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# IMPOSSIBLE HOMECOMING:

# CINEMATIC RETURNS OF KOREAN DIASPORA IN POST–COLD WAR EAST ASIA

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the ways in which contemporary Korean diaspora films are introduced and integrated into South Korean cinema, how they negotiate with the formation of national culture in the homeland and in turn, how they uncover new forms of transnational practices through cinematic imagination and spectatorial experience. By locating Korean diaspora films within the history of East Asian cultural production during the long twentieth century, my thesis contextualizes the cinematic mobility of Korean diaspora in the post-Cold War era and interrogates the ways in which Korean diaspora films affect, subvert, and transform both the national and transnational imagination of Korean cinema.

Based on historical research and textual analysis, my dissertation first addresses how the Korean diaspora in East Asia has historically been situated both in and outside the representational and industrial boundaries established by Korean cinema. Second, it examines how Korean diaspora films have challenged and reconfigured notions of Korean cinema's transnationality on several levels, from cultural policy and financial funding to public discourse on multiculturalism. It focuses on the contemporary films of second- and third-generation Koreans who reside either in Japan or in the People's Republic of China, namely, Sai Yoichi and Yang Yonghi in Japan, and Zhang Lu in China. By scrutinizing both the sociohistorical context and text of these Korean diasporic filmmakers' return to South Korea, this thesis explores the implications of the homeland and of homecomings in their films, the filmmakers' displaced history inscribed into the film texts, and an emergent transnational vision of the films.

Chapter One, titled "Histories of Korean Diaspora in East Asia," presents the history of the Korean diaspora's dislocations and homecomings in East Asia and the continuous process of

making and unmaking a homeland of two nation-states in the ancestral homeland. Chapter Two, "Cinematic Representation of Korean Diaspora in South Korean Films," analyzes the history of cinematic representation of Korean diaspora in South Korean films from the Cold War period to the recent post–Cold War era, with particular attention on the emergence of the diaspora as a cinematic subject in South Korean films in the 2000s that is deeply connected with the transformation of the Korean film industry and reconceptualization of the national cinema since the late 1980s. Entitled "The Divided Nation and Zainichi Filmmakers' Bittersweet Return," Chapter Three is centered on works by ethnic Korean filmmakers active in Japan that either feature the issue of homecoming or were produced in South Korea. This chapter explores the filmmakers' unstable and shifting positions between the host country, Japan, the home country, the divided Korea, and spectatorship in respective countries. The fourth and final body chapter investigates a third-generation Korean Chinese filmmaker Zhang Lu's engagement with South Korean cinema. The chapter, entitled "Crossing the Border to the Audience: Zhang Lu's Cinematic Return to South Korea," closely analyzes the internalized border in his films made in South Korea, both in narrative and cinematic form. The cinematic returns of Korean diaspora, I argue, critically revisits the transnationalism of Korean cinema beyond the current celebration of its supranational flow, by harking back to the inevitably transnational history of East Asia embodied in both lives and films, and illuminates the mutually constitutive and dialectical relationship between diaspora film and South Korean cinema, and between filmmakers and spectatorship.

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Dis/placing a Korean Diaspora Film in Post-Cold War South Korean Cinema

In the third Busan International Film Festival (hereafter BIFF) in 1998, a documentary film drew special attention among over two hundred films invited from all over the world. It was *Reclaiming Our Names* (Ponmyŏng sŏnŏn, 1998), directed by renowned South Korean independent filmmaker Hong Hyŏng-suk. The film portrays ethnic Korean students in Japan, commonly called Zainichi, which literally means "residing in Japan." The second- and third-generation Korean students in the film struggle with their split identities associated with their two names, one Japanese and the other Korean. The film poignantly describes the moment when Zainichi students stand before their Japanese classmates and declare themselves ethnically Korean. The Zainichi Koreans' lives had been almost obscured in South Korean media during the Cold War era, but it seemed that their voices were finally rendered audible through cinematic representation. The film was the first-ever documentary entry to record a sell-out audience and received both critical acclaim and the Best Documentary Prize in the festival.

However, soon after *Reclaiming Our Names* won the prize at the closing ceremony of the festival, the film was embroiled in unexpected controversy. Zainichi filmmaker Yang Yonghi argued that *Reclaiming Our Names* used footage from her short documentary *The Swaying Spirit* (*Yureru kokoro*, 1996) without permission and plagiarized its overall story.[1] The South Korean director Hong Hyŏng-suk admitted that Yang Yonghi inspired the project but the footage of Yang's film was offered by Yang voluntarily. During the intense disputes over the authorship of

[1] A part of this introduction was previously published in *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture* 12 (2019). For further discussion on the issues of authenticity in and out of the film text *Reclaiming Our Names*, see So Hye Kim, "Questioning Authenticity: On the Documentary Film *Reclaiming Our Names*," *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture* 12 (2019): 335-363.

the film, and after jury members' re-deliberation, BIFF concluded that Yang Yonghi's footage only serve as a "background" of Hong's film and thus was not plagiarism. [2]

It is worth noting that the 1998 BIFF epitomized the rapid transition of the Korean film industry by envisioning both the newly arrived era of post–Cold War globalization and the expanded scope of Korean cinema contained therein. Founded in 1996, BIFF presented itself as a new path for the Korean film industry toward democratization, globalization, and the demise of Cold War tensions.[3] Particularly, at the third festival in 1998, BIFF celebrated a new phase of Korean cinema. Fostered by the abolition of official film censorship in 1996 and the lifting of the Japanese film ban in 1998, this new phase was meant to broaden the scope of screened films toward erstwhile forbidden areas of world cinema, including films from former communist countries. Within this expanded scope, films made by overseas Koreans were first introduced to South Korean audiences under the section title of "Another Korean Cinema: Works by Overseas Koreans." This category included five films by Korean American filmmakers and four films by Zainichi filmmakers, including the first South Korean screening of *A Mosquito on the Tenth Floor* (*Jikkai no mosukīto*, 1983) by the rising young Zainichi director Sai Yōichi. This special section reflected growing interest in South Korea about the lives and films of Koreans abroad. It expressed the hope that by embracing "Korean diaspora film" as a category, filmmakers and critics could begin to expand the boundaries of Korean cinema while also using the films of overseas Koreans to envision transnational networks. Nevertheless, the section did not attract much attention during the festival, especially in comparison with the attention garnered by *Reclaiming Our Names*, and remained somewhat marginalized overall, a reality which

[2] Kyŏng-sil Kim, "Pusan Kukche Yŏnghwaje Unp'asang susangjak Ponmyŏng Sŏnŏn mudan toyong p'amun [Controversy about unauthorized use of footage in *Reclaiming Our Names*]," *Sŭk'ŭrin,* November 1998, 65.
[3] Soo Jeong Ahn, *The Pusan International Film Festival, South Korean Cinema and Globalization* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 45–46.

disappointed the Zainichi filmmakers who travelled to Busan to attend their screenings.[4] In this transformative phase, BIFF did not want to pursue the scandal about *Reclaiming Our Names,* as it could jeopardize the viability of the festival. Their subsequent decision that Yang's film served only as a "background" to Hong's documentary ultimately bolstered the authenticity of Hong's film while ironically mirroring the marginalized ways in which Zainichi films themselves were screened at the festival.

However, it should be noted that Yang was in Chosŏn status[5] at the time of the controversy, so she could not enter South Korea to directly join the dispute; all her arguments, claims, and rebuttals were delivered by letter, email, and fax. Zainichi Koreans' Chosŏn status is often regarded as North Korean nationality but rather designates the stateless status of Koreans in postwar Japan, only categorized by the vanished name of their ancestral homeland. Although permission for the overseas travel of Zainichi Koreans with Chosŏn status was granted in the early 1980s, it was still extremely complicated for them to travel abroad, especially to South Korea, as Chosŏn-status Zainichi Koreans were required to switch to ROK nationality to visit South Korea. Yang's parents had a strong sense of loyalty to North Korea, as portrayed in her later documentary films, so it was impossible for her to change her nationality to ROK at that time. Thus, for Yang, South Korea was the homeland to which she was not allowed to return and even her claims for authorship and her presence were denied in the prolonged arguments about her footage in the South Korean film.

[4] Yun-mo Yang, "Che-3 ŭi sisŏn, chaoe Hanin yŏnghwa [The third perspective: overseas Korean film]," *Sŭk'ŭrin,* November 1998, 148–149.

[5] The Chosŏn status has been the only option for Zainichi to choose except Republic of Korea and Japanese nationalities. It has been often regarded as a nationality related to the DPRK but is not official DPRK nationality. A Zainichi with Chosŏn status faced various difficulties to enter the ROK, and the ROK government basically regarded them as someone needing to be converted to ROK nationality. The historical background of Chosŏn status will be further discussed in Chapter One.

*Reclaiming Our Names* and its acclamation at BIFF shows the South Korean film scene's collective desire to validate its emergent post–Cold War status as autonomous, democratic, and internationally recognizable. However, this self-identified position—free from authoritarian and anti-communist governmental interference—was made possible by attenuating the authorship of a Zainichi filmmaker. Yang Yonghi's accusation challenged the presumption of a South Korean filmmaker's earnestness and goodwill to speak for the diasporic Koreans, and furthermore, call into question the internal boundary of post–Cold War South Korean Cinema, which was believed to have overcome the obsolete ideological tensions of the Cold War dichotomy. The ethnic Koreans in neighboring East Asian countries finally could "return" to South Korean cinema in this new era, although this diasporic Koreans' cinematic return is intricately convoluted with various desires of South Korean filmmakers and the Korean diasporic filmmakers' restricted mobility, which are keenly related to the specific situation of Korean diasporic cinema bound to the Cold War politics in the post-Cold War era.

This dissertation explores the return of contemporary Korean diaspora films to South Korea from Japan and the People's Republic of China and their engagement with the contemporary Korean cinema since the late 1990s. The globalization of the Korean film industry has offered diasporic filmmakers the opportunity to position themselves within an emergent category of Korean diaspora cinema. I analyze the ways in which these returning diasporic films convey their makers' transnational experiences of displacement and homecoming to Korean audiences, and in turn, participate in the transnational imagination of Korean cinema. Their films, I argue, complicate the cinematic chronotopes of contemporary South Korea by stirring up the as-yet-unsettled dust of colonization and national division as experienced by displaced Koreans; they also revisit the transnationalism of Korean cinema, moving beyond the current celebration

of its supranational flow of dissemination by harking back to the transnational history of East Asia embodied in both the films and the lives of its subjects.

The questions at the center of this dissertation are how the diaporic films negotiate with the formation of national culture in the homeland and in turn, uncover new forms of transnational practices through cinematic imagination and spectatorial experience. Rapid changes throughout the media landscape in South Korea have sparked vibrant discussions about the historical, social, and cultural implications of Korean films across national borders. However, the discussions in the government and the academy have tended to center narrowly on the outward mobility and influence of Korean films. By contrast, by comparatively locating Korean films within the history of East Asian cultural production during the long twentieth century, my study shifts the focus to the inward mobility of Korean diaspora films from East Asia to the homeland and the ways in which those films affect, subvert, and transform both the national and transnational imagination of Korean cinema.

To be more specific, the chapters that follow focus on the films by second- and third-generation Korean diaspora filmmakers who reside either in Japan or in the People's Republic of China. The history and experience of ethnic Koreans living in these two neighboring East Asian countries has been deeply intertwined with the history of colonization, liberation, national division, and the making of two disparate nation-states in the Korean peninsula. Along with the continued changes in the homeland, their diasporic status has also undergone an extended process of transformations in regard to their citizenship, membership, and national belongings. Exploring the alternating relationships between the ethnic Koreans in East Asia and their ancestral homeland South Korea throughout the twentieth century, this dissertation examines how the Korean diaspora has historically been situated both inside and outside the

representational and industrial boundaries established by Korean cinema and, on the other hand, how the return of Korean diaspora challenges and reconfigures notions of Korean cinema's transnationality.

## 2. Questioning Diaspora's Homeland and Homecomings

In the era of globalization since the 1980s, the term "diaspora" began to be used liberally, both in and outside of academia, to explain the unprecedented flows of human migrations across political and geographical borders. Whereas the term is widely applied to various mobilizations of human populations, the etymology of "diaspora" traces back to the dispersion of Jews from their homeland and is based on the theological understanding of homeland as authentic and indisputable origin for the Jewish population. The primary emphasis on the homeland has been maintained in the discussions of modern diaspora with the homeland understood as a place of origin, where the diasporic populations should have belonged, as such, the place they aspire to return, and thus an important criterion to discern and categorize diaspora. For example, William Safran offers a list of defining characteristics of diaspora: dispersal to two or more locations; collective mythology of homeland; alienation from host land; idealization of return to the homeland; and ongoing relationship with the homeland.[6] Likewise, Kim Butler classifies the diasporas according to the following five dimensions: reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal; relationship with the homeland; relationship with hostlands; interrelationships within communities of the diaspora; comparative studies of different diasporas.[7]

[6] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 83–99.
[7] Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 10, no. 2 (2001): 189-219.

Although these studies endeavor to frame the discussion of diaspora as a concept encompassing various individual cases, the categorical approaches emphasizing the homeland solidify the perception of homeland as a fixed origin, real or mythological, and do not properly elucidate the constantly transforming relations diasporic communities have with their homeland and the host society. Rogers Brubaker notes that "discussions of diaspora are often informed by a strikingly idealist, teleological understanding of the nation-state, which is seen as the unfolding of an idea, the idea of nationalizing and homogenizing the population."[8] He argues that although the diaspora provides "an alternative to teleological, nation-statist understandings of immigration and assimilation," the diaspora studies have their own teleologies which view diaspora as a "destiny" "to which previously dormant members (or previously dormant diaspora in their entirety) are now 'awakening'" with their "true" identities, which are strongly attached to the homeland.[9] Thus, he suggests that by thinking of diaspora not as an entity or a bounded group but "an idiom, a stance, a claim," as "a way of formulating the identities and loyalties of a population,"[10] we can explore "to what extent, and in what circumstances, those claimed as members of putative diasporas actively adopt or at least passively sympathize with the diasporic stance."[11]

Brubaker's proposal is particularly pertinent to understanding the Korean diaspora in East Asia and the process of developing their diasporic projects in response to the fundamental changes of the nation-states of the homeland and host nations. Far from sustaining their "true" identities as Korean diaspora, the ethnic Koreans in East Asia have formulated and developed their diasporic identities in relation to the host nations' policies by either embracing or

[8] Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no.1 (2005): 10.
[9] Ibid., 13.
[10] Ibid., 12.
[11] Ibid., 13.

disavowing their membership. What further complicates their diasporic stance is the altering nation-states in their homeland. Since the first generation's displacement from the Korean peninsula, the homeland had been continuously reshaped from the ancestral nation Chosŏn, the colony Chosēn of the Japanese Empire, and two antagonistic nation-states, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Throughout these changes, the ethnic Koreans abroad have refashioned their diasporic stances as the people of Chosŏn, overseas nationals of the DPRK, co-ethnics of the ROK, or Korean diaspora belonging neither to the ROK nor the DPRK, which cannot be explained as a monolithic ethnic identity.

To understand the diasporic claims of ethnic Koreans in Japan and China, however, the implication of homeland in Korean diasporic populations, which still persists in their diasporic identities, cannot be dismissed but should be further examined by questioning how the myth of homeland has exerted influence on the diasporic communities. Safran points out that the homeland myth is often exploited by the homeland to establish its legitimacy and the diasporic populations internalize it as "a defense mechanism against slights committed by the host country against the minority."[12] He notes that thus the homeland myth "does not—and is not intended to—leads its members to prepare for the actual departure for the homeland. The "return" of most diasporas…can thus been seen as a largely eschatological concept: it is used to make life more tolerable by holding out a utopia—or *eutopia*—that stands in contrast to the perceived *dystopia* in which actual life is lived."[13]

Building upon these discussions, I argue that the meaning of the homeland in the diasporic consciousness of ethnic Koreans in East Asia should be considered not as a unilateral identification with their ancestral homeland but as constant process of formulating, modifying,

[12] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies," 94.
[13] Ibid., 94.

and refashioning with the permutations of the nation-states of their homeland. Throughout the history of colonization, liberation, and Cold War realignment, and the easing of ideological tensions in recent decades, the implication of the homeland of Korean diaspora has been continuously challenged, modified, and reshaped. Thus, for the Korean diasporic populations, the homeland has never been a timeless and stable utopia awaiting their return, but is rather a nodal point to formulate their identities to survive as ethnic minorities of the host nations and to make sense of their dislocated history and experiences.

Furthermore, I argue that it is not only the diasporic communities that envision the homeland and homecoming, but also the nation-states of their homeland that pose as the "authentic" homeland for ethnic Koreans abroad and glorify and mythicize the diaspora's homecoming. To make their membership approved in the homeland, the ethnic Koreans have had to respond to the political and social claims of the homeland nations-states and undergone a constant process of modifying their diasporic claims, and making and unmaking certain nation-states as their homeland. The return or homecoming of Korean diaspora is neither teleological nor mythical but is always situated in highly political contestations surrounding the host nations and the homeland, far from resolving their diasporic status, and indeed, rather complicating it.

Given this plight, ethnic Koreans have pursued the exploration of the homeland and the "true" homecoming in artistic imaginations, beyond the political tensions and empirical adversities, and film is one of the artistic media they adopted to delve into those inquiries. As the films made by second- and third-generation ethnic Koreans in East Asia began to be introduced and integrated into the South Korean film sphere in the 1990s, they have posed the questions of the return in two layers: one as the return of the human subjects' to their homeland in the film texts and the other as the incorporation of these works themselves into the film industry of the

homeland. As a continuation rather than a reconciliation, this cinematic enactment of return sheds light on the memories and histories obliterated in the process of making nation-states of the homeland which poignantly reveal South Korean society's failure to reckon with post-coloniality as well as post-Cold War conditions. Their "return" does not lead to resolution of their dislocation but rather raises fundamental questions on the configuration of *minjok*, the nation or the ethnicity, in South Korean cinema, and radically challenges viewers to reconsider the transnationality of Korean cinema by incorporating the transnational history of dislocation of Korean diaspora in East Asia.

**3. Postmemory and Diasporic Narratives**

One important attribute of the films discussed in this dissertation is that they are made by second- and third-generation ethnic Koreans, which attests to the temporal distance of the diasporic Koreans' return in cinematic medium from the period of initial emigration. Crucial to understanding the "long duree" of Korean diaspora in East Asia from the early twentieth century until today is the question of time across generations. How has the diasporic consciousness, project, or positioning of the second-generation been inherited from the first generation? What made the latter generation maintain their diasporic identity? How does their experience of return to South Korea change their diasporic positioning? What does the homeland mean to the films made by the second-generation ethnic Korean filmmakers?

For the descendants of the first-generation diaspora, the homeland is far beyond their firsthand experience but rather is constituted at the center of their identity through imagination. Avtar Brah notes the ambivalent characteristics of the home for the diasporic populations. She contends that "home" is on the one hand, "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination.

In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin.'" Yet, on the other hand, "home is also a lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, somber grey skies in the middle of the day…all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations."[14] Brah's poignant observation renders a good account of the implications of the homeland for the first-generation diaspora. However, in most cases, the second- and later generations do not have "a lived experience of a locality" in the homeland. The place they hold in the experiential memories as their home is in their host countries. If they have a sense of lived experiences in the homeland, it is imagined through the narratives of the homeland. In other words, to envision their homeland beyond their personal experience, the later generations have to go through the complicated process of unmaking home in their host nations and making an imaginary home in their homeland where they mostly do not have the firsthand experience. What initiates and facilitates this process of un/making home are secondhand memory and the confluence of its narratives.

Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory is particularly helpful to understand this descendant generation's secondhand memory of the homeland and the constitution of their subjective diasporic consciousness. By analyzing the family photography of exiled Holocaust survivors, Hirsh coined the term postmemory to explain "the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right."[15] She argues that although the second generation does not have firsthand experience of the trauma, their subjectivity is deeply convoluted with the memory of the first generation's

[14] Avrar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996), 192.
[15] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 103.

forced segregation from home by building their postmemory upon their parents' memory. Her argument enables us to understand how the diasporic subjectivities of the descendant generations can be interwoven with the first generation's memory, which is transmitted to descendants.

Sandra So Hee Chi Kim further argues that "diasporic identities are consolidated and constructed primarily via mechanisms of postmemory."[16] Building upon Ricoeur's schema about memory, she suggests that postmemory makes the subjectivity of the memory "plural and discontinuous" by adding the temporal axis of generational transmission of the memory which entangles the individual memory with the collective memory. Memory, she argues, is expanded beyond individual boundaries and temporal limitations to the later generation through the identification forged within familiar spaces, thus the structure of postmemory "shapes the kind of intersubjectivity that leads to the phenomenological existence of groups like diasporas."[17] The process of postmemory and intersubjectivity is crucial to elucidate the self-identified second-generation diaspora's perception of the homeland. Diasporic postmemory leads the second generation to reformulate their home in the host society as the place which excluded and alienated their parents and to constitute their consciousness toward the culture, values, and places where their familiar past is located, the homeland. Thus, through the intersubjective process of postmemory, the descendants of the diaspora formulate their own diasporic subjectivity and embark on the project of making their homeland.

Another noteworthy aspect of postmemory in the descendant generation's diasporic identity is not a passive recollection of the past but an active search for the past which involves impulse and practices of imagination and creation. Even though postmemory is directed toward the historical object of traumatic experience in reality, it should be noted that it is constructed not

[16] Sandra So Hee Chi Kim, "Redefining Diaspora through a Phenomenology of Postmemory," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational* Studies 16, no. 3 (Winter 2007): 340.
[17] Ibid., 346.

by the person who experienced it but by another person's consciousness. In this sense, Kim notes the liminal quality of the postmemory between memory and imagination, arguing that "the effort to recall…is creative; it is a practice of citation, mediation, and…imagination."[18] This effort of creative recall is directly connected to the second generation's narrativization of the homeland. The films made by second- and third-generation Korean diaspora filmmakers unfailingly elucidates the process of postmemory to recall the memories of their parents' generation, to be connected to the homeland they left, and to situate themselves not only between the host society and the homeland but also between their parents' original homeland and the homeland they are searching for anew. The positioning of the diasporic films is never stable or fixed but relational to the dynamics of power, politics, and societal structures in and between the homeland and the host nations. The shifting positioning of the Korean diaspora films is not only subject to those dynamics but also actively challenges the configuration of power surrounding the history of dislocation. Through the artistic endeavors of creative recalling, the Korean diasporic filmmakers explore the homeland to which they aspire to be connected, one that is often disparate from the existing nation-states in the Korean peninsula.

Therefore, the second- and third-generation Korean diaspora's films illuminate the process of searching for their cultural identity, which is "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being,'" as Stuart Hall noted. Hall's notion of cultural identity of diaspora helps to examine the Korean diaspora films and their "return" to South Korea as "the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture."[19] In the same vein, Kim emphasizes the experience of diaspora and argues that it "compels us to attend to how collective histories and individual narratives of the past produce

[18] Ibid., 342.
[19] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 226.

diasporic experience in complex relation to the relentless play of history, culture, and power in larger society."[20] Building on this discussion, this dissertation understands diaspora not as a static or homogeneous entity defined by some common, shared trait, but rather an experience of of "becoming." It explores the constantly changing positioning of diasporic identities in the film texts and the ways in which diasporic filmmakers engage with the cultures of the host nations and homeland, and further the mutual process of "becoming" through the cinematic experience shared between the diasporic filmmakers and the audiences.

**4. How to Situate Korean Diaspora Cinema**

While the previous diaspora studies grapple with the interstitial position of diaspora between nation-states, the studies on diaspora film have been positioned in relation to the discourses of national cinema as well as the recent discussions of transnational cinema and world cinema. Here I examine how diaspora film has been discussed both in film studies and Korean cinema studies and postulate how Korean diaspora film can renew current understandings of diaspora cinema in Korean studies and beyond.

While the notion of national cinema has been deployed to understand the particularities of a nation's cinematic productions, many scholars point out various limitations of the concept itself. In his article "The Concept of National Cinema," Andrew Higson notes that definitions of national cinemas often have been applied prescriptively rather than descriptively for the purposes of identifying a certain coherence and unity and thereby producing a unique and stable identity. Arguing against the prescriptive text-based criteria of national cinemas through the 1960s and 70s, he acknowledges the significance of consumption in addressing national cinema. Based on

[20] Sandra So Hee Chi Kim, "Redefining Diaspora through a Phenomenology of Postmemory," 350.

the study of British national cinema, he argues that national cinemas are the product of tensions between "the national" and "the foreign (or international/Hollywood)."[21]

Higson's argument elucidates the ways in which the idea of national cinema was formed, especially in Europe, and has been developed in conjunction with the prevailing standard perception of "cinema" as an industrialized art and entertainment form predicated on Hollywood productions. Due to its hegemony across the world, there is a strong tendency to see Hollywood as the invariant Other from which any national cinema, by definition, should be differentiated. This perception inadvertently assigns national cinema to a peripheral position, by this framing compared to Hollywood, which has dominated the international film industry in terms of production, distribution, and exhibition. However, the dichotomous understanding of the dominant Hollywood cinema and the peripheral national cinema cannot but dismiss various tensions within cinematic culture of a nation-state as well as the diversified trajectories of film production and circulation across the border outside the influence of Hollywood cinema.

In the era of globalization, the notion of national cinema seems to be losing its strength to tie the connection between a film's place of production and/or setting and the nationality of its makers. Transnational cinema, as a conceptual category, emerged in response to the perceived insufficiencies of the existing category of national cinema in the conditions of a globalized world. While the notion of national cinema is based on the geographical territory of nation-state, the notion of transnational cinema focuses on the mobility of cinema across the national borders. In effect, therefore, transnational cinema was mobilized as a response to a shift in the economy of exchange from national to global, coupled with increasing economic globalization and the acceleration of technological developments.

[21] Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," in *Film and Nationalism*, ed. Andy Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 52–67.

Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden maintain that "the transnational comprises both globalization—in cinematic terms, Hollywood's domination of world film markets—and the counterhegemonic responses of filmmakers from former colonial and Third World countries."[22] Underlining the ever comprehensive permeability of national borders and unprecedented accessibility to digital media, they express a positive outlook on the future of transnational cinema, arguing that "digital technology in all its aspects has enabled a growing disregard for national boundaries as ideological and aesthetic checkpoints by a range of legal and extra-legal players, and has functioned to disrupt and decentralize the forces that have, heretofore, maintained strict control over the representational politics of the cinematic public sphere." [23] However, as the authors note, this very mobility of new "revolutionary" digital media are often fundamentally dominated by neoliberal capitalism and its global expansion. Despite their optimistic view, the internet or new media sphere are not isolated from traditional capital and accessibility to it is largely dominated by those who already had resources in the old medium. Contrary to the authors' utopian anticipation, in the era of globalization, the independent or minority film are further marginalized in many ways, or rather, reduced to being capital's byproduct, existing only to represent cultural diversity for the sake of the dominant culture.

Another notable limitation of the discourses on transnational cinema is its assumption of historical rupture between the nation-state-based past and the transnationally mobile global present. For example, Chris Berry argues that "the specificity of 'transnational cinema' can be grasped by distinguishing the earlier international order of nation states from the current transnational order of globalization, and that the primary characteristics of 'transnational cinema'

[22] Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, "General Introduction: What is Transnational Cinema?" in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.
[23] Ibid., 6.

can be best understood by examining it as the cinema of this emergent order."[24] However, it should be noted that the mobility engendered by recent globalization is profoundly intertwined with the history of colonization and the Cold War, especially in case of the diasporic populations from postcolonial nations. The neoliberal globalization in South Korea brought the Korean diasporic population, dispersed by its colonial history, back to the country as migrant workers and this return migration can only be understood adequately by confronting the colonial past and the still-entrenched Cold War system in the region. Likewise, the cinematic mobility of Korean diaspora cinema in East Asia in the post-Cold War era cannot be explained without revisiting the history of forced mobility and immobility in the colonial era and Cold War period. Thus, what is needed in the discourse on transnational cinema is not a completely new language to explain the current transnational cinematic mobility, but careful consideration of the underlying continuity and specific historical context in which the transnational mobility has been made possible in the new configuration of dynamics of power. As Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto noted, "the logic of transnational capital often de-historicizes and de-politicizes difference and very real boundaries in the name of multiculturalism."[25]

Diaspora films have been studied as an exemplary case of the newly emerged transnational cinema and as films situated in interstitial or liminal spaces of national cinema, as largely marginalized cinema. Arguably one of the most influential studies on diaspora cinema is Hamid Naficy's discussion on "accented cinema." Accented cinema, Naficy claims, "is both created with the awareness of the vast histories of the prevailing cinematic modes and in a new mode that is constituted by the structures of feeling of the filmmakers themselves as displaced

[24] Chris Berry, "What is Transnational Cinema?: Thinking from the Chinese Situation," *Transnational Cinemas* 1, no. 2 (November 2010): 124.
[25] Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, "National/International/Transnational: The Concept of Trans-Asian Cinema and the Cultural Politics of Film Criticism," in *Theorising National Cinema*, ed. Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 2008), 260.

subjects and by the traditions of exilic and diasporic cultural productions that preceded them."[26] Describing the films that exilic, diasporic, or postcolonial/ethnic filmmakers have made in the West since the 1960s, Naficy argues that the language of diasporic films carries the filmmakers' distinctive traces much like a speaker's accent when speaking a nonnative tongue. Underlying Naficy's proposition is a presumption of dominant Western cinema having the so-called standard or "neutral" accent but diaspora cinema discloses its history and identity in its accented film style which also embeds criticism of the "non-accented" dominant cinema.

The point of departure for my study from Naficy's enlightening claim is that the majority of current English-language scholarship on diaspora films hardly relates them to the countries or regions of origin for diasporic filmmakers. Within this perspective, the cinema of Europe and Hollywood takes center stage, serving as the main or even the only framework for scholarly inquiry. As a result, diasporic cinema is often viewed as a marginalized film practice and the relationship between diasporic filmmakers and the cinematic market of their homeland rarely takes on significance. My critical intervention is to call into question this prevailing perspective and to propose an alternative viewpoint by placing diasporic films in direct relationship to the so-called home country from which the film director and his or her communities have separated. Thus my research shifts the focus from the position of diasporic films in the periphery of the dominant cinema to the active engagement with and influence on the national and transnational cinema of the homeland.

Korean diasporic films have not been the subject of scholarly inquiry in either diaspora film studies or Korean film studies until recent years. The scholarship on Korean cinema has largely been limited to the notion of "national cinema," focusing on making a coherent linear

[26] Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2001), 22.

historical narrative of Korean film, by canonizing nationalist films and situating certain directors as auteurs of Korean cinema.[27] Recently, however, the nationalist tendency that prevailed in Korean cinema scholarship has been challenged by a number of new perspectives. One of the most important impetuses for this new thinking was provided by the scholarship on colonial films. Facilitated by the rediscovery of war-effort propaganda films produced for the Japanese imperial causes, scholars of colonial Korean cinema have reoriented studies on Korean cinema away from the existing nationalist narrative of Korean film history and embrace newly posited questions on the origins of national cinema itself.[28] Another new perspective on Korean cinema has emerged from the sudden transnational influence of Korean cinema, which is well noted in the discussion of *hallyu*, or Korean Wave. A number of recent studies focus on the international popularity of the South Korean cultural products including Korean cinema, transcending the limited national and geographical territory of South Korea and reassessing the notion of national cinema. However, the studies on internationally popular Korean texts often take quasi-imperialist stance to emphasize the global impact of Korean cinema by assuming a unilateral cultural influence from Korea to other parts of the world.[29] After a few of decades of the *hallyu* phenomenon, critical perspectives have begun to challenge this prevalent tendency.[30]

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[27] For example, Hyo-in Yi, *Han'guk yŏnghwa yŏksa kangŭi* [Lecture on Korean Film History] (Seoul: Iron kwa Silch'ŏn, 1992); Yŏung-il Yi, *Han'guk yŏnghwa chŏnsa* [A Whole History of Korean Cinema] (Seoul: Sodo, 2004); Kyung Hyun Kim and David E. James, *Im Kwon-taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002).

[28] Regarding the studies on colonial Korean cinema see Yŏ-sil Kim, *T'usa hanŭn cheguk t'uyŏng hanŭn singminji* [Projecting Empire, Reflecting Colony] (Seoul: Samin. 2006); Yŏng-jae Yi, *Cheguk Ilbon ŭi Chosŏn yŏnghwa* [Chosŏn Cinema in Imperial Japan] (Seoul: Hyŏnsil Munhwa. 2008); Hwa-jin Yi, *Sori ŭi chŏngch'i* [Politics of Sound] (Seoul: Hyŏnsil Munhwa, 2016); Dong Hoon Kim, *Eclipsed Cinema: The Film Culture of Colonial Korea* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Hyun Hee Park, "Tears in the Imperial Screen: Wartime Colonial Korean Cinema, 1936-1945" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2017); Irhe Sohn, "Enterprises of the Feeble: The Makings of Cinema in Colonial Korea" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2018).

[29] For example, Do Kyun Kim and Min-Sun Kim, *Hallyu: Influence of Korean Popular Culture in Asia and Beyond* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2011); Chae-bok Pak, *Hallyu, gŭlloboŏl sidae ŭi*

Korean diaspora films are fundamentally related to these recent interventions decentralizing Korean cinema studies from territorial understandings of national cinema. First of all, as the history of the Korean diaspora in East Asia is imbricated with the nation's history, the positioning of diaspora films in and out of the category of Korean national cinema attests to inconsistent and conflicting histories of the making of national cinema from its origins and questions the mode of address in Korean national cinema. As Paul Willemen noted, "the issue of national cinema is…primarily a question of address, rather than a matter of the filmmakers' citizenship or even of the production finance's country of origin."[31] According to Willemen, "cinema itself emerges as an object in the same way that the nation becomes manifest: in the process of addressing the specific dynamics underpinning and regulating power relations between and within institutional networks."[32] He argues that the networks of institutions organized by the state, which determine filmmaking, necessarily imprint themselves into the film text and these film texts cannot but register the force field of tensions that institutions seek to achieve. Willemen's argument leads us to reconsider how a given text registers the tensions at play in the complex force field as "the conjucture" and which is presided over by the hierarchically organized combination of institutions that constitute the state. The positioning of Korean diaspora in and outside of the national mode of address in South Korean cinema is unequivocally entangled with the tensions and forces which constitute the national cinema.

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*munhwa kyŏngjaengnyŏk* [Hallyu, Cultural Competitiveness in Global Era] (Seoul: Samsŏng Kyŏngje Yŏn'guso, 2007).

[30] For example, Kyung Hyun Kim explores the "virtual" aspect of Korean cinema and re-conceptualizes the notion of *hallyu*. He examines the reasons of the rapid expansion of Korean films in the domestic and international market, by switching the focus from external aspects of Korean film boom to textual readings of the films. Kim elucidates the complicated relationship between Korean cinema and/as the national (cinema) around *hallyu* period. Kyung Hyun Kim, *Virtual Hallyu: Korean Cinema of the Global Era* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2011).

[31] Paul Willemen, "The National Revisited," in *Theorising National Cinema*, ed. Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 2008), 36.

[32] Ibid., 41-42

Furthermore, this dissertation also focuses on the mode of address in Korean diaspora films within the South Korean film industry. By inscribing the makers' diasporic experience and claims, I argue, those films question, challenge, and engage with the current configuration of national cinema and proffer their own address in dialogue with the address of the Korean cinema. Thus, this research aims to elucidate the "interplay between nationalism and exile" as "informing and constructing each other."[33]

Another intervention of Korean diaspora films is inscribing the transnational history of diaspora in the transnationality of South Korean films in the post-Cold War era. Hae-Joang Cho notes that the *hallyu* fever began with the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 90s, which is commonly called the "IMF crisis" in South Korea, as the efforts of entrepreneurs who were seeking an escape from the financial crisis created the momentum for the Korean popular culture industry to reach transnational consumers. As she rightly points out, the Korean Wave and its transnationalism play a significant role in accelerating the transformation of global residents into neoliberal subjects in an era where all types of communities are being disintegrated and atomized.[34] Korean diaspora films, I argue, bring a critical transnationalism into Korean cinema, which reconnects the severed history of the Korean diaspora with the homeland culture, negotiates with the constitution of the national cinema, and attests to "the tensions and dialogic relationship between the national and transnational."[35]

[33] Edward Said, "Reflections on exile," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. R. Ferguson et al. (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1994), 359.
[34] Hae-Joang Cho, "Reading the 'Korean Wave' as a Sign of Global Shift," *Korea Journal* 45, no. 4 (2005):147-182.
[35] Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, "Concepts of transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies," *Transnational Cinemas* 1, no. 1, (2010) 18.

**5. Chapter Outline**

Entitled "Histories of Korean Diaspora in East Asia," the first chapter explicates the history of Korean diaspora in East Asia and their contested membership between the host country and the homeland as well as between the two nation-states that comprise their homeland. The second chapter, "Cinematic Representation of Korean Diaspora in South Korean Film" illustrates the history of cinematic representations of Korean diaspora in South Korean films from the Cold War period to the recent post-Cold War era. The questions at the center of these two chapters are how the Korean diaspora has historically been situated both within and outside the boundaries of the nation-state as well as the representational and industrial boundaries established by Korean cinema. In particular, the second chapter examines the radical transformations in the South Korean film industry from the 1980s to the 1990s, toward the globalization and the post-Cold War period and the notable thematic appearance of diaspora in Korea cinema. As exemplary texts inscribing the Korean diaspora's return to the cinematic representation in South Korea, it analyzes the South Korean films featuring diasporic Koreans in East Asia, *Ŭri hakkyo* (Our School, 2005), Kim Myŏng-jun's independent documentary film on Zainichi students, and *Hwanghae* (The Yellow Sea, 2010), Na Hong-jin's high-budget thriller film featuring the return migration of Korean Chinese characters. Through detailed analyses of each film's text and context, this chapter attends to the ways in which the production and reception of the films are interconnected with how the Korean film industry has reorganized itself to integrate independent film, historical discourses on the nation, and the shifting economic and social conditions of Korea.

The second chapter, titled "The Divided Nation and Zainichi Korean Filmmakers Bittersweet Return," deals with those works by ethnic Korean filmmakers active in Japan that

either feature the issue of homecoming or were produced in South Korea. My analysis centers upon two second-generation Zainichi—one male and one female—and relatively established directors in Japan, Sai Yōichi (Ch'oe Yang-il in Korean) and Yang Yonghi. I focus on *Blood and Bones* (2004) and *Soo* (2007) by the former and the documentaries *Dear Pyongyang* (2005) and *Sona, the Other Myself* (2009) as well as *Our Homeland* (2012), a feature film, by the latter. My main question in this chapter revolves around the directors' unstable and shifting positions between the host country (Japan), the home country (divided Korea), and the mode of address toward audiences in both countries. Sai's and Yang's cinematic return discloses the paradoxical condition of Korean residents in Japan, where Cold War politics remain incessantly at work in the post–Cold War era. In this situation, as their films show, the only people who can imagine themselves as belonging to a unified Korea are exiles. In other words, being an exile ironically becomes the very condition for the possibility of imagining a unified Korea—a bona fide end to the Cold War and yet-to-be-achieved transnational mobility across the armistice line. Their return, however, constitutes another iteration of their diasporic identity, which remains haunted by the colonial past and bound to Cold War confrontations, poignantly exposing the limitations of transnational South Korean cinema.

The third and final body chapter deals with Zhang Lu, a third-generation Korean-Chinese director, who has made his films in and out of South Korea. Entitled "Crossing the Border to the Audience: Zhang Lu's Cinematic Return to South Korea," the chapter discusses his films produced in South Korea and their South Korean reception. In a wide range of works, Zhang Lu has self-consciously captured in films what he aptly terms "the scenery of strangers," transcending nationally defined issues and depicting those lives pushed to the peripheries and boundaries between nation states. His earlier films featured ethnic Koreans across China, Korea,

and Mongolia in *Tang Poetry* (2004), *Ear of Grain* (2005), *Desert Dream* (2007), *Chongqing* (2007), *Iri* (2008), and *Dooman River* (2009). After the temporary relocation to South Korea in 2012, however, he has produced films that are exclusively set in South Korea and do not explicitly exhibit the issue of diaspora, such as *Scenery* (2013), *Gyeongju* (2014), *Love and…*(2015), and *A Quite Dream* (2016). By examining Zhang Lu's cinematic rendition of his history of displacement and envisioning of an intersubjective cinematic experience, the chapter elucidates the way in which his post-2012 films internalize the notion of the border, from the physical border between the nation-states to the metaphorical boundaries between human beings and search for common ground to share the maker's diasporic experience with the domestic audience. I argue that these films attest to an emergent transnational vision, revisiting collective memories of twentieth-century East Asia and triggering conversation with Korean audiences.

# CHAPTER ONE

# HISTORIES OF KOREAN DIASPORA IN EAST ASIA

## 1. Introduction

While over half of Korean diasporic populations are living in two neighboring countries in East Asia, the histories and lives of those ethnic Koreans were predominantly invisible in the South Korean cultural sphere during the height of the Cold War conflicts. The first generation of Korean diaspora in China and Japan were mostly displaced under the Japanese colonization of Chosŏn, the former dynasty of Korea, and still live under the name of their vanished homeland in their host countries, as *Chosŏnjok* (*Chaoxianzu* in Chinese) in China and as *Chaeil Chosŏnin* (*Zainichi Josenjin* in Japanese) in Japan. After liberation from Japanese colonial rule, about half of the Korean population in those countries returned to the Korean peninsula but a significant diasporic population remained in the host lands due to various reasons. Experiencing the division of the homeland, their homecoming has been interrupted, politicized, and exploited for various political agendas. Notable in the history of Korean diaspora in China and Japan is that the politics of the two Koreas and their relations with the host countries have largerly determined diasporic Koreans' collective and individual lives. Although most current Korean diasporic populations in China and Japan are second or subsequent generations, their lives are still highly susceptible to the vicissitudes of the Korean peninsula.

