

Guest Editors' Introduction

Steven Chung and Hyun Seon Park

The essays collected in this special issue participate in a larger scholarly reappraisal of the core-periphery logic and finite periodization by which the global Cold War has been written into history. Through the narrower methodological frameworks of diplomatic or military historiography or under the auspices of nationalist or liberal-triumphalist discourses, that history cleanly divided the Cold War world into ideologically opposed regional blocs and marked its demise with the fall of the Berlin Wall. The overarching contest of the Cold War was, moreover, understood to be a war of ideas that descended into military conflict through proxy in remote corners of the world and outside the North Atlantic and Central European theaters. It is no coincidence then that the most forceful revisions to this historiography have arisen with respect to the study of Asia, which not only witnessed catastrophic wars throughout the period of ostensible long peace but which continues to be a volatile site of ongoing bipolar struggle. But perhaps the more important intervention has come in the form of research showing many Asian societies were riven with conflicts that prompted them to take an active role in shaping the alignments and outcomes of the geopolitical contest. Tuong Vu, for instance, has argued forcefully for seeing the Cold War as an “intercontinental synchronization of hostilities in which Asian actors shared equal responsibilities with the superpowers in the spread of the conflict.”¹ These mixed alliances and mutual manipulations owe less to regimes of puppetry and unilinear containment than they do to what Prasenjit Duara has termed the Cold War’s “imperialism of nation-states.” Pointing to the new postwar imperial doctrines of limited sovereignty and developmentalist economics that lay at the core of both US and Soviet containment strategies, Duara convincingly delineates both the conditions under which strong authoritarian states and armed conflict proliferated

in the region and the role of East and Southeast Asia in anticipating and even precipitating the end of the Cold War.²

The cultural dimensions of the Cold War in Asia followed similarly pericentric paths within nations and within even the ostensibly aligned spheres of the region.³ Certainly, the powerful influence of US and Soviet cultural training, export, and diplomacy, often implemented hand in hand with military occupation and massive economic and political investment, cannot be ignored. Indeed, throughout the region, but especially in Japan, North and South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, intellectual discourses and popular cultures were dominated by the continual workings of cultural-enlightenment agencies, educational-exchange institutions and, perhaps most significantly, film, music, and, to a lesser extent, literary productions flowing into and out of Hollywood and Moscow. But the crucial point is that the output of the superpower centers was not passively absorbed in place of existing cultural forms but rather that its reception was characterized by continuing and often intense negotiation and conflict between the demands of national strengthening and geopolitical diplomacy. This is precisely where the double register of the concept of the cultural Cold War has begun to be exploited as not only the “soft-power” realm in which superpowers and national regimes alike vied for “hearts and minds” but also as a terrain of lived experiences and practice upon which the often contradictory demands of ideological discipline, aesthetic ideals, and global cultural influences were negotiated.

Korean cinema is an especially fertile ground upon which to explore the Cold War given the ideological and governmental controls to which the film industry was subjected throughout the period. Indeed, the twin pillars of successive post-war regimes, anticommunism and economic development, deeply affected not only how films could be produced but also the political signification of the films that were made and seen. But as the articles in this collection demonstrate, the pressures of the Cold War were not only repressive and censorial; they could also yield transnational collaborations, experimentation with genre and style, and forms of political expression and subjectivity not easily reducible to broad ideological binaries or nationalist discourse. Whether they set out to comically represent the foibles of the premodern aristocracy or to meditate retrospectively on the psychic scars left by the militarization of Korean society, the films visualize the sometimes obscure and contradictory ways the Cold War affected everyday life and experience. And even when the industry was most thoroughly permeated by official policies or financial incentives, the countervailing forces of artistic independence and commercial success or failure gave the lie to any sense of a monolithic Cold War culture. The long decades and slow “decomposition” of the Cold War in Korean cinema therein beg meticulous archival research, heterogeneous disciplinary methodologies, and nimble theoretical reasoning to take fullest account of their complexities. This is precisely the aim of this collection of essays. Following on the tremendous energy that has galvanized scholarship around filmmaking in two dynamic historical epochs—the colonial period and

the recent years spanning New Korean Cinema and the advent of Hallyu—Cold War Korean cinema studies aims to understand the politics of a visual cultural sphere buffeted by the multifarious forces of postcoloniality, global geopolitics, and historical revision.

