

Zurich Taiwan Lecture Series

Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples and Feature Film Cinema: From Colonial Mascot to Eco-Citizen



Prof. Dr. Chris Berry, King's College London

Wednesday, 15 May, 2019, 6 pm

ZUB 416, Zürichbergstrasse 4, Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies, University of Zürich

ABOUT THE TALK:

This presentation approaches that relationship between Taiwan's indigenous peoples and dramatic feature films and in two ways. First, it examines the representation of the indigenous peoples in feature films, and it finds that their depiction has nearly always been connected to Taiwanese identity and Taiwan's ecology. In the Japanese colonial period, the indigenous people were frequently deployed to symbolize the supposedly savage frontier identity of the island and its promise for colonial taming of nature from the Japanese perspective. This continued in the Martial Law era (1947-1987), but civilizing the indigenous peoples now also required assimilation in the form of sinicization. Since the end of Martial Law, a new pattern has gradually emerged, where the indigenous people symbolize both the new, multi-cultural, democratic and eco-conscious Taiwanese identity and its difference from Han-centric, undemocratic, and polluted China. Second, who is representing indigenous peoples in cinema and for whom? Therefore, the final section of the presentation examines the role of Taiwan's indigenous peoples in the production and reception of films about them. Is what Barry Barclay has famously called "Fourth Cinema" emerging in Taiwan: cinema about, by and for indigenous peoples?