

6 Cinema in the Spirit of Bandung: The Afro-Asian Film Festival Circuit, 1957–1964

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Afro-Asian cinematic exchange took off slowly after the celebrated 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. At that point, strong film industries in Japan, India, and Egypt—then part of the United Arab Republic (UAR)—far outpaced any other national cinemas in the region. Most African territories remained under colonial power and had no national film industries. When the First Afro-Asian Film Festival (AAFF) took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 1958, only 14 Asian and African countries participated, along with eight Soviet Asian republics.¹ The official festival communiqué announced future installments, in accordance with the “principles of the Bandung Conference” and “under the sign of peace and friendship among peoples” (Iskusstvo kino 1958b). Chinese delegates took exception to the emphasis on peace. “Our cinema art has to prop up the militant will of our peoples and inspire fear in our enemies,” they wrote in a private note to Tashkent festival organizers (RGALI 2944/13/206/122).² After two more meetings in Cairo and Jakarta the Afro-Asian festival ended in 1964.

Four years later, the First Tashkent Festival for Asian and African Cinema hosted over a hundred filmmakers from Asia and Africa, and observers from Latin America. By then, cinema became a key weapon of liberation. Many participants’ home countries—what was then called the Third World—pursued strategic alliances with the Soviet Union and the socialist Second World against colonialism, capitalism, and Western imperialism (Dirlik 2007). The festival drew on alliances between socialist states and anticolonial movements, renewed at the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, Cuba in 1966 (Mahler 2018). It joined a growing tricontinental network of film festivals from New Delhi, to Carthage, to Viña del Mar. It produced no joint communiqué. Despite its irenic slogan “For peace, social progress, and freedom of the peoples,” Cuban director José Massip did not feel sidelined at the 1968 Tashkent festival in the way the Chinese delegation felt in 1958. He reported in *Cine cubano* that “militant, revolutionary” cinema found a “passionate, sensitive, and receptive” public at Tashkent (Massip 1969).

The divergent Chinese and Cuban experiences a decade apart point to an evolving, contested, and understudied theory and practice of anti-colonial cinema in the Bandung era. The early Afro-Asian socialist film network expanded from the Asian Film Week (AFW) in Beijing in 1957 (Ma 2016), through Afro-Asian Film Festival meetings in Tashkent in 1958, Cairo in 1960, and Jakarta in 1964. This network has been largely forgotten. Studies of film festivals in the 1950s and early 1960s have bypassed the AAFF altogether, focusing on Venice, Cannes, and Berlin in Europe (Valck 2008), or, more recently, on the commercial Asian Film Festival (Lee 2020; Baskett 2017). The Afro-Asian festival’s communiqués do not appear in a comprehensive compendium of cinema manifestos of all kinds that includes a special section on decolonization (MacKenzie 2014). Two historians mined Soviet archives to examine aspects of the Afro-Asian cinema network. Masha Kirasirova reveals Kamil Yarmatov, a Tajik director who worked mainly in Uzbekistan, as a key figure in Tashkent Afro-Asian meetings in 1958 and 1968 (Kirasirova 2014, 359–367). Rossen Djagalov, the only scholar to consider the entire Afro-Asian festival series, judges the earlier festival “a false start” in Second-Third World cinematic alliances because it “did not result in permanent structures and wider networks being formed” and “few” participants’ names are “recognizable” (Djagalov 2020, 138).

This chapter argues otherwise. It analyzes the Afro-Asian Film Festival as a “site of contest” for envisioning anticolonial cinema in the early Cold War. The AAFF matters as a cinematic thread in Bandung-era networks of organizations and conferences; as the earliest articulation of “cinematic Third Worldism” (Mestman 2002), a term usually used to describe militant anti-imperialist cinema of the 1960s and 1970s; and

as a rise and fall of cinematic high diplomacy unique to the Cold War era. The chapter considers the entire Afro-Asian network, paying special attention to spectatorship and informal cinematic contacts at Tashkent. While the Afro-Asian film festival circuit emerged from the state-initiated nonaligned movement, by the post-1968 Tashkent reboot Asian and African filmmakers transformed the festival from a ritualized sphere of high diplomacy to a transnational cinematic event addressing multiple publics, where militant cinema had a voice and a captive audience.

Between Bandung and the Cultural Cold War

The Afro-Asian Film Festival participated in the Bandung-era nation-building after empire. The Bandung Afro-Asian Conference, spearheaded by Indonesian President Ahmed Sukarno, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, brought together 29 independent and decolonizing countries of the region. It established a common Third Worldist program of self-determination, peaceful coexistence, and non-alignment further developed at the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.³ In response to postwar decolonizations and the nonaligned movement, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev launched a program of “peaceful coexistence” with the West and cooperation with African and Asian nations (Westad 2005, 67–68). In 1955, Bandung organizers invited the People’s Republic of China (PRC) but excluded Soviet Asian republics from the conference. But the Soviets participated in Afro-Asian meetings that followed Bandung, most importantly, the December 1957 conference in Cairo that founded the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization (AAPSO). In 1960, the Second AAPSO Congress at Conakry cited the Tashkent and Cairo AAFF festivals as examples of successful cultural cooperation (IIème Congrès 1960, 39). The AAFF emerged as a part of the Afro-Asian network.

