

Jinsoo An (UC Berkeley)

**The Lure of the Colonial Modern:
Tropes of Nostalgia in Recent Korean Films on Colonial Period**

This essay examines the tropes of nostalgia in recent South Korean films that are set against the backdrop of Japanese colonial occupation. Since the arrival of YMCA Baseball Team in 2002, South Korea witnessed a new cycle of films that featured the colonial modern culture and development with intensely attractive ambiance. Whereas the films from the previous decades had largely underscored the didactic lessons of nationalist history, i.e., the scenario of total subjugation, suffering and renewal of the nation, this group of films brought forth the subject and sensibility that had largely been absent in the popular imaginary of the colonial past; namely, the lure and attraction of the colonial urban culture. The advent of new technology and culture in the areas of transportation, leisure, sports, medicine, theater art and mass communication, for instance, often functions as an instigator to promulgate new desire, fascination and identity in these works. The film cycle also demonstrate diverse generic composites, as they encompass several generic terrains including bio-pic (Blue Swallow, 2005), horror (Epitaph, 2007), comedy (Radio Days, 2008), detective thriller (Private Eye, 2008), Western (The Good, the Bad, and the Weird, 2008), and melodrama (Modern Boy, 2008).

In an effort to discern the contemporary cinematic configuring of the colonial past, I intend to pose and wrestle with following inter-related questions. What differentiates the new cinematic tropes of history from the old ways of looking at the colonial past? What mode of address or representational strategy is at stake in figuring the colonial past principally through the cultural lens, as opposed to the political concerns? What specific tropes and pattern of nostalgia operate in this generically diverse but thematically consistent body of films? How does this affective way of picturing the past relate to the larger socio-political issues like justice and retribution? And, lastly, what does the film cycle's distinct historicizing endeavor inform us about contemporary South Korean subject and its relation to the thorny history of colonialism. By approaching the film cycle as the latest instance of the larger stream of sense-making of the colonial history, I intend to illuminate its distinct logic of history but also expand the discussion to interrogate the linkage between the ambiance of nostalgia and the logic of perversion, as these both tropes and rationale produce reverberating echoes to each other in these films.

Andrea G. Arai (U. Washington)

"The Beauty of Horror and Horrors of Beauty: Contemporary Colonial Encoding at *Seodaemun* and the *Mingeikan*"

This paper focuses on Seoul's *Seodaemun* prison and the *Mingeikan* folk art museum in Tokyo: how the colonial is coded in these two places, the sense of time and affect produced, and how these sites share discursive and material space with contemporary dilemmas and national projects of Korea and Japan. The paper blends a history of these memorial and exhibitionary sites with fieldwork in both locations.

Built in 1908, *Seodaemun* was a colonial prison. It was used during the Pak-Chung Hee military era to imprison political prisoners in the 1960s and 70s and then rebuilt and repurposed for educational tours of the colonial period in 1995. Its chief attractions are the material enactments of prison life, from lifelike scenes of resistance to colonial brutality and horror, including "recreated torture scenes that are frighteningly realistic." (Korean Tourism Organization, 2012). The structure as a whole is important for thinking about colonial forms of discipline, surveillance and punishment. However, my principal interests lie with how this space has been altered to serve as a site to attract rather than repel, (or attract as it repels), Korean nationals, Japanese tourists, other foreigners. Additionally my focus is on the particular forms, materials of staging, and objects of the displays themselves.

The *Mingeikan* has its own complex history from Bernard Leach and the British folk craft movement, Yanagi Soetsu's discovery of Korean folk craft and his return to the Japanese countryside, notions of beauty, the "unknown craftsmen" and the *mingei* movement. Today, the *Minkeikan* is advertised as a place where the past has been preserved, rather than overcome, of beauty, rather than horror. And yet, despite the differences between these two places, they both serve as exhibits, displayed and denied, of the beauty of horror and horrors of beauty, inherent in the tensions, problems and possibilities of capitalist and colonial modernity, then and in their contemporary reformulations. At the *Mingeikan*, I focus on how this space of the past and present is engaged with by the visitor-viewers from different parts of Japan, and beyond. I consider how its objects and displays interact with the colonial legacy of the *mingei* movement, or connect instead to the new formulations of an aesthetic Japan, and what space this aestheticizing occupies alongside the dilemmas of radiation, the Tohoku tragedy and the changed social and cultural landscape of economic downturn.