The relationship with the homeland of the Korean diaspora in China and Japan has been constantly changed throughout the history of colonization, national division, and return migration in the era of globalization. In *Contested Embrace*, Jaeeun Kim explores how the Koreans in this region, or in her own term: "transborder populations," were claimed to be

members of the nation-states in the homeland and the host nations and how they have shaped the making, unmaking, and remaking of transborder ties as they have sought long-distance membership on their own terms. She contends that "[d]espite a widespread, deeply entrenched and quasi-primordial belief in Korean ethnic nationhood, the embrace of these transborder co-ethnic populations by the colonial and the two postcolonial states, North and South Korea, has been selective, shifting, and recurrently contested."[1]

The original homeland of the first generation had already been subjugated to Japanese colonial power—indeed, that subjugation was what led to the original displacement of Koreans—and then the liberated homeland was divided into two disparate nations. In spite of these major alterations of their homeland, Korean diasporic populations, especially in the case of Zainichi, who do not have Japanese citizenship, have been obliged to choose one specific nation-state as their homeland to prove their identity. Korean Chinese in the 1950s could maintain dual connection with their host nation the PRC and their ancestral fatherland, the DPRK, however by the mid-1960s their dual loyalty was interpreted as an indication of betrayal and retroaction. After several decades, in the mid-1990s, many of them began to migrate to South Korea, where their existence had been almost totally forgotten since that nation's inception, as foreign migrant workers. At this long overdue return, what the returnees encountered is the fact that the homeland is another host country where their foreignness is more foregrounded than their Korean ethnicity. Through the various predicaments the Korean diaspora in East Asia faced in their homeland, the collective and individual identities of the Korean diaspora have been developed in a direction which cannot belong exclusively to one state. Their fluctuating and fluid identity was often criticized by homeland(s) and host countries alike, and aroused suspicion

[1] Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace: Transborder Membership Politics in Twentieth-century Korea* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016), 9.

around their identity (and perhaps loyalties). Rather than presuming and reifying the nation-state, their diasporic identity unveils the contingency of nation-state and questions the legitimacy of citizenship.

## 2. Zainichi Identity between the Divided Homeland and the Host Nation

One of the biggest reasons complicating Zainichi identity is the issue of Zainichi Koreans' citizenship and nationality. From liberation until Japan and South Korea's Normalization Treaty for diplomatic relations in 1965, Zainichi Koreans had lived without citizenship and nationality and their lives were nothing but in constant limbo. Even before the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952, which stipulated the uniform loss of Japanese nationality for Koreans, Zainichi Koreans were forced to carry alien registration certificates due to an Ordinance for Registration of Aliens. A persistent problem regarding the alien registration system was which country one should choose for their official nationality. When the Ordinance was first issued in 1947, neither the DPRK nor the ROK was yet established, "Japanese officials inscribed the word '*Chōsen*' (*Chosŏn* in Korean) in the space for 'nationality' on the cards of Korean residents."[2] But when the new certificates were issued in 1950, the South Korean government insisted that the correct term should be "Republic of Korea" (in Japanese, *Taikan Minkoku*). However, many Koreans in Japan were disinclined to identify as citizens of the ROK, an appellation which implied to them as belonging to only half of their divided homeland. Thus, even though they were given a choice between *Chōsen* or *Taikan Minkoku* as their nationality during the second registration, "out of the 535,236 Koreans who registered in the early part of 1950, 92% used *Chōsen*."[3] Morris-Suzuki points out that at least until the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan

[2] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Borderline Japan: Foreigners and Frontier Controls in the Postwar Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 93.
[3] Ibid., 93-94.

and South Korea in 1965, Zainichi Koreans found themselves in a strange vacuum: "neither permanent residents nor temporary visitors; subject to the Migration Control Law, but only as and when the state saw fit. For them, the legacy of colonialism, occupation and the post-occupation settlement was a new era of life in the wild zone."[4]

After the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1965, Zainichi Koreans could attain South Korean nationality, which was the only official national citizenship available to them, unless they were naturalized as a Japanese citizen. However, as Sonia Ryang points out, "[With this treaty] the Cold War division translated into a real difference between those Koreans in Japan supporting North Korea and those supporting the South, with the latter having access to residential stability, diplomatic protection, and overseas travel documents, and the former having no such things."[5] For the Zainichi Koreans who either identified their homeland as the DPRK or opposed the fixation of the divided homeland had no choice but to remain "*Chosŏn*" nationals, in the name of non-existing homeland, outside any social protection. By exploring the complicated and intermittent mobility of Zainichi Koreans between their host countries and two postwar nation-states, this section explicates the history of the convoluted process of the making and unmaking of their homeland in North and South Korea and the concomitant transformation of Zainichi identities.

### 2.1. Repatriation to the Liberated Homeland and Illegal Reentry to Japan

On August 15, 1945, the Japanese government declared the surrender of Japan, and Korea was suddenly liberated. While Koreans crossed the internal boundaries of the empire

[4] Ibid., 115.
[5] Sonia Ryang, "Introduction: Between the nations," in *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, ed. Sonia Ryang and John Lie (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2009), 4-11.

during the colonial era, after the liberation, borderlines newly demarcated by the occupying power lay ahead of them. Japan was administered by the SCAP (The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers)/GHQ (General Headquarters), and South Korea was controlled by the USAMGIK (The United States Army Military Government in Korea). The Allied occupation forces in Japan and South Korea basically regarded colonial migrants as "displaced persons" and initiated massive repatriation programs to "re-place" them—to put them back where they belonged.[6] From August 1945 to the end of that year, about 1.3 million out of 2 million Koreans in Japan returned to Korea, and from February to December 1946, a further 82,900 embarked on boats to the Korean Peninsula.[7] However, the unilateral repatriation project could not terminate the exilic status of Koreans in Japan but engendered consecutive illegal migrations.

Although the occupation forces in Japan strictly prohibited Koreans from reentering Japan after having been repatriated, there were several conditions under which many Koreans could not help but violate this regulation. One of them was the strict restriction of the resources Koreans could bring to Korea. Upon repatriation, they had to leave any properties exceeding 1000 yen in Japan and thus, many Koreans decided to postpone their departure due to this restriction or ventured to return to Japan after the initial repatriation. Besides, for those who were forced to migrate to Japan many years ago, the compulsory repatriation generated another experience of dislocation. Moreover, the extreme poverty in Korea the repatriated Koreans encountered drove them to attempt to return to Japan. The last, but not least, reason for Koreans' remigration was the turbulent domestic political situation between the socialist groups and the anti-communist groups, foreshadowing the Korean War in 1950. Accordingly, a considerable number of Koreans who had been repatriated smuggled themselves back into Japan. According

[6] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Borderline Japan*, 122.
[7] Ibid., 53.

to GHQ records, a total 48,076 illegal migrants to Japan were arrested between April 1946 and the end of 1951, and 45,960 were from Korea.[8]

The liberated Korean peninsula was embattled in fierce confrontations over the trusteeship of the USSR in the North and the USA in the South and as a result, a number of armed conflicts began to occur. One of the most tragic events was the April 3rd Uprising on Cheju Island, a series of incidents in which almost 30,000 islanders were killed as the result of clashes between armed civilian groups and government forces over a period of seven years. Beginning March 1, 1947, when the National Police opened fire on protesters, the conflict exacerbated on April 3, 1948, when members of the Cheju branch of the South Korean Workers Party began an uprising to protest against the US Military Government. Clashes continued until September 21, 1954, when closed areas of Halla Mountain were reopened to the public.[9] Bruce Cumings notes that "before 1950, no place suffered the political conflicts of liberated Korea like Cheju…Cheju is a magnifying glass, a microscope on the politics of postwar Korea, for in no place else were the issues so clear and the international influences so tangential as in the peasant war on this windswept, haunted, magnificent island."[10]

In the face of these appalling massacres, many Cheju Islanders smuggled themselves across the border to Japan. Yet, border control in Japan became more rigorous and the reentry of Koreans into Japan was strictly prohibited with the ostensible reason of an epidemic of cholera in Korea in the summer of 1946, but the border restrictions remained in place long after the cholera outbreak had ended. Those who were caught by the border guards were arrested and repatriated. However, the newly established government of Republic of Korea instituted staunchly

[8] Ibid., 69.
[9] Cheju 4.3 sakŏn chinsang kyumyŏng mit hŭisaengja myŏngye hoebok wiwŏnhoe, *Cheju 4.3 sakŏn chinsang chosa pogosŏ* [Final report of investigation of Cheju April 3 incident] (Seoul: Cheju 4.3 sakŏn chinsang kyumyŏng mit hŭisaengja myŏngye hoebok wiwŏnhoe, 2003), 536.
[10] Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Volume II* (Cornell University Press, 2004), 251.

anticommunist policies that essentially prohibited repatriation for most Japan-based Koreans on the suspicion they had joined left-wing organizations. Those who returned to the ROK faced interrogation, imprisonment, and possible execution. Douglas MacArthur, disagreeing with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru's 1949 suggestion that all Koreans unable to "contribute to [Japan's] reconstruction" be forcefully repatriated, remarked that since they were "mostly North Koreans" they "would [all] have their heads cut off" by the ROK government."[11] The characterization "mostly North Korean" was untrue in the literal sense, given that most Japan-based Koreans came from southern part of Korean peninsula. Yet, as Pak Yŏl, the president of the ROK-affiliated Korean Resident Union in Japan (*Zai-Nihon Chōsen Kyoryū Mindan* or *Mindan* hearafter) noted, "communists" were "anyone who [did] not support the present [South] Korean government,"[12] and as such any Zainichi Korean, even those who originated from the southern part of the peninsula, could be labelled as a pro-North Korea communist, or simply a North Korean.

In 1950, the Ōmura Migrant Detention Center near Nagasaki was built to detain Koreans awaiting deportation to South Korea under the terms of Japan's Migration Control Law and Alien Registration Law.[13] The detainees included refugees who had fled South Korea for political reasons and communist sympathizers who feared imprisonment or even execution if they were returned to South Korea under the Syngman Rhee regime. Between the Japanese government's firm will to deport any "undesirable" Koreans and the ROK government's determination not to accept any dangerous Koreans from Japan, detainees in the Ōmura Center had to wait endlessly for what might turn out to be a fatal return to the homeland. Under these

[11] Richard B. Finn, *Winner in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992), 238.
[12] Mark E. Caprio and Yu Jia, "Occupations of Korea and Japan," in *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, ed. Sonia Ryang and John Lie (University of California Press, 2009), 31.
[13] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Borderline Japan*, 20.

circumstances, Zainichi Koreans interned in the Ōmura Center began to plead to be sent to North Korea instead and their "homecoming" was actualized in an unexpected way, by various parties having disparate desires in mind.

### 2.2. Divided Homeland and Politicized Homecomings

Within two months after the end of WWII, the League of Koreans (*Zai-Nippon Chōsenjin Renmei* 1945-1949) was established to represent the remaining Koreans' rights and to call for the bona fide eradication of imperialism. However, reflecting the polarized political factions concerning the Soviet and US occupations in Korea, the Korean communities in Japan was divided into socialist groups and anti-communist ones. The representative organization of the latter was *Mindan*, the Korean Residents Union in Japan, later affiliated with the ROK government since its establishment in 1948. Meanwhile, the socialist faction established the United Democratic Front of Koreans (*Zainichi Chōsenjin Toitsu Minshu Sensen*,or *Misen*, 1951-1955) in the wake of the Korean War and after the dissolution of *Minsen*, the North Korea-affiliated General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (*Zai-Nihon Chōsenjin Sōrengokai* or *Sōren* in Japanese, *Ch'ongnyŏn* in Korean, *Ch'ongnyŏn* hereafter) was formed as an organization for overseas nationals of the DPRK and remains undiminished in its influence on Zainichi society.

Sonia Ryang notes that *Ch'ongnyŏn* members, particularly first-generation members, clung to a central legitimizing discourse rationalized through an identity as "overseas nationals" with a committed link to the North Korean homeland.[14] This nationalistic bond was supported and developed through ethnic education or the "national education work" of *Ch'ongnyŏn*, which

[14] Sonia Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology, and Identity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 93-4.

was believed to be central to maintaining the national identity of North Koreans in Japan. In a situation of rising discrimination by Japanese society and ostracizing policies of the South Korean government, under the ardent movement of *Ch'ongnyŏn*, the DPRK came to be the only country claiming Zainichi people its nationals. Apichai Shipper notes that *Ch'ongnyŏn* has preoccupied itself with political activities in its "home" country and has created and intensified long-distance nationalism among its members.[15]

Based on the longing for homeland *Ch'ongnyŏn* promoted, Zainichi Koreans' "return" to North Korea began in 1959 and continued, with interruptions, until 1984. The peak of the "return" was between December 1959 and the end of 1961 when 74,779 people were repatriated to North Korea. Over 97 percent of the first-generation Koreans in Japan had originated from the south of the Korean peninsula, and most therefore had no friends or family in the North.[16] Yet, ironically, their lack of knowledge about North Korea was helpful in successfully envisioning an "imagined" homeland they had not yet seen. *Ch'ongnyŏn* could proclaim in a lesson to its first graders that North Korea is a "paradise on earth," precisely because few people had seen it. [17]

Although *Ch'ongnyŏn* strongly promoted a mass return movement, several other invisible schemes and participants came into play to actualize this project. Morris-Suzuki unveils that this mass migration was presented to the world as a humanitarian venture, conducted under the supervision of non-governmental organization, the International Red Cross, but the scheme was actually the result of political intrigues involving the government of Japan, North Korea, the Soviet Union, and the United States. In the late 50s, North Korea was short of the labor power in the process of the postwar reconstruction, especially as it was around the time "the People's

[15] Apichai W. Shipper, "Nationalisms of and against *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan," *Asian Politics & Policy*, 2 (2010): 55–75.
[16] Sonia Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan*, 3.
[17] Ibid., 127.

Republic of China was withdrawing some 300,000 Chinese 'volunteers' who had been sent to North Korea during the Korean War, and had stayed on to help with postwar reconstruction."[18]

On top of that, Morris-Suzuki argues, the Japanese government was far more actively involved in the repatriation plan than has been previously realized, and that this involvement was deliberately concealed both from the Japanese public and from the Zainichi Korean returnees themselves. She notes that more than two years before the start of *Chongryun*'s 1958 return movement, the Japanese government had begun to cooperate in energetically lobbying the ICRC to help undertake a mass repatriation of Zainichi Koreans to North Korea and at this untimely lobbying, the Japanese government was already suggesting a potential number of at least 60,000 Zainichi Koreans for this project. The motives behind the enthusiasm of the Japanese government were quite clear, that is, to get rid of Zainichi Koreans, who were a potential danger to Japan. It was evidently eager to find a way to reduce Livelihood Protection payments to Koreans. In a conversation with a visiting ICRC official in May 1956, Inoue clarified that the Japanese government wanted to "rid itself of several tens of thousands of Koreans who are indigent and vaguely communist, thus at a stroke resolving security problems and budgetary problems (because of the sums of money currently being dispensed to impoverished Koreans)."[19] During these discussions about how to "get rid of Zainichi from Japan," the Ministry of Health and Welfare was conducting a campaign to slash the very limited welfare benefits available to Koreans in Japan. Some 60,000 Zainichi Koreans had their welfare payments reduced or cancelled.

[18] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "A Dream Betrayed: Cold War Politics and the Repatriation of Koreans from Japan to North Korea," *Asian Studies Review* 29 (2005), 371.
[19] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Freedom and Homecoming: Narratives of Migration in the Repatriation of Zainichi Koreans to North Korea," in *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, ed. Sonia Ryang and John Lie (University of California Press, 2009), 49.

Meanwhile, the North Korean regime had been effectively utilizing repatriated Zainichi as an instrument to maximize loyalty from family members who remained in Japan as members of *Ch'ongnyŏn*. The Zainichi returnees regularly received money and goods as aid packages from their relatives in Japan, as portrayed in Yang Yonghi's documentary films which will be discussed in the following chapter. The presence of their family members in the DPRK strengthened Zainichi Koreans' emotional attachment to North Korea and long-distance nationalism, encouraging them to identify North Korea as their exclusive homeland. Also, it became a main reason for many Zainichi Koreans to keep their Chosŏn status, not applying for ROK nationality after 1965, in order to maintain their relationship with their families in North Korea and to visit them after permission for overseas travel of Chosŏn-status Zainichi Koreans was granted in the early 1980s.

When *Ch'ongnyŏn* and the DPRK attracted Zainichi Koreans to "return" to the DPRK, the ROK government, on the one hand, mobilized massive protests both in Japan and South Korea against their return to North Korea. On the other hand, meanwhile, it hurried to formulate its legitimacy as "the sole legal government on the Korean peninsula" with diplomatic relations with Japanese government. The Park Chung Hee government envisioned two main objectives by this normalization: to restrain the influence of the DPRK on the Zainichi Korean community and to obtain economic support from Japan, including Japanese war damage reparations. With the normalization in 1965, the ROK government succeeded to secure ample funds to proceed with a nationwide modernization project as well as to exercise leverage with the Zainichi community by granting ROK citizenship and subsequent eligibility for permanent residency in Japan.

The relations between the Zainichi community and the ROK, however, were exacerbated by the kidnapping of Kim Dae Jung in 1973[20] and the Park Chung Hee assassination attempt in 1974.[21] Under these circumstances, the ROK government drastically changed its stance toward the Zainichi community in the mid-1970s from ignoring the population to actively enticing it. On 1975, through *Mindan*, the ROK government launched an ingenious campaign of facilitating Zainichi Koreans' visits to South Korea, under the auspices of a Motherland Visiting Program for Overseas Koreans (*Haeoe tongp'o mokuk pangmun*), specifically targeting *Ch'ongnyŏn* members and Zainichi Koreans with Chosŏn status. The tour took two weeks, beginning in the modernized capital of Seoul, ran along the brand-new highway down to Pusan, then wound its way through the industrial complexes of Ulsan and Pohang, which was meticulously designed to present an image of "the economically vibrant South Korea, a politically proud and ego-boosting motherland."[22] In the first year of the program, 1,310 Zainichi Koreans joined and the number grew six-fold the next year as 7,741 went to South Korea through this program. The visiting program was associated with often forcible persuasion to change the visitors' nationality to ROK and indeed, almost 60 percent of the visitors changed their nationality accordingly.[23]

To sum up, during the height of the Cold War tensions, two newly established nation-states launched projects of Zainichi homecoming for their own ideological purposes: to claim that each was the sole legitimate homeland of the diasporic Korean population in Japan. With the

[20] On August 8, 1973, the Korean CIA kidnapped South Korean opposition leader Kim Dae Jung from his Tokyo hotel room. At that time, Kim Dae Jung was visiting with a Zainichi youth group to discuss the overseas Korean movement towards democratization and reunification. Kim survived by US interference at the last moment. Later, this case was made into a film in Japan, *KT* (2002) by Zainichi film producer Yi Pong-u.

[21] On August 15, 1974, a Zainichi Korean Mun Se-gwang attempted to assassinate Park Chung-hee during his address on Korean Liberation Day, but the First Lady at that time Yuk Yŏung-su was killed instead.

[22] Dewayne Creamer, "The rise and fall of Chōsen Soren: Its effect on Japan's relations on the Korean Peninsula" (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2003), 34.

[23] Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, "Moguk sŏngmyo pangmundan," accessed Mach 30, 2019, http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Index?contents_id=E0073573

mass repatriation project, the DPRK could fill deficient skilled labor power as well as increase and strengthen its influence in the Zainichi community through *Ch'ongnyŏn*. On the other hand, South Korea gained considerable success in converting Zainichi Koreans' nationality from Chosŏn to ROK through the motherland visit program and in undermining *Ch'ongnyŏn* influence in the Zainichi community by presenting the substantial benefits they could receive with ROK nationality. Nevertheless, by participating in those homecoming projects, many Zainichi Koreans experienced further exacerbated dislocation. Those who "returned" to North Korea could not come back to their home in Japan in most cases and their families had to abide by *Ch'ongnyŏn* and DPRK policies for the sake of their family members' safety, as well evinced in Yang Yonghi's films. As Sonia Ryang notes, "[R]epatrication to the North turned out to be an exile after exile, a more authentic and, hence, utterly hopeless exile, the truest from of banishment from humanity at large."[24] At the same time, many Zainichi who were forced to change their nationality during the motherland visit in South Korea were later excommunicated from *Ch'ongnyŏn* community and even from their own family.[25] Two Koreas' one-time or sporadic homecoming projects ignored the lethal position Zainichi Koreans were situated in—post colonial prejudices and the Cold War antagonism—and only intensified their precariousness either in their host country or in two homelands.

As the diasporic history of Zainichi Koreans proceeds to later generations and the fervor of homecomings has waned, there have been growing debates about adjusting the relationship of the Zainichi Koreans with the homeland. In the 1980s, intense arguments developed over two

[24] Sonia Ryang, *Writing Selves in Diaspora: Ethnography of Autobiographics of Korean Women in Japan and the United States* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 71.
[25] A South Korean documentary film, *Grandmother's Flower* (*Halmae kkot*, dir. Mun Jŏng-hyŏn, 2007), portrays the history of the director's uncle, who was once an executive member of Ch'ongnyŏn but abandoned by the family and the community after his motherland visit to South Korea and change of nationality.

rhetorics about Zainichi identity: "Zainichi as method" as opposed to "Zainichi as fact." A renowned Zainichi scholar Kang Sang-jung argued that Zainichi's status is fundamentally different from other minorities in Japanese society as they have an existing Korean homeland and the social discrimination against Zainichi is rooted in their Korean ethnicity. Thus, Kang argues that Zainichi should embrace their vulnerable position amidst the Zainichi community, Japan, and the divided Korea and strive be connected to the homeland, even in an indirect way.[26] In response to Kang's argument about "Zainichi as method," Yang T'ae-ho asserts Zainichi should be understood "as fact." He contends that there is no doubt that Zainichi will reside in Japan as a minority group and their identity should be considered not by an ethnic term but as *minshū*, "the people," or the oppressed people who should be connected to other persecuted minorities. The dichotomy between assimilation and identification with the homeland, as he notes, needs to be overcome, otherwise Zainichi will fail to critically examine their own ethno-nationalism and face the structure of discrimination in the homeland.[27]

Despite the rapid changes in Zainichi identity towards "a third way," however, as Zainichi scholar Sŏ Kyŏng-sik argues, the collective and individual lives of Zainichi Koreans are still particularly susceptible to the homeland politics and Korea-Japan relations to this day. Rather than a classical "imagined community" that shares a collective memory of the homeland, the politics of the homeland tangibly affect the everyday lives of Zainichi Koreans—from attacks on Korean students following North Korea's launches of ballistic missiles since the late 90s to the more recent dissemination of public hate speech toward Zainichi Koreans. Given the

[26] Sang-jung Kang, "'Zainichi' no genzai to mirai no aida [Between the present and the future of Zainichi]," in *Zainichi kankoku chōsenjin: sono nihonshakai ni okeru sonzaikachi* [Koreans in Japan: Their existential value in Japanese society] (Osaka: Kaifusha, 1991), 249-61.
[27] T'ae-ho Yang, "Jijitsu to shite no 'Zainichi': Kang Sang-jung shi e no gimon ['Zainichi' as a fact: Question for Mr. Kang Sang-jung]," in *Zainichi kankoku chōsenjin: sono nihonshakai ni okeru sonzaikachi* [Koreans in Japan: Their existential value in Japanese society] (Osaka: Kaifusha, 1991), 263-73.

currently divided Korean peninsula, he notes, Koreans seeking a homeland in a unified Korea are essentially stateless. That means that the only people who can imagine themselves as belonging to unified Korea are exiles, in other words, ironically, being an exile becomes the condition of possibility of being able to imagine belonging to unified Korea.

### 3. History of Korean Chinese and Their Homecomings

In contrast to "progressive exclusion" of Zainichi Koreans from Japanese society, the Korean diaspora in China was promptly integrated into the People's Republic of China, via the Chinese Communist Party's policies for "progressive inclusion."[28] The Korean migrants to China during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries generally fled hunger and Japanese oppression; some were also forcibly moved to northeastern China by the Japanese who ruled Korea as a colony and Northeast China through a puppet regime from 1931–1945.[29] According to colonial government statistics, 2,160,000 Koreans resided in Manchuria in June 1945, immediate prior to Japan's surrender in August same year.[30] Upon the liberation of their homeland, as many as 1,000,000 Koreans have returned to Korea, although the statistics vary and the number of the repatriated Koreans to North Korea is not clear.[31] The rest remained in China and were reconstituted as Korean Chinese, undergoing land reform and subject to the minority policy launched by the Chinese Communist Party.[32] In 1952, the Yanbian Korean Autonomous

[28] Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace*, 131.
[29] Hyejin Kim, *International Ethnic Networks and Intra-Ethnic Conflict: Koreans in China* (New Yok: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-17.
[30] Kyu-hwan Hyŏn, *Han'guk yuiminsa* [History of Korean Diaspora], vol. 1 (Seoul: Ŏmungak, 1967), 2.
[31] Sŏkhŭng Chang, "Haebang hu kwihwan munje yŏn'gu ŭi sŏngkwa wa kwaje," [The results and issues in the research of the repatriation problem during the liberation period] *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndaesa yŏn'gu* 25 (2003): 11.
[32] Si-joong Kim, "The Economic Status and Role of Ethnic Koreans in China," in *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy*, ed. Inbom Choi and C. Fred Bergsten (Washington, DC**:** Institute for International Economics, 2003), 107-108.

Prefecture was formed, which is marked as a defining moment of the Korean Chinese as a *minzu*, or ethnicity, within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China. With the lax PRC-DPRK border control in the 50s, Korean Chinese developed a dual sense of belonging to two socialist fatherlands, the PRC and the DPRK.

However, with the major societal changes in the PRC from the late 50s, the dual loyalty of Korean Chinese prompted accusations of national betrayal. Their close ties to North Korea were suspended and South Korea did not recognize their existence during the Cold War period. After China's economic reforms since 1978, regional inequalities existing in China manifested themselves in dramatic economic differences between coastal, central, and border regions; among the Korean ethnic minorities living in the border regions were subject to the most severe economic hardships. Since the opening of official diplomatic relations between the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China in 1992, many Korean Chinese moved to South Korea for economic betterment. The rapid stampede of people and the decrease in population resulted in the hollowing out of the autonomous region of ethnic Koreans in China. This section examines the history of Korean Chinese from the colonial era emigration until recent return migration to South Korea and how their sense of belonging to the homeland has been developed, modified, and challenged through their disparate experiences of homecomings and shaped their positioning between two homelands and the host nation.

### 3.1. Colonial Migration and Integration into the Empire

The majority of Korean-Chinese communities are located in northeastern China, Yanbian prefecture of Jilin Province, near the North Korean border, which overlaps with the region called Manchuria. The diasporic location of Manchuria has assumed significance in Korean

imagination of nation, or *minjok*, in the wake of its subjugation to Japan. Andre Schmid notes that the "invention" of the Korean nation did not take place in a cultural and intellectual vacuum but drew on influences from the outside world and through emphasis on the importance of *minjok*. Securing the idea of *minjok* as the sovereign basis of the state, nationalists reasserted Korean independence at the moment of the advent of the colonial era. In envisioning of *minjok*, Manchuria's territorial importance to the nation's history was emphasized by Korean historians. For example, Sin Ch'ae-ho, a Korean historian, rejected the peninsula-bound territoriality of conventional history writing, and instead forged a particular nationalist history that is composed of the glory of the ancient dynasties without a constraining notion of territorial sovereignty.[33]

Notwithstanding the Korean nationalists' ardent reclaiming of Manchuria, the status of Koreans in the region remained ambiguous and often contested. Japan asserted that all the Korean migrants were Japanese nationals and expanded its influence in Manchuria under the pretext of protecting its own nationals. By comparing the Korean's migration to Japan with that to Manchuria, Jaeeun Kim maintains that "a plethora of legal, organizational, and bureaucratic arrangements rendered the Korea-Japan border a quasi-international border," yet "the Korea-China border was an international border in the formal sense of the term but long remained porous to Koreans seeking entry into Manchuria."[34] Despite Japan's rapid expansion, the majority of Manchuria was left as a vast wild area where the state presence was uneven and sparse until the 1920s.

In 1932, however, Japan occupied Manchuria and established a puppet state, Manchukuo, as a multiethnic state with a founding spirit of "the corporation and harmony of five ethnic group

[33] Andre Schmid, *Korea between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 227-36.
[34] Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace*, 53-54.

(*gozoku kyowa*)," based on Japan's expansionist ideology of Pan-Asianism.[35] Koreans were one of these five ethnic groups and the Korean population dramatically increased from 0.5 million in 1930 to over 1.5 million in 1943 by the colonial government's aggressive promotion. Most of the newcomers were recruited from the southern part of the peninsula and their migration, training, and settlement was managed by two "colonization companies," one sponsored by the Government General of Korea and the other by the Manchukuo government. Under the system of Manchukuo nation-state, Koreans were more easily and directly claimed to belong to the Japanese colonial state.[36]

### 3.2. Postwar Realignment of the Membership

After Japan's defeat in WWII, Koreans remaining in Manchuria experienced a process of "progressive inclusion" into the nascent nation-state of the People's Republic of China, starkly contrasting with the case of Zainichi. While postwar Japan focused on excluding Koreans remaining in Japan from the category of its nation and citizenry, the Chinese Communist Party encouraged Koreans to remain in China by registering them in the new household registries and granting redistributed land.[37] With the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Koreans were formally integrated into the newly defined category of Chinese (*Zhongguoren*), being granted Chinese citizenship and an official national minority status.

The reason that the People's Republic of China embraced ethnic Koreans as their citizens is closely related to the rapidly changing political situation surrounding the Manchuria region and the urgent need to integrate the Korean population into their political entity. After Japan's

[35] Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003)
[36] Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace*, 63.
[37] Ibid., 131.

defeat, the Chinese Communist Party seized the region soon after the Soviets left, but shortly the Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*) occupied most of Manchuria and the second Chinese Civil War intensified over this area. Koreans constituted almost 70 percent of the total population of eastern Manchuria, the Yanbian region, and CCP more than needed their support. Under the heightened political tensions in Manchuria, many Koreans who did not support CCP chose to be repatriated to the southern part of Korean peninsula, and the remaining Korean population more consistently endorsed the socialist reform of the CCP by enlisting to fight in the Chinese Civil War.[38] Around 10 percent of the entire Korean population in Manchuria fought in the war on the CCP's side, which greatly surpassed the participation of the Han Chinese. The People's Republic of China highly praised the Koreans' participation and sacrifice in the civil war and announced that Koreans were an integral part of the establishment of the new "Chinese nation."

With the establishment the PRC, two groups of Koreans under the name of Chosŏn resided on either side of the border marked by the Duman River (Tumen River in Chinese): ethnic Koreans in China (*Chosŏnjok* or *Chaoxianzu*) with citizenship of PRC and the Koreans in the Democratic People's Republic of China (*Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Konghwaguk*). As the border control of the Duman River remained lenient until the late 50s, the Koreans on both sides could sustain their ethnic ties across the border. Hye-son Ri's novel *Red Shadow* portrays how Korean people did everything from shopping and bartering across the border to arranging cross-border marriages.[39] Korean Chinese supported the PRC and complied with its policies as it granted them land ownership and other material advantages, but they also remained affectively attached to the Korean peninsula as their ancestral homeland.[40]

[38] Ibid., 132-33.
[39] Hye-sŏn Ri, *Ppalgan kŭrimja* [Red shadow] (Yanji, China: Yanbian Remin Chubanshe, 1998).
[40] Hyun Ok Park, *The Capitalist Unconscious: From Korean Unification to Transnational Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 157.

When the Korean War broke out in 1950, the CCP mobilized Koreans and transferred around 55,000 to 60,000 experienced Korean veterans to North Korea as early as October 1950, even before the official dispatch of the Chinese Volunteer Army. The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC issued on September 20, 1950, notes that "it is a legitimate right as well as a sacrosanct responsibility of *Chaoxian* people who reside in the territory of China to return to and defend their fatherland from the American imperialist threat."[41] Soon after, 20,000 more Koreans joined the People's Volunteer Army and fought in the Korean War on the side of the DPRK. By participating in the Korean War, Korean Chinese strengthened their ethnic ties with North Korea and developed their dual identity both as a citizen of the PRC and as an ethnic semi-member of North Korea.

The CCP launched the *Ethnic Classification Project* (*minzu shibie*) in 1954 and the Korean minority was given the official name of *Chaoxianzu* and "entitled to seats in the National People's Congress, autonomous local governments of various scales, Korean-language schools at various levels, and ration packages that met their culturally specific needs."[42] Simultaneous with the CCP's systematic incorporation of ethnic Koreans into the PRC, North Korea was striving to relocate the co-ethnics in China to the DPRK. After the Korean War, the DPRK struggled with the aftermath of the war which destroyed 70 to 80 percent of the infrastructure and caused a drastic decrease of the population, especially skilled labor power needed for the national reconstruction. Accordingly, the DPRK requested China to postpone the repatriation of the People's Volunteer Army and persuaded Korean Chinese soldiers to permanently resettle in North Korea instead of returning to China. At the same time, it also asked the Chinese government to sponsor the recruitment of Korean Chinese to resettle in North Korea, which

[41] A statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC (September 20, 1950), quoted in Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace*, 135.
[42] Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace*, 138.

coincides with the initial discussion about the Zainichi Koreans' repatriation to North Korea.[43] Around the time of intensifying Sino-Soviet rivalry, the PRC mostly accommodated North Korea's request.

The enthusiastic participation and sacrifice of Korean Chinese in two civil wars unfailingly demonstrated their dual loyalty towards two socialist fatherlands. They were not only the model minority of the PRC who fearlessly fought during the Chinese Civil War, but also the diasporic patriots who joined the war to defend the homeland and became the core of the socialist brotherhood between the DPRK and the PRC. Yet, it should be noted that the strong ties with two socialist fatherlands made these Korean Chinese totally invisible in the other nation-state in their ancestral homeland, South Korea. The anti-communist ROK regime had totally ignored the Korean population in Manchuria for several decades. In a 1954 census of Koreans abroad, conducted by the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the official population of Koreans in China was only 390, which was the number of Koreans in Taiwan, yet over a million Koreans in mainland China were not considered "Koreans abroad."[44] Until the 1990s, the ethnic Korean population in communist countries had been totally unrecognized in the official record of the South Korean government. In contrast to the salient anxiety over the *Ch'ongnyon* community in South Korea, the Korean Chinese had been buried under total ignorance in South Korea.

### 3.3. The First Korean Wind (*Chosŏn param*): Homecoming to North Korea

Nevertheless, Korean Chinese dual loyalty soon became a contentious issue in the process of dramatic societal transitions through the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957-1958), the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in the PRC. The

[43] Ibid., 139-140.
[44] Ibid., 136.

strong bond the Korean Chinese had with their "fatherland" DPRK and the attachment to Korean culture were criticized as "local nationalism" or "bourgeois nationalism." The PRC launched a "National Identity Education Program" (*Zuguoguan jiaoyu*) in 1958, which emphasized that Korean Chinese were citizens of China and required them to break off their national ties to the two Koreas.[45] The Korean Chinese was requested to be loyal exclusively to the People's Republic of China and "unmake" North Korea as their homeland.

Under this changing situation, the Great Famine struck northeast China in 1960 and many Korean Chinese "crossed the loosely controlled Sino-Korean border to seek relief from famine."[46] At that time, North Korea was struggling to handle the labor shortage problem and welcomed these people as repatriates. Alongside this practical reason, around the late 50s, North Korea announced self-reliance as a primary goal of its economic planning after several bloody factional conflicts. To develop the self-reliant socialist nation, it launched various repatriation projects of ethnic Koreans dispersed in East Asia, including Zainichi Koreans in Japan, Sakhalin Koreans, and Korean War orphans who had been sent to socialist allies in Central and Eastern Europe.[47] In the early 1960s, numerous Korean Chines peasants as well as intellectuals who were severely criticized by the government as local nationalists, fled to North Korea.[48] This exodus, which was called as the "Korean Wind" (*Chosŏn param*), shows how the Korean Chinese community responded to the turbulent socialist transformation with their dual membership.

Korean Chinese returnees were integrated into North Korean society more smoothly than Zainichi returnees, thanks to their fluency in the Korean language and familiarity with the

[45] June Hee Kwon, "Forbidden Homeland: Divided Belonging on the China-Korea Border," *Critique of Anthropology* 39, no. 1 (2019): 79.
[46] Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace*, 150.
[47] Ibid., 151.
[48] The exact number of the Korean Chinese who joined this border-crossing is not clear. Yet, Jaeeun Kim notes "a Chinese official source…shows that 55,000 unauthorized border crossers between 1961 and 1962 came not only from the Jilin province…but also the provinces of Liaoning and Heilongjiang." Ibid., 152.

socialist system. However, many of these repatriated Korean Chinese returned to China within a year. Jaeeun Kim notes that one of her interviewees stated the reason for return was that "it was not like what I had imagined it to be."[49] They noticed the stricter labor discipline and more repressive culture in North Korea compared to China and felt disillusioned by the intensifying cult of personality. At that time the food rationing in China was getting better and the economy was recovering. Disappointed by the homeland, which was far from that they had imagined it to be, the Korean Chinese who had returned to their homeland thus returned back to their host country.

The unauthorized homecoming and return initially did not generate grave issues but later became a central reason of blaming the Korean Chinese community during the Cultural Revolution, after the collapse of China's diplomatic relations with North Korea. Many Korean Chinese, especially the intellectuals, were criticized for "harboring separatist ideologies, instigating subversive acts against China, and committing espionage acts for North Korea."[50] It was in this context that their earlier emigration to North Korea and return to China was belatedly revealed, politicized as treason, and punished. Experiencing ruthless indictment and punishment, Korean Chinese found that North Korea was no longer their "exit option"[51] and their homecoming could jeopardize the whole community's survival. Until the re-establishment of diplomatic relationship between the PRC and the DPRK in the 70s, the Sino-North Korea border was strongly closed and North Korea did not consider the Korean Chinese as "potential members."[52]

[49] Ibid., 158.
[50] Ibid., 164.
[51] Ibid., 165.
[52] Ibid., 166.

### 3.4. The Second Korean Wind (*Han'guk param*): Return Migration to South Korea

In contrast to North Korea which strived to bring back the ethnic Koreans in Japan and the mainland China during the height of the Cold War tensions, South Korea had remained reluctant to embrace those overseas co-ethnics in fear of their potential socialist ideas and being a threat to sustaining strong anti-communist policies. However, with the attenuation of the Cold War tensions in East Asia, the subsequent Chinese economic reform, and democratization and globalization of ROK, the situation dramatically changed beginning in the late 1980s. The most salient change was the mass return migration of Korean Chinese from the People's Republic of China.

Prior to the massive second Korean wind (*Han'guk param*) since 1992, as Jaeeun Kim notes, the military governments of the ROK in the 1970s and 1980s recognized the importance of embracing "co-ethnic populations (*tongp'o*) residing in the communist zones."[53] Accordingly, the South Korean media published articles on the Korean Chinese, "in an unmistakably nostalgic tone," reporting on the "well-preserved ethno-cultural practices of the Korean Chinese, their intense curiosity about South Korea, and their longing to return and reunite with their families."[54] Confident in having defeated the DPRK in its economic development, the ROK governments contended their superiority as the sole legitimate nation-state on the Korean peninsula by calling the diasporic Koreans "South Korean" (*Han'gugin*) and South Korea as their true homeland.

Almost simultaneously, the Chinese government began to support the rejuvenation of the traditional cultures of ethnic minorities. June Hee Kwon contends that in the wake of full-scale economic reforms, the Chinese Communist Party switched its agenda on ethnic minorities from assimilation to recognition of internal "otherness" in harmony, which was exhibited as idealized

[53] Ibid., 177.
[54] Ibid., 177.

"plural singularity." The various ethnic minorities' diverse rituals and traditional attires became the subject of ethnic tourism they emerged as an active agent "promoting would-be proper ethnic elements." Kwon, however, notes that the recuperation of the ethnic identity of Korean Chinese has been motivated not only by the PRC's changed policies but also the Korean Wind from South Korea. Upon the economic opportunities associated with South Korea, Korean Chinese re-developed their ethnic and cultural connections with Korea.[55]

The Korean Chinese people's return migration to South Korea began with the family reunion events in the mid-1980s, even before the establishment of the diplomatic relations between the PRC and the ROK in 1992. Although it was extremely difficult to locate relatives in South Korea after four decades, the people who managed to find their kin utilized the visit as an opportunity to procure an economic profit by selling Chinese medicine.[56] Whereas the family reunion homecomings offered an opportunity for economic benefit to Korean Chinese, they often ended with family disputes over the inherent arrangements or disappointment in the different interests on each side and many Korean Chinese returned to China disillusioned.

In the 1980s, South Korea was already experiencing the shortage of labor in its secondary labor market, often referred as 3D (dirty, dangerous, difficult), and in urgent need to accept migrant workers from abroad. Coincidently, the Chinese economic system was under a rapid process of reform and opening up. Korean Chinese in the northeastern border region found that they had less chance to achieve success by internal migration within China due to their status as an ethnic minority and imperfect Mandarin. In this context, many Korean Chinese chose to go to South Korea for a better chance of securing their livelihood, especially since the establishment of the diplomatic relations between the PRC and the ROK in 1992.

[55] June Hee Kwon, "Forbidden Homeland," 82.
[56] Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace*, 179.

The diplomatic rapprochement ironically made Korean Chinese not "potential" South Koreans, but strengthened their identity as citizens of the People's Republic of China. They were required to carry Chinese passports and proper entry visas issued by the South Korean consular office. This change clearly demonstrated the ambiguous position of Korean Chinese in South Korea; they had never had South Korean citizenship and had been forgotten for over four decades, and were only situated in the imaginary category of *minjok* until the ROK strived to expand its influence to the former communist regions as well as attract cheap laborers from abroad.

