



# Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915–1945 (A Quadrant Book)

*Weihong Bao*

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## **Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915–1945 (A Quadrant Book)**

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What was cinema in modern China? It was, this book tells us, a dynamic entity, not strictly tied to one media technology, one mode of operation, or one system of aesthetic code. It was, in Weihong Bao's term, an affective medium, a distinct notion of the medium as mediating environment with the power to stir passions, frame perception, and mold experience. In *Fiery Cinema*, Bao traces the permutations of this affective medium from the early through the mid-twentieth century, exploring its role in aesthetics, politics, and social institutions.

Mapping the changing identity of cinema in China in relation to Republican-era print media, theatrical performance, radio broadcasting, television, and architecture, Bao has created an archaeology of Chinese media culture. Within this context, she grounds the question of spectatorial affect and media technology in China's experience of mechanized warfare, colonial modernity, and the shaping of the public into consumers, national citizens, and a revolutionary collective subject. Carrying on a close conversation with transnational media theory and history, she teases out the tension and affinity between vernacular, political modernist, and propagandistic articulations of mass culture in China's varied participation in modernity.

*Fiery Cinema* advances a radical rethinking of affect and medium as a key insight into the relationship of cinema to the public sphere and the making of the masses. By centering media politics in her inquiry of the forgotten future of cinema, Bao makes a major intervention into the theory and history of media.

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