The Beijing and Tashkent festivals interpreted the “Bandung spirit” as peaceful cooperation of sovereign nations. The Asian Film Week in Beijing included fourteen countries stretching from Syria to Japan and including Tajikistan, a Soviet republic.⁴ Cold-War tensions provided a backdrop. The PRC launched the event four months after it withdrew from the 1957 Cannes festival because Taiwan was also invited (New York Times 1957). At a festival reception, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, who had participated in the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference, announced that the AFW put in practice the Bandung call for cultural cooperation. Indian women’s rights activist Rameshwari Nehru, who gave a plenary at the Cairo inaugural AAPSO conference, spoke at the opening ceremony (Asian Recorder, 1957). The Bandung communiqué had expressed, among other things, a desire that “cooperation in the economic, social and cultural fields would help bring about the common prosperity and well-being of all” (“Final Communiqué” 2009, 102). In a joint concluding AFW communiqué the film delegations echoed the Bandung statement, calling for an annual Afro-Asian Film Festival, to “promote friendship between the people of Asia and Africa and play its part in safeguarding world peace” (Asian Recorder 1957).

The First Afro-Asian Film Festival also emphasized peace, cooperation, and national sovereignty. At the opening in Tashkent in late August 1958, the Soviets hailed the spirit of Bandung and the Asian Film Week as inspiration. The film festival preceded by a month the related Afro-Asian Writers Conference, endorsed by AAPSO in 1957. Tashkent, like Beijing, emulated Bandung’s state summit format. Soviet and Uzbek officials, including the Soviet Minister of Culture Nikolai Mikhailov, spoke at the opening ceremony. The festival awarded no prizes in order to include Morocco and Ghana with their first documentaries alongside India and Egypt, each boasting hundreds of feature films a year. In Soviet creative accounting, fourteen participating Asian and African states and the USSR became twenty-two countries in all promotional materials, with every Soviet Asian republic counted as a sovereign nation.⁵ All 22 delegations signed the final communiqué proposing a regular Afro-Asian festival, with each installment hosted in a different country and a permanent organizing committee (Iskusstvo kino 1958b).

The Soviet spectacle of the Bandung spirit took precedence over viewing and debating cinema. Foreign delegates had no free time to talk: a guarded motorcade transported them from screenings to dinners and from ancient ruins to modern factories (RGANI 5/36/81/65; Kirasirova 2014). To tout Uzbekistan as the host nation, all films screened with Uzbek voiceover delivered via loudspeaker during projection. Asian, African,

and Soviet festival guests who did not speak Uzbek had to rely on librettos translated in advance into Russian, English, and French. This translation system was often “inadequate,” as organizers admitted in their final report (RGANI 5/36/81/65). Moscow delegation head, director Ivan Pyriev, reportedly used a stick to herd Moscovites into sweltering theaters to watch Indonesian pictures they did not understand (Katanian 1997, 324). During a discussion at the Tashkent Film Studio, delegates agreed on Afro-Asian cooperation but stopped short of theorizing what cinema in the spirit of Bandung may look like. “We’ve got the official part down,” Armenian director Artashes Ai-Artian pleaded in vain, “can we now talk about films without ceremony?” (RGALI 2912/1/584/9).

In a cultural Cold-War coup, the festival featured Paul Robeson, a black American singer widely popular in the USSR since the 1930s, as an honored guest. Robeson, a vocal labor, civil rights, and global liberation advocate, had his U.S. passport taken away for seven years as a suspected communist. As a result, he could not travel to the Bandung conference in person and had to send a written greeting instead (Von Eschen 1997, 124, 171). Tashkent was among his first destinations after he got his passport back. In his speech at the festival, Robeson called on delegates to fight colonialism, preserve peace, and uphold Bandung principles (Yan 1958, 30). He contrasted Western movies depicting “murders, cowboy adventures, and military atrocities” to “humanist” African and Asian productions that “truthfully reflect people’s lives” (Iskusstvo kino 1958a, 76–77; Variety 1958). Robeson’s “unqualified public support of the meeting and its sponsors added more political flavor,” U.S. government analysts concluded in their report on the festival (USIS 1958).