The South Korean government did not grant any immigration privileges to the Korean Chinese returnees. As the number of the returnees dramatically increased, the returnees were regarded as "social problems" of South Korea, as illustrated in the South Korean films portraying the Korean Chinese community in recent years, which will be discussed in Chapter Two. They constitute not only the largest group of ethnic return migrants in Korea but also the largest group of foreigners in Korea and have been the main subject of most policy-making regarding ethnic return migration.[57] Dong-hoon Seol and John Skrentny analyze South Korean policy toward Korean-Chinese migrants and argue that they are situated in the lower strata of the hierarchical setting of Korean nationhood, both socially and legally. By defining Korean Chinese as foreigners, the South Korean government allows their entry mainly for low-wage jobs and excludes them from social benefits. Even the more favorable visa, according to the Overseas Koreans Act, was only available to Korean Americans, not to Korean Chinese, until recently. [58] A number of Korean Chinese who returned to their ancestral homeland have encountered social discrimination, which highlights their cultural differences from non-diasporic Koreans over their

[57] Dong-Hoon Seol and John D. Skrentny, "Ethnic return migration and hierarchical nationhood: Korean Chinese foreign workers in South Korea," *Ethnicities* 9, no. 2 (2009): 152.
[58] Ibid., 147-174.

ethnic congruity with them. The Korean Wind rather unmade South Korea as a homeland for Korean Chinese, transforming it into another host society where they choose to go for mere economic reasons.

## 4. Conclusion

Throughout the long twentieth century, the ethnic Koreans in Japan and the People's Republic of China have experienced a constant and ever-changing process of making, unmaking, and remaking of their homeland as a result of tumultuous political tensions surrounding the homeland and the host countries. Experiencing suspended, interrupted, or politically mobilized homecomings, their displacement was exacerbated and they had to experience moments of further alienation not only in the host societies but also in the countries they had believed to be their homelands for so long. Their histories, dislocated from but also connected to the homeland, cast fundamental questions on the process of creating the postwar sovereignty of the two Koreas and illuminate the ways in which the redefining of their governance, territory, citizenship, and legitimacy was inextricably intertwined with ethnic Koreans remaining in Japan and China in the postliberation era.

Far from sentimental nostalgia, the Korean diaspora's perpetual longing for homecoming was rather the result of intensive negotiations with the political and social tensions about their membership in both the host societies and the homeland. The diasporic Koreans' homecoming was not only desired by the ethnic Koreans themselves but also by the nation-states in the homeland for the purpose of solidifying their own legitimacy as the sole sovereign nation in the Korean peninsula. The histories of Korean diaspora in East Asia and their returns have been subject to Cold War politics which dominated not only their homeland and host nations but also

their daily lives. However, their multiple returns in diverse directions, either to one of two Koreas or back to the host nations, illuminate these ethnic Koreans' struggles to survive the global system impeding their mobility, suspending their membership, and obscuring their existence.

Futhermore, the diasporic claims of ethnic Koreans in the PRC and Japan call into question the very notion of "post" in the post-Cold War era in South Korean society. As Heonik Kwon notes, in contrast to the relative "long peace" in Western countries, the Cold War period has never been "cold" in many Asian countries but has been full of intense conflicts and state violence.[59] In the newly independent nations in "peripheral regions," moreover, the bilateral political imperatives of the Cold War system replaced the power dynamics of the colonial era and frustrated the decolonization projects by preoccupying the justification for sovereignty of the nascent nation-states.[60] The histories of ethnic Koreans' diasporic claims attest to the very continued history of Korea from the colonization through the national partition to the post-Cold War era, which can only be elucidated by incorporating the histories of Koreans remaining outside of the Korean Peninsula. The return of ethnic Koreans from neighboring East Asian countries in the wake of neoliberal globalization thus asks South Korean society the question of whether Cold War tensions are truly over, as their histories of dislocation, impeded homecoming, and return to the homeland as cheap labor is intricately intertwined in their lives.

[59] Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 6.
[60] Ibid., 127-129

# CHAPTER TWO

# CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF KOREAN DIASPORA IN SOUTH KOREAN FILMS

"South Korea is my country.
North Korea is also my country.
Many Zainichi people think so.
Director Kim, please tell this to the South Korean audience."[1]

## 1. Introduction

In the 2006 South Korean documentary film, *Our School*, a first-generation Zainichi woman asks the director to relay her words to the South Korean audience. Her sincere request for them to recognize Zainichi issues with empathy beyond ideological prejudice suggests the long history of invisibility of Zainichi in the South Korean cultural sphere on the one hand, the convoluted Zainichi Koreans' longings and belongings between their divided homeland on the other hand.

During the height of the Cold War tensions, the diasporic Koreans in East Asia had long been either forgotten or distorted and caricaturized in South Korean films as an ideological enemy and potential threat to society. With rapid social changes precipitated by democratization and globalization since the 1980s, however, brought a mixed ethos among South Korean filmmakers of anxiety about the "invasion" of foreign capital and aspiration towards the advent of the post–Cold War and led them to reckon with a reconceptualization of the categorical boundary of the Korean cinema. Upon imagining an emergent vision of Korean cinema, Korean filmmakers discovered the subject of Korean diaspora in East Asia and rendered it visible and even occasionally situated at the center of the narrative.

[1] From film *Our School* (*Uri hakkyo*, dir. Kim Myŏng-jun, 2006).

This chapter illustrates the history of cinematic representations of Zainichi Koreans and Korean Chinese in South Korean films from the Cold War period to the recent post-Cold War era. By closely reading the texts and contexts of representative cinematic representations of Korean diaspora, it examines how the cinematic appearance of the Korean diaspora in South Korean films has been intertwined with the desire for transnational mobility and refashioning of Korean film industry.

## 2. Ambivalent Visibility of Korean Diaspora in Cold War South Korean Cinema

During the height of Cold War tensions from the 50s to the late 80s, Korean diaspora in East Asia had nearly disappeared from South Korean films due to a convoluted history with the nation's colonial past and diasporic Koreans' split loyalty between the two antagonistic nation-states that emerged from the division of their homeland. In the process of establishing postcolonial sovereignty in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, those who migrated to Japan and China before the liberation of Korea came to be seen as ideological enemies, potential threats to national security, or remnants of a colonial past which had to be erased.

To be specific, Zainichi Koreans were more contentious subjects in postwar Korean cinema than Koreans in China, as the Syngman Rhee regime in the immediate postwar era imposed a ban on Japanese representation in popular culture. Examining censorship cases related to the importation of Japanese films and the appearance of "Japanese color" (*waesaek*) in South Korean films of the 1960s, Jinsoo An argues that the controversies over Japanese films and any visual representation of Japan during this period demonstrates the ways in which suppressed colonial legacies and the decolonization of the nation were intertwined with Cold War politics.[2]

[2] Jinsoo An, *Parameters of Disavowal: Colonial Representation in South Korean Cinema* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), Chapter 2.

The rigorous censorship of any representation related to Japan led to the disappearance of Zainichi from South Korean cinema during the Rhee administration. One example of this is the 1959 film *Even if the Clouds Are Drifting* (Kurŭm ŭn hŭlŏdo; dir. Yu Hyŏn-mok). The film was based on the diary of a second-generation Zainichi Korean girl, but after censoring the initial scenario, the South Korean government forbade the production of the film due to the Japanese setting and dialogue. In response to this decision, the film producer changed the setting of the film to South Korea and rendered all of the characters Korean.[3] By definition, Zainichi in the postwar realignment of South Korea remained inextricably entwined with any representation of the contemporary Japanese society which was rejected as "Japanese color."

However, in South Korean cinema during the following military regime in the 1960s and 70s, the Korean diaspora in Japan became one of the most favored topics in anti-communist films and the diasporic location in Manchuria turned into an attractive cinematic setting for transnational action films for South Korean filmmakers. This section discusses the ambivalent visibility of the Korean diaspora in East Asia in South Korean films during the Cold War period.

### 2.1. Imagining Transnational Korean Cinema through Propaganda

The first phase of Korean film production history is inexplicably intertwined with the history of colonization. During the colonial era, *Fight For Justice* (Ŭrijŏk kuťo, 1919), the first Korean- produced kino-drama, a play combined with moving picture in background, was made and the film language and technique of Korean cinema was developed concomitantly with the

[3] So Hye Kim, "Over the Im/permeable Boundaries: Cinematization of Nianchan in South Korea and Japan," *International Journal of Korean History* 22, no. 1(2017): 179–187. It should be noted the ban on Japanese culture is correlated with the increase in the unofficial circulation of Japanese cultural products in South Korea, evidenced by myriad illicit South Korean remakes of banned Japanese films. See Chonghwa Chung, "The topography of 1960s Korean youth film: between plagiarism and adaptation," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 8, no. 1 (2016): 11–24.

acceleration of colonial rule in Korea. Notably, during the Pacific War period in the 1940s, a number of co-produced films were made in collaboration with Japanese film productions and Korean filmmakers benefited experiencing and learning advanced film technique and production, albeit with ostensible propaganda messages. For colonial Korean filmmakers, Japanese films were the most reliable textbook for filmmaking and the Japanese filmmakers were their readily available teachers whom they aspired to learn from and emulate someday.

With the sudden liberation in 1945, however, the close ties between the Japanese and the Korean film industry were severed all at once and Japan became a forbidden place to visit and even to be cinematically represented. Syngman Rhee government's staunch anti-Japanese policies forbade any representations of contemporary Japan in South Korea, including even Zainichi Koreans in postwar Japan. Although the United States and Hollywood films emerged as a new model for Korean films, the sudden ban on Japanese cinematic images via all channels, [4] ironically, proliferated the plagiarism of Japanese scenarios in Korean cinema and facilitated Korean film producers' aspirations to be connected to Japanese film culture.

Around the 1965 normalization with Japan, the filmmakers came to desire more feasible film exchanges in the near future, including the location shooting in Japan, exchange of actors, and coproduction with Japanese film producers. Under these circumstances, Zainichi Koreans emerged as a recurring theme in anti-communist films made by partially transnational production.[5] As Zainichi Koreans' return to the DPRK or the ROK was only intermittently allowed, with ostensible propaganda objectives, the divergent homecomings to either side of the

[4] The representation of Japan was prohibited not only in the films produced in South Korea but also in all imported films including Hollywood cinema, Jinsoo An, Chapter 2, "Film and the Waesaek Controversies," in *Parameters of Disavowal.*

[5] The examples include *The Third Zone* (Che sam chidae; dir. Ch'oe Mu-ryong, 1968); *Blues at Midnight* (Yŏng si ŭi burŭsŭ; dir. Chŏn U-yŏl, 1969); *Goodbye, Tokyo* (Kutbai Tong'gyŏng; dir. Ch'oe In-hyŏn, 1970); *Dark Night in Tokyo* (Tong'gyŏng ŭi mujŏng'ga; dir. Ch'oe Yŏng-ch'ŏl, 1970); and *Operation Tokyo Expo '70* (Eksŭp'o ch'ilsip Tong'gyŏng chakchŏn; dir. Ch'oe In-hyŏn, 1970).

Korean peninsula were prevalent subjects of South Korean anti-communist films in the 60s and 70s. The films describe Zainichi Koreans' homecomings to the ROK as glorious events while at the same time depicting their mobility to the DPRK as potentially dangerous and something that should be regulated and re-oriented.

Among them, Kim Su-yong's 1966 film, *Manghyang* [Nostalgia] (dir. Kim Su-yong, 1966, ROK) and 1969 film, *Correspondent in Tokyo* (Tong'gyŏng t'ukp'awon, 1968) are noteworthy as they clearly illustrate how the Korean filmmakers played on the anti-communist rhetoric to realize their ambition of transnational production under growing Cold War tensions and how the Zainichi characters came to reappear in these propaganda films as a vehicle of South Korean filmmakers' transnational mobility. These films were made in the years subsequent to the 1965 normalization when the diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea were just established. At that time, the Zainichi Koreans' repatriation project was still sweeping the Zainichi community and the ROK government was looking for a chance to counterattack, yet it was another decade before the ROK government's invitation to Zainichi with Chosŏn status, under the name of Motherland Visit Program.

A month after the normalization treaty, the Ministry of Public Information announced a plan to allow film exchanges with Japan in four phases: (1) permission to include location images of Japan in South Korean cinema, (2) the exchange of actors between South Korea and Japan, (3) coproduction, and (4) the direct importation of Japanese films.[6] Although the second to fourth phases were postponed until the late 90s, various trials were made in the mid-60s to expand the realm of Korean film production and to actualize certain transitional cinematic mobility. Director Kim Su-yong is the one who most enthusiastically pushed the door and benefitted the most, as well.

[6] Jinsoo An, *Parameters of Disavowal*, 48.

A few months before Kim Su-yong embarked on the project of *Nostalgia*, he made *Affection* (Yujŏng, 1966) based on Yi Kwang-su's novel of the same title. He wanted to film the last sequence in Japan's snow-covered mountains of Hokkaido. Yet, it was before the normalization treaty was signed and he received neither official permission for filming in Japan from the ROK government nor a proper visa for location shooting from the Japanese government. He and film crews could only get a transfer visa for a 72-hour stay in Japan, which also forbade bringing celluloid films. Nevertheless, he managed to film the last scenes at Hokkaido in secret within 3 days and came back to Korea with the films rolled around his and other crews' bodies under their coats to escape the attention of the custom officers.[7] Even though the new era of vibrant film exchanges between Japan and South Korea seemed to be approaching, most of the attempts to cross the border for cinematic production encountered severe regulations during production and strict censorship before official release.

By contrary, when he made the anti-communist film *Nostalgia* in Japan, he enjoyed the full support of the Agency for National Security Planning and Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Japan.[8] While filming *Nostalgia*, he even was able to make another comedy film, *Love Detective* (Yŏnae t'amjŏng, 1966) in Japan at the same time. After *Nostalgia*, he made five more films with film locations in Japan, three of them propaganda films portraying Zainichi Koreans' repatriation to North Korea: *Goodbye, Japan* (Chal itkŏra Ilbon ttang, 1966)[9] , *Correspondent in Tokyo* (Tong'gyŏng t'ukp'awon, 1968), and *That is the Sky over Seoul* (Chŏgŏsi Sŏul ŭi hanŭl ida, 1970), all set in Japan. This means that making a film on Zainichi society with an ostensible anti-communist theme offered the director an exceptional opportunity to film in Japan free from

[7] Su-yong Kim, *Na ŭi sarang ssinema: Kim Su-yong kamdok ŭi Han'guk yŏnghwa iyagi* [My love, cinema: the director Kim Su-yong's story on Korean cinema] (Seoul: Ssine 21, 2005), 89-90.
[8] "Oral History Archive, Kim Su-yong," accessed May 17, 2019, http://fca.kr/ab-1110-27?article_num=27&tpa_index192=30&PB_1451373789=5
[9] Print of the film, *Goodbye, Tokyo* did not survive and only scenario is available today.

restrictions and relatively flexible censorship. The propagandizing narrative of those films, thus, could be understood as the director's negotiation in the political situation between Japan and South Korea.

*Nostalgia* portrays a Zainichi family who joined the repatriation to North Korea. The narrator boy, Kazuo, is the son of a Japanese mother and a Zainichi father whose business recently failed. Kazuo's family and other Zainichi neighbors decide to return to North Korea, which is advertised by *Ch'ongnyŏn* as an earthly paradise. The film demonstrates the motivations for repatriation as more practical than abstract "nostalgia." A middle-aged Zainichi couple, who were running a coffee shop in Tokyo, decide to go to North Korea to avoid their debts as well as to open a new coffee shop in Pyongyang and make a fortune. A young man leaves for North Korea to follow the women he loves. Kazuo's father in financial hardship believes his brother in Pyongyang will help him to settle in the North. Showing the many different desires of the various characters, the film situates Kazuo as the only one who has no selfish greed motivating this "homecoming" trip and lets him witness the grown-ups' tragedies in North Korea as a pure victim.

It is noteworthy that, to emphasize Zainichi characters' suffering in North Korea, *Nostalgia* renders the Japanese colonial past rather invisible. This is well illustrated in the scene where the returnees are questioned upon their arrival in North Korea. When Mr. Choi is questioned about his occupation in Japan, he answers that he was conscripted for forced labor during the Japanese occupation and injured his leg in a coal mine, and thereafter he had several manual jobs. Yet, the North Korean examiner responds that he smells of liquor. While the information Mr. Choi attempts to express is the unjust hardship he endured under Japanese

colonialism, what the examiner perceives from Mr. Choi's answer is only the stench of liquor. The examiner classifies Mr. Choi as an alcoholic and sends him to a workhouse for the disabled.

In the coal mines, all the returnees suffer from the North Korean managers' inhumane treatment and heavy workload. At the end of the film, the returnees set a plan to run away and Kazuo's father dies in the mine during this plan. Leaving him behind, Kazuo's mother says to Kazuo, "Look here well as not to forget. This is the land that took away your father." Aboard a ship returning to Japan, everyone but Kazuo dies, with his mother's dying words instructing him to take the helm of the ship, saying "the direction this needle shows is south, where our real homeland is. Go south." It is significant that the only one who is allowed go to South Korea is Kazuo, who is not responsible for the decision to go to the north. Throughout this dialogue, the film explicitly declares that North Korea is not a utopian homeland for Zainichi Koreans but a nightmare where they are only to be exploited, whereas South Korea is the authentic homeland toward which they should redirect their energies and loyalties.

Nevertheless, this last scene is more ominous than hopeful. In a ship loaded with dead bodies, Kazuo alone heads south in the boundless sea. Holding the helm of the ship, Kazuo blames the grown-ups who had happily boarded the ferry toward North Korea and asks his deceased mother what it means that the homeland is in the south. It is unlikely that this young boy can survive his journey to the "true" homeland. Albeit being innocent from any sin the grown-ups committed, which is specifically their choice of North Korea as their homeland, Kazuo does not know what the homeland means to him and if the nation in the south is his homeland. Instead, he is abandoned on the vast water as the film ends.

**Figure 1-1. Kazuo is heading toward south in a ship loaded with dead bodies.**

In another of Kim Su-yong's anti-communist films featuring Zainichi Koreans, *Correspondent in Tokyo*, the Zainichi Korean protagonist could not survive in South Korea as well. The film begins in Japan where the Zainichi Koreans are embarking on a ferry to North Korea. The protagonist, Chi-suk, is a daughter of a South Korean diplomat in Japan and married to a journalist who is collecting "behind stories" of Zainichi Korean repatriation to North Korea. Anna is an interviewee of Chi-suk's husband and a Zainichi Korean woman whose parents left for North Korea and older brother fled the ferry just before departure. After Chi-suk's husband is assassinated by a North Korean agent, Anna stays with Chi-suk. A Zainichi man, but actually a North Korean spy, approaches Chi-suk and they become a couple. Yet, another mysterious Korean man keeps interrupting their dates on pretense of his interest in Anna. Anna, Chi-suk, and the North Korean spy come to South Korea all together and settle down at Chi-suk's parents' house, forming an alternative family. Yet, all the while, the North Korean spy has a plan to abduct Chi-suk's father to North Korea. At the same time, Chi-suk's father discovers that the spy is actually the son he left in North Korea during the Korean War.

At the climax shot-out scene toward the end of the film, Chi-suk's parents shout to the spy how he could not recognize his own parents. When other hiding North Korean agents start shooting them, the mysterious man, now dressed in a South Korean soldier's uniform, appears

and holds Anna who is fallen from a gunshot. The soldier is actually a secret South Korean agent in Tokyo. At the end of the film, the broken family is reunited; Chi-suk's parents are recovering from their gunshot wounds while her older brother, the North Korean spy, repents of his sin and strongly criticizes the communist North Korean regime in front of reporters.

Yet, there is no room for Anna in this happy ending because she is the only one who died in the fierce shooting. After being shot, in the Korean agent's arms, Anna says that she has always been exploited, but is happy that she dies in the homeland. In the final scene, the South Korean agent pays respects at Anna's grave, with voice-over narration saying, "born in a turbulent era, you are a fallen flower but yet blossoming. We shall not forget you." This is the only voice-over narration of the film, which directly speaks to the audience by using the ambiguous pronoun "we." Anna is only accepted in South Korea when she dies, when her suspicious identity is confirmed not to be dangerous. In contrast to the glorious reunion of the family, that was separated during the Korean War, Anna dies alone, while her parents are in North Korea and her brother's whereabouts are unknown. Anna's death is dignified by a government official of South Korea who urges the audience to remember her; however, this request only confirms that the narrative itself is also exploiting and exluding Anna, or Zainichi Koreans from the boundary of "we."

**Figure 1-2. Anna dying in the South Korean agent's arms (left); the South Korean agent paying respects at Anna's grave (right).**

In these anti-communist films, the Zainichi Koreans' return to North Korea is portrayed as a negative experience that kills and splits families apart, but ironically, they were also not allowed to be members of South Korea. Fleeing from discrimination in Japan, they are either abandoned, or revered only after their deaths. On the one hand, these narratives clearly reflect the ROK government's stance towards the Zainichi community; it mobilized massive rallys against their return to North Korea both in Japan and Korea yet remained reluctant to accept them in South Korea. Zainichi mobility to either side of their homeland was condemned, interrupted, blocked, or suspended in South Korean films in the 1960s. On the other hand, the subject of Zainichi Koreans offered South Korean filmmakers a pretext to actualize their transnational mobility in film production. Even under the severe censorship during the Park Chung Hee regime, the anti-communist narratives featuring Zainichi Koreans allowed Korean filmmakers to reintroduce the cinematic imagery of Japan, which had been forbidden for over a decade.

### 2.2. Imagining the Transnational Landscape of Korean Cinema in Manchuria

In contrast to the good number of South Korean anti-communist films portraying contemporaneous Zainichi Koreans, the Korean Chinese were hardly visible in South Korean cinema during the Cold War era. It is because the mobility to the People's Republic of China was unimaginable for Korean filmmakers while the existence of Korean Chinese themselves had been buried in official amnesia so long in South Korea, as mentioned earlier. However, the location of Korean Chinese diaspora, Manchuria, became a popular topic of mid-1960s South Korean action films, set in colonial-era. Most of the stories of these films revolve around the Korean resistance guerillas in Manchuria and their struggle against the Japanese forces. Jinsoo An summarizes, "the Manchurian action film…codifies and expands the cinematic vocabulary of

nationalism anew by romanticizing and mythologizing the militant nationalist struggle of diaspora Koreans against the Japanese."[10]

As mentioned above, during the colonial era, Manchuria emerged as the spiritual home of Korean *minjok*. Once believed to be the cradle of the nation but lost to history, as Jinoo An notes, "a sense of loss and hardship…ran deeply through the nationalist discourses and collective social memory of Manchuria."[11] He also argues that this sense of loss engendered the affective dynamics of Manchurian action films that "promulgate their codes of masculinity, family, and nation."[12] As a variation of a war narrative film, Manchurian action films change the location of the nationalist struggle from the Korean peninsula to the extensive field of Manchuria during the colonial period. Adopting the genre conventions of the Western film, these films refashion the cinematic imagery of the colonial past as transnational action cinema where courageous Korean masculinity is reclaimed.

However, as Jinsoo An aptly points out, the short heyday of Manchurian action films coincides with the Normalization Treaty with Japan in 1965,[13] a time in which along with the filmmakers' aspirations for transnational mobility, anxiety concerning the tenuous ground of national culture and cinema was increasing. Some worried that Japan's invasion and colonization might repeat in the economic and cultural realms, and a complex interplay between anticolonial opposition and the logic of Cold War politics were dominant in the filed of Korean cinema.

Under these circumstances, Manchurian action films recast the nationalist values in the narratives but also obscure historical specificities by excluding real historical figures from their stories. The past represented in these films is an imaginary one with hyperbolic romance and

[10] Jinsoo An, *Parameters of Disavowal*, 52.
[11] Ibid., 55.
[12] Ibid., 55.
[13] Jinsoo An, "The Ambivalence of the Nationalist Struggle in Deterritorialized Space: The Case of South Korea's Manchurian Action Film," *The China Review* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 46-47.

spectacles while the guerilla struggles of the actual history are refashioned as exotic, flamboyant, and exciting adventures. On top of that, their cinematic images of Manchuria are imaginary in the sense that all the locations are in South Korea, presented in a newly adopted widescreen techniques.[14] Namhee Han notes that "the vernacular widescreen genre of Manchurian action films exposed the overriding ideology of national-state[sic] building imposed on 1960s South Korean cinema by placing transnational cinematic images and imaginations of colonial Manchuria and the lone wanderer at the center of the audience's perception and thus elicited an affective mode of viewing." [15] By defining Manchurian action films as a peripheral South Korean cinema, she also points out that "cinematic Manchuria was far removed from postwar South Korea's public imagination of Manchuria, in both the geographical and ideological senses."[16] In those films, random Korean locations are re-imagined as "Manchuria," which actually does not have to be a specific location of the real Manchuria. This loss of historical and physical reference in the representation of Manchuria resonates with the utter invisibility of the diasporic Koreans in China during the period. The cinematic landscape of Manchuria is rather a theatrical set where the Korean men embark on adventurous transnational journeys, escaping from the suffocating space of South Korea under the Cold War dichotomy, rather than a historic location to which many Koreans had emigrated during the colonial era and had been living, throughout their citizenship changes from Korean, to Japanese, to Manchukuo citizen, to nationals of the People's Republic of China.

[14] For the discussions on widescreen cinema and Manchurian Western films, see Namhee Han, "Technologies of Anamorphic Vision: Widescreen Cinema and Postwar Modernity in Japan and South Korea" (PhD diss, University of Chicago, 2014).
[15]Namhee Han, "Technologies of Anamorphic Vision," 142-143.
[16] Ibid., 154.

## 3. From Invisibility to Integration: Cinematic Representation of Korean Diaspora in the Post-Cold War Korean Cinema

After half a century of near obscurity, however, portrayals of Korean diaspora in East Asia in South Korean film have eventually moved beyond the stereotyped images in anti-communist films and utter invisibility into more realistic forms of cinematic visibility. These changes coincided with the beginning of South Korea's societal transition into the post–Cold War era, fostered through newly adopted policies of globalization and democratization. Under new conditions, filmmakers rediscovered ethnic Koreans living beyond the border of their nation. At first, the stories of such diasporic Koreans appeared particularly in the work of socially active independent filmmakers, many of whom had devoted their careers to the democratization movement and its opposition to the unwavering ideological antagonism of the divided nation. These critically acclaimed films revived Korean diaspora, especially Zainichi voices, that had been silenced for decades and offered an opportunity for South Korean audiences to witness the lives and contested identities of their diasporic counterparts.

At the same time, with the advent of global capitalism, South Korean society has become not only a host country for an unprecedentedly large number of labor migrants from overseas but also a homeland for diasporic Koreans from neighboring nations, with the largest group of ethnic Koreans citizens of the People's Republic of China. The inflow of ethnically Korean but foreign-citizen populations into South Korea engenders a growing phenomenon in cinematic portrayals of newly arrived "others." In recent decades, film audiences in South Korea have been increasingly exposed to cinematic representations associated with Korean Chinese returnees made by South Korean directors. In a number of mainstream films, Korean Chinese have

emerged as main characters, albeit mostly antagonistic characters, and certain stereotypes of their cinematic visibility manifested.

This section first follows the major challenges in the South Korean film industry with the advent of the post-Cold War era. By examining the Korean film industry's subsequent transformation and repositioning, it offers a specific context of the cinematic appearance of diasporic subjects in Korean cinema. Further, close readings of the representative films integrating diasporic Koreans in their texts critically engage with the current phenomenon of salient cinematic visibility of Korean diaspora and examine the convoluted dynamics between embracing and othering, empathy and phobia, and the incorporation into "us" and expulsion to "other."

### 3.1. Toward a New Korean Cinema: Reconceptualization of Korean Cinema and Rediscovery of Korean Diaspora since the late 1980s

Since the late 1980s, the Korean film industry has gone through fundamental changes engendered by the democratization of society and the globalization of the domestic economic system. Erstwhile the domestic film market had been tightly controlled by the government, on the one hand via the strict dual censorship both of film scenarios and the completed products, and on the other hand, via heavy-handed film import quotas for foreign films on the premise of protecting vulnerable domestic films in the market.[17] However, under the social changes involving the attenuation of Cold War politics, extended influence of neoliberal capitalism, and increasing demands to open the domestic market, domestic film producers and foreign capitals respectively redefined censorship and foreign film quotas as significant barriers against the

[17] Yŏnghwa Chinhŭng Wiwŏnhoe and Mi-hyŏn Kim. *Korean Cinema: From Origins to Renaissance* (Seoul: CommBooks, 2007), 97-102; 230-232.

development of Korean cinema. Accordingly, the Korean domestic film market underwent important transformation that reflecting the process of democratization and globalization.

First, the Korean domestic market allowed direct distribution of Hollywood films in the late 1980s. Since the 1970s, Motion Picture Export Association of America had demanded the opening of the domestic film market and reported to United States Trade Representatives about the unfair import restrictions in South Korea in the early 1980s. In 1987, after the US-ROK negotiations before the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the ROK government finally agreed to allow US distributors to open their branches in South Korea and revised the Motion Picture Law reflecting this change. Subsequently, in September 1988, United International Pictures first directly distributed its film *Fatal Attraction* (dir. Adrian Lyne, 1987) in South Korea.[18]

Many Korean film producers defined the direct distribution of Hollywood films as "US cultural invasion" and resisted it by organizing massive rallies and even releasing snakes in a theater where *Fatal Attraction* was screened. During this cultural war against "the US imperialism attacking Korea," not to mention the mainstream film productions, the independent and politically dissident filmmakers actively participated and took an important role in this united front. Young-a Park notes that this "unexpected alliance" between the mainstream industry and independent activists is one of the main factors behind the unforeseen success of the Korean film industry since the late 1990s.[19] During the rallies against Hollywood film distribution, independent filmmakers not only participated but also actively adopted their activist rhetoric, such as *minjung yŏnghwa* (people's film) and *minjok yŏnghwa* (national cinema) and contributed to the recontextualization of Korean cinema.

[18] Mi-hyŏn Kim, *Han'guk yŏnghwa yŏksa* [Korean film history] (Seoul: K'ŏmuinik'eisyŏn puksŭ, 2014), 71-72.
[19] Young-a Park, *Unexpected Alliances: Independent Filmmakers, the State, and the Film Industry in Postauthoritarian South Korea* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

The foreign presence in the domestic film market also pushed radical changes in the censorship system in the late 1980s which converged with the Korean filmmakers' request for fundamental abolishment of the censorship. In 1995, the new Film Promotion Law replaced the Motion Picture Law and stipulated pre-deliberation system through the Performance Ethics Board, which however was not much different as censorship was part of its purpose. On 4 October 1996, the Constitutional Court ruled that the pre-deliberation system as de facto pre-censorship is unconstitutional and major changes were made subsequently. The government quickly amended the Film Promotion Law and introduced a rating system by the newly established Korea Media Rating Board.[20]

These changes enabled the Korean filmmakers to envision a new national cinema, which is on the one hand to be protected from full-scale foreign invasion, and on the other to be finally emancipated from the authoritarian censorship and spatial constraints imposed by anti-communist governments under Cold War politics. With this aspiration and concern about the emergent Korean cinema, Korean film producers and directors began to recognize the Koreans abroad, especially ethnic Koreans in East Asia, as potential film subjects of South Korean cinema. This move resonates with the shifted social attitude toward Koreans abroad, which began with Korean government's reclaiming overseas Koreans as co-ethnics. During the Cold War period, the common term designating the overseas Koreans was *kyop'o*, which almost exclusively denotes the emigration to Western countries since the 60s. However, in the 90s, the term *tongp'o*, which literally means "same uterus," became the official umbrella term designating all ethnics abroad, regardless of their nationality. Jaeeun Kim maintains that "the reemergence of *tongp'o* indexed the *expansion*, or more precisely the *restoration*, of the

[20] Yŏnghwa Chinhŭng Wiwŏnhoe and Mi-hyŏn Kim. *Korean Cinema*, 100-101.

imagined scope of the Korean nation, which had contracted during the Cold War era."[21] In the same vein, the Korean film producers re-discovered the Korean diasporic population in East Asia after a half-century's near obscurity as a vehicle to expand the scope of the realm of cinematic representation in Korean films, to recuperate the forgotten and abandoned narratives of ethnic Koreans during the Cold War period, and to envision the future potential of Korean cinema in the emergent post-Cold War era.

In the 1990s, contemporary Zainichi Koreans' lives beyond the stereotyped images in anti-communist films began to be represented in South Korean films. Japanese society's discrimination against Zainichi Koreans was cinematized in 1992 film *Kim's War* (dir. Kim Yŏng-bin) which portrays the Kim Hŭi-ro Incident (known as the Kim Hiro Incident in Japan) in 1968, which was one of the most sensational criminal cases in postwar Japan. In February 1968, after killing two *yakuza*, Kim Hŭi-ro held eighteen people hostage in a nearby inn for four days. During these days, television media and newspapers competed to report the situation faster than anyone else. All of Kim's requests, negotiations, and complaints were aired simultaneously and this became a media sensation and "theatrical crime."[22] To media reporters, Kim spoke about the discrimination he had endured since childhood and put "the long-neglected problem of the Zainichi population in the media spotlight."[23] Although Kim Hŭi-ro's voice attracted massive attention in Japanese society at the end of the 60s, it took 23 years for his story to be cinematized in his homeland, South Korea.

Son Pyŏng-hŭi, the producer of *Kim's War*, mentioned that even though the Kim Hŭi-ro incident has been dramatized several times in Japan, most of them neglected the national (*minjok*)

[21] Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace*, 183.
[22] Yuriko Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 68.
[23] John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 93.

issues of Zainichi Koreans.[24] All the footage of *Kim's War* was filmed in Japan but with all South Korean leads due to the ban on the appearance of Japanese actors. The total budget was 1.3 billion won (equivalent to1.1 million US dollars), an extraordinary high budget at that time. The film achieved success in the market and received good reviews, winning four prizes at the *Paeksang Art Awards* in 1992. Yet, at the *Grand Bell Awards* the same year, the film did not pass the preliminaries due to an alleged plagiarism issue. A jury member of the Awards raised the accusation that *Kim's War* copied some scenes of a Japanese television film, titled *Kim's War* (Kim no sensō), produced by Fuji Television in 1991.[25] As Kim Hŭi-ro was still imprisoned in 1992, the South Korean film producer felt his story should be introduced to his homeland to make a meaningful change in his case, at the same time, it was an exceptional opportunity for a Korean filmmaker to film the entire footage in Japan. However, the four-decade hiatus of proper cinematic representations made Zainichi Koreans' story remain wedged between South Korean filmmakers' ambition for transnational mobility and the Korean producers' conventional plagiarism of contemporary Japanese films which proliferated under the cultural ban since the 1945.

Yet, the South Korean government finally lifted the ban on Japanese films in 1998. The Kim Dae Jung government announced the plan in three stages on October 20, 1998: The Japanese films co-produced with Korean producers, Korean films starring Japanese actors, Japanese films that had won awards at four major international film festivals (Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Academy) in the first stage (October 20, 1998); Award-winning films from 70 international film festivals and all-rating films in the second stage (September 10, 1999); 12- or

[24] "Kim ŭi chŏnjaeng ŭn kkŭnnannŭn'ga [Is Kim's war over?]," *Han'gyŏre*, December 8, 1991, 10.
[25] "Taejongsang 'Kim ŭi Chŏnjaeng' p'yojŏl sibi" [Grand Bell Prize accused *Kim's War* for plagiarism], *Han'gyŏre*, April 2, 1992, 9.

15-rating films in the third stage (June 27, 2000).[26] Under this plan, several award-winning Japanese masterpieces, including *Rashomon* (dir. Kurosawa Akira, 1951), *Seven Samurai*(dir. Kurosawa Akira,1954), *The Ballad of Narayama* (dir. Imamura Shōhei, 1983), *The Eel* (dir. Imamura Shōhei,1997), *Fireworks* (dir. Kitano Takeshi, 1997) were waiting to be released in South Korea; however, the first film which was allowed to be screened was none other than a South Korean film, *Family Cinema* (*Kajok sinema*, dir. Park Chol-su, 1998)

*Family Cinema* is a film adaptation of Zainichi writer Yu Miri's novel of the same title. After winning the Akutagawa Prize with her novel, *Family Cinema*,[27] Yu Miri visited South Korea in March 1997, which drew great attention from the South Korean media. Park Chŏl-su found that Yu Miri's novel resonated with his own questions about family as he just finished *Farewell My Darling* (*Haksaeng pugun sinwi*, 1996) on a family reunion at a funeral. Before this, he planned a cinematization of Yi Yang-ji's "Yuhi (1988)," but it did not work out.[28] With the easing tensions on the Japanese film ban in 1998, he embarked on filming Yu Miri's novel in August 1998.

Despite the fact that *Family Cinema* is the first South Korean mainstream film which represented Zainichi voice by directly adapting a Zainichi writer's novel, the production and distribution of the film met with difficulty. To avoid the censorship against a cast of Japanese actors, Park strived to recruit as many Korean actors as possible; however, he also recognized that Korean actors would not be able to convey the specific atmosphere of a Zainichi family. To compromise on this issue of casting, he casted Yu Ae-ri, Yu Miri's own sister and actress, as the protagonist Motomi and acclaimed Zainichi novelist, Yang Sŏk-il, in the role of her father.

[26] National Archives of Korea, Opening for Japanese Popular Culture (Ilbon taejung munhwa kaebang), accessed http://www.archives.go.kr/next/search/listSubjectDescription.do?id=003027
[27] Miri Yū, *Kazoku shinema* [Family cinema] (Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1999).
[28] Hye-yŏn Kang, "Kajok kaeim [Family game]: Interview with Park Chŏl-su," *Kino*, December 1998, 207.

However, Park had to appoint Japanese actors in other main character roles. At the preparation of production, the budget for the film was particularly tight, so the producer received a loan from the Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation. The KMPPC promised to lend three hundred million won (equivalent to 300,000 US dollars); however, after it found that over half of the leading actors were Japanese, it discontinued the provision.[29] In addition to that, it was unclear whether the film could pass the censorship review and when it could be released in Korea. Park rather focused on finding a Japanese distributor and introducing it through international film festivals.

Within a month after completing filming, however, the ROK government announced the lift of the Japanese film ban, and *Family Cinema* became the first beneficiary of this lift, because it was a film co-produced by a South Korean filmmaker. Yet, upon deciding new legal criteria about which films are South Korean co-productions or not, the boundary of South Korean films and filmmakers was put into question. Can a Zainichi filmmaker's work be included in the category of "Korean co-production?" How about the case of a film made by a Chosŏn status Zainichi filmmaker? Can Zainichi actors with Chosŏn status or Japanese nationality be regarded as Korean actors? In case of *Family Cinema*, these issues look rather clear, as the film was produced with a 100-percent Korean budget and the director is undoubtedly a non-diasporic South Korean. Due to the complicated issue of redefining the nationality of a film and its maker, the films produced by Zainichi directors were not released in South Korea immediately after the lift of the ban but masterpieces, apparently Japanese films, were introduced one-by-one in 1998 and 1999. Thus, the emergent new era of the film exchanges between Japan and South Korea

[29] Hŭi-yŏn Hwang, "Nŏhŭi ka kajok ŭl minnŭnya [Do you believe in family?]," *Sŭk'ŭrin*, October 1998, 132.

rather solidified the existing system of the nation-states and their cultures and relegated Zainichi films to the gap between them.

In June 2000, Sai Yōichi's *Dog Race* (*Inu hashiru*, 1998) was released in South Korea as the first official domestic distribution of Zainichi cinema. A Korean distributor applied for the film import evaluation as early as September 1999, but *Dog Race* did not pass it at that time. Accordingly, the distributor presented a petition to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the film was able to pass the evaluation in its second application in March 2000. *Dog Race* was the first R-rated film imported from Japan, and also one without any award-winning records from the international film festivals, which does not meet the requirements of the second stage of the opening. However, the Korea Media Rating Board noted that *Dog Race* was made by a "South Korean (*Han'gukin*)" filmmaker, and therefore could be included the category of the first-stage opening. The reports on the Korean release of *Dog Race*, also emphasized that Sai Yōichi abandoned his "North Korean" nationality[30] and became a South Korean in 1994.[31] It is interesting that *Dog Race* was selected as the first of Sai Yōichi's films to be officially released in Korea. His other films made before the change of nationality did not comply with the criteria of films "co-produced by a South Korean filmmaker"; moreover, some of them portrayed Zainichi Koreans in the *Ch'ongnyŏn* community, which could raise other legal issues with the National Security Law. His representative debut film, *All under the Moon* (*Tsuki wa dotchi ni dete iru*, 1993) was released only in 2007 by the original producer of the film, Yi Pong-u's own Korean distribution company and theater.

[30] It was common for the South Korean media to mistakenly ascribe North Korean nationality to Zainichi Koreans who held Chosŏn status.
[31] Sŏn-yi Pak, "Sae yŏnghwa, Kae talrida [New film released, *Dog Race*]," *NK Chosun*, June 5, 2000, accessed March 30, 2019, http://nk.chosun.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=829

### 3.2. Between Co-ethnics and Others: Cinematic Representations of Korean Diaspora in Mainstream Korean Cinema

In the 1980s and 1990s, Korean filmmakers expressed grave concerns about whether Korean cinema could survive in the era of direct distribution of Hollywood films and the newly imported Japanese films. Yet, South Korean films have been achieving unexpected success over the major Hollywood films in the domestic market and even raised the country's visibility in the foreign market with the advent Korean Wave. About a decade after Korean filmmakers' desperate demonstrations against foreign capital, South Korean society had to meet another foreign advance, which was the large-scale return migration of Korean Chinese. As the flow of return migration accelerated in recent decades, a number of mainstream Korean films began to portray them as visible "others" in Korean society.

