a whole counter-cinema with a more social or critical connotation continues to be produced or co-produced in an auteurist tradition, as a counterpoint to the American hegemony present in all distribution sectors. Faced with the new strike force of these cultural industries for more than twenty years, each of these Asian Dragons is today, like others, confronted with the need to defend its own cultural exception, indebted to a filmic heritage that is often poorly preserved, making an auteur cinema that is often poorly supported coexist with a commercial or popular cinema, confined to its own national audience.

Likewise, despite its limited audience, documentary cinema has become very representative of new critical or alternative cinematographic forms, centered today on the consequences of ecological disasters, as in Japan, or pandemic and economic catastrophes, as in China. Collective narratives in a propagandist mode no longer really work, except to establish the aspirations of an audiovisual soft power, often grafted onto a nationalist discourse. But the use of new technologies and new social media participates more widely in the emergence of a large critical filmic production in front of the hegemony of dominant forms of images, notably in commercial and public television. If television remains the unavoidable medium, the digital revolution through the digital economy has reactivated new forms of competition on the scale of a continent of more than one and a half billion people. For example, Japan and then South Korea have gradually become laboratories for innovation and expansion of mobile telephony. Hong Kong remains one of the most connected cities in the world with nearly 90% of smartphones. In China, each household has between one and three smartphones. Taiwan, for example, has become an addiction center for all age groups in terms of cell phone use. Today, more than one and a half billion

cell phones circulate through different public and private operators throughout East Asia. These new image technologies interact on a daily basis in both the reception and production of images of all kinds, shaping this new view of globalization. The production of images by users, a sign of a certain autonomy, also forces us to reconsider those produced by the States, if we consider that in China, for example, more than 600 million surveillance cameras are installed in public spaces, that is to say one camera for every two inhabitants. Especially since December 2019, facial recognition has become mandatory to verify identities, also involves this filmic use of the mobile in biometric control. These new technologies, borrowing after 1949 from the Soviet totalitarian model, but linked today in particular to the large multimedia group Huawei, have turned this visual facial control into an ECCC social rating system to control social behavior. How then can we rethink, beyond the control and production of these images, in the light of these Asian dragons, the question of technological dependence? Especially in this significant evolution towards a digital economy likely to reveal its more authoritarian forms from the perspective of control societies that are both technologically sophisticated and modern? In fact, seen from Asia, this globalization appears more fragmented.

Every image participates or is grafted onto a piece of territory viewed on a daily basis. In this spirit, we have approached the visual regime of these flows of images, as markers in a context of globalization and intensified circulation, where the global is permanently articulated on the local. In contact with these image technologies and in a cultural universe that has become much more porous in the last twenty years, the identities of each of these Asian dragons have not been absorbed into a supposedly unified Asian audiovisual model, even if we can sometimes observe surface similarities between them. How are these territorial differentiations played out?

### **Territorial stakes?**

To introduce in conclusion this question of territories with that of images, also obliges to revise a whole series of questions that have crossed the Asian cultures for nearly a century: their respective relationships to cinema as to history, but also the emergence of new cinematographic practices and devices, within the framework of an industrialization of culture that on an imported mode often North American upsets societies today often crossed by deep moral and political crises (slowdown of growth and cyclical economic crises, authoritarian models and nationalist challenges, corruptions and political censures, natural disasters and ecological crises...) This question of the relationship between images and territories, appears in an unequal way to show here in the end in this Theorem the importance of all these cleavages. Basically, the image translates the power relations between the filmed and the camera that is supposed to observe them, while the notion of territory marks much more accentuated differentiations

between the places of production, concentrated on a few rare urban poles (Shanghai, Tokyo, Hong Kong...) and the poles of diffusion or exploitation of the films, disseminated or reconfigured thanks to the Internet and the digital economy in logics of networks that are both dense and multiplied. At the same time, in the face of this situation that has become more unequal, in a context of increased commercialization of culture, the local has also come to interfere with the global, where in many territories that are often neglected, the massive extension of social communication networks has made it possible to disseminate images from the most diversified sources.

These complex questions of territoriality, beyond simply the status of the images conveyed or their massive circulation, undoubtedly oblige us to rethink the territory in terms of long duration. In its more dynamic configuration, the territory confronted with the world of images, refers to other much more dynamic stakes. At the local level, filming implies a whole process that from production to editing means appropriating multiple territories to finalize a film. Our field observations in Asia, in particular, show how these activities have evolved and transformed throughout history, accelerating as elsewhere with the technological advances of the image. If the digital economy today implies profound ruptures, it also implies new forms of democratization in terms of production and circulation of images, and in a use that is undoubtedly much more widespread than before. These daily practices of the image are articulated to territories in movement. On a global level, the production and diffusion of images also means appropriating other territories in a relentless war of markets. By taking up the idea of world cinema, in the sense of Braudel's world economies, we could ask ourselves what place is given to images from Asia with regard to their respective long cinephilic traditions? But also to ask what cultural specificities, notably in their representations of the foreigner, these images have been able to construct in history as well as in the long term within a continent that has finally experienced fratricidal wars and colonizations? Would cinema have remained only a nostalgic form of exploration of a certain Asia in either fictional or documentary mode? Unless we consider the limits of all identity and visual construction as belonging to imaginary communities, we could ask ourselves in conclusion how such cinema on such given territory, founds a more universal narrative in images? How does the audiovisual in the broadest sense, still allow to build a social link in these different Asian societies, all of which have become more unequal today, in terms of genres as well as social classes, where cinema is rather a privilege of cultivated urban strata in front of television, vector of an offensive audiovisual culture, both commercial and popular? In any case, our collective approach here to this regime of images has allowed us to rethink these different societies in their most varied as well as most stereotyped aspects. Subjected to deep economic and financial tensions, these Asian dragons could ultimately prove to be a colossi with feet of clay in the audiovisual sector. At all levels, on a given territorial parcel and

within its own broadcasting media, the image in this renewed relationship to the territory, reactivates more radical forms of rupture, notably thanks to the massive use of mobiles, but also builds new views in this discontinuity of a visual history in East Asia, perceived in this *Theorem*, both from below and from above. We have only tried to bring here a critical and comparative rereading of these audiovisual systems to arouse new debates and feed this dimension of interculturality.



## Final Notes

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