Robeson went off the Soviet script, however, when he struck a personal friendship with an Armenian director Vasily Katanian. During official functions, Katanian shadowed the singer and his wife Eslanda Goode Robeson for a documentary about them. Snafus abounded: during a grandiose feast in Robeson’s honor at a collective farm the kolkhoz chairman kept forgetting Robeson’s name during every toast. The couple performed for the camera despite the blunders, the oppressive heat, and the busy schedule, including dinner with festival guests, film screenings, and a sold-out public concert at a stadium. The Robesons bonded with Katanian during this marathon. The director ignored Mikhailov’s order to connect Robeson to Asia in his documentary, a pity for the historian but an act of creative resistance at the time: “[Soviet officials] made him a public figure paying no attention to his talent, and my film was going down the same slippery slope” (Katanian 1997, 331). Katanian focused on Robeson’s musical genius instead. What began at a staged Uzbek feast continued in Katanian’s Moscow apartment several months later when *Paul Robeson* (1959) was completed. At an informal wrap party, Robeson sang spirituals and ate home-made caviar-topped eggs. Katanian remained close to the family, including Robeson’s son Paul Jr., all his life (Katanian 1997, 324–333).

Soviet official protocol masked disagreements about anticolonial cinema at the festival. The Tashkent communiqué affirmed: during the “growing struggle of Asian and African nations against colonial oppression” filmmakers “desire... extensive cultural contacts and friendly cooperation” (Iskusstvo kino 1958b, 82). Chinese delegates disagreed. Their note to festival organizers reflected the growing militancy of Mao Zedong’s rule in China, and his frustration with the official Soviet policy of neutrality in ongoing anticolonial uprisings (Westad 2005, 69–70). “Some filmmakers’s ideas lag behind our leap forward to a new era,” Wang Yan, Chinese delegation head and Beijing Film Studio chief, later noted in his report on the festival (1958, 31). The Chinese note slammed the Tashkent lineup: “We cannot agree with the ideology of some films.” Anticolonial films have to show “everyday life of our peoples” and demonstrate that “we are not asking for peace, but aim to achieve it through armed struggle.” In conclusion, the statement reaffirmed the spirit of Bandung and thanked Uzbekistan—not the Soviet Union—for hospitality (RGALI 2944/13/206/122). The Chinese were not alone in their criticism. Several Arab writers boycotted the Afro-Asian Writers Conference because the USSR did not publicly support Algerian guerrilla warfare against French colonizers (Katsakioris 2006, 21). Reports of screenings and personal conversations further clarify these disagreements.

Cinematic Sovereignty Across Ideological Lines

From the Afro-Asian perspective, three major circuits dominated the film festival scene in the 1950s. Film festivals, born in the 1930s, came into prominence after World War II. Until film festival programmers took

over in the early 1970s, national governments submitted films for competition. The Afro-Asian film network provided a Third Worldist alternative to the prestigious European film festival circuit. Two flagship European festivals, Cannes and Venice, accepted into the competition and recognized as auteurs only a few filmmakers from Asia and Africa (Valck 2008). The Afro-Asian festival also served as a socialist counterpart to the commercial Southeast Asian Film Festival—later renamed the Asian Film Festival (AFF)—founded in 1954 by Japanese film producers and funded in part by the Asia Foundation, a covert arm of the Central Intelligence Agency. In line with its pro-American orientation, the AFF welcomed delegations from Taiwan but not China and invited South Korea and South Vietnam but not their Northern socialist counterparts. Indonesia co-founded the AFF, but by 1964 boycotted it as capitalist and US-sponsored (Baskett 2017; Lee 2020).

The three networks, and the cinematic connections they enabled, were not as separate as it would seem from their antagonistic political and aesthetic viewpoints.⁶ The Thai entry at Beijing, *Santi-Vina* (dir. Thavi Na Bangchang, 1954), a Buddhist melodrama and the first color film made in Thailand, had won an award at the first Southeast Asian Film Festival in Tokyo in 1954, and was produced especially for that festival (Lee 2020, 72–73). After the Asian Film Week, both China and the Soviet Union bought it for distribution. Two realist social dramas, Japanese *The Rice People* (*Kome*; dir. Tadashi Imai, 1957) and Lebanese *Where To?* (*Ila Ayn?*; dir. George Nasser, 1957), had competed at Cannes before coming to Beijing. As films traveled across borders and across these three networks, Afro-Asian reception challenged European aesthetic hierarchies. During the Tashkent Studio discussion, Kamil Yarmatov recounted how at the Asian Film Week, “the Lebanese were surprised that the Mongolian people had their own cinema, and we, in turn, were surprised that Lebanon had its own cinema” (RGALI 2912/1/584/22). The Soviets saw Cannes selection *Where To?*; the Lebanese, an untraveled documentary *Modern Mongolia* (1957, dir. Tseveeny Zandraa and Olga Podgoretskaya). In Yarmatov’s telling, the two cinematic discoveries were equivalent.