The seemingly disparate dual flows of foreignness, one from Hollywood and the other from the influx of Korean Chinese, converge in the cinematic representation of the Korean Chinese in South Korean genre films. The opening of the domestic market in the 1980s expedited the restructuring of the Korean film industry, from the advance of the *chaebol* conglomerates in the film market, reorganization of the distribution system centering newly established nationwide multiplex chains, to the vertical integration of production and distribution and subsequent monopolization. It also brought significant changes in the film contents. As film budgets skyrocketed with various investments from in and out of the country, marketability of the films had to be guaranteed for the investors. In response to investors' request for reliability, the production of genre films was expedited. Michelle Cho reads the genre form of South Korean films in this era as a field of articulation and defense against the reification of national narratives in the era of globalization. She argues that genre cinemas became central both in a quotidian

sense of constructing cinematic narrative worlds, but also in the transnational legibility of genre conventions by which "global cinema" is understood and consumed. As she noted, "South Korean popular genre cinema has visualized fictional spaces in which generic elements structure sentiment as both intimate and collective, thereby allowing for the imagination of a shared national identity, which is at the same time grounded in a model of subjective interiority taken to be a hallmark of the universal, rational subject."[32] One of the most salient subjects in the Korean action-thriller genre in recent decades is Korean Chinese returnees. Their existence was often associated with illegality, including illegal migration and violent crimes, that both threaten Korean masculinity and recuperate it at the end.

In the early 2000s, the Korean Chinese characters began to appear in Korean cinema, first as female returnees through marriage immigration in relatively low-budget films.[33] Since 2010, however, most cinematic appearances of Korean Chinese returnees are concentrated in the high-budget action thriller films and male-centered narratives. The most representative film of the latter case is Na Hong-jin's 2010 film, *Yellow Sea* (*Hwanghae*). Despite its extreme violence and R-rated grading, the film thrived in the domestic market, ranking 30th in the 2010 box-office revenues among all films released in Korea.[34] In addition to its success in the market, it generated diverse parodies and appropriations of the Korean Chinese characters in the film in various entertainment genres. In *Gag Concert*, a weekly comedy show on the KBS network, a skit of the same title, *Hwanghae*, enjoyed nationwide popularity throughout 2013-2014. The

[32] Michelle Hwang Cho, "Generic Realities: The Transnational Spaces of South Korean Cinema" (PhD diss, University of California, Irvine, 2011), 4.
[33] Examples include *Failan* (P'airan, dir. Song Hae-sŏng, 2001) and *Innocent Steps* (Taensŏ ŭi sunjŏng, dir. Park Yŏng-hun, 2005).
[34] Korea Box-office Information System, accessed June 15, 2019, http://www.kobis.or.kr/kobis/business/stat/boxs/findYearlyBoxOfficeList.do

distinct features of the Korean Chinese characters in *Yellow Sea* were adapted and reappeared in a number of Korean films in following years.[35]

Suk Koo Rhee notes that *Yellow Sea* foregrounds "the uncanny cultural difference embodied by the Korean Chinese."[36] The Koreans Chinese characters in the film are represented as co-ethnics speaking the same Korean language, but with distinctive accents and visible cultural differences in their appearance. Their ambivalent cultural identity, both familiar and strange, stokes curiosity and caution to the South Korean characters as well as the audience. Their appearance and accent are often decoded as lawlessness and threat to society.

The story of the film follows the desperate journey of a Korean Chinese man, Ku-nam, to South Korea. Working as a taxi driver in Yanji, he struggles to pay off the debt he incurred to get his wife's working visa in South Korea but there has been no contact from his wife for several months. When he becomes more restless, Mr. Myŏn, a Korean Chinese dog dealer and gangster, suggests that Ku-nam goes to Korea to kill a man and that would clear Ku-nam's debt. Ku-nam smuggles himself into South Korea and tries to accomplish the task as well as to find his wife. However, he only discovers his wife's potential adultery and death and to make things worse, Ku-nam discovers others murdering his target before he gets a chance. Everything keeps going wrong and Ku-nam becomes a fugitive from Korean police, the Korean client, as well as Mr. Myŏn who comes to Korea to fix things. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that several different people were involved in the initial murder case, which Ku-nam knows nothing about, and can only try to find a way home, Yanbian, escaping from them all.

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[35] For example, *Traffickers* (*Kongmojadŭl*, dir. Kim Hong-sŏn, 2012), *New World* (*Sin segye*, dir. Park Hun-jŏng, 2013), *Sea Fog* (*Haemu*, dir. Sim Sŏng-bo, 2014), *Midnight Runners* (*Ch'ŏngnyŏn kyŏngch'al*, dir. Kim Chu-hwan, 2017), and *The Outlaws* (*Pŏmjoe tosi*, dir. Kang Yun-sŏng, 2017).
[36] Suk Koo Rhee, "Uncanny Hybridity and Nostalgia Politics in *The Yellow Sea*," *Journal of Asian Studies* 76, no. 3 (August 2017): 730.

At the center of the narrative, two male characters' masculinity is at stake. Ku-nam, a Korean Chinese, crosses the border to find his wife whom he thinks is having an affair with a South Korean man. He tries to recuperate his masculinity by taking her back home and restore his broken family in China. At the same time, Kim Tae-won, a South Korean businessman, sets up a plot to kill his business partner who had affair with his own mistress and tries to prove his masculine superiority over the rival. However, his plan is thwarted as another hitman, Ku-nam, appears in the crime scene he planned. Kim thinks Ku-nam might be hired by himself and tries to eliminate Ku-nam to cover his crime, but Ku-nam survives and escapes. Although Kim achieves his initial goal as his business partner is murdered, his masculinity remains in danger due to Ku-nam's existence.

At this moment of competition, as two male characters struggle to recover their masculinity in their heteronormative relationship, another hyper-masculine character, Mr. Myŏn, arrives in Seoul. He asks Kim for money in return for killing Ku-nam. Mr. Myŏn mercilessly chases Ku-nam to murder him, but Ku-nam surprisingly survives. At Mr. Myŏn's continued threat, Kim sends his gangs to Mr. Myŏn's hideout to assassinate him.

The sequence at the safe house is noteworthy in its visual manifestation of the masculinity of this Korean Chinese character, Mr. Myŏn, which is neither Korean nor Chinese, but rather primitive, the diametrical opposite of Kim's civilized masculinity. Behind the Korean Chinese gangsters who are devouring meat with their hands, the camera focuses on television images of traditional Korea with its national anthem, which is aired daily at the end of regular programs. In the next shots, a group of injured thugs are gnawing the meat off a bone. In several different-sized shots, images of Korea, such as the national flag, are briefly shown but out of focus and the sound of national anthem is muted by noises of eating. As Mr. Myŏn ascends the

stairs, the television image changes from the Korean national flag to the color bar. This brief sequence foregrounds the incongruity between the images of Korea and that of the Korean Chinese in front of them. They do not have any cultural affinity with Korea but only demonstrate the barbarous instincts of survivors. The sense of sympathy and fear of the "odd hybridity of the uncanny-within-the-familiar"[37] Korean Chinese characters brought so far suddenly transforms into sheer horror at the uncivilized violence Mr. Myŏn embodies. When Kim's gangs, armed with knives, ambush the hideout, Mr. Myŏn ruthlessly brandishes an animal bone at them. Then, the image of Mr. Myŏn, covered in blood and holding the bone, escapes the typical expectation of fight scenes in contemporary Korean cinema: Kim Tae-won, with his sophisticated Seoul accent and well-designed suit, is brutally trampled to death by Mr. Myŏn's uncivilized masculinity.

**Figure 1-3. The image of traditional Korea in TV (left); the TV image of the Korean national flag in background and Korean Chinese gangsters gnawing meat off the bone in foreground (right)**

In the film, the Korean Chinese characters continue to jeopardize the South Korean character's plan for recovering his masculinity. Ku-nam's survival itself means a treat to Kim's opportunity to redeem his masculinity, as he is the only witness of Kim's crime. He tries to kill Ku-nam in every possible way but fails. Mr. Myŏn, who was brought to kill Ku-nam, further

[37] Ibid., 733.

threatens Kim, but in a different way. Kim's hypocrisy behind his civilized manners and middle-class facade is exposed by Mr. Myŏn's uncivilized violence and killed at last by him. At the end of the film, severely wounded Ku-nam succeeds in sneaking into a small ship and threatens an old ship owner to steer toward China. However, he soon succumbs to his wounds and his body is thrown overboard into the Yellow Sea between China and South Korea. In the genre conventions of action-thriller films, the ambivalent identity of the Korean Chinese becomes a source of continued jeopardy for the South Korean character. Furthermore, the character of Mr. Myŏn deviates from the ambivalence between affinity and difference demonstrated by Ku-nam in his mix of foreignness and familiarity, and instead, manifests the utter otherness of an uncivilized savage, which eradicates the historicity of Korean Chinese diaspora.

After the success of the film, Ku-nam and Mr. Myŏn became two prototypes of Korean Chinese characters in South Korean action-thriller films. Korean Chinese returnees were represented as mercilessly violent "others" in *The Outlaws* (2017) and *Midnight Runners* (2017), both of which achieved significant box-office success. In *Sea Fog* (2014), Korean Chinese characters appear as sympathetic co-ethnics but also with stark differences in accent and appearance, and they fail to survive in South Korea. In both cases, the otherness of the Korean Chinese characters became the major impetus driving the narrative of South Korean genre films, and these films unequivocally reflect the social anxiety over the Korean Chinese returnees' ambivalent identity. Through the genre conventions, however, the films further accentuate the otherness of Korean Chinese, successfully relieve the anxiety they cause by cathartically expelling, or killing, their illegal existence, and restore the limited boundary of Koreanness, where returnees are prohibited.

### 3.3. Zainichi Representation in South Korean Independent Documentary Films

In contrast to the salient visibility of Korean Chinese in South Korean mainstream films, Zainichi Koreans have been more prevalent in South Korean independent documentary films since the late 1990s. As aforementioned, Zainichi Korean identity is deeply interwoven with the division of the homeland and the Cold War tensions surrounding it, and thus under the still-restrictive mood on North Korean issues, they were not an ideal subject for high-budget mainstream films. Yet, for South Korean independent filmmakers, who began to advance into the Korean film industry in the 1990s, envisioning an emergent vision of new Korean cinema in the post-Cold War era, Zainichi Koreans who have suffered the political tensions of their divided homeland but strived to imagine a reunified Korea appeared as outstanding subjects to criticize the current status of Korean society and conceptualize a new Korean cinema beyond the Cold War dichotomy.

In 1998, two documentary films about Zainichi were made and introduced through film festivals: the first was *Ban* (*Ipkuk kŭmji*) by Pak Sŏng-mi, which discusses Zainichi with Chosŏn status and the second was *Reclaiming Our Names* (*Ponmyŏng sŏnŏn*, dir. Hong Hyŏng-suk, 1998), the film discussed in the introduction. These films were critically acclaimed in the festrivals as they revived Zainichi voices that had been silenced for decades and offered an opportunity for South Korean audiences to witness the "authentic" lives of their diasporic counterparts.

In the mood of reconciliation between North and South Korea of the early 2000s, several South Korean independent documentary films have portrayed Zainichi students at Chosŏn schools (*Chōsen gakkō* in Japanese), institutions designed for ethnic Koreans and administered by *Ch'ongnyŏn*. Kim Myŏng-jun made the documentary film *Our School* (*Uri hakkyo*, 2006)

centered on Zainichi students at a Hokkaidō Chosŏn school. The film was acclaimed as a humanistic and unbiased portrayal of Zainichi Koreans and drew a total audience of over 90,000, a figure which broke the audience record for an independent film at the time.[38] Following *Our School*, South Korean journalist Pak Sa-yu collaborated with Zainichi filmmaker Pak Ton-sa to make *All for One, One for All* (*Yuksimmanbŏn ŭi t'ŭrai*, 2014), a film featuring students at a Chosŏn school in Osaka. In the same year, a film about students of a boxing club at a Chosŏn school in Tokyo was made by South Korean filmmaker Yi Il-ha, entitled *A Crybaby Boxing Club* (*Ulbo kwont'ubu*, 2014). In each of these documentary films, the Chosŏn schools appear as utopian spaces where young Zainichi students are encouraged to cultivate a Korean ethnic identity.

The first noteworthy feature in these documentary films is the filmmakers' subjective presence in the text. Unlike observational documentary films, these documentaries foreground the filmmakers' subjective existence and their relationship with the film subjects in the text, either as narration, subtitles, or dialogue with the students. This salient presence of the filmmaker's subjectivity has been one of the characteristics of Korean independent documentary films since the late 90s, especially on the issue of the socially marginalized populations. In-yŏng Nam notes that this mode of Korean independent documentary films, in which a filmmaker does not take on an omnipresent perspective but acknowledges both the filmmaker and the subjects' presence in the film text, procures an equal space where socially marginalized people might gain their own voices.[39]

[38] Although *Our School* was not widely released in theatrical venues, audiences organized "community screenings" in non-theatrical venues and significantly contributed in drawing 90,000 audiences.
[39] In-yŏng Nam, "Han'guk tongnip tak'yument'ŏri yŏnghwa ŭi chaehyŏn yangsik yŏn'gu [Study on mode of representation of Korean independent documentary]" (PhD diss., Chung-ang University, 2004), 4.

In three documentaries on Zainichi students, I argue, the filmmakers' presence in the text constitutes them as social actors vis-à-vis the filmic subjects. The documentary film scholar Bill Nichols explains the filmic subjects in documentaries as social actors, as their lives stretch beyond the presence of camera. In contrast to professional actors in fiction films, they are believed to show their real lives. However, they are also actors, in a sense that they perform in front of camera, "to serve the needs of the filmmaker,"[40] which complicates the spectator's belief in the authenticity of documentary texts. What those films show is not only the students' lives but also the South Korean filmmakers' lives encountering the diasporic Koreans in Japan. The filmmaker's subjective voices in the film on Zainichi students work to fulfill two purposes: One is to faithfully document the Zainichi students' diasporic identity, the other is to establish their own identity in facing them. The South Korean filmmakers in these films, oscillate between their own identity as non-diasporic Korean and the Zainichi students' diasporic identity.

The filmmaker's position as another social actor in the films is possible through his/her long-term close relationship with them. Kim Myŏng-jun, the director of *Our School*, stayed at the Hokkaido Chosŏn School for three years and was deeply moved by the students and teachers there. Similarly, *One for All, All for One* is also based on the filmmaker's personal ties with the Zainichi community. While working as a journalist covering Japanese issues, Park Sa-yu first visited Ōsaka Chosŏn School as it was entering a legal battle with the Ōsaka prefecture government over the right to the use of the playground the school had used for 60 years. A few months later, Park was diagnosed with breast cancer and she narrates in the film that during her lonely struggle against the disease in Japan, Ōsaka Chosŏn high school students' mothers took care of her by making food for her and visiting her. These personal relationships they had with

[40] Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), 5.

their respective Zainichi communities was the primary motivation to make the film, permit them to film Zainichi students' lives, and secure the authenticity of the film texts.

The filmmaker's position as a social actor serves as a guide for the South Korean audience to follow the texts and learn about the history of Zainichi Koreans. Given that the subjects of the films, Zainichi students in the *Ch'ongnyŏn* community, have been widely underrepresented in South Korean society for a long time with the only available images distorted or manipulated, the filmmakers' subjective narrations offer cues for the South Korean audience to learn about Zainichi communities. The filmmakers confess their own ignorance of the history of Zainichi students at first, which effectively encourages the audience to be engaged with the film and the subject matter.

These films endeavor to deliver a "true" picture of Chosŏn schools beyond the ideologically tinted images of it in South Korean media, mostly from news footage portraying the children wearing North Korean-style red flowers in their hair and the Kim family portraits on classroom walls to foreground the schools' ties with the DPRK. Kim Myŏng-jun noted that he wanted to describe "the smiling faces of children who are proud to learn the Korean language and letters and recognize themselves as Koreans…. I hoped that the audience would look back at their own lives and realize that the school is no different from the ones that we attended."[41] To achieve this goal, Kim meticulously organizes the parts explaining the history of Chosŏn schools. When the film starts, the subtitles only explain how the schools were first established spontaneously in the immediate postwar period and their history forgotten in South Korea since then. After introducing students and teachers and their lives, in the middle of the film, with the director's narration, the schools' connection with the DPRK is cautiously explained. By this

[41] Director's Statement, Seoul Independent Film Festival 2006.

strategy, he intends for the audience to meet the students in the school, who are not very different from themselves, without any ideological prejudice.

The films foreground the ethnic sameness of those students and their collective identity as Koreans and expands the boundary of "we (*uri* in Korean)" to include them within it. While portraying the daily lives in the schools, they also focus on the altruism and collectivity of school life, which is rare in South Korea today. In this Chosŏn school, students are not interested in competing with each other academically or achieving individual goals such as entering top colleges but sincerely care for each other as friends and classmates. Ryŏsil, a subject in *Our School*, who transferred from a Japanese school, had difficulty reading the textbooks written in Korean. In the interview sequence, she says that her classmates translated whole books into Japanese for her and she was very moved by their help. All three films demonstrate the students' altruistic minds with surprise and respect.

However, this rare quality of the Chosŏn school students should be understood within a sociohistorical context of Zainichi communities. Facing severe discrimination in Japanese society, Zainichi Koreans did not have equal opportunities in society and cannot but help and rely on each other and sustain their community to survive. At the same time, *Ch'ongnyŏn*'s growing control of the Chosŏn school system solidified the schools' detachment from Japanese society. Claiming to be a North Korean overseas organization, *Ch'ongnyŏn* declared that it would abide by Japanese law and refrain from interfering in Japan's domestic affairs, so it secured its legitimacy as a non-subversive organization.[42] For this reason, *Ch'ongnyŏn* neither played any significant role in the Zainichi protest against fingerprinting as part of Japanese alien registration in the early 80s, nor requested any civil rights to the Japanese government. By examining the lives of various *Ch'ongnyŏn* individuals, Sonia Ryang argues that "class identity

[42] Sonia Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan*, 113.

and gender identity are subsumed under an identity as 'overseas nationals' of North Korea, who lead a dignified life in Japan 'thanks to the love and care and wise guidance of the Great Leader Kim Il Sung.'"[43] Although the school system and education materials have significantly changed from the time of Ryang's description to reflect the attenuation of ideological tensions between the two Koreas, the Chosŏn Schools exist as a kind of utopia preserving and perpetuating collective values that can only succeed in utter isolation from the larger society.

Following the chronological order of the school year, the three films reach the most emotional moments for the students, which is their field trip to North Korea. The director's camera follows every detail of the students' lives without restraint, yet this is the only moment when the director cannot follow them because the filmmakers are ROK nationals. In *Our School*, Kim follows them as much as possible until they reach Niigata port, where the DPRK ferry vessel, *Man'gyŏngbong-ho,* is about to depart. Looking at the students on the ship over the high fences in front of him, Kim narrates: "I did not feel any sense of division between me and the children at the school. But when I saw the students head off to North Korea, I clearly understood for the first time in my life that Korea is divided into two nations." At this moment, he first experiences the inaccessibility of the other half of the homeland and a subsequent pseudo-diasporic emotion. He has felt no barrier between him and the students but at the moment of their trip to "homeland," his own nationality prevents him from accompanying their journey.

To film their trip, the director gives a video recorder to a student and asks him to record anything he sees in the homeland. The student records various tourist spots, field trip events, and the people they meet in North Korea and which shows the strong emotions they experienced there. This footage is re-arranged by the filmmaker with nostalgic accordion music, the filmmaker's narration, and student interviews after the trip, asserting that they met truly beautiful

[43] Ibid, 96.

people in North Korea and they are proud of being Korean. Juxtaposing the filmmaker's own pseudo-diasporic emotions, the film offers an opportunity for the South Korean audience to acknowledge its own life under the national division and understand Zainichi students' diasporic situation. Both as the victims of the history of colonization and national division, the film shows that the South Korean people and Zainichi students share ground for understanding as "*uri.*"

The three South Korean documentary films envision the Chosŏn Schools as utopian spaces where *Zainichi* students can develop and maintain their ethnic identity as Korean. Even though the films look like coming-of-age stories of *Zainichi* students, the people who, in fact, changed are the South Korean filmmakers. At Chosŏn Schools, the filmmakers, who are outsiders to Zainichi society, are embraced in the community and deeply moved by "uncorrupted" values and authentic human connections. While documenting the students' ethnic identities as diaspora, they revisit their own identity and strive to find a common ground they can share with *Zainichi* students by expanding the category of "*uri*." Thus, the Chosŏn Schools are not only a school for the *Zainichi* students but also locus for imagining homeland for South Korean filmmakers and audience.

Nevertheless, the noteworthy emotions of the films are the filmmakers' envy of *Zainichi* students' strong and seemingly unwavering identity, which is rarely found in contemporary South Korea. The films praise the ways in which the students endeavor to learn "our" language even though they do not use it outside of the school. By embracing the Zainichi students into the category of "*uri,*" the constantly conflicting social conditions shaping their ethnic identity between two homelands and the host country are tempered and even diminished.

Norma Field dissects the emotional structure of envy surrounding Zainichi suffering. In her discussion of the Zainichi female writer, Chong Ch'u-wŏl, she suggests that "'we'

(privileged American academics, Japanese writers, and even Zainichi Korean writers-that is, anyone who remains thoughtful though safe within the capacious arms of advanced capitalism) are caught in a serial structure of envy for the political consciousness that comes from suffering."[44] The South Korean documentaries on Zainichi students evidently show the structure of envy of those students' seemingly unwavering ethnic consciousness which arises from their sufferings. Yet, to properly understand Zainichi life and their idealization of homeland, the audience and filmmakers need to get over "the envy" and attend to the specific conditions which make that school such as utopian place. As Field notes, "specific oppressions must be attended specifically, without, however, losing sight of interconnections."[45]

**4. Conclusion**

Under the heightened tensions of the Cold War logics surrounding the Korean Peninsula, not only the physical homecomings of Korean diasporic populations in East Asia but also their cinematic representations in South Korean cinema was highly contested. Zainichi Koreans were portrayed as potential risks to South Korean society and their mobility to North Korea was condemned but their return to South Korea was prohibited in several anti-communist films. Korean Chinese were merely visible but only the location of their diasporic migration was represented in non-historical settings in Manchurian action films. In either case, the ethnic Koreans in East Asia were positioned within the nexus of the tightly controlled realm of South Korean cinema under the anti-communist government and the filmmakers' aspiration for transnational mobility beyond it.

[44] Norma Field, "Beyond Envy, Boredom, and Suffering: Toward an Emancipatory Politics for Resident Koreans and Other Japanese" *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 1, no.3 (1993): 657.
[45] Ibid., 665.

With the consequential social changes in the 80s, Korean diasporic populations in two neighboring countries finally gained visibility in South Korean cinema in a seemingly more "proper" way. However, the "embrace" of ethnic Koreans in the representational realm of South Korean cinema upon the advent of the post-Cold War era revealed convoluted desires in South Korean film industry to refashion the boundaries of Korean cinema. The representations of Korean diaspora in South Korean films are fundamentally entangled with the South Korean filmmaker's anxiety over their own shifting identities in the wake of rearrangement of Korean film industry and encounter with the massive migration of "different" Koreans as well as their envy of the Korean diaspora's determined identities.

The emergence of the diaspora as a cinematic subject is closely connected to the process of reconceptualizing Korean cinema and repositioning itself in the international market, accompanied by the questions of what a Korean film should represent and to whom it should be shown. Both as a national and transnational theme, the cinematic subject of Korean diaspora challenges the territorial and ideological boundary of the South Korean nation-state, which had been tightly controlled until the early 1980s, and raised questions on the national specificity of South Korean society. Distinguishing discourses on national specificity from those of nationalism, Paul Willemen makes the following argument: "a cinema addressing national specificity will be anti- or at least non-nationalist, since the more it is complicit with nationalism's homogenising project, the less it will be able to engage critically with the complex, multidimentional, and multidirectional tensions that characterize and shape a social formation's cultural configuration."[46] The South Korean films featuring the Korean diaspora demonstrate their engagement with the multitudinous tensions of South Korean society. In doing so, these

[46] Paul Willemen, *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 212.

films distinguish the cultural specificity of Korean diaspora from those of non-diasporic Koreans, including the filmmakers and the main audience of the films, and reduce the former to either destructive tropes or instrumentalized in the construction of the national address. Thus, although the Korean diaspora has achieved certain visibility in South Korean films, the films focus more on illustrating the national specificity of South Korean society, which receives the diasporic populations within it, than that of diasporic Koreans who are returning to a realm of public visibility in South Korea. To sum up, the South Korean films on Korean diaspora rather redefine their mode of address toward its non-diasporic Korean audience and curtail the diasporic narratives to serve that purpose. Nevertheless, concurrently with the advent of Korean films on the topic of diaspora, the diasporic filmmakers' own works began to be introduced and integrated into South Korean film industry, offering radically different mode of address toward South Korean society.

## CHAPTER THREE

## THE DIVIDED NATION AND ZAINICHI FILMMAKERS' BITTERSWEET RETURN

### 1. Introduction

A projector begins to turn around.
It is the bright autumn sky of Chosŏn.
Sounds of raving and clapping….
The steel bars are shaken.

….

Oh, homeland!
with my bursting heart,
how much I hoped to see you,
Northern hometown, which I have never seen before!

Only heard about it and read about it
Even though I've heard and read about it tens of thousands of times,
I only wanted to know more about it,
People's country, which is like a huge mountain!

Today, although we are behind bars,
Our mind is as bright as your sky.
We've got new energy to break the bars.[1]

This is an excerpt from a poem written in 1957 by Cho Sang-sŏn, a Zainichi Korean detainee in the Ōmura Migrant Detention Center. The newspaper article in which the poem is featured says that he was a member of a Korean literary club in the Ōmura Center but there is no further information about him. He could have been arrested by the Japanese police for a misdemeanor or caught while smuggling himself from South Korea to Japan. Regardless of the reason for his detention, he must be a Zainichi who originally came from the South, because he says in the poem that he has never seen North Korea. While waiting to be repatriated to South

[1] Sang-sŏn Cho, "Ch'ŏŭm ponŭn choguk [Homeland, which I see for the first time]," *Chosun minbo*, October 26, 1957, 4.

Korea, without a set date of deportation, he wrote a poem describing a screening of a North Korean film in the detention center. The writer is deeply touched by the scenery of North Korea, which he calls his "homeland." However, what does homeland mean to him when he calls North Korea his homeland, although he has never been there? What kind of film might have motivated his poem? How does the cinematic experience lead him to identify with his "homeland" and engender a feeling of "imagined" belonging?

This chapter studies the notions of home, homeland, and homecoming in Zainichi Korean filmmakers' work and film experience. By following their cinematic journey between the divided homeland and host country, it questions how the medium of film delivers the experience of homecoming. The notion of "homecoming" refers not only to human subjects' return to their homeland in the film texts but also to the diasporic filmmakers' incorporation into the homeland's film industry. By examining "homecoming" in this dual sense, the chapter aims to illuminate the relationships between the diasporic films, their human subjects, and the audiences in both homeland and host country.

To be specific, this part examines the films made by two second-generation ethnic Korean filmmakers active in Japan, Sai Yōichi and Yang Yonghi, that either feature the topic of homecoming or were produced in South Korea. I focus on *Blood and Bones* (2004) and *Soo* (2007) by the former and the documentaries *Dear Pyongyang* (2005) and *Sona, the Other Myself* (2009) as well as *Our Homeland* (2012), a feature film, by the latter. My main concern in this chapter revolves around the directors' unstable and shifting positions between the host and the home country, and spectatorship in both Japan and South Korea. On the basis of historical contextualization, I explore the relationships among representations, spectatorship, generations, and gender.

## 2. Making Zainichi Identity through Filmmaking in the Postwar Japan

Following the success of a few feature films made by Zainichi filmmakers in the 90s, the cinematic presence of Zainichi began to be widely discussed and historicized not only in Japan but also in Korea and English language scholarship.[2] Most of the scholarly and curating works focus on the continued existence of Zainichi in postwar Japan and their sporadic cinematic visibility. However, Shota Ogawa suggests that we shift the focus from the "natural" presence of Zainichi in Japanese cinema to "a place carved out through inventive practical and discursive efforts."[3] As he indicates, the Zainichi's cinematic presence goes beyond the mere realm of cinematic representation in Japanese films, but is associated with diverse film practices and discursive endeavors, which shaped, challenged, and modified contemporaneous Zainichi identity. Their film practices have not been confined to the territory of Japan and the boundary of Japanese cinema, as their diasporic identity was engaged with the film culture in the homeland, albeit in an indirect way, and envisioned the Zainichi film culture between the homeland and Japan.

The history of Zainichi Koreans' filmmaking dates back to the immediate post-WWII era, when the colonized Koreans were to be refashioned as "Zainichi" Koreans of postwar Japan. The

[2] For example, Chŏng Su-wan, "Ilbon Yŏnghwa Sok e Nat'anan Han'gukin Sang Yŏngu [A Study about Representation of Koreans in Japanese Films]," MA thesis, Dongguk University; Yang In-sil, "Ilbon Midiŏ ka P'yosangganŭn 'Ch'aeil' sang [Zainichi image, represented by Japanese Media]," *Han-Il Minjok Munje Yŏngu*, 5 (2003): 73-107; Iwabuchi Koichi, "Political Correctness, Postcoloniality and the Self-representation of 'Koreanness' in Japan," in *Koreans in Japan*, ed. Sonia Ryang (Routledge, London: New York, 2000) ; Inuhiko Yomota, translated by Aaron Gerow, "Stranger than Tōkyō: Space and Race in Postnational Japanese Cinema," in *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia*, ed. Jenny Kwok Wah Lau (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003); Kazutami Watanabe, "*Tasha" no shite no Chōsen.* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003); Inuhiko Yomota. *Nihon Eiga No Radikaruna Ishi* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1999).

[3] Shota Ogawa, "Zainichi Cineaste: Film and the Korean Diaspora in Japan," (PhD Diss. University of Rochester, 2014), 38.

postwar Zainichi filmmaking began as early as November 1945, under the League of Koreans in Japan (*Choren*), as *Choren* set up its film division under the Education and Cultural Affairs department. In April 1946, Mishu Eiga Incorporation (*Minei*) was established as a subsidiary company of *Choren*'s film division. The members of *Minei* included Ho Nam-gi and Kim Sŏn-myŏng, who later became core members of *Ch'ongnyŏn*'s film activities. *Minei* closely collaborated with the Japanese film workers by joining the National Cinema and Theater Workers' Union with the aim of democratizing film in Japan and Korea. Some well-known Japanese documentary filmmakers, including Inamura Kiichi, Ishimoto Tokichi, and Asano Tatsuo also participated in *Minei*. *Minei* produced thirteen installments of *Choren News* and two documentary films before it ran into financial difficulties and had to disband. [4]

Like *Choren*'s initial objective, *Minei*'s foremost aim was "to lay the groundwork in Japan, where film supplies are comparatively easier to obtain than back at home, and then move the entire organization to Korea in the near future and help build up the Korean film industry."[5] Although residing in Japan, *Minei* filmmakers regarded their work fundamentally connected and, ideally, contributing to building the new film culture in their homeland. With this belief, Kim Sŏn-myŏng, a *Minei* member and a cinematographer, bought film equipment from Japanese production companies and tried to send it to North Korea in 1948. However, this smuggling was caught by US occupation authorities and Kim and his associates were arrested.[6]

[4] For more information about Zainichi filmmaking during US Occupation period, see Shota Ogawa, Chapter 1 in "Zainichi Cineaste: Film and the Korean Diaspora in Japan," (PhD Diss. University of Rochester, 2014).
[5] Almanac of Cultural Activities of Koreans in Japan [Zainichichosen bunka nenkan] (Tokyo: Chōsenbungeisha, 1949), quoted from Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, Yoshio Yasui, and Noriko Tanaka, *Nihon ni ikiru to iu koto: kyōkai kara no shisen* [*Borders within: what it means to live in Japan*] (Tōkyō: Yamagata Kokusai Dokyumentarī Eigasai Tōkyō Jimukyoku, 2005), 22.
[6] Ibidl., 18; Ogawa, "Zainichi Cineaste," 61.

*Choren* was dissolved by the Japanese government in 1949 and the United Democratic Front of Koreans in Japan (*Minsen*) was formed in January 1951. *Minsen* continued producing newsreel documentaries but another important project was to introduce the films of homeland to Zainichi audiences. In April 1953, a Japanese peace activist, Hirano Yoshitaro, visiting China for negotiations for repatriation of Japanese in China, was handed a North Korean film, *Keepers of the Homeland* (*Hyangt'o rŭl chikinŭn saramdŭl*, 1952) from a Korean representative with words to deliver it to Zainichi compatriots.[7] However, the film reels were detained in Japanese customs and Zainichi organizations, filmmakers, and audience cooperated to make a public screening possible.[8] *Keepers of the Homeland*, portraying North Korean partisan's courageous fight against the US army during the Korean War, was first screened in Japan on October 22, 1953. It was promoted as "Homeland (*choguk*) movie" among Zainichi Koreans and helped them to be connected to the homeland where the bloody war had just ended by a ceasefire agreement three months before. During the collective movement for the screening of *Keepers of the Homeland*, the Zainichi Korean Filmmakers' Collective (*Chaeil Chosŏn Yŏnghwain Chiptan* or *Eishu*) was established on July 20, 1953[9] and became a central organization of Zainichi filmmaking during the *Minsen* period. The filmmakers of *Eishu* produced *Misen News* and other documentary films including *Children of Korea* (*Chosen no ko*, dir. Arai Hideo and Kyogoku Takahide, 1955).

[7] Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, *Nihon ni ikiru to iu koto* [*Borders within*], 27.
[8] "Pogusippŭn choguk yŏnghwa, Hyangt'o rŭl chikinŭn saramdŭl ŭl sisa, ilban kong'gae chaengch'ui haja!" [Let the public screening of our homeland movie, Keepers of Homeland, possible!], *Haebang sinmun*, May 23, 1953, 2.
[9] "Yŏnghwain chiptan ŭl kŏlsŏng" [Film collective established], *Haebang sinnum*, July 25, 1953, 2.

보구싶은조국영화

『향토를지키는사람들』을試寫

一般公開를爭取하자!

조국 인민들로부터 종국 귀환사절단 平
野義太郎씨를 통하여 제일六〇만 동포들
에게 보내온조국영화「향토를 지키는 사
람들」(전 十一권三十五미리)의 橫濱세
관시사회 (試寫會)가 지난二十일 오전十
시부터 동경新橋 PPC회관에서 열리었
다 발금 세관 당국에 수입 신청중에
있는데 일반공개를 쟁취하는 운동을 지
금조·일각단체에서 전개하고있다 그런데
이날 시사회를 구경한 관객들은 이구동
성으로 이영화는 세계적 수준을 훨신
앞섰다고 「칠찬을 보내었다 앞으로 이영
화의 공개는 재일 동포들뿐만 아니라
전 일본 인민들에게 커다란영 향을 줄
것이지금부터 예상되고있다 (감독은「소년
유적대」「땅을의 고향」의 감독자인 윤
씨이며 영사시간은 一시간五十七분)



**Figure 2-1, "Let the public screening of our homeland movie, *Keepers of Homeland,* possible!" (May 23, 1953, 2p) (left); *Haebang sinmun* newspaper cartoon, "Ttolttoli" featuring the screening of *Keepers of Homeland* (October 23, 1953, 2p) (right)**

With the establishment of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (*Ch'ongnyŏn*) in 1955, the Zainichi filmmaking practices were restructured centering *Ch'ongnyŏn* and its direct relation with the DPRK. The Zainichi Korean Filmmakers' Collective was reorganized into the Film Department of the Alliance of Korean Writers and Artists in Japan under *Ch'ongnyŏn*. Reflecting *Ch'ongnyŏn*'s identification with DPRK, the films produced by the Ch'ongnyŏn Film Department were mostly newsreel films and educational documentary films about the ethnic education system, the splendor of the North Korean homeland, and the aspiration for the reunification of Korea. Upon the beginning of the Zainichi's repatriation to North Korea, Ch'ongnyŏn Film Department produced more films on the North Korean fatherland and worked as effective propaganda tool.

In the first decade after liberation, ethnic Koreans remaining in the former colonizer's territory could imagine their connectedness with the homeland through the medium of film.

Especially in a situation where their homecoming to either side of the homeland was not feasible, the film viewing was an alternative means to experience their homeland. With the growing influence of North Korea in Zainichi society through *Ch'ongnyŏn*, the cinematic images of the homeland became more directly associated with North Korea. Zainichi filmmakers in the Ch'ongnyŏn Film Department aspired to participate in the "Fatherland" reconstruction, albeit from afar, and their films made the Zainichi audience experience the homeland in North Korea through film viewing, which ultimately facilitated the mobilization of 90,000 Zainichi people in the repatriation project toward a homeland where most of them had never been.

## 2. Cinematic Homecoming to North Korea: *Ch'ongnyŏn*'s Coproduction with the DPRK

While most Zainichi filmmakers were consolidated under *Ch'ongnyŏn* and focused on production of education film and newsreel documentaries in the 60s, many renowned Japanese filmmakers, including Kobayashi Masaki, Imamura Shōhei, and Ōshima Nagisa, began to cinematize Zainichi issues in their films and attracted significant domestic and international attention. Ch'ongnyŏn filmmakers occasionally collaborated with the Japanese filmmakers. For example, when Urayama Kirino made *Foundry Town* (*Kyūpora no aru machi*, 1962), *Ch'ongnyŏn* helped him revise the script and make the depiction of Zainichi more realistic. Along with the changes in cinematic representations of Zainichi in Japanese cinema, the Ch'ongnyŏn Film Production was established in 1974 as an outpost of film production beyond the Ch'ongnyŏn community and newsreel films.

In the 1980s, Ch'ongnyŏn Film Studio made three feature films in coproduction with Chosŏn Art Film Studio in North Korea: *Silver Hairpin* (*Ŭnbinyŏ*, dir. Ko Hak-rim, 1985), *Snowmelt in Spring* (*Pomnal ŭi nunsŏgi*, dir. Rim Ch'ang-bŏm and Ko Hak-rim, 1985), and

*Mother's Wish* (*Ŏmŏni ŭi Sowon,* dir. Rim Ch'ang-bŏm and Yŏ Un-gak, 1987), all of which employed film crews and actors from North Kore. Among these three co-produced films, two were directed by North Korean filmmaker Ko Hak-rim, who was born in Japan but repatriated in 1960 at the age of twenty-five. As Johannes Schönherr notes, "[Ko] was most certainly chosen [for the co-production projects] because of his background and his knowledge of Japan."[10] Ko made a number of films in North Korea with diverse topics but his background as a Zainichi returnee compelled him to play a pivotal role in the co-produced films with Ch'ongnyŏn. Moreover, the all-location shooting of these films in Japan gave him the privilege to revisit his hometown in Japan, which was not allowed to other returnees.

Immanuel Kim notes that the political and cinematic shifts in 1980s North Korean film made this co-production possible.[11] The first change is that Zainichi who did not convert to ROK nationals but remained with Chosŏn status, were granted special permanent resident status after Japan joined the International Covenants on Human Rights and ratified the United Nations Refugee Convention in 1981. Accordingly, Zainichi Koreans could travel abroad and finally visit their repatriated families in North Korea. These family reunions were an important moment for *Ch'ongnyŏn* to solidify the Zainichi community's emotional ties with the DPRK. The second significant change was the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) decision to hold the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in South Korea. The DPRK requested that the IOC jointly host the Olympics with South Korea as it could be an unprecedented opportunity for the DPRK to be recognized by the world. To make the joint-hosting possible, the DPRK arranged the reunion of separated families in North and South Korea to show the world the importance of unification of Korea. However, the IOC did not grant this request and the DPRK's plan to garner international

[10] Johannes Schönherr, *North Korean Cinema: A History* (Jefferson N.C.: McFarland, 2012), 94.
[11] Immanuel Kim, "Snow Melts in Spring: Another Look at the North Korean Film Industry." *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema 7*, no. 1 (2015): 41–56.

recognition was thwarted. The third shift was impelled by Kim Jong Il's enthusiasm to develop North Korean films to international standards. As a cinephile himself, Kim found the North Korean films until the 1960s outdated in comparison with films in Eastern bloc countries. He wanted to elevate the standard of North Korean films to appeal not only to the domestic audiences but also to the international audience, showing the advancement of the DPRK. The presence of South Korean director Sin Sang-ok and actress Ch'oe Ŭn-hŭi in the DPRK from 1978 until their escape in 1986 significantly contributed to the modernization of the outdated film production system in North Korea. With unconditional support from Kim Jong Il, Sin produced various films in unprecedentedly large-scale and diverse genres, moreover, with international co-productions with Eastern Bloc countries. Steven Chung notes, "[Sin's North Korean films] instantiated broad changes in the North Korean film industry, created a cultural sensation and did penetrate the world (if only that of the communist bloc) market."[12] The DPRK's struggle for international recognition in the 1980s found its way in the co-production films with *Ch'ongnyŏn*.

The co-produced films unequivocally deal with the topic of homeland and homecoming. However, in the mid-1980s, when the repatriation project to the DPRK was terminated, the representation of homeland would be expected to be different from the 1950's educational films. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the ROK and Japan in 1965, many Zainichi Koreans have changed their nationality from Chosŏn to ROK, as one could apply for permanent residency in Japan following the change. In contrast to the decline in the numbers applying to return to North Korea since the 1970s, many Zainichi students began to go to South Korea for college education and Zainichi entrepreneurs started businesses in South Korea. As

[12] Steven Chung, Split Screen: Sin Sang-ok and Postwar Cinema (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 179.

already mentioned, in the early 1980s, Zainichi Koreans finally could visit North Korea after being granted special permanent residency. However, ironically, after visiting their "homeland," many Zainichi people found blatant differences from the images *Ch'ongnyŏn* promoted and the significant economic gap between North Korea and Japan. Thus, co-production films in the 1980s had to reckon with the economic rise of South Korea, disillusionment about North Korea, and no-longer-possible return to North Korea. In this context, two of the three films, *Silver Hairpin* and *Mother's Wish,* explore Zainichi Koreans' return to South Korea and its aftermath.