The specific location of Korean cinema within the Cold War system, and therein the contribution Korean cinema studies can make to a revised understanding of the Cold War, arises from its enmeshment in intertwined local and global political conflicts. The very boundaries of Korean cinema are continually drawn and redrawn in a double process of liquidation and reattribution: while they are made flexible in the ongoing encounters between national cinema formations and transnational production, distribution, and collaboration, they are also fortified through a visual and discursive order premised on the internal division of the South and the North. We might, then, call attention to three aporias that cut across the combination of the Cold War on the one hand and Korean cinemas on the other.

The first of these aporias surfaces within the binary structure of the Cold War ethos, polarized into oppositions between the free world and the communist bloc, friends and enemies, and good and evil. The Korean War and national division made these distinctions easily representable. For example, at the height of the Cold War in the 1960s through the 1970s, the dialectic of the visible image and the political unconscious yielded a division between a proper, national body and an improper, threatening body, made especially clear in the production of humanitarian war films and anticommunist films. And while the reductive moral troping of North Korean villains has waned and given way to reconfigured relationships between South Koreans and North Koreans since the late 1990s, the ideological grip of bipolarity has remained firm. This unresolved aporia in relation to North Korea resurfaced most recently with the controversies surrounding two films, *Project Cheonan Ship* (2013) and *Northern Limit Line* (2015). Based on real incidents, they each deal with ongoing South-North military confrontations, respectively the sinking of a South Korean warship by presumed North Korean attack in 2010 and the effaced naval battles over the disputed territorial lines of the Yellow Sea in 2002, the year of the FIFA World Cup in Japan and South Korea. The contrasting public responses to these films were particularly striking: while the screenings of *Project Cheonan Ship* were pulled in response to pressure from conservatives furious over the film's questioning of the cause of the sinking, *Northern Limit Line*, which jingoistically honored the young naval soldiers who fought for "freedom" and "nation," quickly claimed first rank at the box office. The abiding predicament of North Korea and anticommunism therein prompts us to trace how the topography of division moves through and within contemporary Korean society.

The second aporia exists within South Korea's engagement, largely though the auspices of US global hegemony, with the "free world." It was undoubtedly Hollywood films and their aesthetic principles as well as US military, financial, and administrative aid that most deeply impacted the cultural environment of postwar Korea. Critical approaches to this subimperial condition have variously sought to

think through the relationship between the processes of knowledge production and concrete institutional practices. Several of the papers in this volume actively depart from a model of organic film historiography that would trace the internal and even spiritual logic of national film culture and instead appropriate the language of coloniality, transnationality, and even cosmopolitanism to trace the transformative force of Cold War cultural politics. These heterogeneous approaches, further, are not limited to conventional analyses of industrial practices or visual style but rather broadly address the place of Korea in the global circulation of power and culture, whether by reexamining the instrumental role played by quasi-private US institutions within regional cultural Cold War strategies or through highlighting the lasting violence embedded in the Cold War exploitation of bodies for labor, sex, and military contest.

The third aporia arises in the process of locating Asia within the global Cold War. While the Cold War in the Euro-American theater was characterized by an ideological (and ostensibly peaceful) and geographical (and ostensibly isomorphic) division of the world into two opposite systems, the Cold War in East Asia was distinguished by continual outbreaks of hostilities and contention with the ruins of colonialism. As Heonik Kwon has pointed out, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union did not signal the end of “the” Cold War. Rather, the fierce and continuing battles in Asia, sites of the reconstruction of the neocolonial world system Kwon calls “the Other Cold War,” suggest the Cold War’s slow “decomposition.”⁴ Shifting the central axis of discussion from West-centric politics to the regional politics of identity and the cultural logic of daily life, Paek Wöndam points out that “regardless of the former colonial ruler, the colony, or whether we are talking about the free world or the communist camp, the Cold War becomes the cultural logic that regulates the consciousness and daily life of people in East Asia by arranging the framework for the place of the nation-state.”⁵ As the studies in this volume reveal, the Cold War as an internalizing and daily principle of life under geopolitical division was waged not only in the realms of ideology and history but also in the realms of popular genres and intimate family relations in Asia.