The Afro-Asian network stood out in one key element: it promoted anticolonial popular cinema. First, all its festivals targeted mass audiences, unlike Cannes, Venice, or the AFF, all open only to industry professionals. During the Asian Film Week, the films played at six Beijing theaters, then went to ten largest Chinese cities. In Beijing, long queues formed to get advanced tickets that quickly sold out, with additional screenings scheduled by popular demand as early as five o’clock in the morning. (People’s China 1957, 36). The Tashkent festival reported an audience of “more than one million” (RGANI 5/36/81/69). Second, many participants interpreted Bandung cultural cooperation as Afro-Asian commercial cooperation, and nonalignment, as Afro-Asian film industries’ independence from Hollywood. Many delegates, especially those from India, Pakistan, and Egypt, came to Tashkent to negotiate co-productions and business agreements with other national film industries in the Afro-Asian sphere. The Soviet film industry shared these goals: just before Tashkent, Yarmatov came back from India where he negotiated an (ultimately unrealized) co-production (RGALI 2912/1/584/20). Japan, India, and Egypt served as models of major Afro-Asian film industries that rivaled Hollywood in their output and international distribution.

Accordingly, the Afro-Asian circuit featured popular genre films shut out of European festivals. The AFW featured *Baaghi* (*The Rebel*, dir. Ashfaq Malik, 1956), an Urdu action blockbuster set during liberation struggles against British colonizers. South Asian song-and-dance melodramas captivated Tashkent festivalgoers. India presented two of them, Hindi *Bhabhi* (*Sister-in-Law*, dir. S. Panju and R. Krishnan) and Marathi *Gruhdevta* (*Family Deity*, dir. Madhav Shinde, 1957). Ceylon submitted *Vanaliya* (*The Forest Lass*, dir. B.A.W. Jayamanne, 1958), one of widely popular Sinhalese song-and-dance melodramas based on South Indian, mainly Tamil, models. These countries sent melodramas despite competing at Cannes with films that abandoned formulas to convey authentic local experiences: India with Satyajit Ray’s *Pather Panchali* (1956), and Ceylon with Lester James Peries’ *Rekhawa* (*The Line of Destiny*, 1956). Chinese delegates surely had Indian and Sri Lankan genre films in mind when they composed their protest. Yet from the perspective of Afro-Asian cooperation, *Vanaliya* made sense. Jayamanne told festival participants that cinema in Ceylon was “developing with the help of Indian filmmakers” (Faiziev 1958, 147).⁷

The most celebrated picture at Tashkent, *Turang* (*Beloved*; dir. Bachtiar Siagian, 1957), blended anticolonial history, melodrama, and action cinema. *Turang* tells a story of liberation struggle against Dutch colonialists in Northern Sumatra. Young revolutionary Rusli falls for a peasant girl Tipi while nursing his wounds in a

remote village. The couple's bliss falls apart when a traitor gives away village partisans' plans. The lovers die in the ensuing attack, but the peasants retreat into the mountains to fight on. Tashkent audiences responded with enthusiasm. "Spectators in the Iskra theater, filled to capacity, gaze with bated breath on the screen," described poet and translator Mikhail Kurgantsev, "where a sunbeam slowly traverses the immobile faces of Rusli and Tipi. The sunrise glides over the blood-soaked ground of Indonesia. A haunting, heart-wrenching song begins, then subsides in the distance" (1958, 44). Immediately after the first screening, Sovexportfilm approached Abubakar Abdy, *Turang* producer, to buy the film for distribution in the Soviet Union. North Korean delegation expressed interest as well (Mimbar Penerangan 1958, 769). "This film proves once again that works exploring big political themes can achieve enduring popularity with spectators," concluded young Uzbek director Latif Faiziev (1958, 142). By blending an anticolonial message with dynamic storytelling, *Turang* transcended the Manichean logic of the Cold War. The film impressed Tashkent spectators and festival guests in 1958, won a national prize at the Indonesian Film Festival, and played at the Asian Film Festival in 1960.

Turang revealed another unique feature of the Afro-Asian cinematic circuit: nations could appropriate film authorship. At Tashkent, each state covered air travel for its representatives and thus dissident directors could not attend.⁸ Bachtiar Siagian did not come to Tashkent with his film and not a single report mentions him as the director. Siagian may have been out of favor with Indonesian state officials because his previous, censored film sided with farmers and traders against a government urban development project in Jakarta (Sen 1994, 43). Festival reports introduce Abdy, frequent Siagian's collaborator, as "a co-creator" or even "the director" of the film. Funded in part with regional government support, *Turang* was shot on location of the depicted struggle, in the Karo region of North Sumatra, and featured local villagers as actors. Abdy told film critic Georgy Kapralov that "he personally participated in the liberation battles of his people" against the Dutch. Kapralov took this as further proof of *Turang*'s authenticity (1958, 27). Abdy represented Siagian's vision well: in 1964, back in good graces and organizing the Jakarta festival, the director praised the radical Indonesian delegation at Tashkent (Siagian 1964, 15).