Also Mingei today in Japan and Korea, follow, Yanagi today <http://www.mingeikan.or.jp/english/> The unknown craftsman, Brian Moeran, Folk Art Potters of Japan

Heekyoung Cho (U. Washington)

Spaces of Possibility Created in and by Translation

With East Asia's rise on the global stage over the past twenty years, "Tong-asia-ron" (Theory of East Asia) has appeared in Korea, China and Japan as a way of articulating a new blueprint for the future of East Asia which can overcome the modern and open up new possibilities of East Asian community. In Korea, the renowned scholar, Choi Wŏn-sik, has been a leader in the discussion. Considering what the discussion might mean to literature, he has argued for the need to examine modern Korean literature as "East Asian texts." He criticizes two strands of literary study that omit its East Asian context: one which blindly takes Western literature as a universal reference, and the other which ignores the impact of foreign literatures in order to build a purportedly authentic, national basis for modern Korean literature. Against these, Choi argues for a version of "Tong-asia-ron" in which the East Asian community does not lose its "peripheral perspective," maintaining a principled awareness of the dynamics between core and periphery in World Systems, while also remaining conscious of the peripheries that exist within East Asian countries themselves.

As part of this search for new perspectives in the study of modern Korean literature, I believe new approaches to the translation of foreign texts, particularly in the formative period of modern Korean literature, have an important contribution to make. Undeniably, modernity in East Asia is a translated modernity, and if one wishes to avoid the conclusion that this relegates the modern in East Asia to the status of something derivative and imitative, then a reconsideration of the process and significance of translation itself may be necessary. My larger project is to argue that translation and adaptation was a creative and constructive process through which Korean intellectuals practiced and envisioned their own form of modern literature by embracing foreign literary elements and simultaneously incorporating their own socio-political and cultural needs. Shifting the focus to an examination of the dynamics of this process lifts the stigma that the shadow of translation might otherwise cast over modern Korean literature, while opening a way for scholars to begin to appreciate the multi-layered socio-cultural contexts within which each text is situated.

In this paper, I will investigate the Korean translation of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which is a relay adaptation from a Japanese version. The Korean version makes a unique change to the novel by moving its setting from early nineteenth-century Marseille and Paris to early twentieth-century Shanghai and Beijing. It begins before Sino-Japanese War in 1894 and ends in the year the adaptation was published (1917). In doing so, the translation is able to subtly address contemporary East Asian socio-political issues, particularly Korea's colonial situation. It even manages to give voice to nationalist aspirations, which were strictly banned from the pages of the Japanese colonial government bulletin where the translation was serialized. I hypothesize this was only possible because the text was taken to be a translation of a foreign novel. Through examination of this case, I will show how translation opened up spaces of possibility that were otherwise foreclosed to Korean intellectuals under colonization, letting them respond publicly to issues of pressing concern to them.

Sukjong Hong (Cornell U.)

Transnational Solidarity in Struggles over Space in Korea and Japan

When Jeju villagers in Gangjeong are visited by Okinawan villagers during their sit-in struggle against the construction of a South Korean naval base, what happens to their subjectivity as the unique subjects of tragic Korean history? When media activists travel between Seoul and Tokyo to produce videos about displacement struggles in both capitol cities, such as Nike Park in Tokyo and Duriban in Seoul, what are the terms of their participation? Neither struggle has been contained within national borders, but has traveled frequently between the two nations in the form of bodies documenting what happens, video clips and many megapixels of images across the web, even though both are intensely spatial and place-based.

I am interested in exploring the ways in which transnational activist solidarities are creating new possibilities for agency within state and corporate-led processes of displacement, and especially how spatial and cultural dynamics between the center (mainland Korea or Japan, in this case) and the periphery, as well as a reliance on media activism, offer opportunities to bridge the spatial and cultural divide between Korea and Japan. These forms of transnational solidarity are often under the radar, or dismissed within their respective countries as anti-state, anti-patriotic. Based on interviews, participant observation, and visual and other records of the past several years of this cross-cultural, cross-national action, I hope to encourage a wider dialogue about the future of these struggles and the new or hybrid forms of identity and agency that are emerging.

Kyoung Lae Kang (U. Rochester)

***Embracing Postcolonial Potentiality:
New Faces of Japanese Collaborators in Contemporary Korea***

In 2011, a biography, entitled *Lee Wan-Yong Pyungjeon* ("A Biography of Wan-Yong Lee," by Yunhi Kim), came out and evoked sensational responses among South Korean readers. It is a biography of Wan-Wong Lee, a top Japanese collaborator, who committed crimes against Korean people. The publication of this biography is remarkable in that the issue of pro-Japanese collaborators had been tacitly prohibited in Korean popular discourses. Korean cultural taboo however does not confine itself to this specific subject, but extends to various issues entangled with the colonial past. In fact, Korean society could not properly address political and ethical questions related to Japanese colonialism, even after its national liberation in 1945. Korean people also left the colonial memories unaddressed until recent years. Since the late 1980s, Korean society has been increasingly exposed to discussions of the Japanese colonial time. As colonial memories continued to return through various cultural scopes, Korean people have gradually changed their understandings of the colonial past.

