

Koreans as Japanese Soldiers During WWII: Cinematic Representations

Professor Takashi Fujitani

University of California, San Diego

Discussant: Dr. Ethan Mark, Leiden University

Tuesday October 28th, 2008 15.00 - 17.00 Lipsius building, LUF room (148)



Abstract

Between 1940 and 1945 Korean and Japanese directors made at least seven feature films about Koreans volunteering for or serving in the Japanese military, and another on Koreans in the border police. In addition, Korean and Japanese directors produced a number of documentaries on Korean military service. This talk will explore key themes in a number of these films as a method for analyzing the changing character of colonial rule during the period of total war (1937-45) - a period that ought to be understood as a moment during which the Japanese empire began to "decolonize" Korea through a process of its incorporation into an expanded concept of "Japan." Prof. Fujitani will use the lens of soldiering in order to discuss such ideas as freedom, self-determination, family, romance, and gender as they pertain to the idea of Korea as an emergent region of the Japanese nation. In part, he will argue that the young men in these films were not only soldiers dedicated to the national cause, but also lovers, husbands, sons and sometimes fathers, and that the management of the family, romance and gender were as integral to late colonial/national rule as mobilizing the population for service to the nation. In fact, these films tended to conflate the world of personal intimacy with larger themes of "public" service and historical destiny.

Takashi Fujitani received his Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Berkeley and teaches modern Japanese history at the University of California, San Diego. He is the author of *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (UC Press, 1996), co-editor of *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* (Duke U. Press, 2001), and series editor of *Asia Pacific Modern* (UC Press). He has published widely in various venues in Japan, the United States, and Korea and is the recipient of numerous awards including in recent years fellowships from the John S. Guggenheim Foundation, ACLS, SSRC, and NEH.

In connection with this lecture, there will be a special public showing of one of the associated films:

"Straits of Joseon" (1943)
October 27th, from 17:00 to 19:00
Lipsius Building, room 005
Japanese w/ English subtitles

For more information, please visit our website: www.mearc.eu or contact us at: info@mearc.eu

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