In another case of national authorship, Ghana submitted two shorts, a documentary *Freedom for Ghana* (1957) and a dance film *Jaguar* (1958), both directed (uncredited at the festival) by Sean Graham, a British former head of the colonial Gold Coast Film Unit, with a mixed British and Ghanaian crew (Rice 2019, 81, 233–236). With the pictures came Joseph Odunton, an Oxford-educated screenwriter and Ghanaian official who started as a local translator for colonial mobile cinemas during World War II. In a trenchant critique of the colonial film unit published in 1950, Odunton had argued that films made for African spectators must "reflect the social and cultural aspirations of their audience" (1950, 25). *Freedom for Ghana*, a color documentary of the country's first independence day, expressed such aspirations: in a key scene, a Ghanaian national flag rises in place of a Union Jack, joined by a voiceover that one British critic thought "positively inflammatory." (Monthly Film Bulletin 1957). Following Odunton's lead, Tashkent festival reports praised the documentary as a Ghanaian production.

At least in one instance, Tashkent cinephilia exceeded state purposes at the festival. A Moroccan short *Amrar's Daughter* documented a folk theater performance on a 16mm color film accompanied by a soundtrack on magnetic tape where an announcer explained the narrative and voiced all the dialogue.⁹ The Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) produced such actualities for rural cinema caravans, providing audio tape in Arabic and two main Berber dialects and counting on local commentators to translate into others (Carter 2009, 63–64). At Tashkent, published reports praised this government-sponsored informational film as an experimental blend of documentary and fiction, complete with a love-story plot and "non-professional fellahi actors" (Kapralov 1958, 44; Kurov 1958, 18). The underground feel of the screening shaped this interpretation. Organizers rummaged for a proper projector at the Tashkent Film Studio and borrowed a reel-to-reel audio recorder from a private apartment to play both film and audio in sync (Faiziev 1958, 143). On top of all that, a translator delivered a "lively and witty" oral commentary in Uzbek (Kapralov 1958, 31). In its encounter with the audience, the short came to embody a new anticolonial aesthetic inspired by the technical limitations of decolonized film industries.¹⁰ Tashkent projectionists, interpreters, and spectators became the film's "genuine co-authors," in line with the concept of revolutionary "imperfect" cinema Cuban director Julio García Espinosa would propose in 1969 (García Espinosa 2014, 224). Impressed by audience

enthusiasm, the Soviets bought *Amrar's Daughter* for distribution (Guliamov 1958, 233).

The Afro-Asian cinematic Third Worldism advocated statist forms of anticolonial cinema. In 1957, the Beijing communiqué set the aim to “bring prosperity to the film industries of the Asian and African countries” (Asian Recorder 1957). To that end, in their final Tashkent statement, participants resolved to coproduce films, to share cinematic knowledge and technologies, and to exchange “feature, documentary, and scientific pictures” (Iskusstvo kino 1958b). The same practical goals, in a tricontinental formulation, appeared again among the resolutions of the Third World Filmmakers Committee, a meeting of 45 African, Latin American, and Asian anti-imperialist filmmakers in Algiers in 1973 (Mestman 2002). Both manifestos envisioned a film production and distribution infrastructure independent from the film industries of the United States and former colonial powers. For many participants at Beijing and Tashkent, anticolonial cinema in the spirit of Bandung meant cinematic sovereignty: building a robust national film industry in collaboration with other nonaligned states. By the 1970s, the filmmaker’s role in the anti-imperialist struggle, as defined by the Third World Filmmakers Committee, was “no longer limited to the making of films,” but extended to “associating cinema in a more concrete way in this struggle” (“Resolutions” 2014, 280). Chinese militant critique of cinematic sovereignty in response to the Tashkent communiqué, as well as experimental aspects of Tashkent screenings, prefigured the guerrilla cinematic Third Worldism of the post-1968 moment.

Contradictions and Legacies

The evolution of the Afro-Asian cinema network paralleled the transition from the Bandung peaceful coexistence model to a militant Non-Alignment tricontinental alliance where smaller nations such as Cuba and Algeria had more power (Byrne 2015). In February–March 1960, the Second AAFF in Cairo hosted ten delegations, including observers from Yugoslavia, the future host of the 1961 inaugural Non-Aligned Conference, and a Palestinian representative, Gamal Arafat, elder brother of Yasser Arafat, who in 1959 co-founded the militant Palestinian National Liberation Movement, or Fatah, and would become the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization.¹¹ In April 1964, the Third AAFF in Jakarta welcomed twenty-two delegations, including a host of decolonized African states and the revolutionary Liberation Front of South Vietnam.¹² The two final festivals played out the tension between cinematic sovereignty and cinematic militancy.