Nevertheless, the task of reexamining the colonial time invariably contains convoluted issues and has thus sparked a heated debate in Korean society. The issue of pro-Japanese collaborators had stood out among these cultural disputes. Some political discourses sought to issue new laws to ask this group of people to take responsibilities for their treacherous behaviors.¹ On the contrary, other Korean scholars indicated that one cannot easily demarcate who remained loyal to the Korean national group and who negotiated with the Japanese colonizers to survive.² Korean cultural products seemed to convey this epistemic ambiguity well in their altered depiction of the Japanese colonizers: they portray Japanese colonizers and collaborators in neutral tone, or embellish their acts in a certain form of "hospitality," which may be highly problematic in the context of (post-)colonialism.³

This project argues that the contemporary depiction of the pro-Japanese collaborators offers a good discursive space to consider contemporary Korean society's shifting understanding of the colonial past. In this project, I will explore a recent Korean film *Modern Boy* (Jiwoo Jeong, 2008) and *Lee Wan-Yong Pyungjeon*, both of which embody contemporary Koreans' changed understandings of Japanese collaborators. By highlighting epistemic ambiguities that surround the altered depictions of these historical events, I will seek to illuminate how the colonial pasts and the contemporary meaning of the colonial period are intertwined in the treatment of Japanese collaborators. In addition, theoretical contributions will be sought from contemporary discussions of hospitality and ethics, as well as historical films and narrative.

¹ In fact, the Korean government issued "Gwageo-sa Chungsan Teukbyulbup" (A Special Law to Resolve Colonial History) in 2005 to support the Korean public's aspiration for a colonial resolution.

² For a further discussion, refer to Haedong Yoon, "Chinil-Pa Chungsan-kwa talsikmin-ui Kwaje" (A Resolution of Pro-Japanese Acts and Postcolonial Responsibilities), *Dangdae Bipyung* (Seoul: 2004).

³ For instance, as Michelle Rossello asserts, hospitality as a metaphor can blur "the distinction between a discourse of rights and a discourse of generosity." Rossello, *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*, Stanford University Press, (Stanford: 2001).

Thomas Looser (NYU)

“The Local Image: the Gathering of Spaces in Japan, Korea, & the World”

The terms of both social form and political protest (in other words, the terms and conditions of places of possibility) have begun to shift, especially under what is generally called neoliberalism. If anything, the creation of new places of possibility seems to have become an increasingly localized process, even while the threads of political and social life are increasingly global. This sets up a complicated basis for understanding both how spaces of possibility might emerge, and how local spaces (as Korean, or Japanese) might in fact be affiliated. This paper takes up these questions especially through the limited and specific context of the contemporary political image (something like the documentary image)—looking not simply at the content of imagery, but at the ways in which changing image forms help to bring together political positions. I take up specific examples from Japan, Korea, and elsewhere. Along with a consideration of the ties of Japan and Korea, the aim is also to examine the settings which now help to determine what a global place of possibility might be.

Christopher T. Nelson (UNC)

You Were Right About the Stars: Reading the Patterns of Everyday Life in Contemporary Okinawa

Everyday life in Okinawa pulses with discordant rhythm. The circulation of capital, the relentless march of labor, the echo of memory, the steady backbeat of ideology.

This is not a natural rhythm, although it also includes the phases of the natural world. It is all-encompassing and endlessly demanding. It acts upon everyone yet is brought to life by the actions of those subject to its regime. For years, Okinawans have tried to make sense of this rhythm. Many have turned to political ideologies, others to academic discourses. Some rely on the comfortable touchstone of common sense. However, there are others who look for guidance in the voices of local deities and the dead, or explore the hidden signs that have been inscribed in the world around them. For this paper, I will consider the work of those who struggle to feel and to understand these patterns. I am particularly interested in the possibilities they offer for those living with the burden of military occupation, economic marginalization, and ideological oppression.