The opening essays by Christina Klein and Han Sang Kim aptly demonstrate the often circuitous, sometimes covert, and largely potent means by which US cultural discourses and formal institutions conditioned Korean cinema’s engagement in the global Cold War.

Klein’s article, “Cold War Cosmopolitanism: The Asia Foundation and 1950s Korean Cinema,” makes two convincing claims about the strategic planning and cultural diplomacy the US government applied in Korea through the Asia Foundation (TAF): that they were directed at enhancing already existing local initiatives and practices; and that they sought to strengthen Korean national culture as well as its cultural and commercial networks across “free Asia.” These in turn inform the paper’s overarching thesis that an integrative “cosmopolitanism” promoted by the TAF in the cultural realm supplemented the United States’ political strategies in East and Southeast Asia. Klein carefully details how the TAF’s

initiatives, such as its sponsorship of the Asian Film Festival or the critical role it played in the formation of the Korean Motion Picture Cultural Association, “shaped the national and regional fields” within which the films were produced rather than directly policing their political or aesthetic content. Klein then details the style and production methods of two films, *The Wedding Day* (1956) and *Because I Love You* (1958), to demonstrate the varied ways the AF sponsored films that promoted local cultural traditions and fostered regional economic cooperation and intercultural exchange. Grounded in pioneering research into newly accessible AF archives as well as a forensic investigation of those early postwar Korean films, the article delivers a remarkable amalgam of historical elucidation and textual interpretation. It therein revises our understanding of the ways the Cold War was waged and experienced.

Beginning its explorations in the tumultuous early Cold War years, Han Sang Kim's paper, “Film Auteurism as a Cold War Governmentality: Alternative Knowledge and the Formation of Liberal Subjectivity,” then quickly broadens its historical scope to encompass the 1990s in order to track the shifting political and economic conditions of “liberal subjectivity” in South Korea. Through personal interviews, research into the operation of agencies like the United Nations Korea Reconstruction Agency's film unit and analysis of published and unpublished reflections of Korean and US filmmakers, Kim uncovers contests over the meaning and use value of documentary and narrative filmmaking. These disagreements amongst Korean and US filmmakers and bureaucrats alike prompt Kim to reject the top-down, sender-receiver binaries, which, according to Kim, continue to inform studies of “the cultural Cold War.” But at the core of the paper is Kim's argument that not only was the spirit of individualism and auteurism through which filmmakers opposed the overdeveloped South Korean state inspired by US and European institutional discourses and practices but that that spirit, which constitutes what Kim calls “alternative knowledge,” conditioned an unexpected collusion between an entrepreneurial auteurism and the encroachments of neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s. This leads Kim to a bold synthesis: that the self-conscious auteurism of filmmakers like Ha Kilchong and Pak Kwangsu, which had stood in resistance to Korean authoritarianism and the Cold War system under which it thrived, became the most effective idiom through which “post-Cold War” liberal subjectivity found expression.

The reorientation of the Cold War locality in Asia is reflected in two intertwined papers, Sangjoon Lee's “Destination Hong Kong: The Geopolitics of South Korean Espionage Films in the 1960s” and Evelyn Shih's “Doubled Over 007: ‘Aryu Pondū’ and Genre-Mixing Comedy in Korea.” Both papers, entertaining and informative, delve into the hidden territory of espionage films in South Korea and beyond. It is of course no coincidence that spy fiction has drawn broad critical attention in recent Cold War studies. In spite of a general devaluing of the genre as archetypal B movies, espionage films are an excellent entry point in two ways. First, the genre shows us the multifarious and often unstable ways in

which the United States-led free-Asia strategy and global popular mass culture merged. Second, in both the transnational mobility of the agents they represent and the circulation of the genres' codes, the films reveal the vernacular mode of the global system in the Cold War era.

