

Spring 2021 Arts of Asia Lecture Series  
The Power of Images in Asian Art: Making the Invisible Visible  
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## **Colonial Representation in South Korean Cinema**

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### **Part One: Korean Cinema's Depiction of the Colonial Era (1945-2001)**

1. Larger Issues to Explore
  - a. Colonial issues in South Korean Cinema
  - b. Cinematic construction of the collective memory (of the past)
  - c. Representational features and patterns and popular genre or cycle
  - d. Notable changes in recent films
2. Colonial Questions in Post-colonial South Korea
  - a. Significance of colonialism to cultural formation of Korea
  - b. The Japanese "assimilation policy" in the late colonial period
  - c. The protracted anti-colonial and anti-Japanese sentiments
  - d. Cinema and its role in the making of social memories
  - e. Post-colonial cultural productions and anti-colonial nationalism
3. Colonial Questions in Post-colonial South Korean Cinema
  - a. Consistent output
  - b. Propaganda? No.
  - c. Shift in focus; from manifest message to representational pattern
  - d. Strategies to disavow the cultural indoctrination of the late colonial cultural policies
  - e. Production of new ways of seeing and imagining the colonial past
4. Colonialism and Representational Conventions
  - a. Cinematic depiction: not as a direct window but constructed imagery
  - b. Examples
    - i. The penetration of Japanese colonial power
    - ii. Japanese as unlawful occupiers
    - iii. Japanese residents and network of settler culture
5. Disavowed Representation
  - a. Suppressed: the use of Japanese language and its signage on the screen
  - b. Development of stereotype

- Example 1: Scene from *Genealogy* (Im Kwont'aek, 1978)
  - Example 2: The Government General of Korea (GGK) Building and its Transformation
  - Example 3: The GGK Building from *Genealogy* (Im Kwontaek, 1978)
6. Filmmaking in the Post-Liberation Period
    - a. Nationalist films
    - b. The case of director Ch'oe In'gyu
    - c. Biographical films of nationalist heroes
  7. Colonial Urban Space in South Korean Cinema
    - a. Expanding traffic and network of colonial modern development: not the focus
    - b. Disinterest towards the perceptual mode of modernity
    - c. Absence of the fascinated gaze of Koreans on the colonial modernity
    - d. Boulevard Space: not the attention in South Korean cinema until 2002
  8. Negative Space of Austerity (from 1945 to 2002)
    - a. Privileged sites: dark passages, back alleys, underground meeting spot, abandoned houses
    - b. Characterized with dark and empty milieu
    - c. Centrifugal space for illicit and subversive activities
    - d. Space beyond the supposed surveillance of the colonial power
    - e. Stylistically similar to American film noir
  9. Ambiance of Negative Space
    - a. Lack of aura of proximity or interaction
    - b. Aura of languor or inertia
    - c. Charged with the sense of danger
  - Example 4: Scene from *Continent on Fire* (Yi Yongho, 1965)
  - Example 5: The GGK Building from *Modern Boy* (Chöng Chiu, 2008)
  10. Manchurian Action Films of the 1960s
  11. Historicizing Manchurian Action Films
  12. Cultural Concerns over Japanese Popular Culture
  13. Controversies over Infringement
  14. "Waesaek Yöngghwa" Controversies
  15. Money Question in Manchurian Action Films

## **Part Two: Korean Cinema's Depiction of the Colonial Era (2002 – Present)**

16. The Case of *YMCA Baseball Team* (Kim Hyönsök, 2002)
  - a. A departure from the dominant spatial tropes of colonial Korea
  - b. Emergence of sports arena as alternative space

- c. Site of fair competition; equalization between the colonizer and the colonized
- d. The fascinated gaze of collective Koreans

17. The Figure of Pro-Japanese Collaborator

- a. The Korean alterity under the colonial surveillance
- b. The shared intelligence to recognize the “pretense” of other Koreans
- c. The colonial authority’s failure to discern deception
- d. Collaborator caught between two ways of seeing

18. The Case of Yŏm in *Assassination* (Choi Dong-hoon, 2015)

19. The Issue of Pro-Japanese Collaboration (Koen de Ceuster)

20. Resistant Myth of Nation

- Examples: Sequences from *Assassination*
- Examples: Sequences from *The Age of Shadows*

## READING LIST

### On the Colonial History and Culture in Korea

- Michael E. Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*
- Mark E. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*
- E. Taylor Atkins, *Primitive Selves: Koreana in the Japanese Colonial Gaze*
- Nayoung Aimee Kwon, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan*

### On Korean Cinema

- Jinsoo An, *Parameters of Disavowal: Colonial Representation in South Korean Cinema*
- Dong Hoon Kim, *Eclipsed Cinema: The Film Culture of Colonial Korea*
- Jinhee Choi, *The South Korean Film Renaissance: Local Hitmakers, Global Provocateurs*
- Hye Seung Chung & David Scott Diffrient, *Movie Migrations: Transnational Genre Flows in South Korean Cinema*