The cinematic Third Worldism promoted in Cairo was socialist in goals and capitalist in execution. In an important 1968 manifesto young radicalized Egyptian filmmakers charged that in Nasser’s Egypt “cinema grew out of the public sector” but the state promoted high-budget “Hollywood production practices” where “stars are transformed into commodities” (New Cinema Group 2018, 30–31). What young filmmakers later saw as aping the United States the older generation at the Cairo AAFF conceived as nonaligned entertainment cinema. Popular genres dominated the lineup, spearheaded by Tamil anticolonial action epic *Veerapandiya Kattabomman* (dir. B. R. Panthulu, 1959) which took away three prizes and “drew repeated applause” from audiences (Asian Recorder 1960). Meanwhile, the Soviet embassy panned festival organization as “exclusively socialist,” with too few capitalist countries participating (RGALI 2329/8/1558/99). Five festival meetings discussed Afro-Asian cinematic cooperation, including festival organization, the final communiqué, co-productions, transnational film distribution, and transnational publicity for movie stars, or what Sabir Mukhamedov, Soviet delegation head and Uzbekistan’s Minister of Culture, dismissed as “exchange and popularization of actresses” (RGALI 2912/1/584/21). The discussions tackled mundane barriers to film exchange that would remain crucial in the 1960s and 1970s: customs, censorship, and incompatibilities between private (UAR, India) and nationalized (USSR, China) film industries. The final communiqué refused to resolve these contradictions. It put commerce alongside Afro-Asianism: “We, who are engaged in the film business, and members of the Bandung conference...” It further noted “the different social systems in the national life of the Afro-Asian Group” and the need to “respect ... the way of life in each country” (RGALI 2329/8/1558/86).

Several voices disrupted the conciliatory high diplomacy at Cairo. Star power allowed Egyptian actresses Madiha Yousri and Magda Kamel to engage in debates, whereas Yousri was present but had no real voice at

Tashkent. Magda Kamel confronted India, for refusing to buy the anti-imperialist film she produced and starred in, *Jamila the Algerian* (dir. Youssef Chahine, 1958), and the Soviet Union, for delaying the purchase (RGALI 2329/8/1558/101). The film came out in the USSR in 1962. Nations with nascent film industries decried the unequal two-tier system that allowed only UAR, India, China, and the Soviet Union to compete for prizes. Delegates reminded the organizers that many countries cannot afford the AAFF. Travel expenses and the strict requirement of expensive English or Arabic subtitles made participation impossible for Burma, Thailand, Ethiopia, and Ghana (RGALI 2329/8/1558/91, 101–102). The 1968 Tashkent festival would take these grumbles into account.

The Jakarta AAFF promoted tricontinental solidarity in anti-imperialist and anticapitalist struggle. The festival, endorsed by the Third AAPSO Conference in Moshi, Tanzania (RGALI 2944/13/206/3), militarized the spirit of Bandung. In the final communiqué delegates vowed “to support the liberation movement of the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and to make use of films, the weapon in our hand, to this end” (FBIS 1964, RRR6). The festival executive committee headed by *Turang* director Bachtiar Siagian, proclaimed the event “not a commercial project, but a tool of the Afro-Asian people for the realization of their common objectives:” the fight “against cultural penetration of imperialist and colonialist forces.” Accordingly, the AAFF organized a mass boycott of American films. “By early June, the boycott had spread through the country and only a very few American films continued to be shown in very small communities,” USIS official Burt McKee reported (1964). The USSR did not fare much better. Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated further over withdrawal of Soviet nuclear arms from Cuba (Westad 2005, 160–162). Chinese sway over most AAFF participants “constantly made itself felt in the hostile attitude toward the Soviet delegation and the Soviet Union” (RGALI 2918/4/106/16–17). The USSR received only one minor prize, for cinematography in *Children of Pamir* (*Deti Pamira*, dir. Vladimir Motyl, 1962). Only then the Soviets understood the significance of the 1958 Chinese protest note. “I.e. no peaceful co-existence!” an anonymous official jotted in the margins of the note in 1964 (RGALI 2944-13-206/122).