Lee's paper shows how South Korean moviegoers were fascinated by the cosmopolitan adventurousness of the Western spy and by the possibility of transposing that lustrous style to Asia. Tracing the logic of espionage films from the colonial period to the Cold War cultural sphere, Lee maps the historicity of the spy-film phenomenon against its cultural, economic, and political function in East Asia. Astutely, Lee distinguishes South Korean espionage films not only from their ostensible Hollywood roots but also from other Asian branches such as Hong Kong *bangpian*. His analyses of *SOS Hong Kong* (1966) and *Special Agent X-7* (1966) argue that South Korean spy movies articulate the Cold War politics that permeated the "free" states of Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong toward two ends: first, to strengthen the allegiance of these states against communist enemies (North Korea and the People's Republic of China) and, second, to divert public attention from South Korean military deployment to Vietnam. Addressing the "local" memories of the colonial past and the Korean War, South Korean espionage films' structural archetypes in the 1960s and '70s revolved around the repetitive theme of family reunion. Lee concludes that, regardless of how transnational their mode of production was, South Korean espionage films domesticate transnational conflicts within the domestic political unconscious.

The sleek movement of Korean James Bond films across Asian metropolises takes a farcical turn in Shih's paper on spy comedies produced in the same period. Focusing her attention on the numerous copycats and comic translations of the Bond series through *aryu* spy films, Shih's paper mounts an argument about popular texts' ability to contest state discourses amid censorship and anticommunist paranoia. In her close readings of two films, *Star Ferry Kim* (1966) and *Salsari mollatchi: 007 p'oksop'an* (1966), Shih highlights the aesthetic effects of the cultural marriage and divorce of a cosmopolitan, superhuman *sŭp'ai* and a vernacular, unsophisticated *kanch'ŏp* in these comedies. The strength of the paper lies in the way Shih illuminates the generic formation of the 1960s Korean comedies *under* and *beyond* the rubric of anticommunist politics, underscoring the hybridity that "destabilizes the generic orientation, the ideological structure, and the gender fixation" of the spy film. An especially telling instance of this hybridization is embodied by Sŏ Yŏngch'un, the main actor in *Salsari mollatchi*, who provokes laughter through transnational masquerade and cross-dressing, doubly vernacularizing the espionage genre through ethnic and gendered play. Shih further explores the politics of generic translation by showing how the spy film operated within the conventions of urban travelogue (the *sanggyŏnggi*) as well as anticommunist protocols.

The next two essays in the issue, by Hyun Seon Park and Jeehey Kim, explore the means by which experiments in cinematic form have challenged official and

conventional histories of coloniality and military sex labor. In both, the politics of memory are central.

In her "Cold War Mnemonics: History, Melancholy, and Landscape in South Korean Film of the 1960s," Hyun Seon Park mines two comparatively overlooked films from the late 1960s, Kim Suyong's *Mist* (1967) and Yi Sönggu's *The General's Mustache* (1968), for insights into memory and the representation of the past in the broader context of the Cold War. The paper rests on a fundamental insight that the temporally linear and morally dichotomous nationalist narrativization of the war conditioned a melancholic mode of coping with trauma and loss. The incessant return of Korean cinema throughout the 1950s and 1960s to the war in the form of melodramatic war chronicles or heroic anticommunist ventures largely served to reinforce this inability to confront the past. Drawing on psychoanalytical theory and looking laterally to literature and visual arts, Park argues that the two films in differing ways elaborated innovative mnemonic technologies that foregrounded the limits of historical representation and therein began the work of unlocking cryptic war memories. She finds in the deployment of wide-screen, flashback, and metafictional narrational techniques the means by which the films contest the exclusive separation of the past and present and the projection of an unchanging, individualistic subjectivity. Mapping the formulation of these mnemonic technologies against both the new directions taken in the contemporaneous film industry and the ongoing regulation of the global Cold War system, Park's paper richly suggests the critical problematic of cinematic modernism in Cold War Korean cinema.