*Silver Hairpin* features Chin-sŏk, a devoted *Ch'ongnyŏn* member, who is a director of the distributing agency of the *Ch'ongnyŏn* newspaper. Twenty years earlier, his wife got news from South Korea that her mother was in critical conditions. Despite Chin-sŏk's concern, she decides to go to South Korea to meet her mother for the last time. Since then, she could not return to Japan because her homecoming was only orchestrated by South Korean secret agents' scheme to collapse the *Ch'ongnyŏn* organization. Even still, the secret agent approaches Chin-sŏk to coax him to come to South Korea but he refuses flatly. A while later, he learns that his wife is now in the Ōmura Detention Center, when she smuggled herself to Japan to celebrate Chin-sŏk's sixtieth birthday. All the members of *Ch'ongnyŏn* cooperate to release her and finally Chin-sŏk's family reunites.

To the South Korean agents, Chin-sŏk says that South Korea is not his homeland because it is colonized by the United States, just like it was colonized by Japan. Through Chin-sŏk's voice, the film explicitly asserts that the homeland is where the Korean people's spirit is alive, which is North Korea. Under the situation of increasing South Korean influence on the Zainichi community in the mid-1980s, the film claims that going to South Korea could be extremely dangerous, even rupturing the family and risking one's own life. Thus, instead of "returning" to

South Korea, which is "a colony of the USA," the film argues that Zainichi Koreans should remain in Japan and work hard for the unification of the motherland by devoting themselves to *Ch'ongnyŏn.*

*Mother's Wish* goes deeper into the life of a returnee to South Korea. It tells the story of T'ae-ryŏng, a Zainichi student who came to Seoul to attend college in 1971. It was his mother and late father's wish to send him to *koguk* (ancestors' country, homeland) to study. Although he came to Seoul with naïve hope and ambition, his college in Seoul was embattled by severe confrontations between the riot police and the students who were striving to prevent President Park Chung Hee's third term. While T'ae-ryŏng was helping a wounded girl, he accidentally got involved in the demonstration and was arrested by the police. At that time, the government tried to fabricate an espionage case operated by Zainichi students and T'ae-ryŏng suddenly found himself charged as a North Korean spy. T'ae-ryŏng's mother tries to release him by visiting the South Korean embassy in Japan and even the Agency for National Security Planning in Seoul but only finds that the officials there are so corrupt that they only demand bribes from her. During the interrogation, T'ae-ryŏng is tortured so severely with water and fire that he loses his ears. Zainichi students find evidence to prove T'ae-ryŏng's alibi, but nevertheless, the court sentences him to death. His mother never gives up but pursues her campaign to save her son's life. After ten years of waiting, his mother dies while he is still behind the bars.

This tragic story is based on the true story of the Sŏ brothers' case. Sŏ Sŭng and Sŏ Chun-sik, second-generation Zainichi Koreans from Kyōto, entered Seoul National University as part of a South Korean government program to attract overseas Koreans. They came to be involved in student demonstrations during the 1971 presidential election between Park Chung Hee and Kim Dae Jung. One month before the election, the brothers were arrested for violating

South Korea's National Security Law, which criminalizes any "anti-state" activities such as praising North Korea or questioning South Korea's stance on issues related to North Korea. They suffered brutal torture throughout the investigation, and Sŏ Sŭng attempted suicide by burning himself in the fear of making a false confession. Sŏ Sŭng was imprisoned for 19 years and Sŭ Chun-sik for 17 years and their mother, who devoted the rest of her life to save them, died during their prison term.[13]

Besides the Sŏ brothers' case, almost twenty more espionage cases involving Zainichi students were fabricated in the 1970s. The gravest charge against them was "unauthorized visit to North Korea" or "unauthorized contact with a North Korean," both of which were prohibited by the National Security Law of South Korea. The possibility that Zainichi Koreans could get in touch with North Korea through their repatriated family, Korean schools run by *Ch'ongnyŏn*, or the *Ch'ongnyŏn*-centered community itself, could be a legitimate reason to incarcerate them forever in South Korea. *Mother's Wish* criticizes this ruthless treatment by the South Korean government, questions the legitimacy of South Korea as the true homeland, and praises the DPRK for its moral superiority.

These films foreground the moment of homecoming to South Korea as a fatal and tragic mistake which fundamentally destroys the returnees' lives as well as their families. All the families in these films come to be ruptured and dispersed by their poor choices, with the reunion of the family becoming the goal for these separated family members. They imbricate the notion of family with the notion of homeland and claim that a homeland which separates a family is not a true homeland. Yet, the true homeland, each film claims, is inaccessible to Zainichi Koreans in their respective periods, thus those films basically consider Zainichi mobility to be dangerous.

[13] Chun-sik Sŏ, *Sŏ Chun-sik okchung sŏhan: 1971-1988* [Sŏ Chun-sik's letter from prison: 1971-1988] (Seoul: Yagan Pihaeng, 2009).

In contrast, *Snowmelt in Spring* goes beyond the mere condemnation of South Korea and glorification of North Korea by envisioning symbolic unification of two antagonistic homelands, through the love story of a young Zainichi couple. The partition dividing the home country creates a major obstacle to the marriage of Yŏng-a, whose father is a member of the pro-ROK *Mindan* and fiancé, Nam-su, from a pro-DPRK *Chongryon* family. The film depicts the ideological tensions surrounding Zainichi in contemporary Japan and suggests the thawing of relations between North and South with a happy ending in which the two lovers are wed.

*Snowmelt in Spring* finds the main reason for the reunion of the couple and their families is drawn from the colonial experience of Zainichi. Yŏng-a's father was conscripted to a coal mine in Hokkaido during the colonial era. One day, Yŏng-a's father killed a brutal Japanese director and instigated a riot. Yet, their rebellion was quickly suppressed, and he escaped with other Korean workers. While fleeing, one of his friends, Tŏk-sam, sacrifices himself to save Yŏng-a's father. Toward the end of the film, Yŏng-a's father finally discovers that Tŏk-sam is Nam-su's father and allows Nam-su and Yŏng-a's marriage.

One notable aspect of this film is that the narrator is another ethnic Korean living abroad, Ch'ŏl-mun, a Korean history professor at Seattle University in Washington. He visits Japan to do research in the archives in Japan as well as to attend his friend's daughter's wedding, that is, Yong-a. Seeing the two ideologically conflicting families of his friend, he thinks about the destiny of the homeland. When the young couple was broken up by their parents, Ch'ŏl-mun runs into Nam-su and helps them reunite. Belonging neither to the North nor the South, Ch'ŏl-mun is located between two conflicting ideologies and connects them. Furthermore, as a Korean who lived through the Japanese colonial rule and the national division, he is the one who

connects the history of the two Koreas to the colonized past and justifies the hope for the reunification of the two Koreas.

As the film was co-produced with the DPRK, it emphasizes the moral superiority of North Korea and criticizes the corrupted capitalist culture of South Korea. However, it is noteworthy that the narrative envisions overcoming the enmity between pro-North Korean Zainichi and pro-South Korean Zainichi by recognizing their common experience during the colonial era. Although the division of the homeland was still firm at the time of filmmaking, the ethnic Koreans abroad imagine and realize a symbolic reunification in the narrative. The characters of ethnic Koreans abroad in the film situate themselves at the center of a cinematic envisioning of a reunified homeland.

### 3. Zainichi Presence in Japanese Films and Emergence of Zainichi Cinema in the 1990s

Although Zainichi characters had been featured in a few Japanese cinema since the immediate post-war period,[14] as Watanabe Kazutami notes, during the 1960s, from the demonstrations against the United States and the Japan Security Treaty to the generation of the All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee, Korea and ethnic Koreans in Japan came to be recognized as part of the Third World and as a tool to criticize Japan's aggressive war.[15] The 1960s constituted a critical moment in Japanese society in enlivening new representations of Zainichi. On the one hand, there was a global rearrangement of powers prompted by the Vietnam War and a diplomatic change in the Korean peninsula occasioned by the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. On the other hand, social

[14] For example, *The Thick-walled Room* (Kobayashi Masaki, 1956), *Nianchan* (Imamura Shōhei, 1959).
[15] Kazutami Watanabe, *"Tasha" no shite no Chōsen* [Korea as the Other] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003), Chapter 4.

incidents closely related to Zainichi issues, such as the Komatsugawa Incident [16] and the Kim Hŭi-ro (or Kim Hiro in Japanese) Incident made the Japanese society reckon with the Zainichi existence in postwar Japan. From the late 1950s throughout the 1960s, a few renowned Japanese directors made films on Zainichi issues, including *My Second Brother* (Imamura Shōhei, 1959), *Foundry Town* (Urayama Kirino, 1962), *The Forgotten Imperial Army* (Ōshima Nagisa, 1963), *A Treatise on Japanese Bawdy Songs* (Ōshima Nagisa, 1967), *Death by Hanging* (Ōshima Nagisa, 1968), and *Three Resurrected Drunkards* (Ōshima Nagisa, 1968). Throughout the social changes surrounding Zainichi Koreans, they entered the sphere of cinematic representation in Japan as the most representative "Other" in Japanese society.

However, as Yomota Inuhiko points out, "until the 1970s, it was largely taboo to explicitly represent Zainichi in major studio films."[17] Comparing the invisibility of Zainichi with the visible Chinese characters in Japanese films, he argues that the Chinese have been given positive stereotypes in Japanese cinema but Koreans associated to negative images even beyond cinematic representations. He notes that "Koreans have been too close a presence for Japanese to build them into a positive stereotype in cinema; Japanese and Koreans have been like doubles looking at each other's images in a mirror, so similar one cannot tell them apart."[18]

Exploring cinematic radicalization in Japan in the 1960s and early 1970s, Yuriko Furuhata examines the ways in which Japanese avant-garde filmmakers re-discovered and re-mediated the image of Zainichi, already presented in journalism, most famously the Kim Hŭi-ro

[16] In 1958, the eighteen-year-old Ri Chin'u allegedly raped and killed two women; he was convicted and executed four years later. This incident was so sensational that it was made into several forms of cultural productions, including a TV scenario by Kinoshita Junji, Miyoshi Toru's *Silence of Sea*, Ōka Shōhei's *Innocence*, a short story by Ōe Kenzaburō, and Ōshima Nagisa's *Death by Hanging*.
[17] Yomota Inuhiko, "Stranger than Tokyo: Space and Race in Postnational Japanese Cinema," in *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia*, ed. Jenny Kwok Wah Lau (Temple University Press, Philadelphia 2003), 86.
[18] Ibid., 87.

and Komatsukawa Incidents. Competing with television journalism, she argues, the new generation Japanese filmmakers used cinematic artifice to expose the constitutive theatricality of journalism itself.[19] Between the overall invisibility in the major studio films and the excessive visibility in media journalism, the avant-garde filmmakers destabilized the dichotomous realm of Zainichi representation. Among the various films, Ōshima Nagisa's *Death by Hanging* (1968) acutely plays with the existing Zainichi representation in 1960s Japan by staging the negative stereotypes of Zainichi and discriminatory words and letting them be performed by Japanese public officials. While Maureen Turim emphasizes "Ōshima's concern with issues of justice and the state, grounded in reference to a 'real' incident,"[20] Furuhata focuses on the film's theatricality and artifice, based on Ōshima's understanding of the media event as being itself theatrical in nature.[21] Furuhata's argument shows that Ōshima's 1960s works, such as *Death by Hanging* and *Three Resurrected Drunkards*, do not reflect his sincerity in representing Zainichi issues in an authentic way, but rather his interest in the fragile reality of the mediated Zainichi image and his endeavor to achieve his own reality by radicalizing the theatricality of Zainichi crimes.

The cinematic existence of Zainichi in Japanese films, however, rapidly diminished in the 1970s. Koichi Iwabuchi explains the phenomenon of vanishing Zainichi in Japanese mass media as the product of excessive political correctness, engendered by minority groups' denunciations of the derogatory representations in Japanese media.[22] He maintains that an overabundance of self-censoring ironically rendered minority ethnic groups in Japan invisible in public media. The

[19] Yuriko Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 55.
[20] Maureen Turim, *The Films of Oshima Nagisa: Images of a Japanese Iconoclast* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1998), 65.
[21] Yuriko Furuhata, C*inema of Actuality*, 77.
[22] Iwabuchi notes the most representative case as a denunciation strategy adopted by *Buraku kaiho domei* (Buraku Liberation League) in the late 60s. Koichi Iwabuchi, "Political correctness, postcoloniality and the self-representation of 'Koreanness' in Japan," in *Koreans in Japan*, ed. by Sonia Ryang (Routledge, London: New York, 2000), 57.

negative stereotype of dirty and violent Zainichi had been constructed by the misrepresentations of the public media, but those same media reacted to that misrepresentation by coming to regard avoiding the representation of Zainichi to be the only politically correct option, thus purging them from the realm of representation.

Nevertheless, Zainichi directors' appearances in the Japanese film industry since the 1990s brought significant transformation of cinematic representation of Zainichi identity. Iwabuchi remarks that Sai Yōichi's *All Under the Moon* (1993), the first commercially successful film about Zainichi identity in Japan, challenges the Japanese media's superficial practices of political correctness and radically destabilizes the complacency that "ordinary" Japanese feel in accommodating their daily encounters with individual resident Koreans.[23] He highly appreciates the film's endeavor to liberate Zainichi from the burden of history and to allow a subtle escape from the tyranny of collective memory to a more nuanced subjectivity. Comparing Sai Yōichi's work with the exploitative "cosmetic-multiculturalism" of Japanese cinema and, the consumerist-driven accommodation of ethnic difference in contemporary Japan, Mika Ko also commends the Zainichi director, whose films she views as a genuine representation of minorities.[24]

The emergence of new forms of Zainichi representation such as that in *All Under the Moon* should also be understood against the backdrop of Japan's evolution into a so-called multiethnic society in the 1990s. Yomota Inuhiko examines this societal change and filmic representation of multicultural Japan by focusing on Iwai Shunji's film *Swallowtail Butterfly* (1996). Arguing that this film ultimately contributes to effacing the Other to reconstruct the

[23] Ibid., 58.
[24] Mika Ko, Part 3 in *Japanese Cinema and Otherness: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and the Problem of Japaneseness* (London: Routledge, 2010).

nation as a postmodern consumer culture,[25] he points out that *Swallowtail Butterfly* does not include Zainichi as members of multicultural Japan in an ostensibly multicultural Japan, because "Korea is, to the Japanese, not an exotic or ideal destination for tourists as are Hong Kong and Shanghai; combined with the racial discrimination that Koreans have long experienced in Japanese society, it would have been inappropriate to playfully take up their case in this context."[26]

*All Under the Moon*, on the contrary, foregrounds the Zainichi existence in the newly emerged multi-ethnic society and Zainichi interaction with other newcomers, especially in the relationship between Tadao, a Zainichi man, and Conny, a Filipina woman. However, Mika Ko and Koichi Iwabuchi both note that the film's depiction of a Filipina woman is nothing but conventional images of Filipino migrants, contrasting with the films' careful subversion of stereotypical Zainichi. Also, as the film is produced entirely by Zainichi, Iwabuchi argues, it might enable Japanese viewers comfortably to enjoy what is happening in the Korean community, because it is a story of another world which has little to do with the Japanese themselves. Nevertheless, he asserts that "strategic hybridity in [*All Under the*] *Moon* is a necessary detour to advance from a reified essentialism which does not well articulate a number of different options and forms of everyday life that can accommodate diasporic transculturation of 'Koreanness'"[27] and "a process of reproducing a 'self-confirming other,' a narrative to which the majority are eager to listen, in order to learn not about the interrogated subject, but about self."[28]

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[25] Koichi Iwabuchi, "Political correctness, postcoloniality and the self-representation of 'Koreanness' in Japan," in *Koreans in Japan*, edited by Sonia Ryang (London: Routledge, 2000), 88.
[26] Yomota Inuhiko, "Stranger than Tokyo," 84.
[27] Koichi Iwabuchi, "Political correctness, postcoloniality and the self-representation of 'Koreanness' in Japan," 69.
[28] Ibid., 72.

Since the late 90s, the cinematic representation of Zainichi was further facilitated by the unexpected fever over Korean culture, the so-called Korean Wave (*hallyu*). Analyzing the phenomenon of hallyu in Japan, Iwabuchi investigates the dynamics between the reception of the Korean Wave and the recognition of Zainichi. In comparison with Japan's Hong Kong boom in the 1990s and the Korean Wave in the 2000s, he argues that while Japanese audiences' consumption of Hong Kong media culture was marked by a nostalgic longing for lost social vigor as well as appreciation of a different mode of Asian modernity, South Korean culture was projected less onto the social vigor Japan allegedly has lost than onto personal memories and sentiments, which interestingly engendered the vivacity of post-text social praxis, such as learning the Korean language and educating themselves about the colonial history of Japan and Korea. Regarding the impact of the Korean Wave in Japan, he argues that the presence of Zainichi as (post)colonial subjects in Japan is decisively different from the Hong Kong case.[29] According to him, while there are positive impacts of the Korean Wave on the social recognition and positioning of Zainichi in Japan, there can be discerned a confusion in understanding their existence through the prism of South Korea, which accompanies the segregation of shared historical experiences of Zainichi.[30]

Ahn Min-hwa also examines the film *Break Through!* (*Pacchigi!*, dir. Izutsu Kazuyuki, 2004) in a context of the Korean Wave.[31] *Break Through!* portrays Zainichi students in a Chosŏn school in Kyoto in the late 60s, directed by a Japanese filmmaker but produced by Zainichi producer Yi Pong-u and based on Yi's own experience. Before analyzing *Break Through!*, she

[29] Koichi Iwabuchi, "When the Korean Wave meets resident Koreans in Japan: Intersections of the transnational, the postcolonial, and the multicultural," in *East Asian Pop Culture: 33 the Korean Wave. Vol. 1*., ed. Beng Huat Chua and Koichi Iwabuchi (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 253.
[30] Ibid., 257.
[31] Minhwa Ahn, "Allyŏjijianŭn tto tarŭn hallyubum: Chae'il bum gwa yŏnghwa pakch'igi [Another unknown Korean Wave: The Zainichi boom and the film *Pacchigi!*]" in *T'ŭraensŭ Asia yŏngsang munhwa*, ed. Kim So-yŏng (Seoul: Hyŏnsil Munhwa Yŏnʾgu, 2006), 203-37.

scrutinizes several Japanese TV dramas featuring Zainichi protagonists in the early 2000s and argues the embrace of Zainichi characters is intertwined with the intimidation Japanese feel from the fervent Korean Wave and subsequent desire to re-construct Japanese culture. In comparison with those TV dramas, she presents *Pacchigi!* as an emerging alternative dialogue between Japanese society and the Zainichi community as well as global and local, arguing that this film envisions the moment of solidarity based on their proletarian identity, also situated in the specific locality of Kyoto, thus overcomes the ethnic or national boundary between Zainichi and Japanese people. In this regard, shecontends, the film demonstrates a critical localism, local as a site of resistance and liberation, not a localism that is exploited by global capital, as proposed by Arif Dirlik. .

However, I argue that the film *Break Through!* rather clearly demonstrates the humorous gesture of solidarity and its limitation in real political engagement. To be specific, the scene when Zainichi boys meet Japanese student activists of the All-Campus Joint Struggle League on a college campus shows the limitations of that very solidarity or mutual understanding. In the scene, Zainichi boys go to the campus demonstration to sell helmets and steel pipes, stolen from a junk shop one boy's father is running. One Japanese activist asks them which faction they belong to. At first, they answer they are from the Arirang Unification Front in eastern Kyoto, but the Japanese student doesn't understand what that means. Then, one Zainichi boy adds that they need money for their senior classmate's medical treatments, who was injured at the Sanrizuka protest. Once the Japanese student hears the word "Sanrizuka," he shows a favorable attitude toward them and buys all the helmets and pipes. The code of Zainichi ethnicity, such as "Arirang" or "Unification," cannot be decoded by the Japanese student, but must detour to the Japanese

political code "Sanrizuka," and only then is it possible to realize their solidarity via this misunderstanding.

Furthermore, the overall nostalgic tone of the film about the spatiotemporal setting of Kyoto in the 1960s should be more critically examined. The film describes violent confrontations between Zainichi students and Japanese students, but the temporal setting of the late 1960s enables the audience to secure the distance to enjoy this ethnic confrontation as of the past and not belonging to current world. The culture of the late 1960s, even the protest culture, is tuned to this nostalgic mood, which reduces many convoluted issues to a fetishized and consumable image. In his own call for a creative critical localism, Dirlik warns that "excluded from this [critical] localism are romantic nostalgia for communities past, hegemonic nationalist yearnings of a new kind, or historicism that would imprison the present in the past."[32] The unexpected success and enthusiastic reception of *Break Through!* thus designates the very irony of Zainichi films, which need to make the past a consumable product by romanticizing its own history and securing a comfortable space for the Japanese audience.

Also, amid the praise for the new visibility of Zainichi cinema, the gender imbalance in Zainichi films should be re-examined further. Sai Yōichi's films are not only products of the director himself, but a collaboration of a group of second-generation male Zainichi artists: the screenwriter Chŏng Ŭi-sin, the producer Yi Pong-u, and the writer Yang Sŏk-il. To investigate the gender issues of Zainichi films, this male Zainichi cineastes' notions of gender, which is shaped not only by the Zainichi community but also by the Japanese film industry, should be considered. The text and context of their films show the highly male-dominant film culture where Zainichi men are accepted into Japanese society and its cultural sphere through their

[32] Arif Dirlik, "The Global in the Local," in *Global/Local: Cultural Productions and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham, N.C: Duke Univ. Press, 1996) 38.

hyper-masculinity. However, in this embrace of a male-centered Zainichi narrative, Zainichi women's narrative is hardly included, which stresses that ethnicity cannot be understood without examining its interaction with gender and sexuality, as Melissa Wenders notes in her analysis of Zainichi literature.[33] Compared to the male Zainichi cineastes' works successfully settled in the mainstream industry, female directors' works, such as Yang Yonghi and Pak Sŭ-nam, are much further marginalized and the narratives of Zainichi women also have been rare in commercially lucrative Zainichi films.

The emergence of Zainichi cinema since the 90s is significantly associated with the readjustment of Zainichi identities in relation with the homeland. Unlike the *Ch'ongnyŏn*-centered movement in the 1970s, which mainly aimed to "return" to the homeland or at least to sustain direct connection to the homeland, the anti-fingerprint movement in the 1980s enabled Zainichi Koreans to re-orient their identity as "foreigners" whose life space is not the homeland far away but the Japanese society in which they are now situated. The new wave of immigration in Japan since the 1980s further motivated Zainichi Koreans to fashion their diasporic identity as an ethnic minority of Japan rather than as overseas nationals of the DPRK.

Regardless of its varied styles and topics, however, Zainichi cinema discloses the conflicting ideas of the homeland. For Zainichi Koreans, even for the second- and subsequent generations, the homeland is not merely an "imagined" or "mythic" place, whether it designates the DPRK, the ROK, or Chosŏn, but is what incessantly determines their individual and collective identities. The history of dislocation perpetuated by Cold War politics constituted the Zainichi filmmakers' envisioning of homecoming via cinematic imagination.

[33] Melissa Wender, *Lamentation as History: Narratives by Koreans in Japan, 1965-2000* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 201

In the post-Cold War era, with the rise of the South Korean film industry and the expansion of its influence across the border, some Zainichi filmmakers were offered a chance to introduce their films to the homeland audience and to collaborate with the South Korean film industry. Most prominently, Sai Yōichi and Yang Yonghi were introduced in South Korea as representative Zainichi filmmakers and their films garnered significant discussions which led to the social recognition of Zainichi in South Korea. However, Sai's and Yang's cinematic return discloses the paradoxical condition of Korean residents in Japan, where Cold War politics remain incessantly at work, even in the post–Cold War era. In this situation, as their films show, their homecoming is still suspended and can only be imagined by their cinematic envisioning of the bona fide end to the Cold War and yet-to-be-achieved transnational mobility across the armistice line. Their return constitutes another iteration of their diasporic identity, which remains haunted by the colonial past and bound to Cold War confrontations, poignantly exposing the limitations of the realm of transnational South Korean cinema.

## 4. Where My Blood and Bones Are Shattered: Sai Yōichi's Films on Homecomings

### 4.1. Introduction of New Zainichi Cineastes in South Korea

Sai Yōichi, or Ch'oe Yang-il in Korean, must be the most representative and established Zainichi Korean filmmaker in Japan. He was born to a Zainichi Korean father and a Japanese mother in 1949 in Nagano Prefecture. His father was a leftist activist in *Ch'ongnyŏn* and Sai attended Chosŏn high schools run by *Ch'ongnyŏn*. Due his involvement in student movements, he was expelled by his college and entered the film industry. As is well known, he worked as the first assistant director for Ōshima Nagisa's *In the Realm of the Senses* in 1975. The experience working with Ōshima largely shaped Sai's own films, in the sense that he maintains a keen

interest in the social minorities of Japanese society, and he settled down in the Japanese mainstream film industry.

After making seven films featuring social outsiders in contemporary Japan, in 1993 he made *All Under the Moon* (*Tsuki wa dotchi ni deteiru*) about Zainichi Koreans, portraying a Zainichi taxi driver's life and romance. Based on Yang Sŏk-il's novel *Taxi Rhapsody* (*Takushi Kyōsōkyoku*, 1981), *All Under the Moon* was made by a collaboration of Zainichi cineastes, the producer Yi Pong-u and the scriptwriter Chŏng Ŭi-sin. Drawing massive attention, it became the first commercially successful Zainichi-themed film and won 56 film prizes in one year.[34]

Sai's unexpected success attracted the South Korean media's attention. After the success of *All Under the Moon*, Sai Yōichi went to Korea for the first time in his life on April 20, 1994. To enter South Korea, he changed his nationality from Chosŏn to ROK, which was reported as "Ch'oe Yang-il, converted from *Ch'ongnyŏn*."[35] However, Sai himself asserted, "the reason I have not changed my Chosŏn nationality thus far is only due to my respect for my father. I changed it to ROK now only because it is easier for me to go abroad" and "Nationality does not mean anything. South or North doesn't matter to me. I have only *choguk* (ancestral homeland)."[36] Even though Sai Yōichi and his film's mobility were sometimes interpreted in the language of Cold War politics, most of the Korean media introduced the film as a film "made by

[34] Yomota Inuhiko, *Ilbon yŏnghwa ŭi raedikŏlhan ŭiji* [Radical Will of Japanese Cinema], trans. Kang T'ae-ung (Seoul; Somŏng, 2011), 188-215.
[35] Ch'i-yong An, "Choch'ongryŏn sŏ Chŏnhyang han Kyop'o Kamdok Ch'oe Yang-il ssi [Ch'oe Yang-il, an overseas Korean filmmaker, converted from Ch'ongryŏn]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, April 21, 1994, 19.
[36] Sang-yŏn Yi, "Hae'oe esŏ binnanŭn Han'gugin Ch'oe Yang-il [A proud overseas Korean, Ch'oe yang-il]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*. December 23, 1995.

the cooperation between *Mindan* Koreans and *Ch'ongnyŏn* Koreans,"[37] symbolizing a reconciliation of divided Zainichi society, which precisely reflects the divided homeland.

In 1993, Yi Pong-u, the producer of *All Under the Moon,* who was also a Chosŏn national, came to South Korea to import the South Korean film *Sŏp'yŏnje* (dir. Im Kwon-t'aek, 1993) to Japan. After an agitating interview with the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Japan, which pressed Yi to change his nationality to ROK, Yi was allowed to enter South Korean for 48 hours without changing his nationality. During the brief meeting with Yi T'ae-won, the producer of *Sŏp'yŏnje,* Yi Pong-u was not asked anything about the details of the contract, but only about his family history in Japan and Korea and got an unusually simple two-page contract. Yi Pong-u said that Yi T'ae-won, who was a refugee from North Korea during the Korean War, understood Yi Pong-u's life as a Korean diaspora in Japan and believed him. Under the title *Over the Windy Hills*, *Sŏp'yŏnje* was released in Japan and became the first successful Korean film in Japan, drawing over 100,000 viewers there.[38] As this story illuminates, Sai Yōichi and the involved Zainichi cineastes' success in Japan were interpreted in South Korea as the end of Cold War confrontations and the beginning of a new epoch, leaving the colonial past and ideological tensions of the Cold War era behind.

In 1996, Sai Yōichi went to South Korea again, to study the Korean language in preparation for a film about Cheju Island's April 3rd Uprising, a major transnational project involving France, Japan, and Korea.[39] Although the Korean media reported it as "Ch'oe's

[37] "Ch'ae Il kyop'o Ch'oe Yang-il kamdok chak tal ŭn ŏdi e ttŏ inna Il yŏnghwa sang hwipssŭrŏ [A Korean Japanese director's film, *All Under the Moon*, swept Japanese film prizes]," *Tong'a Ilbo*, January 28, 1994, 21.
[38] Pong-u Yi, *Insaeng ŭn pakch'igi ta: iruji mot hal kkum ŭn ŏpta. na mani hal su innŭn il ŭl ch'ajara!* [Break through the life: there is no dream you cannot achieve. Find your own specialty] (Seoul: Ssine 21, 2009), 62-75.
[39] Chae-ch'an Pak, "Il kyop'o kamdok i 4.3 sagŏn yŏnghwa yŏnch'ul [A Korean Japanese director, making a film about April 3rd Uprising]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*. January 17, 1996, 19.

entering the domestic film industry," this was not realized until 2007 when Sai made his first Korean film *Soo*. His project on the Cheju Uprising eventually foundered, but the closest film to this suspended project among Sai's later work must be *Blood and Bones.*

Sai Yōichi and Yi Pong-u became the most representative Zainichi figures in South Korea in the early 2000s, symbolizing the newly achieved recognition of Zainichi in Japanese society and recently available Zainichi voices in South Korea. Yi Pong-u distributed several South Korean films, including *Shiri* (dir. Kang Je-gyu, 1999), *Joint Security Area* (dir. Pak Ch'an-uk, 2000), and *Untold Scandal* (dir. Yi Jae-yong, 2003) in Japan as well as produced successful film series *Break Through!* (*Pacchigi!*, dir. Kazuyuki Izutsu, 2004) and *Pacchigi! Love & Peace* (dir. Kazuyuki Izutsu, 2007). In 2005, he founded a Korean branch of his production and distribution company Cine Qua Non Films and opened a multiplex theater in Myŏngdong, Seoul. Meanwhile, Sai's films were well appreciated in Japan and some were released in South Korea after the lift of the ban in 1998. In 2004, Sai became the chair of the Directors Guild of Japan, as the first chair with foreign nationality. Both Sai and Yi endeavored to collaborate with the South Korean film industry, not only to expand their business but also to overcome the division of the homeland which had shaped their lives and films erstwhile.

### 4.2. Making a Mainstream Diaspora Film: *Blood and Bones*

During his sojourn in South Korea, Sai published a journal serially in *Chūōkōron* and after his return to Japan, the editor of *Chūōkōron* planned to make a monograph of his collected journals. For this project, he stayed in a hotel for a while under the editor's surveillance. There

he read Yang Sŏk-il's newly published novel *Blood and Bones* (*Chi to hone*, 1998).[40] Infatuated by the powerful story, he spent six years cinematizing the story.

*Blood and Bones* features a half-century history of a Zainichi man and his family. Those years encompass major events which shaped Zainichi society fundamentally, including Japan's defeat in World War II, Korea's national division, and Zainichi repatriation to North Korea. Yet, *Blood and Bones* describes a Zainichi man whose life abuts against those social forces, rather than being controlled by them. Kim Chun-p'yŏng, or Shunpei in Japanese, is a first- generation Zainichi who comes to Ōsaka from Cheju Island in 1923. Settled down in Ikaino, Ōsaka, Shunpei, a greedy and violent man, begins to run a fishcake factory and eventually becomes a loan shark. From his son Masao's perspective, the film painstakingly portrays the monstrous Zainichi father. In 2005, *Blood and Bones* received a number of awards such as the Japanese Academy Award, the Blue Ribbon Award, and the Kinema Junpo Award and attracted massive public attention in Japan.

Whereas the most salient issue of this film is Zainichi Korean life in Japan, the film deviates from the common features of diaspora films, such as those Hamid Naficy termed "accented cinema." With the term accented cinema, Naficy emphasizes the polyphonic structures of diasporic films caused by the multi-local, multi-national, multi-cultural characteristics of the diasporic filmmakers. As for diasporic subjects, language is never simple and unitary, but is almost always spoken with an accent. Naficy argues that the language of diasporic films is noticeable in carrying their creators' distinctive traces and revealing their roots as well as their interaction with the host societies. Unlike the unaccented dominant Hollywood cinema, accented cinema discloses its history and context, he argues. In this sense, the notion of accented cinema

[40] Yōichi Sai, Uishin Chon, and Sogiru Yan. *Eiga Chi to Hone no Sekai* [The World of the film, *Blood and Bones*], (Tokyo: Shinkansha, 2004),14.

has a strong affinity with Deleuze's idea of minor literature, as the minor is a means of challenging dominant modes of representation. By that definition, accented cinema can be understood as alternative cinemas in a broad sense.

However, *Blood and Bones* espouses the dominant film style as much as it exhibits its Zainichi identity or accent. Sai Yōichi was firmly determined to make the film not a minor film or alternative art-house film targeting a limited audience, but as a major film which reaches a broader range of people.[41] It was produced with a high budget, even building a whole film set representing the Korean town of Ikaino, Osaka, starring a group of the most famous Japanese actors of the time, and was made not only as a cinematic text but also as multi-media cultural products, from the original novel to a manga version. Although the topic and even language the characters occasionally use is "accented," the film explicitly follows the familiar style of dominant film. That is, the accent of Zainichi identity is modulated by the familiar visual configuration of the immigrant anti-hero films in a mainstream film style, such as *The Godfather* trilogy. Thus, I argue that *Blood and Bones* is major Japanese cinema with a Zainichi accent rather than alternative "accented" cinema.

The opening sequence of the film convincingly demonstrates the ways the film adjusts the diasporic accents, both linguistic and cinematic, to accommodate the dominant cinematic style. When the film starts, over a black screen with the film credits, we can hear a babble of voices and singing in the Cheju Island dialect. Without subtitles, the Cheju dialect is not quite intelligible either to the Japanese audience or the Korean, by which the film foregrounds the foreignness of the sounds the audience first encounters. When the chatting sound is changed into voices singing "Odolttogi," a traditional Cheju folksong, the black screen dissolves into a bird's-eye view shot, showing a steamer ship, the *Kimigayo-maru*, filled with Korean people traveling

[41] Ibid., 63.

between Cheju Island and Osaka. In a following scene, the camera pans the side of the ship showing the Korean people on board, and Western-style somber music overlaps with the Cheju folksong that continues from the previous black screen. Via young Shunpei's point of view, by the shot and reverse shot, the film shows a skyline view of the Osaka factory district, filled with smoking chimneys. The camera movement and *mise-en-scene* of this sequence greatly resembles the sequence of young Vito Corleone's arrival in New York City in *The Godfather Part II* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974). When the ship young Vito Corleone is aboard gets close to the city, in shot and reverse shot, the film shows the immigrants' faces on the ship and the Statue of Liberty over the solemn music. Through this visual configuration, Shumpei is shown as an ambitious young man with a Japanese dream, like the young Corleone with an American dream. By the familiar audio-visual style of Hollywood cinema, Sai coordinates the first-generation Zainichi Korean's migration with the broader image of migration in familiar cinematic references.

**Figure 2-2. Shunpei looking at Osaka in a ferry (left); Vito Corleone looking at New York in *The Godfather Part II* (right)**

Another important visual image which modulates Zainichi specificity with dominant cinematic language is the ways in which violence is contextualized in this film. Noboru Tomonari argues that Shunpei departs from the "faceless category of repressed resident Koreans," a category that Koichi Iwabuchi sees as problematic in the representation of Zainichi in

general.[42] Departing from the stereotypical victim image of Zainichi Koreans, *Blood and Bones* foregrounds hyper-masculinity as a salient ethnic characteristic of Zainichi Korean men, similarly to recently made Zainichi-related films, such as *Pacchigi!* (dir. Izutsu Kazuyuki, 2004) and *Go* (dir. Isao Yukisada, 2001), yet its masculinity functions in a different way than in those films. In *Go*, Zainichi men's hyper-masculinity is a way for them to be accepted into Japanese culture, symbolized as being loved by a Japanese girl. However, in *Blood and Bones*, the Korean ghetto in Ikaino is utterly isolated from Japanese society and Shunpei's hyper-masculinity does not help him to be recognized by the larger world but only destroys his own community and family.

Regarding the visceral violence dominating *Blood and Bones*, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano argues that the film is strategically targeted to the Japanese audience through the Japanese "cultural imagination" that can only be sustained by differentiating "Korean and Zainichi Korean culture from the dominant Japanese culture."[43] Arguably, the violent image of Shunpei caters to the Japanese audience's popular memory of images of male violence, especially the pre-existing cinematic image of Kitano Takeshi, the actor who played the role of Shunpei, in *Battle Royal* (2000) and *Zatoichi* (2003), and the cultural memory of the "ethnically-marked" pro-wrestling hero, Rikidoznan, in the 1950s, whose Zainichi identity was always the target of public attention. Wada-Marciano asserts that the extreme violence of the film is both popularized and ethnocized, in the sense that "violence is the only currency for Zainichi Korean figures to have 'subjectivity' within the Japanese cultural imagination."[44] Thus, she critically sums up that "to gain major

[42] Noboru Tomonari, "Configuring Bodies: Self-Identity in the Works of Kaneshiro Kazuki and Yan Sogiru." *Japanese Studies* 25, no. 3(2005): 257–69.
[43] Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, *Japanese Cinema in the Digital Age* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 115.
[44] Ibid., 120.

status, the film merely fulfilled the audience's expectations of the violent Zainichi Koreans, erasing the characters' complex identities beyond the cultural imagination."[45]

In agreement with Wada-Marciano's analysis of Shunpei's violence in a Japanese cultural context, I would like to further discuss the violence in relation with home, hometown, and homeland, which is significantly disparate for a first-generation Zainichi and a second-generation one. From the opening sequence of Shunpei's coming to Osaka, Shunpei's son Masao appears as the narrator of this film, who relays his father's story to the audience. Masao, the second-generation Zainichi, who was born in the Korean ghetto of Osaka, has only an abstract idea of homeland, with no direct experience, as is well demonstrated in the sequences when Masao and his friends are attracted by the revolutionary images of the DPRK. Instead, Masao's home itself is its own quasi-state as Shunpei's own kingdom, which is ruled by brutal violence and authoritarianism.

From Masao's perspective, the film loosely juxtaposes the image of nation or home country with Shunpei's domination. Before the end of the World War II, Shunpei seems like an uninvited guest rather than the father or the head of household. Without any notice, he disappears and shows up, with his arrival to the house indicating subsequent violence to the family, especially to Masao's mother. Most of the time, the father is away from home, which means brief peaceful times free from violence. However, when the war is over, Shunpei permanently comes back home. The news that Shunpei has come back frightens not only Masao's family but also the entire town which was terrorized by Shunpei's imminent violence. From his return, Shunpei regains his authority as the patriarch of his family as well as the extended family of the Korean town by gaining economic power and perpetrating domestic violence. It is notable that Shunpei's return occurs simultaneously with the demise of the Japanese empire. When two

[45] Ibid., 130

disparate nation-states were in the making on the Korean peninsula through extreme brutality, Shunpei is making his own kingdom in the Korean shantytown in Osaka. Even though everyone is frightened by Shunpei's physical assaults, the village gains vitality by laboring in the fishcake factory, which restores social order in the town, demonstrated by the divided gender roles in the division of labor in Shunpei's factory. His kingdom is comprised of his family, his blood and bones, as the title of the film denotes, and even the law and order of the Japanese nation-state do not reach there. The only way to escape from this utterly isolated quasi-state is to die, as Masao's sister does.

*Blood and Bones* is made in *mise-en-abyme* style, given that the first-generation Zainichi's history is documented and imagined by the second-generation Zainichi. The frame of the film exhibits significant differences from the original novel, which can be argued to be Sai's own filmic interpretation. Yang's original novel begins with young Shunpei working in a fishcake factory in Osaka. Overwhelmed by Shunpei's robust physique and piercing eyes, no one in the factory, even the manager, dares to control him. Shunpei in the novel is a monstrous figure from the first page. However, Sai sets the film a bit earlier than the novel begins, to Shunpei's arrival in Japan, which foregrounds the image of homeland as the bounded locality of Cheju Island rather than the broad and national image of Chosŏn.

The ending of the film also bears a significant difference from Yang's novel. The novel *Blood and Bones* finishes when Shunpei and his children from a Japanese mistress leave Ikaino to take the repatriation ship from Niigata. Yet, the epilogue, which is narrated by Masao and from his perspective, only hints at Shunpei's last moment. Masao happens to read a newspaper article about three repatriated Zainichi who are looking for their mother in Japan. The description of their family sounds like Shunpei's and the article states that the father, Shunpei, died three

years after his return. Looking at the photograph of the three siblings, Masao feels the unbreakable chain of blood.[46]

In contrast to the novel, the film visualizes Shunpei's last moments in North Korea: after Shunpei kidnaps his youngest son from the Japanese mistress to take him to North Korea, in the North Korea sequence, the film shows a young man digging in the ground on a snowy winter day. The camera follows him entering a shabby house. Preparing a meal, he casts a glance to a corner of the room, then the camera shows Shunpei lying on the bed. It becomes clear what the young man was doing before: he was digging a grave for Shunpei. Then, the opening sequence of young Shunpei on the *Kimigayo-maru* ship follows. The film cuts back to dying Shunpei, who just draws his last breath. After glancing Shunpei briefly, the younger man keeps eating his meal and the film ends.