Militant cinema dominated at Jakarta. This militancy was state-sponsored: half-empty theaters played festival films to Sukarno’s supporters while official media trumpeted their success (McKee 1964). The festival welcomed documentaries from new revolutionary cinemas, including unedited 16mm footage from North Kalimantan which received “an ovation” (Hui-Min 1964, 7). Spectators at the Chinese 3-hour color epic *Red Detachment of Women* (*Hóngsè Niángzi Jūn*, dir. Xie Jin, 1961) gave “great cheering at every appearance of the Communist flag, the red guerrillas, or any act of violence perpetrated against the old established order [i.e. imperialist West]” (McKee 1964). The film won a top prize. On the jury, the Chinese members and *Turang* director Bachtiar Siagian lambasted Soviet films according to the tenets of revolutionary cinema. These tenets incorporated a Soviet trace—Siagian discovered film theory with Vsevolod Pudovkin in Chinese translation (2013)—but decolonization put this trace in a different light. *Five from Fergana* (*Piatero iz Fergany*, dir. Yuldash Agzamov, 1963), a drama about Communist youth organizing in Turkestan, slid into “universal humanism.” Anti-imperialist documentary *Law of Baseness* (*Zakon podlosti*, 1962) by Alexander Medvedkin—whose 1930s *ciné-trains* would inspire Chris Marker’s 1960s militant SLON film collective—insulted Congolese religious beliefs (RGALI 2944/13/206/80). “Why did the USSR send this film?” a Congolese delegate confronted Soviet guests during the festival. “Only Africans should make films about Africa” (RGALI 2944/13/206/76).

Revolutionary African and Asian filmmakers built creative alliances that exceeded official festival slogans. At Jakarta, a dozen African filmmakers from seven sub-Saharan countries could meet and see each other’s films, a unique opportunity at the time. Dmitry Pisarevsky, the chief editor of *Sovetsky ekran*, lauded several documentaries from “African nations that just won their independence,” including films from Uganda, North Rhodesia, Somalia, and an “informative and decently shot” 35-mm color *Zanzibar People March Forward* (1964), a documentary prize winner (RGALI 2944/13/206/73). Japanese director Satsuo Yamamoto’s encounters with the DRV delegation led to an invitation to Hanoi where he supervised the making of a blockbuster antiwar documentary *Vietnam* (*Betonamu*, 1969; Yamamoto 2017, 214). Celebrity and glamor coexisted with militancy. DRV actress-director Nguyen Thi Duc Hoan, feted as “one of the most charming and attractive stars that has graced our Festival,” came away inspired by contacts with Asian and African socialist filmmakers (Turner 2007, 105). Sabir Mukhamedov, again Soviet delegation head, lamented that young female movie stars from

the DRV, PRC, UAR, India, and Pakistan eclipsed Kazakh doyenne actress Amina Umurzakova, and suggested in the future to “include actresses according to their age and popularity” (RGALI 2944/13/206/59). The 1968 Tashkent festival took seriously both militant and popular Global South cinemas.

The organizers of the First Tashkent Festival for Asian and African Cinema—including Kamil Yarmatov, Latif Faiziev, and Sabir Mukhamedov (RGALI 2944/24/126/7-8)—revised the festival infrastructure for travel funding, film translation, and socializing. The event, still popular and noncompetitive, featured guests and films from 49 Asian and African countries (RGALI 2936/4/1835/1). China was not invited. The Soviets handled travel expenses for Asian and African guests and chartered an Aeroflot plane to fly participants from the Carthage Festival for Arab and African Cinema in Tunisia (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016, 293). In a relay system, films were first translated into Russian (via loudspeaker) to the Soviets and then into English and French (via headphones) to foreign guests. The festival now organized “creative discussions” on cinema and liberation struggles. All participants stayed at the same hotel and mingled at official and impromptu meals, dances, and parties (Razlogova 2013, 165, 168).

These changes produced multiple festival publics, accommodated several directions for Third World cinema, and allowed South-South collaborations tangential to or critical of Soviet official policies. Senegalese director Ousmane Sembène disagreed with much in Soviet film aesthetics and modernization theories, as Julie-Françoise Tolliver shows in this volume. Yet Sembène came to nearly every Tashkent festival, to meet with African filmmakers and build pan-African cinematic institutions. Egyptian Madiha Yousri, one of a few actresses at the 1958 Tashkent festival, in 1968 was celebrated among many movie stars by Tashkent residents who flocked to Indian and Egyptian melodramas (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016, 283). Guy Hennebelle, a militant French critic, saw in Tashkent “a much more eclectic tableau than in Tunis in cinematic reality in Africa and Asia” (1968, 34). In 1976, the Tashkent festival became tricontinental, renamed the Tashkent Festival for Asian, African, and Latin American Cinema. Until its end in 1988, Tashkent kept visible the tension between popular and militant strands of anticolonial cinema born at the Afro-Asian Film Festival of the Bandung era.