Robert Oppenheim (U. Texas Austin)

Culture, Power, and the Variable Optics of Studying "Korea Abroad"

This is a conceptual paper built of two research foci (spread across a distance of more than a century) and their respective dialogue with prevalent modes of interpretation. Overall, I argue that there is an inconsistency in how Korean studies has treated the nexus of culture and power in two different historical moments in which Korean things have circulated prominently abroad. The first moment centers on the accumulation and ethnological display of Korean objects in the United States at the end of the 19th century, most notably at the U.S. National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution. The interpretive framework we have tended to bring to incidences of the collection of Korean things, as well as such related phenomena as World's Fairs, has emphasized a "curatorial" level of agency highlighting the representational, disciplinary, and definitional effects of selecting and arranging objects and text and space. I would argue, however, that an adequate account of American collecting of Korean things requires us to see a broader field of agencies at work in the assembly of these Korean collections, to understand objects in collections as potentially projections of the agency of absent actors, and as a result to locate the effect of interpretation not simply at the aforementioned curatorial level but as distributed throughout this field. We need, if one wishes a slogan, a bit less Foucault here. Contrast this situation with Korean studies' recent, and at times overweening, interest in the "Korean Wave," and with Japanese studies examinations of "cool Japan," "pink globalization," and the like, in their common relation to the problematic of "soft power." Recent research I conducted jointly with Heather Hindman in Kathmandu, Nepal, reveals a situation where this problematic reaches limits not evident in the majority of Korean Wave studies that have looked at developed regions of Asia, North America, Europe, etc. The Korean Wave in Kathmandu is very real, but the other, and dominant, driver of interest in Korea is the South Korean Employment Permit System and its mandate, as a condition of candidacy for a job in South Korea, of passage of a Korean language test; the result is a scramble to learn Korean on the part of would-be migrants. Thus to understand this situation one needs to see the intertwinement of desire as examined by most Korean Wave studies with the disciplinary effects of the EPS and similar transnational governance regimes. One needs, in the converse of my first example, just a dash more Foucault.

I should be clear that the point of examining the inconsistency I identify in this paper is not to seek consistency as an ultimate resting place. I suggest, rather, that it might be illuminating to allow the interpretive dominant of the first moment to inform the second, and vice versa. Tensions such as the one I highlight here can be productive if we are willing to bring areas, eras, and topics into conjunction; that, indeed, is my hope for "Spaces of Possibility" more generally.

Janet Poole (U. Toronto)

Homely Ruins and the Domestication of Colonial History

The material remains of colonialism have until recently been characterized by their invisibility, absence, destruction or removal. The past few years have, however, witnessed a trend towards both the documentation and restoration of architectural remnants from the early twentieth century. My paper explores the material remains of Japan's colonial rule in Korea and their changing status since the turn of the century. It considers the status of remains (*yusan*) and ruins (*p'yehŏ*) in contemporary South Korea's material landscape. The paper will combine a reading of the late 1990s fad for guidebooks documenting colonial remnants with a consideration of the status of colonial remains in 2012. I am particularly interested in the remnants of domesticity: the traces of Japanese homes in colonial Korea and how they are looked at today. I anticipate spending time at a restored Japanese home in Kunsan, as well as in old Japanese neighbourhoods in Seoul. My guiding questions are: what constitutes a ruin in contemporary South Korea? Do colonial ruins unsettle or reinforce the historicism that undergirds the narration of modern South Korean history? And how does the homely figure in the domestication of colonial history?

Franz Prichard (UCLA)

Between Dark Urban Nebulas and Radiant Archipelagos: Nakahira Takuma and the Critique of “Reversion.”

Within the span of four years between 1973 and 1977 influential Japanese photographer and critic Nakahira Takuma produced some of his most important and least explored works of writing and photography. Two image worlds predominate this period of intense yet subtle transformation in Nakahira’s practice; on the one hand, a seemingly tranquil image world of seas and skies captured through Nakahira’s itinerant movements between the Ryūkyū Archipelago and the Japanese mainland, and on the other, the musty darkness of urban surfaces frozen in a permanent night, dimly emanating a pale fluorescent glow, depleted of anything but the slightest vestige of their human inhabitants. Traversing an urbanized mainland, post-“reversion” Okinawa, as well as the Amami and Tokara Islands between Kyushu and Okinawa, Nakahira delineated a radically other mapping of the emergent post-“reversion” social space. As such, Nakahira’s image worlds offer new perspective on a shared yet typically divided historical experience of the advanced stages of Japan’s Cold War urbanization. Brought together through the photographic praxis of Nakahira, this paper examines a dynamic confrontation between the increasingly disciplined gazes of the mainland’s apolitical urban consumer-subjects and the colonial/imperial gazes informing the “return” of Okinawa. Interrelated and yet divisively polarized, Nakahira’s work articulated an uncharted topography of resistance welling up from the tense magnetic field between the image worlds of an urban mainland wiped clean of all visible traces of the explosive political struggles which ushered in the 1970s and the neo-colonial realities of “reversion.” This paper will serve as a critical introduction to key moment in the development of Nakahira’s critical writings and photography as situated by a discussions of historical and contemporary theorists of “reversion” spanning from influential poet and critics Tanigawa Gan (1923-1995), Morizaki Kazue (b.1927), writer Shimao Toshio (1917-1986) and the contemporary critic Nakazato Isao (b. 1947). In light of the continued impasse between the people of Okinawa and Japanese government over the status of US and Japanese military facilities, this paper seeks to foster transnational discussion of the shared regional experiences of the Cold War as seen from the vantage point of cultural practices that actively produced alternatives to the military and economic logic behind “reversion” and “return.” Based on an unpublished dissertation chapter, I hope to revise this paper to engage with the perspectives of Korean Studies scholarship on related aspects of Cold War cultural practice throughout East Asia.