Regarding this visualization of Shunpei's death, Sai said, "In the novel, the death was ambiguously described. I thought about an ending with Shunpei's peaceful rest in Cheju Island, his hometown. But I couldn't persuade even myself. As he lived a violent life, he deserves death in a bare land. While Shunpei dies, Ryūichi survives and will live as tough a life as Shunpei's."[47] While in the novel, Masao, the narrator of epilogue, feels the unbreakable shackles of blood and bones through the surviving siblings in North Korea, the film leads the audience to focus on the last moments of Shunpei's life, without any narration or explanation. By juxtaposing his determined face on the ship to Japan, his dying face casts the question of why he became such a monster. By tracing Shunpei's personal origins on Cheju Island to his death in North Korea, Sai Yōichi envisions the monster's harrowing homecoming and observes his ostensibly deserved

[46] Sogiru Yan, *Chi to Hone*, (Tokyo: Gentōsha, 2001), 505-512.
[47] "Yŏnhab int'ŏbyu, P'i wa Ppyŏ ŭi Ch'oe Yang-il kamdok [Joint Interview with Ch'oeYang-il, the director of *Blood and Bones*]," *Chae'oe Tongp'p Sinmun,* Feb 17, 2005, accessed March 1, 2019, http://www.dongponews.net/news/articleView.html?idxno=4682http://www.dongponews.net/news/articleView.html?idxno=4682

wretched last moment. Yet, at the very last, what we see is not the monster who destroyed the life of his family but a fragile old man who once upon a time was a hopeful young man.

On the one hand, the homeland to which Shunpei "returned" is contrasted by the locality of Cheju Island from where he originally hailed. While he configured his own "state" in Osaka, his homeland had itself been reconfigured into two nation-states facing off against each other. He would have well known that North Korea is not his homeland per se, yet he had no choice but to "return" there when he found that Masao does not want to help his business in Osaka, in other words, to be part of his kingdom anymore. When his own "blood and bones" turn their faces away from him, Shunpei decides to entrust himself to his broader blood and bones, the nation-state of homeland, by donating all his property. On the other hand, Shunpei's return and death in North Korea is the only way Masao can break the chain of blood and bones with Shunpei, although he himself is Shunpei's blood and bones. Even though Sai went to Kangwon-do of South Korea near the armistice line to shoot the North Korean sequence, the visual image of North Korea does not bear any reality or verisimilitude, instead, it appears as a metaphoric hell space where Shunpei pays dearly for his violent misdeeds. Through this visual image of homecoming and death, the film illustrates second-generation Zainichi self-hatred and self-pity surrounding their ethnic identity.

*Blood and Bones* was Sai's first film which was released in South Korea at the same time in Japan.[48] After the Korean premiere at the Pusan Film Festival, the Korean distributor released it in theaters nationwide. After the opening of the film, however, a viewer wrote into the film magazine *Ssine 21* to ask about a deleted scene in the South Korean release of the film. The question referred to a scene when Ch'anmyŏng, a young socialist and poet, takes a train to Niigata to catch the ship to "return" to North Korea. The viewer opined that because

[48] *All under the Moon* (1993) was released in Korea in 2007 and *Dog Race* (1998) was opened in 2002.

Ch'anmyŏng suddenly disappeared without any explanation, he could not understand what happened to that character.[49] The Korean distributor explained that when he applied for the film's import and release in South Korea, he was told by a committee member that the scene with the DPRK flags and General Kim Il-sung's song might be a problem according to National Security Law, as it can be interpreted as "praise for North Korea." The Korean distributor, who had already seen many cases in which the recommendation process delayed a film's release significantly, voluntarily deleted the 110-second sequence depicting Ch'anmyŏng's repatriation. Sai Yōichi expressed his regret about this and the deleted sequence was included in Korean DVD version.[50] Even though *Blood and Bones* was distributed after the lifting of Korean film censorship, through the self-censoring process, Zainichi Korean history related to North Korea was ruled as impermissible for South Korean audiences. This argues that the precarious social position Zainichi Koreans inhabited throughout the Cold War period persists and their homecomings yet still regarded as occasions of suspicion, necessitating investigation and control.

**Figure 2-3. Image of North Korean flags, initially deleted in South Korean release version**

[49] Han-sŏk Chŏng, "P'i wa Ppyŏ, ibbuk hwansongsik changmyŏn sakchehan ch'ae kaebong [Blood and Bone, released deleting the repatriation celebration scene]," *Ssine 21*, March 8, 2005, 24.
[50] Ŭn-hyŏng Kim, "Kkŏkkiji annŭn kŏmyŏl ŭi him [Unwavering censorship]," *Ssine 21*, March 18, 2005, accessed July 15, 2019, http://www.cine21.com/news/view/?mag_id=29106

### 4.3. Sai Yōichi's South Korean Film, *Soo*

In 2007, Sai Yōichi made his first, and only thus far, film in South Korea with an infant South Korean film production, Triz Club. A Korean producer, who eagerly wanted to make a film with renowned Sai Yōichi sent a letter to Japan in 2004 and Sai, who was also interested in transnational filmmaking at that time, agreed to make his first Korean film.[51] Based on the Korean graphic novel *Double Casting*, Sai's first Korean film *Soo* describes orphaned twin brothers who had been separated since childhood.

Whereas the project started with the enthusiasm of a novice South Korean producer and an established Zainichi director's willing response, the actual process of production was not quite smooth. To expedite the process, the Korean producer hired a few of Korean scriptwriters to adapt the comic book into scenarios. All the versions had to be translated into Japanese to be sent to Sai Yōichi. Without knowing who wrote which clearly, Sai sent his comments and had to wait until the translated answer arrive. As Sai's filmmaking schedule was densely packed, he could not afford to wait through the extended process of script revision and eventually rewrote the whole script by himself. Even on the first day of filming, the script was not fully revised and translated, but the crews were confident about Sai's experience and capability as a director. However, Sai had difficulty working with Korean crews, most especially Sai's despotic style of controlling the production on his hands was in conflict with the Korean crews' flexible style. There were rumors that Sai beat a crewmember on location and a number of crewmembers quit their work in the middle of filmmaking. Sai himself once left the film location due to the ill-preparedness. At last, within only 15% of production remaining, a more experienced Korean producer took over the work and completed the film, but it was only possible because Sai himself compromised with the imperfections in filmmaking.

[51] Yŏng-jin Kim, "Su e taehan ongho [My defense of *Soo*]," *Film 2.0*, April 3, 2007, 102.

The title of the film *Soo* comes from the protagonist Tae-su's alias. Tae-su and his twin brother, Tae-jin are orphans, roaming around a fish market. One day, Tae-su steals a bag full of drug money from a drug dealer, who end up catching identical Tae-jin by mistake, and the twins are separated from then on. While Tae-su becomes an efficient hitman named Soo, raised by a former soldier on a US military base, Tae-jin is raised by the drug dealer and just becomes a police officer, escaping from two decades of slavery. For a long time, Soo looks for Tae-jin in every way out of guilt that he ruined Tae-jin's life because of his misdemeanor. When the brothers are finally about to meet after 19 years' separation, Tae-jin is killed in front of Soo's eyes by a gunman hired by the drug dealer. Overwhelmed equally by grief and rage, Soo sets himself on a straight line of revenge by doing whatever it takes to find his brother's killer, including impersonating Tae-jin to infiltrate the police force.

Nathaniel Heneghan maintains that *Soo* "most thoroughly interrogates the aporia that surrounds Zainichi identity through strategies of doubling, repetition, performance, and masquerade, with the titular character embodying a Deleuzean notion of repetition that opposes conventional systems of representation and reconfigures passing as a viable approach for subverting binary concepts of identification."[52] He analyzes *Soo* as the Zainichi subjectivity resisting the homogeneous Japanese society by subversively using their dual identity or the logics of the passing. Although agreeing with his argument, I argue that the context of South Korean production and Sai's experience in the Korean film industry further complicate the film text, which features a Zainichi identity that is not only constituted by the disrecognition by

[52] Nathaniel Heneghan, "The Minority Machine: Alterity and Excess in the Films of Sai Yōichi," *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture* 12 (2019): 381.

Japanese society[53] but is also related to the misrecognition in the homeland. The act of doubling in the film *Soo* clearly manifests the Zainichi filmmaker's strategic approach to the homeland film industry but also the inescapable slippage in his identification with it.

*Soo* is exclusively shot in Korea with an all Korean cast and Korean crew, yet the cinematic image of the film does not show any clear reference to contemporary Korean society. The opening sequence clearly shows the film's departing from the spatiotemporal setting of contemporary South Korea. The film begins with a high angle shot showing the huge Korean national flag moving over the massive crowds gathering in the Seoul City Hall plaza during the 2006 World Cup Games. All in red t-shirts, people are rooting for the Korean soccer team, shouting Republic of Korea (*Taehanmin'guk*). After showing tens of thousands of people cheering for the national team, the camera shows the sky where fireworks are exploding, then solemn non-diegetic music plays with Tae-su's narration, saying "endless waiting makes people exhausted." In the next scene, we see Tae-su in a car, passing by the people gathered to cheer. Totally detached from the uplifted spirits and nationalist mood outside, Tae-su is confined by his past and guilt which cannot be shared with the others. In this opening sequence, the film portrays Tae-su as a person isolated from outer society and draws the audience's attention from the heightened nationalist atmosphere of South Korea during the World Cup games to isolated Tae-su's story.

Tae-su's foremost objective is to be reunited with his lost twin brother. He seems to almost achieve his goal when he finally finds Tae-jin after 19 years. However, just when the twins find each other across the street, Tae-jin is shot by a hitman hired by the drug dealer. From

[53] John Lie notes disrecognition as a consequence of societal repression of Zainichi produced by the imperatives implicit in discourses of homogeneity. John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 80.

this moment on, Tae-su masquerades as Tae-jin to get revenge on the drug dealer, who misrecognized Tae-jin as Tae-su and destroyed his life. Tae-su imitates his dead brother's appearance, lives at Tae-jin's house, and even works as a police officer, embodying the antagonistic two identities at the same time. Tae-su's dual identity destabilizes the social order surrounding him, especially his own police team, where all the forces are focused on catching Soo, the hitman. The drug dealer continuously sends gangsters to assassinate Tae-su, and his fellow officers begin to suspect Tae-su's identity.

There are two pseudo-father characters to these twins, which symbolize the construction of postwar South Korean history. One is Song-in, an antique art dealer and a Vietnam War veteran. He found young Tae-su in a club near the US military base and became his de facto father. Although he looks gentle and rational in appearance, he is the one who made Tae-su a contract killer as well as a broker for Tae-su's crimes. The other one is Ku Yang-wŏn, the drug dealer, who captured Tae-jin. He has made his own world in a large-scale fish market apart from the law and order of the nation and dictatorially rules it by mercilessly using violence, which resonates with Shunpei in *Blood and Bones*. Symbolically, on his desk, the photography of Park Chung Hee is framed between Buddha and Jesus. Sai mentioned that Song-in represents necessary evil and Ku Yang-wŏn, absolute evil.[54] As he said, the two fathers symbolize the two types of violence which constructed contemporary Korean society: one is the formalized violence endorsed by a bigger power, namely the United States, invisible in domestic society but which drove the next generation to continue to resort to another form of violence: authoritarian violence directed against its own people.

[54] Yŏng-jin Kim, "Igŏt ŭn yŏhatŭn Ch'oe Yang-il ŭi yŏnghwada [Anyway, this is Sai Yōichi's film: An interview with Sai Yōichi]," *Film 2.0*, March 13, 2007, 62.

**Figure 2-4. A frame of Park Chung Hee's photo placed on Ku Yang-wŏn's desk**

However, it should be noted that these two father-son relationships have come about by the mere misrecognition on the part of Ku Yang-wŏn. The theme of misrecognition between Tae-su and Tae-jin is repeated throughout the film. Ku Yang-wŏn misrecognized Tae-jin as the one who stole his moneybag and after Tae-jin's death, Tae-jin's girlfriend and colleagues misrecognize Tae-su as Tae-jin. Tae-su actively takes advantage of people's misrecognition to fulfill his revenge and obfuscate their confidence in his identity. Although disguise and misrecognition are common rhetorical tropes in hardboiled films, in *Soo* it requires further contextual understanding about Zainichi identity not only in Japan but also in South Korea. In South Korean society, Zainichi Koreans are constantly requested to reveal their "true" identity in terms of whether they support South Korea or North Korea. On top of that, referring to their deficiency in the Korean language and their Japanese mannerisms and fashions, Koreans often derogatorily call them half-Japanese (*pan ch'okpari*). Zainichi identity which does not fit into the ethno-nationalism and anti-communist idea of South Korea is often misrecognized and made them vulnerable to diverse forms of violence, including state violence as in the fabricated espionage cases. In this context, Tae-su's masquerade has a symbolic significance by which he gets out of victimization and utilizes the misrecognition for his own purposes. This could also be

read as Sai's own positioning about the filmmaking of *Soo*, making his first "Korean film" as a Zainichi filmmaker.

To end all the tragedies that derive from misrecognition, Tae-su has no other way but to kill the pseudo-father. Tae-su and Tae-jin both tried to sever the relationship with their pseudo-fathers when they found each other. However, Ku Yang-wŏn murders not only Tae-jin but also Song-in to induce Tae-su in his place. The latter half of the film describes Tae-su's bloody quest to kill Ku Yang-wŏn. During the battle, Tae-su constantly speaks to Tae-jin, which is actually talking to himself. Embodying his dead twin in himself, Tae-su realizes that Ku Yang-wŏn could have been his own pseudo-father if he had not misrecognized his brother. Thus, this becomes a mission to kill the father of both, who destroyed both lives. With very little dialogue, Sai does not stylize the combat scenes; they are often chaotic, emphasizing the desperation in the characters' will to survive and revenge. At the end, Tae-su finally kills Ku Yang-wŏn but is also fatally wounded.

Although Sai put much effort in this project, the film was neither successful at the box office nor received favorable comments from critics. Sai's original script had to be shortened during filmmaking and some characters left without enough explanation. Especially, the lack of proper context of the characters' emotions made the South Korean audience and critics puzzled. A Korean film critic, Yi Sang-yong, noted that "*Blood and Bones* could be appreciated in Korea as a film about a father, which demonstrates Zainichi filmmaker's liminality, however, the father-son relationship of *Soo* is very difficult to contextualize. The audience must actively engage with the narrative to understand. However, with the film's images of fierce violence, it

must be hard for the audience to fill the gap in the narrative."[55] Another critic mentioned that Soo is "a film with only action and style but without motivation."[56]

The failure of contextualization is partly due to the troubled production process. As mentioned earlier, the filming in South Korea was much different from that of Japan for Sai and there were various instances of misunderstanding and miscommunication. In an interview, the interviewer mentioned that some film crews said that Sai is exactly same as the character Shunpei in *Blood and Bones*. Sai answered that if he were Shunpei, he would have never compromised but he did. Thus, he was totally different from Shunpei, but he rather regrets that he hadn't been Shunpei so to make the film in a better way.[57] Sai, an established director in the Japanese film industry, found himself in a totally different situation, where his authority and control were at stake.

In South Korea, namely his ancestral homeland, Sai encountered distinctly different cultures of filmmaking. His Zainichi identity was translated as otherness rather than ethnic sameness by his own crews, and his despotic style exacerbated the misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the film *Soo* compellingly integrates the issues of misunderstanding and misrecognition he must have felt in South Korea as discussed above. Due to the inevitable adjustments he had to make during the production and the post-production process, the final result was wildly uneven, moving between slow exposition scenes of plot development and raw, brutal fight scenes dominated by chaos. However, the South Korean critiques about the lack of contextualization rather show the lack of contextual understanding of Zainichi in 2007 South

[55] Sang-yong Yi, "Tugae ŭi sisŏn ŭo iknŭn Su [Reading *Soo* from two perspectives]," *Film 2.0*, March 27, 2007, 31.
[56] Pyŏngwŏn Chang, "Haengwi wa sŭtail man itko tonggiga ŏmnŭn aeksyŏn [Action only with movement and style, but without motive]," *Film 2.0*, March 27, 2007, 32-33.
[57] Yŏng-jin Kim, "Igŏt ŭn yŏhatŭn Ch'oe Yang-il ŭi yŏnghwada [Anyway, this is Sai Yōichi's film: An interview with Sai Yōichi]," *Film 2.0*, March 13, 2007, 60.

Korea. A majority of the comments about *Soo* only concentrated on the hardboiled film style of Sai Yōichi and failed to read the Zainichi filmmaker's positioning and engagement with South Korean society.

*Soo* remains an impressive experiment of a Zainichi director making a Korean film but was not be continued. Sai mentioned that *Soo* would be a singular point in his film career, although it would not be a turning point.[58] Sai has not made any other films with a Korean co-production team after *Soo*. He had a solid production system and audience in the Japanese film industry and did not have enough reason or motivation to continue with South Korean production.

## 5. Between Home and Homeland, Yang Yonghi's films

### 5.1. Dispersed Family and Autobiographical Filmmaking

Yang Yonghi is a second-generation female Zainichi filmmaker who has made two documentary films and one feature film about her own family's homecoming experiences. She was born and raised in *Ch'ongnyŏn*-centered Zainichi society and her three brothers "returned" to the homeland, the DPRK in the early 70s. Yang's parents were praised as a "model family" of Zainichi Koreans by *Ch'ongnyŏn*. Yang herself was a model student in Chosŏn schools. However, her life was deeply divided between the strict rules of *Ch'ongnyŏn*-centered Zainichi society and the liberal youth culture in contemporary Japanese society. After a few years of service as a teacher in Chosŏn schools, in 1994 she decided to live her life as she wished and removed herself from *Ch'ongnyŏn* society. At that time, she happened to learn of video recording and adopted it as her own language to communicate with the world. In 1995, she made two short documentary films about Zainichi students, titled "Ch'ima chŏgori" and "The Swaying Spirit (*Yureru kokoro*)," describing the ethnic discrimination these students encounter in their

[58] Ibid., 63.

daily lives. The two films were aired by Japan's NHK broadcasting network, and thus she decided to pursue filmmaking as a career. In 1997, she went to New York to study documentary filmmaking and in 2005, she made her first feature-length documentary, *Dear Pyongyang*, about her own family.

In this section, I will follow Yang's three films telling her autobiographical story and explore how the meanings of home, homeland, and homecoming have been reconsidered and revised. In addition to that, by closely examining the interconnections between her own life and filmmaking, I will scrutinize the director's unstable and shifting positions between the host country and divided homelands.

### 5.2. *Dear Pyongyang*

Yang Yonghi's first feature-length film, *Dear Pyongyang*, epitomizes a recurring theme in all her films, which is the journey to the homeland, but also questions where the family's homeland truly is. *Dear Pyongyang* records Yang Yonghi's several homecomings to North Korea from 1995 until 2004 to meet her brothers and their families.

After introductory subtitles about the history of Zainichi Koreans and their repatriation to North Korea, the first scene shows Yang's mother and father having dinner with beer. Yang's voice intervenes in their conversation from behind the camera and her hand holding a cup of beer stretches into the screen from behind the camera. This is the location of her camera throughout the film. Holding a camera with her right hand, she talks to her family members from behind the camera and reaches out her other hand to touch them. As this positioning of the filmmaker shows, the video footage of *Dear Pyongyang* is basically made as home video, as if filming family members to later show other members who were not present. Thus, this basic function of a video

recorder commonly used by non-professional cinematographers symbolizes the upmost objective of this film, which is to share a moment among dispersed family. Yang positions the audience with her and asks them to watch the film from that vantage.

Although the camera follows Yang's family members literally "at arm's length," it only reveals there are many more stories which cannot be told in front of the camera. Behind her nephews and a niece's innocent babbling, the camera captures her brothers' silent faces. Her eldest brother, who had most difficult time adjusting to North Korean society and culture and who suffered serious mental illness, leans against the wall and listens to his son's piano playing. He rarely talks but his silence itself reveals much about his life in Pyongyang as a "returnee."

Through this film, Yang Yonghi poses two crucial questions to her father. The first one is whether he regrets his decision to send all the sons to North Korea, and the other is whether she might change her nationality from Chosŏn to ROK. Both questions have been forbidden in Yang's family but through the camera she brings the questions forth. In an article, Yang noted that it was like "stroking somebody's skin with a knife."[59] She knew that the process of filmmaking could hurt someone but only wished not to hurt her father too much or kill him. Making a film about North Korean life itself could be dangerous, especially for the people living in North Korea. Then, how much anguish, how many scars could she ask her family to bear? She had to "balance herself like on a balance beam" not to hurt her family too much as well as to neither praise nor criticize North Korean society.

Her questions are, in other words, about the distance between her father's homeland and her own home. In the bus to Pyongyang, her voiceover narration says, "There was a traffic notice saying '16 km to Pyongyang.' Looking at the scenery outside of window, I am thinking of my

[59] Yang Yonghi, "Naifu de fureru yō ni [Stroking skin with a knife]," *Gendai Shisō: Revue De La Pensée D'aujourd'hui* v.35 no. 13 (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2007), 73.

three brothers and nephews and a niece. At the same time, I am sure that I am not embraced in the fatherland, or heading to the capital of a revolution, but just going to the place where the people I miss are, where they are waiting for me." She and everyone in the family know that the father's choice of homeland as North Korea eventually separated them but could not dare to ask her father about it. Toward the end of the film, she asks the question and gets the answer that "it would have been better if I had not sent them." His hopes of Korea soon unifying and then this unified Korea and Japan reinstating diplomatic relations was far from being fulfilled. Through her family, constrained by Cold War politics, Yang Yonghi unveils her own precarious existence between eras—Cold War and post-Cold War—to the audiences in Japan and South Korea.

The homeland in *Dear Pyongyang* is nothing but an ambivalent place, an unknown land imposed upon her as a homeland, but also a place that separates her family, where she is not, but where her loving brothers are. These contradictory and multifaceted meanings of the homeland in this film illuminates the intimate conflicts between home and homeland for Zainichi Koreans, especially *Ch'ongnyŏn* society. Yang Yonghi, as her image of balancing on a balance beam captures, carefully demonstrates her mixed feelings about Pyongyang and eventually accepts that Pyongyang is her father's homeland that he has long believed in, but to her it is just a place where her family is living, which is actually not her own homeland.

*Dear Pyongyang* was introduced in South Korea through the Pusan Film Festival, and released in South Korea in November 2006 by the distribution company Cine Qua Non Films, run by Yi Pong-u. It is notable that *Dear Pyongyang* was often discussed with a South Korean documentary *Repatriation* (*Songhwan*, dir. Kim Dong-won, 2004) in South Korea.[60]

[60] For example, Hŭi-ch'ŏl Kim, *Sesang ŭl parabonŭn na man ŭi nun, tak'yument'ŏri* [Documentary, My own perspective toward the world], (Paju; Tŭllyŏk, 2014); Public Conversation between Yang Yong-hi and Kim Dong-won, titled as "Talk about Documentary, Diaspora, Family, and Diary Film," at 2005 Seoul Independent Documentary Film and Video Festival on November 1, 2015.

*Repatriation* is a documentary film about North Korean partisans who were captured and imprisoned in South Korea for more than thirty years. They were finally released from prison in the 1990s, when inter-Korean relations improved, and repatriated to the DPRK. During the Korean student movement in the 1980s, one of the shared loci of solidarity was the abnormality of belonging to a divided nation. They refused to accept South Korea as a legitimate nation or the only homeland option, but rather pursued the unification of the homeland.[61] The Korean independent film movement, which was directly influenced by the student activism, adopted this longing for unified homeland—thus the authentic vision of North Korea—which had been forbidden since the establishment of the South Korean government in 1948, and was one aspiration for the movement. *Repatriation* shares this wish for a unified homeland by portraying the long-term prisoners' "homecoming" to North Korea. However, the film could imagine their lives in North Korea only based on footage from a propaganda documentary made in North Korea. The director endeavored to find some semblance of authenticity in this footage but could only find awkward faces in the staged setting. Given this inaccessibility to an authentic North Korea for Korean audiences, *Dear Pyongyang* provided the South Korean audiences with the most intimate portrayal of North Korea available.

### 5.3. Cinematic Imagining of Homecoming: *Sona, the Other Myself* and *Our Homeland*

Although Yang Yonghi wanted to transcend the inherent borders between her father and herself by filmmaking, the borders in real life were fiercer than her will. Because she made and released *Dear Pyongyang* without the North Korean government's permission, in 2006 North Korea banned Yang Yonghi's entry to the country indefinitely. Facing a situation in which she

[61] Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 70-108.

cannot shoot further footage in North Korea, she made another documentary film from the footage she had shot before she was banned from entering North Korea. Her second documentary, *Sona, the Other Myself*, is about Sŏnhwa, or Sona, her only niece in North Korea, who reminded her of her own childhood as an only daughter among elder brothers. In an interview, Yang said Sona was the reason she brought a video recorder to North Korea in the first place.[62]

As she changed her nationality to ROK while making *Dear Pyongyang*, Yang temporarily shifted her filmmaking base to South Korea for the project of *Sona, the Other Myself*. She attained the minimum of the production costs from Pusan International Film Festival's Asian Network of Documentary Fund in 2006 and a Korean film production company, Zio Entertainment, took on the role of production and distribution in South Korea. She had to redress her balancing act between the divided homelands to protect her family, pursue her filmmaking, and envision another homecoming, even if only possible in cinematic imagination.

In this film, Yang shows her earlier journey to Pyongyang to meet Sona, who was born and raised in North Korea. Even though Yang denies North Korea as her own homeland, it is Sona, her beloved niece's homeland. Looking at Sona, Yang sometimes envies her for being able to live near her own missed brothers, but also worries about Sona's life in North Korea. From a filmmaker intimate with the subject, it introduces young Sona, who is full of feisty spirit and talent and does not hide her thoughts and feelings in front of camera.

However, on Yang's last visit to Pyongyang, Sona, now reaching puberty, seems a bit shyer in front of the camera. Yang brings Sona to a western restaurant to give her a chance to taste something she hasn't tried before. Looking at the menu, Sona cannot decide for a long time

[62] Pyŏng-jin Kang, "P'yŏngyang esŏ ssŭn tubŏnjjae p'yŏnji [The second letter from Pyongyang]," *Ssine 21*, March 1, 2011, 79.

what she might like to try. Sona looks worried that the order might not be good because she is not familiar with most of the items on the menu. Yang presses her, saying that it is better to regret her choice than to not even try. After eating the meal, Yang and Sona sit in front of the Pyongyang Grand Theater. When Yang says she likes to watch plays, Sona is about to say that she doesn't care for that very much. Yet, suddenly she stops talking and makes a gesture to shut down the camera and whistles "shut down" in English. On a black screen, the dialogue Sona and Yang share is written. It is about the plays Yang watched in New York and Japan. Sona says, "I don't know about that very well, but it is better than not even listening to the story, so please tell me more if it's alright with you…."


**Figure 2-5. Sona asking Yang to shut down the camera**

Sona's furtive request to shut down the camera and the following black screen awakens the audience from their spectatorial distance and extends an invitation to experience the invisible but surely extant borders between them. In contrast to Yang's impatient demands to experience as much as possible, Sona knows better than anyone what can be spoken of and filmed or not. She refrains from expressing her thoughts in front of camera, but only when the camera is shut off does she utter a variation of Yang's earlier words: "it is better than not even listening to the

story." This moment designates that truthful conversation among Yang's family cannot be filmed, and ironically, it was the last footage Yang could film in North Korea. Although Yang portrays her own and her family's life through the intimate subjective lens which identifies with her own perspective, what she eventually finds is a moment that she cannot record.

In 2012, Yang made her first feature film, *Our Homeland* (*Kazoku no kuni*). It is also about her family's history, but this time the film features not her homecoming to the DPRK but her elder brother's homecoming to where their home is located: Japan. Sŏng-ho, a fictional character modeled on Yang's brothers, was sent decades ago to North Korea and returns to Japan for a temporary medical visit. Under the constant surveillance of an accompanying North Korean official, Sŏng-ho and his family reunite again. Rie, a fictional characterization of Yang Yonghi herself, cannot be happier with Sŏng-ho's return but by his return, they must confront the hidden scars left on all the family members' hearts after Sŏng-ho's "repatriation" so long ago.

Although the function of the camera in feature films is largely different from that of documentary films, *Our Homeland* takes on a peculiar positioning of the camera that evokes documentary filming. A good example is the scene when Sŏng-ho arrives at his hometown neighborhood. In the car, the camera takes on the vantage of Sŏng-ho, showing Sŏng-ho's face looking out of the window and showing the scenery outside that he would have been seeing. Through this shot-reverse shot, the camera makes the audience identify with Sŏng-ho's perspective. However, when he gets out of the car and looks around the alleys while slowly walking, the camera detaches from his point of view. At first, the hand-held camera stands in front him but slowly moves behind him. Then it follows behind him but when Sŏng-ho stops, it walks a half circle around him and shows him in a frontal shot. It shoots Sŏng-ho's face from the front then pans to show what he looks at without cutting. The sounds of the market, the whirring

of cicadas is amplified by virtue of walking rather than driving. When Sŏng-ho finds his mother and stops, the camera moves a half circle from behind and again shows his face in profile. This movement indeed shows a subjective perspective, but the audience cannot be sure if it is Sŏng-ho's perspective or not. It is definitely detached from Sŏng-ho's point of view but expresses what he feels as well.


**Figure 2-6. Sŏng-ho arriving at his hometown in Tokyo**

Regarding this peculiar location of camera in *Our Homeland*, Chŏng Han-sŏk writes that the salient existence of subjective viewpoint in *Our Homeland* damages the autonomous diegetic world of feature film. By taking a privileged stance from the camera's perspective and the fact that this story is based on the filmmaker's personal history, Chŏng argues, Yang intervenes into the diegetic world and overrules it. [63] Largely agreeing with Chŏng's analysis, I further the argument about the use of camera perspective in all her films. In the two documentary films, as mentioned before, the camera is located right next to her eyes and it moves like an extension of her body. The subjects of the film are all family members who also treat the camera indeed as an extension of her. From this subjective perspective, the audience can see her family's most intimate faces, which starkly contrast with those in the photographs montaged in the films. In

[63] Han-sŏk Chŏng, "Sin chŏnyŏng gaekchan: sŭlp'ŭm ŭn ŏdisŏ poaya hanŭn'ga [Where should the sadness be observed]," *Ssine 21*, accessed October 10, 2016, http://www.cine21.com/news/view/?mag_id=72856

other words, her position as a daughter, sister, and aunt of the filmic subjects provides the audience with the privilege to see their ordinary and private lives in North Korea, which is rarely accessible to anyone but North Koreans themselves. Yet, at the same time, Yang limits the audience's perspective to her own position and does not deviate from it. Not only by the camera location but also with the narrations, Yang tries to define the meaning of the scene as she sees it and the viewer's independent interpretation is restricted.

Yang's rather restrictive methodologies in her films are surely determined in part by the political situation surrounding her family. Just as her access to North Korea was denied after making *Dear Pyongyang*, her own and her family's actual lives were constantly under the influence of her films. She said she was extremely worried whether she might put her family in North Korea in danger after making the films.[64] For Yang, making films about her family was a double-edged sword, both a desperate enunciation to make sense of her multiple identities as well as posing a threat to her family in North Korea. In an interview, she said the following:

> The best way to protect my family is to make them as famous as possible. When the DPRK government decided to ban my entry, *Ch'ongnyŏn* imposed upon me to write a "letter of apology." But I made *Sona, the Other Myself*, instead of an apology letter. I expressed my opinion with that. [65]

Yang's life inside and outside of the films was directly influenced by the Cold War politics still virulent in North Korea. Throughout the films, she shows that her family's location and the homeland are not identical for her, and within this situation, her utmost objective for filmmaking came to be protecting her family from danger, particularly political danger. The defensive attitude of her films is not only for her family in North Korea, but also for her father. He was an enthusiastic activist who led the repatriation project ardently, which means he not

[64] Yang Yong-hi, "Naifu de fureru yō ni," *Gendai Shisō: Revue De La Pensée D'aujourd'hui* 35 no. 13 (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2007), 74.
[65] Yong-jae Mok, "Kajok chikiryŏgo 'Gutbai P'yongyang' mandŭlŏtta [I made 'Sona, the Other Myself' to protect my family]," *Daily NK*, February 21, 2011.

only sent his own sons to North Korea but also was involved in sending many other Zainichi Koreans from the Osaka area. However, the filmmaker limits the scope of the film tightly to her family's story and tries to advocate for her father's deed, deflecting possible criticism against him. That is to say, she wanted to tell her family's story to the audience but only in the way she wants it to be understood. The reason that the black screen in *Sona, the Other Myself* is so poignantly revealing may be that it shows a singular moment the director cannot control.

This intimate but also restrictive camera use persisted in *Our Homeland* as well. Then why did she make a feature film rather than a documentary film? In addition to the fact that she cannot cross the border to North Korea anymore, another motivation might be inferred from the black screen in *Sona, the Other Myself.* As there are many untold family stories that cannot be shared before the camera, she decided to make a feature film in order to be freed from those practical restrictions.[66] She wanted to reenact the moment which could not be filmed in her documentary and she and her brother could not speak what they wanted. The location of the camera in *Our Homeland* seems to be Yang's own location, watching her past like an out-of-body experience. Thus, as Chŏng notes, Yang tries to moor the autonomous world of feature film into the frame of reference of her own actual history, and furthermore, to decide for the audience where and what to see in the film.

Yang's filmography is a chronology of constant confrontation with the homeland, negotiation between her home in the host country and divided homeland, finding the appropriate distance from the homeland, and strategic choices to protect her family through filmmaking. And in her latest film, she features her brother's reverse homecoming from North Korea to Japan. The film explicitly shows that the homeland her father chose was not a homeland of return but rather

[66] "Filmmaker Yang Yong-hi Vows to be 'Offshore Troublemaker' to Protect Family in North Korea," accessed February 20, 2019, https://asiasociety.org/new-york/filmmaker-yang-yonghi-vows-be-offshore-troublemaker-protect-family-north-korea

that their home in Japan is the place Sŏng-ho belongs. On the first night after his homecoming, lying in their futons before going to sleep, Rie says to Sŏng-ho, "O-kaeri [Welcome home]" and Sŏng-ho answers "Tadaima [I'm back home]." In this film, Yang more clearly shows her opinion about the homeland, which is not the ideological homeland her father chose but is merely a place where the family lived together. Her notion of homeland deviates from the configurations of nation-states and sharply criticizes the coercive control of the North Korean regime.

While *Our Homeland* is a low-budget independent film, it drew unexpected attention in Japan, and was even selected as the candidate to represent Japan for the 85th Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film as well as won Best Picture at the 2012 *Kinema Junpo*. Regarding the enthusiastic reception in Japan, Yang said in an interview, "Most contemporary Japanese films tend to focus on small stories in 3m length, pretty and sensitive, but they look like a story of their own without anybody outside of that. It is like a dessert, not main course dish. Given that, *Our Homeland* must be received as a different and fresh story."[67]

However, Shota Ogawa's analysis of *Our Homeland* explains the enthusiastic reception of this film in Japan from a different perspective. Although the narrative is about a specific history and condition of a Zainichi family that sent members of the family to North Korea, it resonates with a different "homecoming" story in the same vein, very familiar to the Japanese audience, which is the return of abducted Japanese from North Korea in 2002. In the 70s and 80s, over a dozen of Japanese people vanished from mostly coastal cities and there were rumors that North Korea must have been involved in these happenings. In 2002, at the DPRK-Japan summit, Kim Jong Il first admitted that the DPRK kidnapped 14 Japanese citizens. Subsequently, in October 2002, five abductees returned to Japan and their family reunions became a media

[67] Yong-ŏn Kim, "Agin ŭn ŏbtta. hajiman amudo haengbokhae jiji annŭnda [No villains, but nobody is happy either]," *Pressian*, March 8, 2013, accessed August 1, 2019, http://m.pressian.com/m/m_article/?no=68641&ref=kko#08gq

sensation. Ogawa explains that "when five of the abductees finally returned to Japan in 2005, the spectacle of the abductees' arrivals, with their accented speech and unfamiliar hair-styles, evoked the same sense of cultural ambiguity as the typography used in Yang's film." [68] He notes that North Korea has become a familial country for the Japanese families of the abductees; in other words, it became *kazoku no kuni*, the original title of *Our Homeland*, which means "[my] family's country." Sŏng-ho's reverse-homecoming visually mirrors the returned Japanese abductees in 2005 and provides the Japanese audience with emotional moments to sympathize with Sŏng-ho and his family in the film, which ultimately blurs Sŏng-ho's *zainichi* identity.

Yet, it should be noted that in Japan, criticism against the North Korean regime is deeply related to Japan's own vindication of its colonial past. Sŏ Kyong-sik notes the issue of North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens and media coverage of this issue:

> One of the reasons that Japanese society's denunciation of North Korea was heightened as such is that it reversed Japan's position from being criticized about the war and its colonial responsibility to a position from which it can condemn North Korea in the name of humanitarianism and human rights. So to speak, Japan could seize the higher moral ground in this case. [69]

Zainichi Koreans are diaspora engendered by Japanese colonialism and are the living remnants of and witnesses to Japan's colonial past, which might be the people Japanese society, in wishing to sanitize its less savory historical actions, wants to erase more than anything else. These people, by their mere existence, attest to and embody the war crimes and colonial past of Japan. However, unlike the rather detailed exposition of Zainichi Korean history in Yang's documentaries, *Our Homeland* foregrounds the story of a family who must have lived relatively happily but broke itself apart by sending the sons to North Korea and thereby attributes the cause

[68] Shota Tsai Ogawa, "A Long Way Home: The Rhetoric of Family and Familiarity in Yang Yong-hi's Pyongyang Trilogy," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 9, no.1 (2017): 43.
[69] Kyŏng-sik Sŏ, *Zainichi Chōsenjin tte donna hito* [Who are Zainichi Chosēnjin] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2012), 231.

of the family's tragedy only to North Korea. In effect, it pushes the fundamental reasons her family had to be separated, which are the colonial past of Japan and social discrimination toward Zainichi Koreans, to the rear. The repatriation project itself was initiated by the Japanese government which itself wanted to rid the archipelago of Zainichi Koreans. In this sense, the Japanese government is deeply implicated in the issue of repatriated Zainichi and their families. Yet, the moving story of *Our Homeland* offers a chance for Japanese audiences to view the story of Zainichi Koreans without little engagement as Japanese citizens, from an "armchair" perspective, as Koichi Iwabuchi notes.[70] Furthermore, by juxtaposing the Zainichi's repatriation to North Korea with the Japanese citizens' abductions to North Korea, the Japanese audience could easily identify them with Yang Yonghi's family story through self-victimization.

**6. Conclusion**

Since the liberation of Korea in 1945, Zainichi Koreans utilized film medium to imagine their emancipated homeland, to be connected to it from afar, and to facilitate actual homecomings. While the majority of the first-generation Zainichi originated from the Southern part of the Korean Peninsula, most of them disapproved of the newly established nation-state in their homeland. Instead, they imagined their true homeland in the socialist nation-state comprising the other part of Korea where they had never been, or the unified Korea that does not exist in reality. Accordingly, imaginative experience of the homeland through filmmaking and film viewing played a pivotal role to aspiring homecomings beyond experiential memory.

However, the Cold War system, which not only divided their homeland but also dominated their daily lives, made their homecomings impossible or caused further dislocation

[70] Koichi Iwabuchi, "Nostalgia for a (Different) Asian Modernity: Media Consumption of "Asia" in Japan." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 10, no.3 (2002): 547-573.

from their families in Japan. With the attenuation of the Cold War tensions and a subsequent shift in global values that emphasized transnational movement, Zainichi Koreans, especially those with Chosŏn status, found the opportunity to travel to their ancestral homeland. Nevertheless, the formal visit or "return" to an ancestral homeland does not necessarily "unmake" diasporas. For Zainichi filmmakers, whose work is discussed in this chapter, homecoming experiences are more disillusioning than redeeming, disappointing than validating. Through these bittersweet returns, their films unveil Zainichi Koreans' convoluted current positions, which in many ways are still constrained by the Cold War logic despite that era now nearly 30 years past.

Those works of second-generation Zainichi filmmakers, moreover, raise the fundamental questions on what homeland means to them. Although they were born in Japan and do not have firsthand memories of the homeland, the first generation's experience of tumultuous histories of displacement, which was transmitted to the postgenerations, takes the center of the narratives. At the same time, by reconstructing the narrative about the homeland in their films, the makers endeavor to reckon with the meaning of the homeland in their own experiences, beyond the inherited memories. It is to make sense of their own diasporic subjectivities both interwoven with the first generation's memory but also positioned in different configurations of social tensions. For the postgeneration directors, the homeland, either the ROK or the DPRK, is not a place to aspire to return but a place where a part of their family members "repatriated" and their parents' and their own traumatic experience of separation began. Those films, thus, demonstrate the active search and creative recalling of the postmemory and excruciating struggles to find their own homeland apart from that of the first generation.

Therefore, the cinematic return of the second-generation Zainichi filmmakers elucidates the process of searching for their cultural identity, which is fundamentally influenced by the postmemory but is also in the incessant process of "becoming." Diaspora signifies a certain experience, and rather than being a static or homogeneous entity defined by some common, shared trait, it is arguably a shared phenomenon of "becoming." As Stuart Hall notes, "far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, their [cultural identities] are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture, and power."[71] In the same vein, diasporic filmmakers' identities constantly transform through the experience of multiple returns, while the cultural consciousness of non-diasporic audiences are irrevocably influenced through the cinematic experience of diasporic films. Through the cinematic reenactment of Zainichi Koreans' bittersweet returns, their films initiate long overdue conversations with homeland audiences by enabling them to experience the diasporic postmemory through film viewing.