Conclusion

Cold War imperialism decimated Afro-Asian anticolonial cinema networks. *Turang* director Bachtiar Siagian, for example, spent 13 years in prison and saw all but one of his films destroyed by the right-wing Suharto regime installed in 1965 with the help of the United States. Only since the mid-1990s, thanks to Krishna Sen’s historical and theoretical interventions, Siagian reappeared in discussions of militant cinema from the Global South (Sen 1994; Sen 2003). Further study of the AAFF promises to reveal global connections among early militant filmmakers such as Siagian, as well as pioneers of Asian and African popular cinemas. This chapter suggests two avenues for further analysis of the Afro-Asian Film Festival as a “site of contest” for anticolonial cinema in the age of Bandung.

First, Global South artists’ creative aims and collaborations matter for cultural diplomacy, apart from the goals of their governments. Historians of Cold War cinematic diplomacy tend to zero in on governments’ attempts to win the “hearts and minds” of foreign citizens (Shaw and Youngblood 2014) and draw the boundaries of Asia along the Soviet border excluding Soviet Asian republics in a gesture of “cartographical dismemberment” (Lewis and Stolte 2019, 8). But African and Asian filmmakers’ creative aims were often distinct from the goals of their governments. Soviet Asian artists gained authority because Soviet leaders needed them to court African, Asian, and Latin American cultural elites after Bandung (Kirasirova 2011; Kalinovsky 2013; Jansen 2019). Their Afro-Asian encounters transformed their filmmaking. Latif Faiziev, a realist revolutionary drama director in 1958, spent a third of his article on the Tashkent AAFF dissecting South Asian song-and-dance melodramas, and subsequently served several times as a Soviet cinematic envoy to the region (1958, 145–148; RGALI 2944/24/34/71). In the 1980s, he would co-direct, with Umesh Mehra, three Soviet-Indian song-and-dance co-productions, starting with the blockbuster *Ali Baba and 40 Thieves (Alibaba Aur 40 Chor/Priklyucheniya Ali-Baby i soroka razboinikov, 1980)*.¹³ Tashkent became a key node on the Afro-Asian network where Soviet Asian filmmakers negotiated their Soviet, Afro-Asian, and later tricontinental loyalties. These filmmakers’—all Global South filmmakers’—creative, cinematic

internationalism deserves to be taken into account.

Secondly, Bandung matters for the history of anticolonial and anti-imperialist cinema. Histories of militant cinema from the Global South usually begin in the 1960s, when filmmakers coalesced around the Third Cinema movement that spread from Latin America to international festivals and conferences, from Viña del Mar to Pesaro (Mestman and Salazkina 2015). The post-1968 Tashkent festival became an important node on this anti-imperialist cinema network (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016). The concept of Third Cinema, articulated by Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in 1969, united a network of manifestos and transnational organizations, including the Pan-African Filmmakers' Association and the Third World Cinema Committee (Diawara 2001, 35–50; Mestman 2002). Yet several key points advanced in these manifestos and meetings—about cinema as an instrument of peace or war, the divergent aims of Global South political and commercial cinemas, and proper revolutionary film aesthetics—were already debated on the Afro-Asian film festival circuit. Cinematic Third Worldism began in the age of Bandung.

Notes

- 1 The Soviet Asian republics include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.
- 2 I cite RGALI and RGANI archival references according to their location: [fond/opis/ed.khr./page number](#).
- 3 On Bandung history, see Prashad 2007; Young 2016; Lee 2010; and Lewis and Stolte 2019, among others.
- 4 People's China 1957, 37. Other participants were Burma (now Myanmar), Cambodia, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), China, Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Mongolia, North Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, and Thailand. Syria sent a delegation but no films.
- 5 Other participants included Burma, Ceylon, China, DRV, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Mongolia, North Korea, Pakistan, and Thailand. Sudan sent an observer. Japan did not officially participate but two Japanese studios sent films.
- 6 On a similar phenomenon in literature, see Popescu 2020.
- 7 For more on connections between Sri Lankan and South Indian cinemas see Tampoe-Hautin 2017.
- 8 On the importance and government control of air travel in the Bandung era, see Lewis 2019.
- 9 *La fille de l'Amrar* by French documentary filmmaker Jean Mazel.
- 10 For continuities between the CCM actualities format and Moroccan experimental modernist cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, see Limbrick 2015.
- 11 Other delegations included China, DRV, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, North Korea, UAR, and USSR. Kuwait participated as an observer. Japan did not officially participate but individual studios sent films.
- 12 Other delegations included Afghanistan, China, Congo (Léopoldville; now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), DRV, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lebanon, Mali, Mongolia, North Kalimantan (now part of Indonesia), North Korea, North Rhodesia (now Zambia), Pakistan, Somalia, "Southeast" (Southwest?) Africa, Tunisia, UAR, Uganda, and Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania). Four countries, including Iraq and the Philippines, sent films but no delegates.
- 13 For more on this film, see Salazkina 2010.

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