Clark W. Sorensen (U. Washington)

Regional Subjectivity in Globalizing Korea: The Example of Mokp'o

As discourses of Korean history and identity have remained focused on grand teleological paradigms and a nation-centered framework suitable for Seoulites, regions outside of Seoul have been left feeling stripped of their youth and bereft of identity. In the context of the local self-government that has evolved from Kim Young Sam's democratization initiatives, local authorities have felt obliged to work at creating local identities for reasons of attracting tourists. These regional identities are by no means identical. Andong plays up its Confucian heritage calling itself "The Capital of the Korean Spirit" (精神文化의 首都), while Kwangju calls itself "The Shrine of Korean Democracy" and holds the Kwangju Biennale international art exhibition in even years.

The current paper will be based on fieldwork in Seoul and Mokp'o this summer in which I propose to study local subjectivity through observations of tourist activity, interviews with government officials, and contacts with local folk religious specialists and diviners. It is hypothesized that the regional subjectivity is colored by nostalgia for the colonial past in which Mokp'o was a big center of Japanese settler activity, attention to seaside tourism, and the subjectivity of fisherfolk and island people expressed more through folk religious activity than government-sponsored activity. Mokp'o is triply marginalized within Korean national culture as being on the edge of the Korean peninsula, being associated with fisherfolk rather than agriculturalists, and having been founded basically as a Japanese port in the late 19th century. This should provide rich material for comparison with similar marginalized areas in Japan, such as Okinawa or Fukushima.

Robert Winstanley-Chesters (U. Leeds)

"Landscape as Political Project?" –Towards a 'Greening' of the DPRK; Identifying the Rise of a Conservational Paradigm in North Korean Environmental Management and its Connection with Western and Japanese Ecological Thought.

Environmental management and practical policy strategies relating to it have always been an important part of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) approach to what might be described as "revolutionary" or "Juché orientated" industrial/economic development. Historically environmental management in the DPRK has focused on schemes designed to promote productive increase or the building of technological capacity. Individual projects such as the "West Sea Barrage" or the "Taegyedo Tidal Reclamation Area" or more general systems for industrial management such as the "Tae'an Work System", have been demonstrative of this impulse. However since the collapse of the wider Soviet Bloc, and the famine period of the mid 1990's it has been possible to determine a change in policies relating to the management of the environment in the DPRK. Recently the DPRK has begun in a general sense to respond to themes developing within the thinking of governments, strategists and theoreticians from the wider world. Policy underpinned by themes such as "conservation" and "preservation" has been informed and influenced by the environmental or "green" movements. Accordingly projects within the DPRK focused on afforestation and hydrological engineering have begun to resemble those in nations within its closer East Asian neighbourhood like Japan (and even the ROK/South Korea). This paper builds on my previous research identifying historical narratives relating to environmental management within the DPRK (specifically those relating to coastal reclamation and forestry management), and the routes through which DPRK institutions translate ideological or philosophical development into practical policy direction; it investigates the extent to which the DPRK incorporates philosophically "alien"/foreign ideas within its theoretical construct and how institutionally it utilises strategies inspired by conservation-focused theory from the wider world in the field of environmental management, and especially that deriving from its local context such as the Japanese environmental movement; it identifies the development of new projects such as those focused on hydrological engineering at Punjiman and Sindo and low carbon power generation such as the wind farms at Unhairi which demonstrate practical examples of this utilisation and analyses what these developments might mean for practical and theoretical policy within wider institutional context in the DPRK, as well as its relationship with Japan and other neighbouring countries which are close geographically but far distant from an ideological or philosophical perspective.