[71] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 225.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## CROSSING THE BORDER TO THE AUDIENCE:

## ZHANG LU'S CINEMATIC RETURN TO SOUTH KOREA

you are the audience

you are my distant audience

i address you

as i would a distant relative

as if a distant relative

seen only heard only through someone else's description.

neither you nor i

are visible to each other

i can only assume that you can hear me

i can only hope that you hear me

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha - Audience Distant Relatives (1977)[1]

### 1. Introduction

The identities and sense of belonging of the ethnic Koreans in the People's Republic of China has been bound up with a convoluted history of colonization, national division, and globalization. The first significant generations of Korean Chinese, who left the Korean peninsula for China mostly in the early decades of the twentieth century, faced a variety of challenges

[1] Constance Lewallen et al. *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982)* (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley Art Museum: University of California Press, 2001), 29.

when they made attempts to return to their homeland, especially to South Korea. Among the most formidable impediments were unquestionably those posed by the systematic forces pertaining to Korea's national division and the Cold War entrenched in East Asia. The latter half of the last century witnessed South Korea's successful normalization of its diplomatic relations with previously antagonistic neighborly nation, the People's Republic of China. In the era of global capitalism, South Korean society has become not only a host country for an unprecedentedly large number of labor migrants from overseas but also a homeland for diasporic Koreans from neighboring nations. Indeed, large numbers of ethnic Koreans in the People's Republic of China have returned to South Korea as foreign workers. It is in this context of porous borders open for those without Korean citizenship that the globalizing Korean film industry has offered diasporic filmmakers an opportunity to position themselves within the category of Korean diaspora cinema, which began to emerge since the late 90s.

The inflow of foreign-citizen populations, both ethnically Korean and non-Korean, into South Korea engenders a growing representation of this multi-ethnic population in cinematic media of Korea. In recent decades, film audiences in South Korea have been increasingly exposed to cinematic representations associated with newly arrived others of Korean society, including ethnic Koreans returning from their host nations in East Asia. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Korean Chinese came to be a common feature in Korean mainstream films as co-ethnic "others." Coincident with the explosion of cinematic representation Korean Chinese, the films made by diasporic directors from the People's Republic of China began to be introduced to South Korean audiences. Although their films were circulated in marginalized distribution routes such as the art house cinema circuit or domestic film festivals, they have facilitated considerable discussion about the ethnic Korean returnees and offered an opportunity for South Korean

audiences to observe diasporic filmmakers' own cinematic renditions of their histories, lives, and homecomings.

One of the most representative ethnic Korean directors whose own family history is entwined in the Korean diaspora is Zhang Lu, a third-generation Korean Chinese filmmaker. While his work has often been categorized in the world market as Chinese independent film, Zhang Lu has avoided releasing his films in China because of severe censorship of anything that goes against the government's image of national unity. Since his debut, he has worked in collaboration with the South Korean film industry and with the support of the South Korean government. Zhang Lu's filmography can be divided into two phases according the setting and style of the films. In the first phase, he made films mainly based in China, although they were not exhibited there. The films made in this period such as *Tang Poetry* (2004), *Ear of Grain* (2005), *Desert Dream* (2007), and *Chongqing* (2007), feature ethnic Koreans across China, Korea, and Mongolia who are pushed by inexorable forces to the peripheries of and boundaries between nation-states and constantly cross the borders between them.

Since 2012, however, when Zhang Lu temporarily shifted his main base for filmmaking to Korea, this third-generation Korean Chinese director's films exhibit conspicuous differences from his previous films. For one thing, as evidenced by the spatial setting of *Scenery* (2014), *Gyeongju* (2014), *Love and…* (2015), and *A Quite Dream* (2016), his recent films are set exclusively in South Korea and the theme of border-crossing seemed to have disappeared. For another, issues related to the Korean diaspora, which were a persistent topic in his earlier films, although visible in the characters' histories, surface explicitly in none of these films. Far from viewing Zhang Lu's homecoming as a fait accompli, I argue that the films of this period internalize the notion of the border, from the physical border between the nation-states to the

metaphorical boundaries between human beings and actively invite the South Korean audience to engage with the internalized border-crossings.

This chapter mainly analyzes Zhang Lu's post-2012 films and his envisioning of spectatorship in South Korea. By examining Zhang Lu's cinematic rendition of displacement and multiple forms of border-crossing, it explores not just collective memories of the past in both the homeland and sites of diaspora but also a new sense of communication and community-building between historically and spatially divided lands and nations. The specific focus of the chapter is on the ways in which Zhang Lu internalizes the notion of the border or boundary as the metaphoric border of human beings, such as the border between a dream and waking life and the sensible and the insensible. By delving into the implications of the inherent borders in his films, I argue that his post-2012 films endeavor to find a communal ground to share the experience of diaspora with the homeland audience, with the narrative and sensory configuration unfolding in a pedagogical methodology to induce the spectators to experience border-crossing through film viewing.

## 2. Zhang Lu's Journey to the Homeland

Zhang Lu was born in a Korean Chinese community in Yanji in 1963, but his family was forced to move to the Han Chinese community in Dunhua during the Cultural Revolution and lived there during his elementary school years. He remembers that his family was the only Korean family in the village in Dunhua. Even after they moved back to Yanji, he had to go to the Han Chinese school as he did not know the Korean language. He graduated from Yanbian University, majoring in Chinese literature, ultimately becoming a Chinese literature professor

there and debuting as a novelist in Chinese in 1986. After his involvement in the Tiananmen Square protests, he lost his job, and as he reflects, did nothing but stay home for the decade after.

In an argument with a filmmaker friend, Zhang Lu bragged that anybody can make a film and in 1999, he rather spontaneously made the short film "Eleven." However, he did not have enough money or knowledge for the post-production process and brought the film to the novelist and director Yi Ch'ang-dong in Korea, whom Zhang had first met in China a few years before. "Eleven" was invited to the Venice Film Festival that year, where Zhang Lu met Korean cinematographer Ch'oe Tu-yŏng. Ch'oe Tu-yŏng established a film production company solely to produce Zhang Lu's films. They ultimately made two features together, *Tang Poetry* (2003) and *Grain in Ear* (2005).

From his first feature, Zhang Lu did not intend to release his films in China because his cinematic explorations about being ethnic Korean in the PRC can be subject to censorship by reason of being against the government policy of ethnic harmony or national unity.[2] Having seen his father incarcerated for five years during the Cultural Revolution, he was pessimistic about the chance that he could produce and exhibit his films without government interference in China. Owing to the collaboration with the Korean producer, *Tang Poetry* received support for post-production costs from the Korean Film Council. Chŏng Sŏng-il, a Korean film critic who was a judge for the selection of the films at that time, remembers how he was perplexed by watching *Tang Poetry* for the first time. He wondered why this "Chinese film" should be included in the application, because all the dialogue was in Chinese and the crews were Chinese; moreover, the story was about China. After reading the written application, he found that the producer was

[2] Pyŏng-sam An, "Chung'guk yŏnghwa kŏmyŏl e nat'anan paet'asŏng yŏn'gu [A Study on the Exclusivism of Censoring a Film in China]," *Han'guk Tongbuka nonch'ong* 54 (March, 2010): 53-73.

Korean and the director an ethnic Korean in China.[3] As the first Korean Chinese filmmaker active in Korea, Zhang Lu's appearance itself questioned what kind of films could be included in the category of Korean cinema.

Beginning from the claustrophobic apartment in Beijing in *Tang Poetry*, Zhang Lu's films wander around China, Mongolia, and Korea, then go back to his hometown, before going back to his grandfather's homeland. He made *Grain in Ear* in 2003, featuring a Korean Chinese woman living with a boy on the outskirts of Beijing. In 2006, he made *Desert Dream*, with a different Korean film production company, which portrays a North Korean refugee mother and child going to Mongolia. In 2007, he made two films, which bifurcated from one project, *Chongqing* and *Iri*, in China and Korea respectively. In 2009, he went back to his hometown in China and made the film *Dooman River*. His filmography symbolizes the itinerary of his cinematic journey.

As his second feature film *Grain in Ear* received international acclaim, a number of Korean scholars started paying attention to his films. Most of the scholars focused on the liminality of both the filmmaker and the films and discussed the diasporic characteristics in his films. Dae-jung Kim notes the difficulty of categorizing Zhang Lu's film, arguing that his films cannot be included in the national cinema either in China or Korea.[4] So-yŏng Kim maintains that that Zhang Lu's films challenge the boundary of the national cinema in Korea and his films should be recognized as multiple practices of national cinemas.[5] Despite the abundance of academic discussions on Zhang Lu's films in South Korea, most of them focus on the

[3] Sŏng-il Chŏng and U-yŏl Chŏng, *Ŏnjenga sesang ŭn yŏnghwa ka toel kŏt ida: Chŏng Sŏng-il, Chŏng U-yŏl ŭi yŏnghwa p'yŏnae* [Someday, the world will be cinema] (Seoul: Pada Ch'ulp'ansa, 2010), 310-311.
[4] Dae-jung Kim, "Chang Ryul, Tiaspora kŭriko yi sidae ŭi riŏllizŭm [Zhang Lu, diaspora, and the realism of our time]," *Yŏnghwa yŏksa yŏngu* 9 (2010): 6.
[5] So-yŏng Kim, *Yŏnghwa p'yŏngnon'ga Kim So-yŏng i palgyŏnhan Han'guk yŏnghwa ch'oego ŭi 10-kyŏng* [10 vistas that film critic Kim So-yŏng discovered] (Seoul: Hyŏnsil Munhwa, 2010), 22-25.

filmmaker's diasporic or liminal status and its representation in cinematic form. In this chapter, I pay particular attention to the cinematic renditions of border-crossing in his post-2012 films which invite the audiences in South Korea to participate. In South Korea, Zhang targeted as his main audience not the highbrow film festival circuit audience, but a Korean audience from a broader background. To make a sustainable system of continuous filmmaking, he has been trying to reach out to the Korean audiences in his film text. To achieve this goal, I argue, Zhang Lu transforms the notion of border and border-crossing into a more metaphorical meaning and builds a foundation through which he can initiate a cinematic conversation with the audience.

## 3. Crossing Borders in Zhang Lu's Dooman River: Off-screen Space and the Ethics of Diasporic Korean Cinema

Before the discussion on Zhang Lu's films made after his temporary relocation to South Korea, I begin with the examination of his 2009 film *Dooman River*, as it explicitly deals with the topic of border-crossing in narrative and illuminates the ways in which he cinematizes the border-crossings, and further expands it beyond the narrative. To be specific, I examine the ways in which this film cinematically enacts multiple border-crossings both in its narrative and cinematic form, including how the film impels the viewing audience to embark upon their own spectatorial border-crossings and ethically reckon with a vision of co-habitation.

The film title *Dooman River* refers to the river that runs between two nation-states where two groups of people with a shared ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity must live under different nationalities. On the China side of the river is Yanbian prefecture, in China's northeastern Jilin Province, where the majority of Korean Chinese population is settled. As discussed in Chapter 1, the earlier generation of Koreans in this region crossed the Dooman

River during the Japanese colonial era. After Japan's surrender in 1945, those who remained in the region were reconstituted as Korean Chinese, a group subject to minority policies enacted by the Chinese Communist Party. In 1954, the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture was formed, granting legal citizenship in the PRC for the Korean Chinese ethnic minority, yet the Sino-Korean border security was so lax in the 1950s that Korean people across the river maintained a sense of community by crossing the river occasionally. However, as the Cultural Revolution in China led to a violent assimilationist assault on ethnic minorities, the Dooman River hardened into an impermeable border. In recent decades, as the regional Cold War order weakened, many Korean Chinese migrated to South Korea to find jobs. The result of this rapid exodus was a hollowing out of the autonomous region. It is against this backdrop that the narrative of *Dooman River* unfolds.

The film depicts encounters between two distinct diasporic groups, ethnic Koreans in China, who form a cultural and linguistic enclave set apart from mainstream Chinese society, and North Korean refugees, who cross the border to overcome the rampant hunger in their isolated homeland. A Korean Chinese boy, Ch'ang-ho, lives with his grandfather and older sister, Sun-hŭi. Sun-hŭi is shown to be mute but was not born so; she has suffered from aphasia ever since her father was carried off by the Dooman River while he was rescuing her from a flood. In the father's absence, Ch'ang-ho's mother has become a migrant worker in South Korea. The film begins with destitute North Koreans arriving in Ch'ang-ho's village after risking their lives to cross the border despite severe cold and vigilant border guards. The villagers initially accept these refugees with hospitality. Yet, as the desperate North Koreans turn to theft and violence against their hosts, the villagers gradually become hostile toward their border-crossing guests. Whereas the ethnic Koreans in the region are the hosts of the border-crossers, the film acutely

illuminates their positions as guests, or guest workers, in South Korea, which is symbolized as the absent parents of the children in the film.

One night, Ch'ang-ho meets the North Korean boy, Chŏng-jin, who has crossed the border to find food and medicine for his sick sister. When they first meet at an abandoned school building, the film foregrounds the window frame between them and visualizes the divided space these two different people occupy, one as a host of the space, the other as a stranger. Yet, in a situation that suggests an unequal power dynamic between the uninvited border crosser and member of the host community, Zhang Lu brings a refreshing texture to the encounter. Ch'ang-ho proposes to Chŏng-jin that he make a contribution to a communal activity (that is, a soccer game) in exchange for food, and Chŏng-jin agrees. By making a proposal to Chŏng-jin that he serve as a guest player for a soccer game with the neighboring village's team, Ch'ang-ho offers the possibility of full recognition as a member of the host group. By agreeing to join the soccer game, Chŏng-jin makes the decision to return the hospitality, a risky decision to participate in a public game that can lead to forced deportation. And yet, Chŏng-jin's agreement makes it possible for him to be treated as a member of the host community, with a sense of equality, dignity, and respect.

The second episode of encounter between the two boys serves to actualize the promise of an equal relationship suggested in the first encounter. The film compellingly establishes Ch'ang-ho and Chŏng-jin as equal subjects of viewing; Zhang Lu does so by opting not to use the conventional shot-reverse shot but to deploy a continuous panning shot that sutures Ch'ang-ho's and Chŏng-jin's otherwise separate point-of-view shots, momentarily blurring the boundary between the subject and the object of viewing.

In this sequence, Ch'ang-ho returns with a friend to the abandoned school to meet Chŏng-jin for soccer practice presumably the next day. The handheld camera initially takes Ch'ang-ho's point of view entering the building. When the camera arrives at the last room, it pans around, turning in a complete circle. At that instant, we see Ch'ang-ho and his friend in the frame. This momentarily triggers in the viewer the question of whose point of view is currently being taken by the camera, for up until now the point of view has been Ch'ang-ho's. Blurting out that no one is in the school waiting for them, the two boys turn around and the camera begins following them from behind. It is at this moment that Chŏng-jin's off-screen voice is heard and the camera shows Ch'ang-ho and his friend turning back. The camera cuts to a shot of Chŏng-jin's face, clarifying him as the latter viewing subject—the end of the shot is clearly from Chŏng-jin's point of view. In this sequence, the camera first takes Ch'ang-ho's point of view and, without a cut, merges into Chŏng-jin's point of view. Through this combined operation of two disparate perspectives in a continuous manner, Zhang Lu grants equal viewing subjectivity to both Ch'ang-ho and Chŏng-jin. In the following soccer play scene, the camera frames all the Korean Chinese boys and Chŏng-jin in on-screen space by carefully following their movements, as if it tries not to desert anyone in the off-screen space.

**Figure 3-4. The visual bordering between the North Korean border-crossers and Korean Chinese boys in their first encounter (left); Chŏng-jin and Korean Chinese boys both on-screen space in the soccer game (right)**

However, the film acutely shows how the boys' friendship on equal footing is vulnerable to the tensions surrounding the border area by foregrounding the off-screen space more than the on-screen space and directs the audience's attention to the invisible off-screen space. After the soccer game, Ch'ang-ho and Chŏng-jin sit on the window frame of an abandoned school building. However, the sounds of footsteps from Chinese police officers on patrol trigger action. Chŏng-jin jumps down from the window and hides inside the building, Ch'ang-ho remains still, looking at the policemen. Here, Chŏng-jin's spatial and kinetic action draws audience's attention to the relationship between the on-screen space and the off-screen space, divided by the cinematic frame. His disappearance from the sight of the patrolling officers corresponds with his entrance into the off-screen space. To be sure, he is invisible to the viewers, however, they know about his presence somewhere off screen, whereas the police do not. In such a way, the film constantly directs the audience's attention to the invisible, which inhabits an off-screen space but certainly exists nonetheless.

Unlike the frame of a picture, the off-screen space in film is not permanently invisible, because the cinematic experience is based on the sensory and temporal structure which expands beyond the visuality of a certain shot. Christian Metz notes that, "in film there is a plurality of successive frames, of camera movements, and character movements, so that a person or an object that is off-frame in a given moment may appear inside the frame in the moment after, then disappear once again."[6] He also mentions that with the existence of a soundtrack, the audience can perceive a character's presence even when he or she has disappeared into the off-screen space. In this sense, André Bazin notes that "the outer edges of the screen are not, as the technical jargon would seem to imply, the frame of the film image. They are the edges of a piece

[6] Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," *October* 34 (1985): 86.

of masking that shows only a portion of reality."[7] "A portion of reality" can be understood as a limited on-screen space in a physical sense but what the screen shows us exceeds the limited reality of the frame and as Bazin notes, "seems to be part of something prolonged indefinitely into the universe."[8] In this sense, the off-screen space complicates the "portion of reality" in on-screen space and makes the cinematic reality heterogeneous by exposing what "does not belong to the order of the visible."[9] Seeing the off-screen space thus undermines the privileged status of the visible of the screen, thus allows the audience see more than "a portion of reality," which is essentially a "centrifugal" experience. In this regard, the film *Dooman River* accentuates the invisible off-screen over what is visible on-screen. In a deliberate move, it directs and even forces the spectators to transcend the limited realm of immediate visibility, and to explore the space outside and beyond the edges of the cinematic frame. The move from on-screen to off-screen directs spectators into a centrifugal act to see beyond a narrow reality, and into the act of border-crossing, which is itself of potential consequence.

**Figure 3-2, Initially, Chŏng-jin and Ch'ang-ho are both on-screen space (left) but as the police approaches Jong-jin disappears into the off-screen space (right)**

[7] André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* Vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 166.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Gill Deleuze, *Cinema.* Vol. 1, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), 30.

The off-screen space of *Dooman River* not only indicates the immediate adjacent space out of the frame but extends beyond the visible, encompassing myriad flows of human migration across the Sino-North Korean border and also across the border of South Korea. The scene when Ch'ang-ho introduces Chŏng-jin to his sister Sun-hŭi for the first time acutely shows the expanded off-screen space. Initially, Sun-hŭi, Ch'ang-ho, and Chŏng-jin are having a conversation in on-screen space. Yet, when a phone rings, which is from Ch'ang-ho's mother in South Korea, Chŏng-jin disappears into the off-screen space. After the phone call, Ch'ang-ho also moves to the off-screen space but we can still hear their conversation about his mother. When Ch'ang-ho tells Chŏng-jin that his and Sun-hŭi's father had passed away, Sun-hŭi looks off-screen to where Ch'ang-ho and Chŏng-jin are supposed to be and insists that their father is alive. Then she disappears to the off-screen space in a different direction. When Ch'ang-ho tells Chŏng-jin a story about his father's death, no one occupies the on-screen space.

The three central characters of the scene gradually disappear from the on-screen space. In addition to them, another person exists in this scene but is invisible: Ch'ang-ho's mother in South Korea. Gradually, the film positions these ethnic Korean characters from different nation-states—North Korea, China, and South Korea—who cannot occupy the same space at the same time, and turns the invisible off-screen space into a place where they can co-exist, albeit temporarily. Another noteworthy aspect of this scene is the way in which the characters' gaze transcends the border of the frame. From outside the lower right corner of the frame, Ch'ang-ho softly warns Chŏng-jin that Sun-hŭi can hear what they are talking about, with an accompanying glance that moves over to the left edge of the frame, to the off-screen space his sister occupies. The audience cannot see this movement, but they can easily imagine the invisible gaze of the characters, traversing across the visible space on-screen.

However, this equal footing formed among the young ethnic Koreans remains fragile due to the political and social tensions surrounding the North Korean border-crossers. One night, a desperate North Korean male border-crosser knocks on Ch'ang-ho's house and begs to be allowed to sleep in the garage for one night. Ch'ang-ho's family receives him with hospitality. The next day, Sun-hŭi, alone in the house, serves the man food. He is relieved, but becoming drunk, he hears the sound of North Korean propaganda broadcasting from the TV. He is overcome by feelings of frustration, anger, and fear, which manifest as an uncontrollable sexual urge and drive him to rape Sun-hŭi.

The framing of this scene is noteworthy for the tensions it creates between the spaces on and off-screen. The rape happens in the off-screen space out of the right edge of the frame as we can hear Sun-hui's painful cries. Meanwhile, the camera zooms in to the television and places the image of North Korea across the Dooman River, transmitted by television, into the center of the frame. This unexpected invasion of the authority of the nation-state destabilizes the border-crosser's sense of being here in China, not there in North Korea, shattering the equal relationship between the host and the guest in this community. By foregrounding the visible existence of elsewhere in on-screen space and pushing the incident happening into the immediate space of the scene off-screen, the film undermines the frame as a physical comfort zone for the audience. Meanwhile, the catastrophe for Ch'ang-ho looms on the other side of the off-frame space, as his best friend Ch'ŏl-bu witnesses the rape from a window.

**Figure 3-3. While the North Korean image transmitted by TV takes the center of on-screen space, Sun-hŭi is raped by a North Korean man in the right side off-screen space and Chol-bu is looking at the rape from the left side of the off-screen space.**

When Ch'ang-ho hears about the incident from Ch'ŏl-bu, he begins to resent the North Korean border-crossers and even lashes out violently at Chŏng-jin. However, Chŏng-jin tells him that his sick sister had died, which means that he did not have to cross the border again but will keep his promise to play the soccer game against the other village. That night, Ch'ang-ho can't sleep, and silently listens to the sounds of guns firing outside. In this crisis of their relationship, he realizes that Chŏng-jin maintained his loyalty and human dignity, even risking his own life, and he resolves to reward Chŏng-jin's loyalty in kind.

On the day of the scheduled soccer game, however, Ch'ŏl-bu goes to a police station to report Chŏng-jin's presence, and the police come and take Chŏng-jin away in the middle of the game. Ch'ang-ho goes to the roof of a building and cries out to the people to let Chŏng-jin go. The policeman and the village chief urge him to come down. However, with no further pleading, Ch'ang-ho throws himself to the ground. The sequence of Ch'ang-ho's fall renders the invisible gaze traversing the on-screen space in the earlier scenes into a visible action. At first, the camera shows Ch'ang-ho at the edge of the roof, moving to the right side of the frame and disappearing instantly. However, this temporary disappearance ends with him jumping to his death. He suddenly intrudes from the off-screen space into the frame and disappears into the off-screen space again. In the next shot, we observe his falling through the frame of a window, shot from

the inside of the building. With the window frame at the center, the space is split into two sub-frames. The first window sub-frame on the left has Chŏng-jin handcuffed by the Chinese policemen, while the sub-frame on the right is the space that is assigned for Chang-ho's fall to the ground as Ch'ŏl-bu hides behind its pillar. Unable to cross the border to Chŏng-jin's side, Ch'ang-ho's body falls into the right side of the frame, top to bottom. This scene poignantly visualizes the gravity of the border-crossing, which applies not only to Chŏng-jin who crosses the border of a nation-state, but also to Ch'ang-ho who crosses a border by an act of his own will—the border of the visible space of the film.

The distressing sequence of Ch'ang-ho's fall acutely illuminates that the movement from invisible to the visible space is not merely a metaphorically emancipating but also an extremely dangerous existential move. For the border-crossers like Chŏng-jin, movement to the visible space involves danger of being caught by the state; Ch'ang-ho resists that very power of the state by throwing his own body across the edges of the frame. When Ch'ang-ho temporarily stays invisible in the off-screen space on the roof, ironically, the audience may expect him to be safe there. However, he comes back to visible and his movement crossing the off-screen space and on-screen space concludes with his death. Ch'ang-ho's motion allows the audience not only to see the heterogeneous reality beyond the visible space but also to encounter his ethical choice of border-crossing when being visible also means being exposed to grave risk.

**Figure 3-4. On the roof, Ch'ang-ho disappears to the right side of the off-screen space (left); Soon, he runs into the on-screen space and jumps down the building (right).**

The implication of the visual frame's bordering in this tragic sequence leads us to return to the very first scene. As the film opens, lingering on a static shot of the Dooman River for an entire minute, it seems that nothing is moving; the only audible sound is the whistle of the wind. From off-screen the sound of footsteps then comes into the frame, followed by two people in the distance approaching the camera from the left side. As they draw near in a medium long shot, the camera tilts down to show Ch'ang-ho lying on the frozen river. The two approaching then turn toward him but he does not move. When they call his name, he gets up and runs toward the other side of the river. After the title of the film appears, the following scene shows the dead bodies of North Korean border-crossers lying on the frozen river in the same posture as Ch'ang-ho, shot in the opposite direction from the earlier scene. These two scenes before and after the title can be understood as loose point-of-view shots, showing what Ch'ang-ho might have seen in the frozen river before he played dead. Ch'ang-ho's gaze at the border-crossers' bodies on the river might have prepared him to resist the border between him and Chŏng-jin at the last moment. What is important here is that Ch'ang-ho's gaze in the frame is unseen and can only be imagined by the audience's consciousness, expanding beyond the screen.

This opening sequence resonates with the ending sequence of a bridge over the river imagined by Sun-hŭi. The voiceless girl, who used to enjoy drawing scenery outside the house, finds herself incapable of doing so after the rape. Just as her muteness is a consequence of an earlier trauma—the loss of her father—so too has the ordeal of rape caused in her another perpetual loss, this time of her ability for visual representation. The film *Dooman River* does not end with a narrative of victimhood, however. Sun-hŭi undergoes a turning point when she meets an aged neighbor who suffers from dementia and has been ceaselessly trying to return to her childhood home in North Korea. This old woman tells Sun-hŭi that there was a bridge on the

Dooman River, one on which she and her mother used to migrate across the river. After this encounter, Sun-hŭi manages to draw an object that does not exist in the realm of the visible: the bridge over the Dooman River. By drawing the invisible bridge, Sun-hŭi confronts the forgetting of another border-crossing: across same river in the opposite direction. In doing so, she engages with a temporally expanded reality of the border, one which includes the almost forgotten history of Korean people's border-crossings to China, only remembered by a dementia-stricken woman. In the final sequence, Zhang Lu uncannily visualizes this bridge and allows the old woman to walk across it from China to North Korea. This last long shot of the bridge enables in the audience a centrifugal experience of border-crossing in this region as a realm broadened beyond the visible space.

**Figure 3-5. Sun-hui drawing the long-gone bridge over Dooman River (left) and the dementia-stricken woman crossing over the bridge at the ending scene of the film (right)**

To sum up, Zhang Lu problematizes the conventional practice of privileging what we see in the film frame and makes the audience conscious of the invisible space off-screen. In the film, the off-screen emerges as a heterogeneous space where a guest and a host can meet on equal footing, where the people who are not allowed to be together can coexist. However, when catastrophe intrudes on this space, only a futile but ethical resolution can serve to interrupt the authority of the nation-state. The film asks the audience to see the invisible, that is Ch'ang-ho's gaze toward the border-crossers' dead bodies, his resolution to reward to Chŏng-jin's loyalty,

Chŏng-jin's dignity as human beings, and the old woman's hope to go back to her hometown in North Korea.

Whereas *Dooman River* was introduced through international film festival circuits first, it was released mainly in South Korea. The film therefore invites South Korean audiences to see these invisible elements of South Korean society. It asks them to bear witness to myriad border-crossings beyond divided Korea, including both the North Koreans crossing the Dooman River into China as well as the Korean Chinese entering South Korea, and to recognize their human dignity beyond the stereotyped image of "strangers." In this way, the film offers opportunities to renew the notion of border-crossing in South Korea from the thicket of competing discourses on North Korean refugees and increasingly hostile or indifferent perspectives about the Korean Chinese residents. What the film destabilizes is not only the limited visible space of the Sino-North Korean border region but also the limited discourses around North Korean refugees in recent years. In South Korea, the stories about North Korean refugees' border-crossing have been often politically appropriated to condemn the North Korean regime and the multifarious realities of the border-crossers encountered in their journey from North Korea through China to South Korea has been reduced to only "a portion of reality." Under these circumstances, *Dooman River* offers a profound insight into understanding border-crossings within and beyond the divided Korea. By extending the audience's perception beyond the visible space and discourse, the vision of *Dooman River* endeavors cinematic deliberation as one way to see beyond "one portion of reality."

## 4. Blurry Scenery of the Homeland

The first film Zhang Lu made after his temporary relocation to South Korea is *Scenery* (*P'unggyŏng*, 2014), which is also his first documentary film. In *Scenery*, Zhang Lu observes foreign migrant workers in South Korea, from a variety of countries all over the world. Experiencing rapid changes toward market opening and neoliberal capitalism since the late 1980s, South Korea has become one of the major host countries for globalized labor. As the inflow of migrant labor increased, it is not surprising to meet a number of migrant workers in the streets of South Korea, especially in the factory districts on the outskirts of Seoul. It is notable that what Zhang Lu finds in the scenery of the homeland is neither ethnic nor culture similarity with him or feelings of belonging, but the people who are not supposed to belong to Korean society. Whereas the migrant workers became a part of the scenery of contemporary Korean society, they are also obscured by the glamorous image of the metropolitan city of Seoul. The labor power of migrant workers is certainly needed in every corner of the Korean economic system to keep the wheel of production rolling, but their existence is often disavowed or obscured to sustain the ethno-nationalist image of South Korea.

The migrant workers' paradoxical mode of existence, visible and invisible at the same time, is well symbolized in the title sequence. On the road to Seoul from Incheon International Airport, the camera captures the scenery of Seoul behind the thick fog. The movement of the windshield wipers alternately reveals and obscures the view; the landscape over the window is seen and unseen according to the movement of wipers. Further, even the visible landscape is still hazy and dim due to the heavy fog surrounding the car. The camera only captures the shadowy image of Seoul through the murky car window and beyond the fog behind it.


**Figure 3-6. The blurry scenery of Seoul in the opening sequence of *Scenery***

His first fiction made in Korea, *Gyeongju* is set in Gyeongju, a city on the southeast coast of the Korean peninsula. It is well known as the capital of the 1000-year-long Silla Dynasty and one of the famous tourist spots for its extensive historical remains and national treasures. What infatuated Zhang Lu about the city of Gyeongju is the ancient tombs throughout the city.[10] As the dialogue in the film says, "you cannot go anywhere here [in Gyeongju] without seeing a tomb." What the film *Gyeongju* focuses on is not national memories of an ancient glorious kingdom of Korea but the eccentric conditions of living in this city today, where nobody feels uncomfortable sharing the space with dead people, as the film shows a teenage couple kissing in front of the tombs and children running between the tombs. The conventional separation of space between the living and the dead does not work in this city. As Zhang Lu captured the ambiguous scenery of Seoul in *Scenery*, he tries to capture the ambiguous scenery of Gyeongju where people share their living space with the dead.

[10] Si-hwan An, "Kŭ yŏyu nŭn ta ŏdi ro katnunga [Where have all his composure gone: an interview with Zhang Lu]," *Ssine 21*, June 17, 2014, 78.

**Figure 3-7. Ch'oe Hyŏn looking at a teenage couple and children playing at tomb in *Gyeongju***

The film *Gyeongju* begins with the protagonist Ch'oe Hyŏn arriving at Daegu Airport. Ch'oe, a Korean professor at Beijing University, married to a Chinese national, comes to Korea after three years to attend a friend's funeral. In the funeral hall, he sees a photograph of the deceased friend and realizes it is a photo he took seven years before in Gyeongju. The photo which captured the living friend's face now becoming the face of the dead reminds him of an erotic painting on the wall of a tea house where he and the dead friend went together seven years before. Then, Ch'oe recklessly goes to Gyeongju, as if he were compelled by the dead friend. However, at the tea house he only finds that the owner changed three years before and the new young female owner covered the painting with wallpaper because of customers' crude jokes about it. The invisible painting, which was visible in the past, and the dead friend, who was alive then, draw Ch'oe on a strange journey across the boundary between the visible and invisible, the dead and the living, encountering people who are also under the influence of dead people.

In his 2016 film *A Quite Dream*, he films the area where he has been living in Seoul, Susaek-dong, the northwestern corner of the city. One interesting feature of this area is a clear division between the gentrified area, glaringly named as Digital Media City, where newly built high-rise apartments, commercial buildings, and even many mainstream broadcasting companies are packed, and the shabby town across the underpass, which remains underdeveloped still.

When Zhang Lu moved to South Korea, the school offered a residential apartment in Digital Media City, where he had stayed for five years. However, when he strolled around the area toward the old Susaek-dong, he found a stark contrast from the DMC and discovering intimate familiarity with his hometown in China. It is a ghetto for the marginalized people of Seoul under the shadow of the luxurious buildings of the DMC.

The four protagonists of *A Quite Dream* symbolize the lower-class people of Seoul as well as the margins of Koreans—a Korean Chinese who migrated to Korea several years before, a North Korean refugee, a former small-time gangster, and an epileptic young man with a bit of an intellectual disability. These four roam the old Susaek-dong, occasionally convening at "*Kohyang Chumak* [Hometown Tavern]" a Korean Chinese girl is running in the front yard of her rented house.

**Figure 3-8. Four protagonists of *A Quite Dream*, on a roof of a building of Susaek-dong. High-rise buildings of DMC are shown in background.**

Zhang Lu's films in Korea visualize multiple boundaries, both visible or invisible, which are not official borders between the nation-states now but imbedded social boundaries in Korean society, with people crossing those boundaries, knowingly as well as unwittingly, between the visible and invisible, the dead and the living, and the old and new. Korea, Zhang Lu's

grandfather's homeland, does not offer him nostalgic scenery of homeland but rather another complicated setting with incessant mobility across newly demarcated borders of lives.

**5. Cinematic Dreams in the Home Country**

Going back to the film *Scenery*, the way in which Zhang Lu engages with the migrant workers' marginalized lives through cinema is noteworthy and also offers a thematic cue to understand his later films in Korea. Reacting to the increased number of migrant workers in Korea and subsequent issues related to their unjust labor conditions, a number of Korean filmmakers have attended to those issues. The most common objective of those filmmakers' work is to raise visibility for the violated human rights of migrant workers, which are often associated with activist movements on the relevant issues. Activist documentary films on migrant workers endeavor to represent the silenced voice of migrant workers, improve their working conditions, and recuperate their human rights in Korea, on the premise of a shared condition as human beings. However, Zhang Lu chooses a different approach, which is not based on the universal commonality of human beings but on the stark otherness or individuality of each worker. His goal is not to raise the visibility of the migrant workers' lives in Korea, but to look into the invisible in their lives, which are their dreams.

To the migrant workers, Zhang Lu asks only one question: what is the most memorable dream they have had in South Korea? The dream Zhang asks those people about is not a metaphoric "Korean Dream" per se, but specific dreams they had during sleeping. In front of the camera, the workers tell their dreams, which are often related to their waking life and sometimes get lost between their homelands and the host country, Korea. Dreams constitute the Otherness of Self, as the conscious or rational cannot control the world of dreams. In his magisterial book,

Freud argued, during dreaming, the unconscious, which is censored by the preconscious, often pass into the conscious, and manifests the hidden desire which even the self cannot understand. In this sense, a dream exhibits the stark Otherness of myself. Yet, at the same time, dreams can be a common ground for all human beings, in a sense that we all carry that Otherness during our sleep. In this way, Zhang Lu finds common ground to engage with the migrant workers in Korea: the commonality of bearing Otherness. In an interview, Zhang Lu said that "For the people living in a foreign place, their dreams more often invade the waking life."[11] If I push his words a bit further, I would say that for diasporic people the dream is more diasporic than their waking life, which is incessantly wandering between their home and a foreign land. As a returned diasporic subject, an ethnic Korean with PRC citizenship, Zhang Lu listens to the migrant workers' dreams in Korea and delivers their dreams as well as his own to Korean audiences in cinematic language. I argue that "dream" is an important keyword to understand his cinematic reenactment of homecoming as well as communication with the homeland audience through cinematic experience.

Dreams have been a popular subject in cinema since the invention of the cinematograph. Colin McGinn writes, "In the cinema, we relive the life of the dreaming self. Movies thus tap into the dreaming aspect of human nature. Moreover, they *improve* upon our dream life. They give us the dreams we yearn for. It is a rare individual who is not fascinated by his own dreams, with their raw ability to reveal, their magical expressiveness; movies partake in this fascination. The impact of movies stems, then, at least in part, from the primal power of the dream."[12] Although the visual fantasies of the films have often been compared with dreams in a metaphoric

[11] Sŏng-il Chŏng, "Angae sok ŭi p'ungkyŏng [The scenery over the fog: an interview with Zhang Lu]," *Ssine 21*, December 10, 2013, 81.
[12] Colin McGinn, *The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact* (New York: Pantheon, 2005), 192-193.

way, film scholars have been more interested in the equation between film-viewing experience and dream. For example, Siegfried Kracauer notes that cinematic experience resembles the dreaming process in two ways: the spectators get immersed into the images like dreaming people, however, and at the same time the films often lead the spectators away from the projected images into subjective reveries. He contends that theses seemingly opposite directions of the dreaming process during film viewing are inseparable and "the dreaming spectator, who originally concentrated on the psychological correspondences of an image striking his imagination more or less imperceptibly, moves on from them to notions beyond the orbit of that image—notions so remote from what the image itself implies that there would be no meaning in still counting them among its correspondences proper."[13] According to him, the spectators are "wavering between self-absorption and self-abandonment" and these two intertwined dream processes "constituted a veritable stream of consciousness whose contents—cataracts of indistinct fantasies and inchoate thoughts—still bear the imprint of the bodily sensations from which they issue."[14]

Edgar Morin further pushes the affinity between film experience and dream as to argue that cinema is a "complex of dream and reality."[15] He considers a human as a complex being, having both the practical and the imaginary within his mind, which cannot be reduced to one, and cinema allows us to understand the imaginary human or "the internal theater of the mind: dreams, imaginings, representations: *this little cinema that we have in our head*."[16] By foregrounding the imaginary structure of a spectator's engagement into reality through film-viewing, Morin contends that "the cinema allows us to see the penetration of man in the world

[13] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 166.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Edgar Morin, *The Cinema, Or, The Imaginary Man* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 149.
[16] Ibid., 203.

and the inseparable process of the penetration of the world in man."[17] According to him, the cinema resembles dreams not only in its fantastic visual representations and absorption in it, but also in its metamorphosis of life into its double and its implication of human duality between the reality and the imaginary.

A Korean American writer, filmmaker, and performance artist, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha envisions the dream-like potential of cinema toward the "collective imagination" where the separation of consciousness and unconsciousness is suspended, as if one is dreaming someone else's dream. Cha conceives of her relationship "as an artist to her audience in terms similar to those which…she sought to weave—or perhaps reveal—around her, filial relations, spun not by a network of blood and genes, but by an all-embracing force of a desiring consciousness."[18] For Cha, establishing such links of pseudo-genealogy was only a means by which to engender a recognition of collective consciousness among all the participants, and thereby to point toward a larger experience transcending the individual ego. Thus, in contrast with the psychoanalytic model of the cinematic apparatus, Cha seems to have envisioned the "cinematic" experience as a kind of alchemical ritual in which the participants transcend their individuality to find greater knowledge through access to "collective memory and imagination."

Zhang Lu's envisioning of dreams specifically resonates with Cha's understanding of cinematic experience as a phenomenon capable of bridging the various binaries, here and there, past and present, and self and other. In the film *Scenery*, as a dreamer is both a participant and an observer of dream, Zhang views the migrant workers' dreams and weaves their dreams into his own dream. Furthermore, the film invites the audience to observe and participate as the

[17] Ibid., 204.
[18] Lawrence R. Rinder, "The Plurality of Entrances, the Opening of Networks, the Infinity of Language," in *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982)* ed. Constance Lewallen et al (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley Art Museum: University of California Press, 2001), 27.

cinematic dream unfolds through viewing experience. Thus, the film first envisions the director behind the camera, crossing the borders to the other migrants who are in front of the camera. Then it also allows the spectators in front of the screen, to expand their perceptions into the screen by crossing the borders between the dreams on-screen and their dreaming process of film-viewing.

In the opening sequence of *Scenery*, over the image of the road toward Incheon International Airport, Augustino, a migrant worker from East Timor, tells us his dream. Having come to Korea in 2010, he is about to go back to his homeland due to health issues. During his stay in Korea, his mother passed away, he says, but he met his mother in his dreams every night. Even though his body was in Korea, his dreams were in his homeland. After the short interview with Augustino, the camera turns to Seoul again, showing the foggy landscape of Seoul described above. This opening sequence alludes to the crossing itineraries of a migrant worker's return home from Korea and Zhang Lu's return to the Korean homeland.

To understand the migrants' dreams, Zhang Lu's one criteria in this film is finding an appropriate distance from them. Instead of trying to thoroughly understand them, Zhang Lu seeks alternative ways to coexist with them, both existing as "strangers." It should be noted that this process of encountering is delivered though the cinematic medium to the audience. In the interview sequences, the camera stands at a recognizable distance from the filmic subjects, and their posture is a bit stiff and uncomfortable, explicitly belying the presence of Zhang Lu's camera, which is foreign to them. In some scenes, the migrant workers or their families even hide from the camera angle or ask a question about the film crew in front of them. Rather than presenting the migrants workers' lives as "real," meaning unhidden, undistorted, or unmediated, Zhang Lu exposes the foreign sensation they experienced in front of him and allows the audience

to feel the distance between themselves and the subject and to acknowledge the distance between the filmmaker and the filmic subject as well.