In "Wandering Ghosts of the Cold War," Jeehey Kim finds in the acclaimed 2012 independent documentary film *Tour of Duty* two motifs through which the moral dichotomies and finality of the Cold War are disturbed: ruins and specters. Three former sex workers, whom the film follows as they revisit abandoned base camps and read from letters to lost friends and family members, embody the palimpsest histories of continuing exploitation and marginalization that are literally and figuratively concealed in the "post-Cold War" era. Kim, through close and generous analysis of the film, convincingly argues that *Tour of Duty* departs from both the victim allegories of nationalist historiography and the unilinear sociological structures of previous cinematic engagements with military sex workers, instead giving voice to the women themselves through bold experimentation with documentary form. Further, the intercalation of interviews, fictional monologues, and lyrical performances enjoins the viewer in a participatory mode that, Kim contends, is both deeply affecting and suggestive of our complicity in processes of forgetting these gendered memories of the Cold War.

Finally, in "Departure and Repatriation as Cold War Dissensus," Jinhee Park puts recent Korean documentaries against the backdrop of the "post-Cold War" and makes a compelling argument for the diasporic affect that nation-focused Cold War discourse has both engendered and ignored. Like Jeehey Kim's paper, Park's discussion of diasporic mobility touches upon two blind spots of Cold

War visuality: the returnees, repatriates, and exiles who were “dislocated” and the diasporic practices of independent documentary films. In its reading of the autobiographical and ethnographic documentaries *My Father's Emails* (2012) and *Dear Pyongyang* (2005), the paper links the diasporic experience of families in North Korea, South Korea, and Japan to the political aesthetics of interstate Cold War alliances and conflicts. “Dissensus,” then, takes a crucial role in Park’s argument, indicating the heterogeneous and indeed heterodox positions that emerged from “the ongoing Cold War in their familial histories and their perpetual diasporic condition.” According to Park, dissensus does not simply denote “disagreement” or “ignorance” of national-ideological powers. Rather, it refers more suggestively to epistemological doubt within the Cold War entanglement, such that geopolitical conflicts are lived in the frictions within intimate and familial contact. Balancing a historical delineation of diasporic families against close filmic analyses, Park’s paper underscores the often obscured ways the Cold War was felt and lived at the microlevel of daily experience.

Both editors wish to thank Theodore Hughes and Jooyeon Kim at the *Journal of Korean Studies* and Moonim Baek at Yonsei University for their support of this special issue. “The Cold War in Korean Cinemas” began as a workshop hosted at Princeton University, sponsored by the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, the Humanities Council, the East Asian Studies Program, Yonsei University’s Center for Korean Visual Culture, and the Center for Korean Research at Columbia University. We also jointly thank all contributors for the provocative questions and insights they offered during the workshop as well as for their rigorous responses to editorial appraisals. Finally, we thank the anonymous reviewers for their indispensable comments and suggestions.

NOTES

1. Tuong Vu, Introduction.
2. Prasenjit Duara, “The Cold War as a Historical Period.”
3. Political scientist Tony Smith has argued for a “pericentric” view of the Cold War in which governments of states traditionally seen as peripheral to the core theater of the global conflict—such as North Korea, China, Israel, Cuba—in fact played decisive roles in “expanding, intensifying, and prolonging” the struggle. See Smith, “New Bottles for New Wine.”
4. Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War*.
5. Paek Wöndam, *Naengjön Asia üi munhwa p’unggyöng* [Cultural landscape of Cold War Asia], 15.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Duara, Prasenjit. “The Cold War as a Historical Period: An Interpretive Essay.” *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 3 (2011): 457–80.

- Kwon, Heonik. *The Other Cold War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Paek Wōndam. *Naengjōn Asia ūi munhwa p'unggyōng* [Cultural landscape of Cold War Asia], vol. 2. Seoul: Hyōnsil Munhwa, 2009.
- Smith, Tony. "New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War." *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 567–91.
- Vu, Tuong. Introduction to *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia: Ideology, Identity and Culture*, edited by Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.