In navigating each worker's interview about his or her dream, the insert shots which embody Zhang Lu's own dreams attract our attention. In the middle of the film, Oaliullah Bhuilan, a migrant worker from Cambodia, explains his dream in front of the camera, which says that his wife, still in Cambodia, came to Korea in his dream and they went to Cheju Island together. Even though he doesn't know where Cheju Island is located and what it looks like at all, he said it was extremely beautiful and he wants to go Cheju Island sometime. After this interview, Zhang shows two migrant workers on a subway platform from the other side of the tracks. After a train passes in front of the camera, the workers are gone, even though the train did not stop. A low-angle shot of a flying plane and a high-angle shot of Cheju Island from the plane follow. The plane arrives at Cheju International Airport and shows the scenery of Cheju, as if the film brings Bhuilan to Cheju Island in this dream-like sequence. The island's scenery in winter is starkly different from what Bhuilan described, not crowded with many tourists as he saw in his dream but silent and even bleak. The quiet waving beach of Cheju Island is cut to a photograph of a Cheju beach on a calendar on the wall, where Ganga Basnet, a female worker from Nepal stays. She had severe back pain in Korea and had to stay at home for several months. One night she had nightmare in which dead people in her village tried to take her and she shouted at them to leave her alone, and she started to get better slowly. Although her life is confined in a small room in Korea for long time, the photograph in her calendar shows a beautiful sunset of Cheju Island. By inserting the dream-like sequences of Cheju Island, Zhang Lu loosely connects two migrants and the audience to follow their dreams bridged by his cinematic dream.

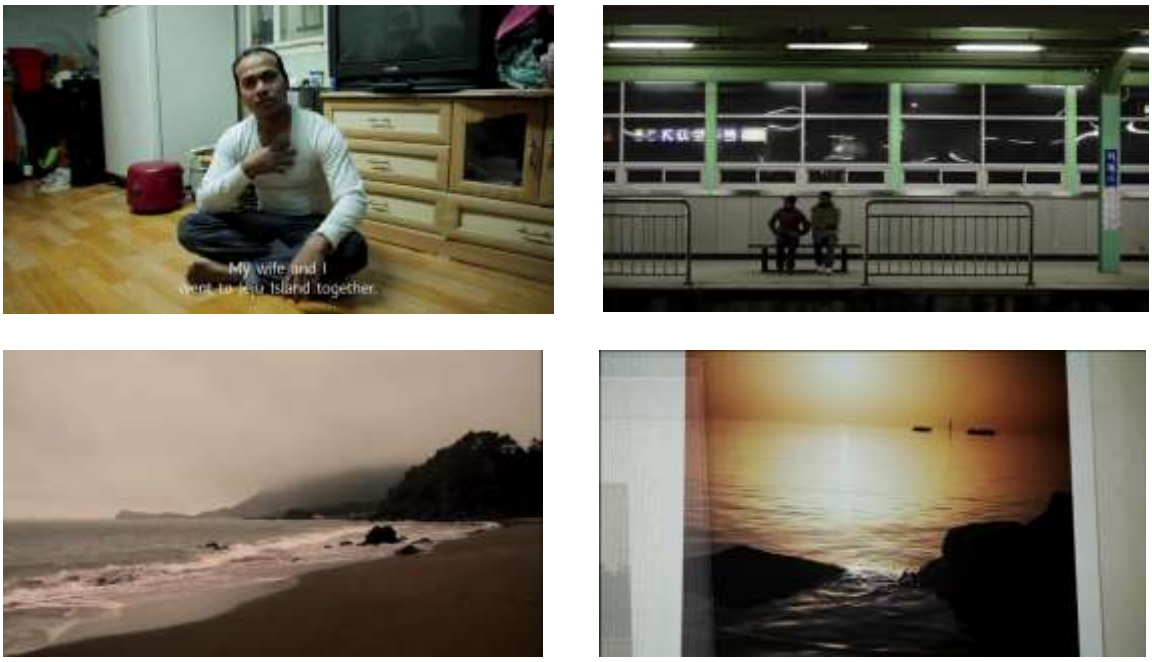


**Figure 3-9. Oaliullah Bhuilan describing his dream (upper left); Oaliullah Bhuilan in the subway station (upper left); a scene of Cheju Island (lower left); an image of Cheju island on a calendar in the next interviewee's room (lower right)**

In contrast to the static camera position throughout the film, in the very last sequence of *Scenery*, the film abruptly deploys a subjective movement of the camera with hand-held shooting. With sounds of people screaming, the camera runs, crossing the busy streets of downtown Seoul, as if trying to escape from somebody. It goes into the small alleys of the shabby streets. At the end of the alley, the camera moves up and down with heavy breathing sounds. It moves slightly down, embodying the cameraman's movement of sitting down and tilts up toward the sky, where a sound of a plane can be heard but the plane is not visible. This sequence can be read as the realization of a migrant's dream or Zhang Lu's dream, as he mentions in an interview that the people living away from home feel deep anxiety and their dreams are "shaking."[19] What is notable here is Zhang induces the audience not to hear the interview or view the scenery from a

[19] Sŏng-il Chŏng, "Angae sok ŭi p'ungkyŏng [The scenery over the fog: an interview with Zhang Lu]," *Ssine 21*, December 19, 2013, 81.

distant position but to experience the embodied movement and breathing of a migrant's dream. Thus, this very last sequence crosses the line of the proper distance he established between himself and the migrant workers and invites the audience into the dream through cinematic experience.

In his films, Zhang Lu employs subjective camera movement and unconventional editing to destabilize the binary between characters and induce the spectator's embodied experience. In *Dooman River*, the idiosyncratic point-of-view shot when Ch'ang-ho meets Chŏng-jin for the second time marks an indication to transcend the division of the seeing subject and viewed object as well as the borders between the characters, as analyzed above. A technically similar camera movement is used in *Gyeongju*, which now blurs the boundary between dream and reality. When Ch'oe Hyŏn visits the tea house again after meeting his ex-girlfriend, he is sitting in front of camera. He is looking toward his right side at the door, showing his profile. Then he slowly turns his face toward the camera and saying, "You're here, *hyongsu-nim*,[20]" staring at the camera. It cuts to the face of his dead friend's wife, who ran into Ch'oe at the funeral. She says that she needs to tell Ch'oe something. The camera shows the two talking from the side, showing both in one frame. The widow says that her husband was neither murdered nor committed suicide, but his death was his own choice, like high Buddhist monks do. Ch'oe asks for her hand and grabs it. While he is grabbing the widow's hand over the table, the camera pans toward the wall behind Ch'oe, showing only him. Then the voice of Yun-hŭi, the owner of the tea house, can be heard saying "You must be very tired." Then the camera pans back to the initial position, showing Yun-hŭi coming to sit where the widow was sitting.

[20] "*Hyŏngsu-nim"* is appellation for sister-in-law but commonly used when a male calls his older friend's wife. Thus, in this film, it is clear that Ch'oe is talking to his dead friend's wife by calling *hyŏngsu-nim.*

**Figure 3-10. Ch'oe grabs the friend's wife's hand (left), and without a cut, camera pans to left and comes back then Yun-hŭi comes in (right).**

By showing the shot of the widow and one of Yun-hŭi, uncut and by the continuous movement of the camera, the film blurs the boundary between Ch'oe's dream and reality and obscures the audience's distinction of the dream sequence from reality in the narrative. As Ch'oe touches the widow's hand but cannot recognize it is a dream, the audience cannot tell who exactly was the person Ch'oe saw and which is dream or reality. Through the porous boundary between the dream and reality, the film brings the dream into waking life and mingles with it. In Zhang Lu's films in Korea, he uses the dream both as a theme and a structure. He prevents the audience from perceiving traditional distinctions between reality and dreams but encourages the experience of a sensory configuration of intertwined life and dream.

## 6. Cinematic Dreams in the Homeland: The Phenomenological Experience of Zhang Lu's Cinema

Zhang Lu's Korea-based films create a visceral viewing experience for the spectator. The ways in which those films position the spectators calls for a phenomenological approach to his cinematic texts. Before discussing the phenomenological aspect of Zhang Lu's films, I will briefly review the theoretical discussions on phenomenological spectatorship. In his essay "The Film and the New Psychology," Merleau-Ponty argues that a film is perceived not in its discrete

cinematographic elements (visual, aural, and editorial) but in these elements' meaningful totality as a temporal and sensual configuration that is grasped as "a unique structure of a thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all [our] senses at once."[21] He emphasizes that a film's meaning emerges not only in narrative and dialogue but also, and primarily, in our perception of lived conduct and behavior in the world. According to him, the cinema is thus a phenomenological art, "peculiarly suited to make manifest the union of mind and body, mind and world, and the expression of one in the other."[22]

The phenomenological approaches offer an insight to the intersubjective relationship between the filmmaker and spectator. Vivian Sobchak argues that phenomenological spectatorship is fundamentally different from Lacanian psychoanalytic interpretation. She compares Lacan's analysis of the mirror stage with Merleau-Ponty's, arguing that for Lacan, the infant's ego emerges "in and according to the deceptive, alienating, objectifying character of the relations the infant as seer has to its specular image,"[23] which is "mistake," or méconnaissance and he or she acknowledges his or her corporeal limits and constitutes the boundary between Self and the Other. Merleau-Ponty, however, understands the same phenomenon as an originating act of reconnaissance and reflective knowledge. Noting that an infant always already possesses a primordial and immanent knowledge of the subjective body lived perceptively from within as "mine," he argues that this primordial knowledge of the body that contextualizes the visible Other seen in the mirror and informs the visible Other with subjective as well as objective status. Sobchack notes that while Lacan situates the Self in the "being seen" in the mirror, Merleau-Ponty locates subjectivity in the "seeing being" in the mirror.

[21] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense* (Evanston, Il.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 50.
[22] Ibid., 58.
[23] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 119.

This intersubjective spectatorial experience offers a grounding for a potential way to understand others across national or cultural borders. The phenomenological notion of embodied spectatorship assumes that the relationship between spectator and film is not solely communicated through signs but experienced in the body. Laura Marks explains that phenomenological subjectivity posits "a mutual permeability and mutual creation of self and other."[24] In this intersubjective relationship, film spectators do not remain passive receivers or decoders of the information projected on the screen, but their perception opens them into the world and enables them to dialogically participate in the production of cinematic experience.

Based on these discussions of phenomenological spectatorship, I will analyze the ways in which Zhang Lu invites the audience into his cinematic dream, inducing the spectator's embodied experience through the sensorial configurations of the film. In 2015, Zhang Lu made the most experimental film among his films in Korea, consisting of four different short chapters, with the title of *P'illŭm sidae sarang* [Film Age Love] and *Love and…* in English. In this film, Zhang conducts cinematic experiments in deconstructing and reconstructing both cinema itself and the audience's experience of cinema. Commissioned by the Seoul Senior Film Festival for its opening gala in 2015, Zhan Lu initially made what is now the first chapter of *Love and…* as a short film, with the theme of mourning the loss of celluloid film. It features a cast of reputed actors such as An Sŏng-gi, Park Hae-il, and Moon So-ri, who volunteered to perform without pay. With a limited budget, Zhang successfully filmed the short version in merely three days. After shooting the first chapter, however, Zhang said in an interview, he could not sleep for a few days, thinking that this film should not be completed as it was.[25] His post-filming agonies

[24] Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 149.
[25] Hwa-jŏng Yi, "Chang Ryul, nae saenghwal i toen yŏnghwa hyŏnjang iyagi [Zhang Lu, A Story of Filmmaking, Which Rules My Daily Life]," *Ssine 21*, Oct 27, 2015, 91.

led him to convene the crew again at the site of the original filming, an abandoned psychiatric hospital which was slated to be demolished within a month at the time of Zhang's shooting. There, Chapters Two and Four were shot without any actors. Through the variations in the four different chapters, I argue that Zhang Lu renews the audience's sensory perception through the cinematic experience, which clearly elucidates Zhang Lu's pedagogical methodology both in the filmmaking and the film-viewing experience.

In Chapter One, the camera, in black and white digital video, follows a girl who visits her grandfather in a psychiatric hospital. During her visit, the grandfather gives a peeled apple to a cleaning lady he likes and insists she eat it. The cleaning lady turns him down and the apple is tossed away, then the grandfather abruptly starts to chase her holding a knife. After catching her, he hands the knife to her and says that it's her turn now. Now he runs and she chases. When she finally catches him at a staircase, she stabs him with the knife. Then the off-screen sound of a director shouting "cut" intervenes and the black and white changes to color, which shows that the previous sequences were film-within-a-film.

The story of the film-within-a-film is based on a clear separation between two opposing worlds: one belongs to the psychiatric patients, the other to the mentally sound people. When the film first shows the grandfather, the camera approaches him from the rear. Pretending to play an imaginary guitar, he asks the granddaughter, "You hear that, right?" However, there is no diegetic sound in this sequence, but the granddaughter says she can hear it as if it doesn't really matter. Then he asks if she can see an imaginary apple in his hand, and she gives a real apple to him. The grandfather belongs to the world where he can see the invisible and hear the inaudible, but the granddaughter, the cleaning lady, and the audience reside is the rational world where there is shared consensus on what constitutes physical reality.


**Figure 3-11. The grandfather plays an imaginary guitar (left) and he shows an imaginary apple to his granddaughter (right)**

When the director shouts the cut, the cast and crew all seem satisfied with the scene except a gaffer. He shouts to the director that this film should not be made in this way and asks if the director believes in love. The director scorns him that if he knows better, he should go and shoot by himself. The gaffer leaves the shooting location alone and steals a can of film reel on the way out. He heads to the bank of Han River and the first chapter finishes with a zooming in on the serene river. However, one notable point here is there was no film container the gaffer could steal because the film-within-a-film is shot in digital. The loss of celluloid film material is one of main themes of this film, as it initially motivated the short film project. Zhang Lu notes that the reason he was interested in using celluloid film is because no one uses it these days in Korea. The rapidly changing film industry of South Korea forces almost all commercial films to be digitally produced in order to economize and expedite the filmmaking process. Because of this, the only films made in celluloid are independently produced experimental films. Zhang found that the untimely disappearance of film materials is analogous to the forgetting of old people in rapidly modernizing societies. However, ironically, Zhang Lu himself could not help but film the first chapter in digital format due to financial and time limitations. Thus, the gaffer might have been yelling to Zhang Lu that this film should not be made in this way, or he could be Zhang Lu himself who believed after filming the first part that the film should not be

completed like this. The other chapters of this film might have been made to rectify this first chapter which was filmed with the wrong material.

The second chapter, titled "*P'illŭm* [Film]," is shot in 16mm celluloid film. It is noteworthy that this chapter is made with expired 16 mm film, with expiration dates five or more years earlier. That is to say, the physical material that constitutes this chapter should have been destroyed a long time ago, but outlived its expected, or even assigned, lifespan. This obsolete film bears the traces of time physically in the form of scratch marks, faded colors, and coarse-grained surfaces. These signs of temporal decay, and yet endurance, hinder viewers from accepting the represented image as it is but forces them to experience the passage of time the material belies.

The images in Chapter 2 can be further explained with Deleuze's notion of "optical images." Deleuze argues that optical images are distinctive in time-image cinema. Unlike the images of movement-image cinema, where the image directly extends into action, optical image in time-image cinema is abstracted from the narrative context thus the viewer must bring her own resources of memory and imagination to complete them. It forces the viewer to contemplate the image itself instead of being pulled into a narrative, and search their own memories to make sense of it and connect it with virtual images such as dreams, fantasies, and the sense of a past. [26] Laura Marks analyzes the optical image in intercultural cinema, which she coined to explain the diaspora films not belonging to a single culture but mediating in at least two directions. She argues, "because the viewer cannot confidently link the optical image with other images through causal relationships, she is forced to search her memory for other virtual images that might make

[26] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Trans., Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 42-55.

sense of it."[27] Borrowing Bergson's terminology, she says that to perceive an optical image, our "attentive recognition" is needed, which means "participatory spectatorship," as "the way a perceiver oscillates between seeing the object, recalling virtual images that it brings to memory, and comparing the virtual object thus created with the one before us."[28] The optical image invites the audience to understand the meaning of the image through her experience of the film from the inside and create the meaning through embodied experience. The "Film" chapter envisions a cinematic world where the audience can experience the passage of time through their memories.

Memory, also one of the most important themes of this film, is a way humans can live in both the past and present, with cinema a powerful human-created tool for recording memory outside the mind. As mentioned above, the filmmaking location—the old mental hospital—was soon to be demolished. Zhang Lu said that he wanted to film the space to memorialize it before it disappeared. On its face, the camera seems to trace the interiors and exteriors of the hospital building without any clear objective, but the empty space is full of movements and signs of invisible forces. The camera cannot capture the causes but only the effects, such as a broken egg, a fallen apple, moving peanuts, which means the images severed from causality of images. After watching the following third chapter, we can see some of the seemingly meaningless montages are visualizations of the patients' mumbling,[29] that is, this second chapter captures the memories lingering in the space, which include, as well, the memories of the people who occupied this space for filmmaking.

Among the mingled memories of the space, Zhang Lu brings his own cultural memory related to film which might be foreign to its Korean audience: an excerpt from the Chinese

[27] Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 47.
[28] Ibid., 48.
[29] For example, the images of cabbage, anchovy, and peanuts in Chapter 2 corresponds with the mental patient's murmuring "peanut, anchovy, and cabbage" in Chapter 3.

translation of Jorge Luis Borges's "The Wall and the Books," Korean poet Yun Tong-ju's poem "Until the Daybreak," and Chinese singer and actress Zhou Xuan's song "Blooming Flowers and the Full Moon 花好月圓." These nods to Chinese and Korean traditional and popular arts illuminate Zhang Lu's cultural position as an ethnic Korean who was born and raised in China.

Regarding the use of Zhou Xuan's song, Zhang resisted the Korean staff's objection that the Chinese song is unfamiliar to the Korean audience. Zhang argues that "Popular films tend to erase their own sentiments and fit with the common sentiments of the audience. However, is this really the right way to go? I know many more people would have liked it if I had used a Korean song. However, my own sentiments wanted a Chinese song. It was just more right for me."[30] The memory he tried to represent through this film is not only what might be a Korean audience's memory but also his own memories, which include a cultural memory of the China he experienced. Zhou Xuan was among the most popular actresses and singers in China through the '30s and '40s and remembering her song in "film" is only natural for Zhang Lu. In addition, the notion of the second chapter, the memory of the old mental hospital, echoes with Zhou Xuan's tragic personal history which ended with her commitment to a mental asylum at an early age. By not obfuscating his own cultural positionality as a diasporic Korean in China, he initiates a conversation with the homeland audience.

[30] Hwa-jŏng Yi, "Chang Ryul, nae saenghwal i toen yŏnghwa hyŏnjang iyagi [Zhang Lu, A Story of Filmmaking, Which Rules My Daily Life]," *Ssine 21*, Oct 28, 2015, 92.

**Figure 3-5. A copy of Borges' short stories (left); a LP of Zhou Xuan's songs (right)**

In a few of interviews about this film, Zhang Lu mentions that sometimes he feels that he became psychotic in Korea. He means that in China, filmmaking was only a small part of his life and that he had numerous and varied relations, but in Korea, filmmaking consumes all of his life, as all the people he meets are related to the film industry and all his conversations with them about filmmaking.[31] After his temporary return to South Korea, he must fashion himself as a full-time filmmaker and adjust his life to a singular focus on film-related activities. He laments, jokingly, that under these circumstances all the variety in his life has been eliminated. Yet, the real frustration he might have felt in Korea was that he had to talk about only South Korean film and culture. When he started to make films in Korea with Korean actors and crews, the Korean media wrote that he had "returned" to his homeland and made a "Korean film."[32] Before his "return," Zhang was often called a "*tongp'o*" director in Korea. The term "*tongp'o*" literally means "same uterus" and underscores the ethnonational homogeneity of Korean people. As Theodore Hughes notes, the term has been "frequently invoked as a nonideological site for

[31] Chi-hye Kim, "Int'ŏbyu, 'Pillŭm sidae sarang' Chang ryul kamdok I mal hanŭn na ŭi isanghan yŏnghwa [Interview, Zhang Lu Talks about His Strange Film]," *SBS news*, October 28, 2015, accessed August 1, 2019, http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1003238241

[32] Han-sŏk Chŏng, "Yi yŏnghwadŭl ŭl ki'ŏk harira, yi yŏnghwadŭl ro ki'ŏk toerira (2) [Remember these films, will be remembered by these films 2]," *Ssine 21*, December 23, 2014, 76.

overcoming national division"[33] in postwar Korean society and is still used prevalently to emphasize the oneness of Korean people across many differences. However, the unity the term stresses generally forces diasporic Koreans to be assimilated into dominant South Korean culture and history. Thus, when a *tongp'o* Korean returns to the homeland, he must accept the non-diasporic Koreans' history as his and detach from his own history as a diasporic Korean.

The third chapter of *Love and…*consists of excerpts from 35mm celluloid films in which the actors of the first chapter once starred. The actors in the first chapter are all well-known movie stars in Korea who began their careers during the celluloid film era. An Sŏng-gi, who plays the grandfather, started his career as a child actor in the late '50s and performed a number of significant roles in Korean New Wave films, becoming a "national actor (*kungmin bae'u*)." The actress who played the cleaning lady is Mun So-ri, who debuted in the role of an innocent girl in Yi Ch'ang-dong's acclaimed film *A Peppermint Candy* (2000) and became one of the most influential actresses in the Korean film industry. Pak Hae-il, the gaffer, also debuted in the early 2000s and is best known for his performance as an alleged serial killer in Bong Jun-ho's *Memories of Murder* (2003). He also starred in Zhang Lu's previous film *Gyeongju* (2014), as a protagonist in a role modeled after Zhang Lu's own persona. Han Ye-ri, who plays the granddaughter, belongs to a younger generation of actors but has already become well known for her performances in many independent films, including her role as a Korean Chinese girl in the film *Let the Blue River Run* (2009). She plays the female lead in Zhang Lu's most recent film *A Quite Dream* (2016).

Under the title of "*Kŭdŭl* ("they" or "them")," the third chapter of *Love and…*consists of excerpts from 35mm celluloid films where the actors of the first chapter previously worked.

[33] Theodore Hughes. *Literature and Film in Cold War South Korea: Freedom's Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 149.

These actors' existence on screen is larger than the story encompassed by the film and evokes memories of their previous films. Most Korean people who have lived in Korea since the 1990s would be aware of the actors' previous work and images from their films. In other words, the South Korean audience shares a certain cinematic memory about those actors. Of course, the memory would have its personal variations depending on individual tendencies, experiences, and histories, but generally, the memory is also shared collectively among the people who inhabit a shared spatiotemporal space.

Specifically, Zhang Lu chose footage from *A Peppermint Candy* (Yi Ch'ang-dong, 1999), *Memories of the Murder* (Pong Jun-ho, 2003), *May 18* (Kim Ji-hun, 2007), and *A Blind River* (An Sŏn-kyŏng, 2009). With the exception of *A Blind River*, the other three films mark the representative films of the time by attracting mass audiences, and furthermore, engaging with an important historical moment of South Korea. *A Peppermint Candy* follows the protagonist's life from the Park Chung Hee regime in the 1970s until the financial crisis of the late 1990s, which is intertwined with and scarred by this history. *Memories of the Murder* portrays an infamous serial killing case in the 1980s and reveals an ugly picture of South Korean society where infuriating injustices and brutal violence were taken for granted under the military dictatorship. Meanwhile, *May 18* portrays the Kwangju Uprising in 1980, which ignited a nationwide democratization movement in Korea. In this sense, those films contribute to certain historical narrativization of South Korea. During the period portrayed in those films, however, Zhang Lu did not reside in Korea, in other words, he does not belong to the historical narrative of those films. Nevertheless, by revisiting those films, he engages the memories of those films. He dismantles the grand narrative of South Korea by taking a few scenes out of a solidified context and connects them to the narrative he structured in the previous chapters. While he does not share the same cinematic

memory with his Korean audience, he tries to engage with that memory and make his own film grounded in that communal memory. One interesting modification Zhang Lu makes is removing the audio tracks from the footage and connecting the shots by intertitles. With this rearrangement, each excerpt emerges from its original context and is reworked into a new structure of meaning.


**Figure 3-13. A scene from *Memories of Murder* (left), followed by an intertitle (right)**

In this sense, the quote from Borges in the second chapter explains Zhang's methodology further. In Chapter 2, after showing the Chinese edition of Borges's short story, Zhang Lu's own voice reads Borges's "The Wall and the Books" as a voice-over narration imposed over the image of burning books in the sink. This excerpt is about Shih Huang Ti, who burned all the books to obliterate the past and built the Great Wall to secure his own empire. Shih Huang Ti (Qin Shi Huangdi), who wanted it to be the beginning of a new history and dreamed of immortal life. However, as he might have known, Borges writes, "men love the past and I can do nothing against this love, nor can my executioners, but sometime there will be a man who feels as I do, and he will destroy my wall, as I destroyed the books, and will erase my memory and will be my shadow and my mirror and will not be aware of it." By citing this story, Zhang stresses both the adamancy of the past and its memory. For him, a diasporic director who moved as an adult to his ancestral homeland, the memory of homeland, specifically the cinematic memories of South Korean films would be more foreign than familiar to him. Rather than trying to erase his own

memory of a past that does not align neatly with conventional understandings and associations of either homeland or host country, or trying to build his own cinematic world totally independent from the shared past of the Korean audience, he chose to build a foundation where he can share certain memories with the audience, where he can construct his own film over it.

After the variations in two chapters, the film revisits the first chapter in Chapter 4. The final chapter is titled "Love, again," which is an almost identical reenactment of the first chapter, except for the absence of the actors' bodies. Without showing the actors' bodies, the films allow the audience only to listen to dialogue between the characters. Besides lacking the actors' bodies, this final chapter also diverges in several other ways from the original. For instance, in the first chapter, the girl was listening to the K-pop song "Bad Girl, Good Girl" on headphones but the sound was so loud that it could be heard from beyond the headphones, which the viewer assumes by the nurse's comment on the song that he clearly must have heard. Meanwhile, in Chapter 4, we cannot see whether the girl is wearing headphones or not, because there is no visible actor's body onscreen, but can only hear her humming to Zhou Xuan's song "Blooming Flowers and the Full Moon." The nurse asks what the song is, but the girl answers that it is an old Chinese song.

The humming of Zhou Xuan's song in the fourth chapter has particular significance. Chapter 4 envisions a world bearing both Zhang Lu's own memory as a Korean descendant in China represented in Chapter 2 and audience's memory of the previous three chapters. Zhang asks the Korean audience not to understand the indexical meaning of each image but to experience the world the film unfolds, encouraging spectators to engage with the image through their own memories of the film. Thus, what this film finally aims at is the spectators' active participation with Zhang Lu's own engagement with South Korean film culture.

**Figure 3-14. The girl listening to music meets a nurse in Chapter 1 (left); the girl is not visible but her humming of Zhou Xuan's song is heard in Chapter 4 (right)**

The variations in the last two chapters remind us of the grandfather's first dialogue in the first chapter: *can you hear (the inaudible sound)? Can you see (the invisible apple)?* In Chapter 3, Zhang invites viewers to listen to the inaudible dialogue by seeing the silent film and in Chapter 4 he urges them to see the invisible actors' bodies. Through their memories of the previous chapters, viewers have now transcended to the other world, where one can experience inaudible and invisible things, yet it is, as a matter of fact, a world of cinematic experience. After the blackout, a short epilogue is attached, which shows the actors' bodies again. The gaffer holding film container is walking to the riverbank and sits next to another elderly man. The gaffer pretends to play a guitar, just as the old man did in the first chapter, but now we can hear the diegetic sound of a guitar. This shift in sound use symbolizes what Zhang asks the audience during the film. We could not hear the guitar in the first chapter, but in the epilogue the sound is no longer inaudible.

**Figure 3-15. The gaffer playing an imaginary guitar in the epilogue, with audible diegetic sound**

## 7. Conclusion

Zhang Lu is the only diasporic filmmaker who actively pursued his film career in South Korean film industry. The film *Dooman River* he made right before his "return" to South Korea, foregrounded the theme of border-crossing both in the narrative and cinematic form and posited questions on ethnics of border-crossing. In his films made in South Korea, he furthered the explorations of borders and border-crossings, which he encountered in everyday life and filmmaking in his ancestral and foreign homelands. The border his films envision crossing most enthusiastically is the border between him and the South Korean audience.

His anticipation of cinematic border-crossing to the spectators can be traced in Yun Tong-ju's poem, cited in the last chapter of *Love and...*. Yun Tong-ju is a colonial period Korean poet, born and raised in Manchuria, who went to Korea and Japan to study, and died in a Japanese prison on the charge of having participated in the Korean independence movement. Yun Tong-ju's life trajectory particularly illuminates the continuous migration of Koreans in the colonial period and the history of dislocation of Korean diaspora in East Asia. For this reason, Jinhee Kim argues that "Yun is not just a poet, but also can be considered a unit of analysis, a

readable text in the context of world or East Asian discourse."[34] However, when Yun Tong-ju was canonized as one of the most representative "national" poets in postwar South Korea, his diasporic identity was understated. Up to this day, Yun Tong-ju is the most beloved poet of South Koreans and many of his poems are included in school textbooks. Zhang Lu cited a number of his poems in his films, but not poems well known to the Korean audience. For Zhang, Yun Tong-ju is not a Korean "national" poet, but a fellow ethnic Korean, born and raised in his hometown in China and migrated to South Korea after growing up. In an interview, Zhang mentioned that if Yun Tong-ju did not die in a prison in Fukuoka, he would be just a Chosŏnjok from Longjing City in Yanbian.[35] As Zhang disconnects some sequences from famous Korean films in the third chapter of *Love and...*, he disjoins Yun Tong-ju's poems from the tendency toward nationalist readings in South Korea and integrates them into his exploration of an emergent spectatorship.

Before the gaffer leaves the filmmaking site in Chapter 4, he suddenly starts to recite Yun Tong-ju's poem, "The Palace of Love." On the surface, it is a poem about love. The narrator in the poem asks his lover Soon that "When was it you came into my palace?" and "When was it that I entered yours?" This simple first verse illuminates Yun's view of love, which is not becoming inseparable by love, but to enter the lover's palace and to let the lover come into his own. In the fifth verse, the narrator tells Soon to "run out the front door," "before the hot flame of the sacred candle goes out." It is followed by the sixth verse: "Before the darkness and wind strike the window/I will disappear through the back door/To a faraway place/Eternal love in my

[34] Jinhee Kim, "The Understanding of Yun Dong-ju in Three East Asian Countries," *Korea Journal* 51, no. 3 (Autumn, 2012): 204.
[35] Sŏnhŭi Yu, "Chang Ryul kamdok kwa hamke hanŭn pomnal ŭi Kunsan haeng ŭl kkumkkuda [Dreaming a journey to Kunsan with Zhang Lu: an interview with Zhang Lu]," *Hankyoreh*, November 7, 2018. http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/movie/869286.html

arms."[36] The narrator says that he can secure eternal love by leaving the palace of love in the opposite direction from his lover. Love, for the poet Yun, is not an unchanging and immortal force binding the lovers together, but something that should be preserved in one's mind, not to be changed and tarnished. To keep love alive, Yun says, becoming one is not the answer, but rather, living one's own life carrying the eternal love in one's arms is the only possible way.

The love in Yun's poem echoes the relationship between the film and spectators Zhang Lu imagines. Cinematic experience not only signifies understanding the audio-visual messages projected on the screen, but also entering into the film world and experiencing it, and at the same time, allowing the film world to slip into the spectator's real life. What Zhang envisions in this film is a love for the audience in his homeland by inviting them into his palace of love, which is the cinematic text, and visiting their palace of love, the spectator's experience. The love cannot last forever but he dreams that even during the running time of the film, he and the audience can enjoy a shared love and affection and perhaps after viewing the film, all will carry the memory of this moment of love back into their non-cinematic everyday lives.

In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Jacques Ranciere suggests imagining spectatorship beyond the structural opposition between collective and individual, image and lived reality, or activity and passivity. These opposing binaries are always overlapped, as collectives are made of individuals and images are always a part of the use of our sensory abilities. Contemplation might look passive but is always mentally active. He asserts that what each individual has in common is the fact that their intellectual journey is unique and it is this very uniqueness that is the basis for our sense of community.[37] Ranciere's understanding of community resonates with the filmic experience Zhang Lu's films imagines. It is not absorbing an audience into the film text but

[36] Tong-ju Yun, *Sky, Wind, and Stars*, trans. Kyung-nyun Kim Richards (Fremont: Asian Humanities, 2003), 51.
[37] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009),17.

inviting members to come into the world envisioned in the film, with each spectator's individuality. It is not a utopian community without any dissent or struggles, but rather a "community of sense" Ranciere proposes, where both the artist and the spectator have a unique subject position and so will come to their own specific interpretation.[38] Through the embodied experience of audiences, Zhang Lu may dream a community transcending salient cultural differences, which might be all the love his films call to create.

In sum, Zhang Lu's films made in South Korea challenge the current configuration of national cinema by restructuring the memories upon the South Korean films and inscribing his own memory beyond what is believed to be "national" in Korea. They cross the borders of the cultural memory between the diasporic Koreans and non-diasporic Koreans and enable the audience to experience the connected memory by film viewing. Through phenomenological spectatorship, his films facilitate the audience to build memories throughout the viewing experience, which encompasses the collective memory of Korean national cinema and that of diasporic experience. Thus, Zhang Lu's films offer a chance for the audience to "remember" memories beyond their firsthand experiences and participate in an emergent community of the postmemory, which is both national and transnational.

[38] Ibid., 64.

# CODA

In May of 2011, I co-organized a conference entitled "Border Crossings in East Asian Cinema: Koreans on the Move" at the University of Chicago. Under the topic of Korean migrations and their cinematic (re)enactment, two Korean diasporic filmmakers were invited to this conference: Zhang Lu from the People's Republic of China with his film *Dooman River*, and Yang Yonghi from Japan with her documentary film *Sona, the Other Myself*. The event was productive in many ways and eventually led me to the question of how the understanding of contemporary Korean cinema could be reconfigured by diasporic filmmakers' works. This event conceptualized my dissertation project, in which the directors Zhang and Yang and their films constitute a pivotal part.

A few days after the event, I had a phone conversation with my mother, who resided in New York where my family had immigrated from South Korea. When I told her about the films that were featured in the program, her response took me by surprise. She said that she had watched *Dear Pyongyang*, Yang Yonghi's earlier film, and so did her own mother. My surprise was not a little. For one thing, the film was not widely released in South Korea. For another, my mother had never been cinephilic enough to look for art house or independent films. The question of how she and her own mother came to watch *Dear Pyongyang* was itself of great interest to me, and at my insistence, she revealed a chapter of our family history that had never been told to her children while we lived in South Korea.

My maternal grandmother was born and raised on Cheju Island, the island that had been subject to the Cold-War Korea's grave history of state violence. All her experience of Japan's colonial rule and the national division in the wake of Korea's liberation from Japan took place on the island. During the April 3rd Uprising in 1948, when the island as a whole was engulfed in

brutal violence by South Korean official and unofficial forces, her two younger brothers smuggled themselves into Japan, as many Cheju Islanders did. In 1960, I was told for the first time, my maternal grandmother's youngest brother boarded a "repatriation" ship to North Korea, similarly to Yang Yonghi's brothers. After a few decades of separation, according to my mother, my grandmother managed to find a route to exchange letters with her brother through the Korean-Chinese community in Yanbian, China, and sent money to him and his family in the north. This brother died in 2010, but she continues to correspond with his son, her nephew, in North Korea.

Upon hearing about my grandmother's hidden stories, I felt a sudden opening in myself. The only story that we the younger generation grew up hearing about our extended families concerned my paternal grandfather's tragic death by communists during the Korean War. My maternal great-uncle's voluntary "return" to North Korea must have been a taboo story within the family. As the earlier-generation family members, who had held fast those firsthand memories of their separated family members only to themselves, were getting old and passing away, those deeply buried personal stories were also very likely to disappear, never passed on to later generations. For me and my mother, Yang Yong-hi's film happened to offer a rare opportunity that enabled the proscribed family story to enter into our conversation, allowing us to rediscover our own history and connect with the family members who dispersed across various borders.

Transnationalism in the Korean diaspora films discussed in this dissertation is deeply connected to the memorialization of transnational Korean history throughout the twentieth century. The memories of the first-generation ethnic Koreans who left their homeland for various reasons are bound to shape the postmemory of the second- or third-generation filmmakers.

Introduced to viewers in South Korea, the descendant generation's films enable the homeland audience to experience diasporic Koreans' history of dislocation, displacement, and multiple returns. To be sure, cinematic experience is far from a firsthand experience. But, as is illustrated by my own opening to the concealed chapter of my extended family, postmemory of the diasporic filmmakers prompts the viewing audience to build their own postmemory beyond the boundaries of the nation-states and the ideological dichotomy of the Cold War division. By tracing back to the unequivocally transnational history of Korean migration, it engenders an occasion for reconnecting themselves with and to the histories that had been muffled by a passage of time, spatial distance, and, more often than not, inexorable politics.

Cinema functions as an important medium and channel in mediating the first generation's memory, their descendant generation filmmakers' postmemory, and further the viewing audience's memory and postmemory. In this dissertation, I show how the first generation of ethnic Koreans utilized the cinematic medium in order to visualize a homeland that is often different from the nation-states established in their original home country. As they search for their own diasporic identities, the descendant generation filmmakers cinematize not only the strong memory of the homeland as transmitted from their parent's generation, but also the intense conflicts and radical distance, which are distinguished from the first generation's vision of homeland. By participating in South Korean filmmaking and exhibition, their films challenge the meaning of *minjok* in the national address of South Korean cinema and raise the questions of the identity to the audience. As Zhang Lu's films show, the audience's temporal experience of cinematic texts is intensely interwoven with the diasporic filmmaker's memory as well as the audience's memorialization of the text, and thus becomes a communal ground where a new set of collective memories can be initiated.

With the advent of neoliberal globalization, various transnational film projects have been launched in South Korea, taking the form of co-productions with those from neighboring East Asian countries as well as from Hollywood. These mostly high-budget projects cast well-known actors from each country and feature transnational narratives. The diasporic filmmakers' transnational vision, I strongly note, is fundamentally different from the supranational flows of so-called transnational South Korean films, in whose projects the Korean film industry tends to celebrate the international recognition of Korean cinema. To a considerable degree, the power imbalance imbedded in the projects and a mode of production highly dependent on multinational capital make the films only transnational in terms of profit-making. Even more important, those film texts hardly question what the trans/national means in audiences' film-viewing experiences.

Vis-à-vis the relationship between the national and the transnational, the following questions takes on a new urgency: how should the national be redefined in the era of unprecedented return migration of ethnic Koreans, including Korean diaspora from China, former-Soviet regions, and North Korea? I argue that the Korean diasporic films show a vision of a critical transnationalism, as Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim suggest. Higbee and Lim argue that a critical transnationalism "scrutinizes the tensions and dialogic relationship between national and transnational, rather than simply negating one in favour of the other."[1] The films explored in this thesis are all attentive to the very formation of the national and the transnational in Korean history and Korean national cinema, which is also directly connected to the filmmakers' diasporic identities. If I push Higbee and Lim's claim further, the critical transnationalism proposes the audience participate in the questions on the trans/national through cinematic experience and make them rethink their own positioning in the national culture.

[1] Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, "Concepts of transnational cinema: towards a critical transnationalism in film studies," *Transnational Cinemas* 1, no. 1, (2010), 18.

Korean diaspora films' critical transnational vision not only orients themselves toward the transnational past of the memories of the displaced ethnic Koreans but also address themselves to the future of Korean cinema. As the films made by Zainichi filmmakers show, it begins with a fundamental examination of the convoluted conditions of the remaining Cold War tensions in the transition to the post-Cold War era.

This radical transnational vision of Korean diaspora films, therefore, challenges the current dominant scholarly understandings of diaspora films, which often characterizes the diasporic films as marginalized film practices in the dominant cinematic culture in the West. The intricate tensions and negotiations the diasporic films make with the national culture can only be properly understood by closely reading the histories of dislocation and the constant transformation of the nation-states in the homeland. In South Korean cinema, diaspora as a filmic subject has never been marginalized. To the contrary, it has been at the very forefront of South Korean filmmakers' aspirations to gain transnational mobility and expand the boundaries of Korean national cinema. In response to incorporating the diaspora in the national film industry, ethnic Korean filmmakers directly participated in the homeland film culture and demonstrated their transnational vision in their film texts. The Korean diaspora films have thus facilitated the mutual process of redefining the national and the transnational; they further presented a vision that traverses the binary (often oppositional) relationship of the national and the transnational, the center and the periphery, dominant cinema and marginalized cinema, and the West and the rest of the world.

Lastly, this dissertation demonstrates how the Korean diaspora films relay memory to later generations and the homeland audience, expanding the understanding of memory beyond the personal level. Just as my mother and I revived a forgotten or forbidden history through our

shared viewing of and discussions of Yang Yonghi's film, the film audience not only gets to know the experiences and perspectives of diasporic Koreans but comes to attain both a national and transnational memory connecting the Koreans in South Korea to those in North Korea and to diasporic Koreans outside of the Peninsula. Far from being a re-territorization of diaspora or a strengthening of ethnonationalism, this expanded post/memory cinematically embodies a search for a new national vision by rekindling the obscured histories of the nation as well as an emergent transnational vision that connects the transnational history of the past to the future of transnational Korean cinema.

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