

ジェンダーとエスニシティから見るハリウッドにおける朝鮮戦争のイメージ

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Images of the Korean War in Hollywood from Gender and Ethnic Perspectives

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要旨

米国内において朝鮮戦争とは常に「忘れられた戦争」と認識されてきた (Robert Lentz, 1)。しかし、東アジアにおける朝鮮戦争の影響は多大であり、1950年代の米国—東アジア諸国の国際関係とその後の東西の冷戦構造の変換をもたらした。そして、地政学的に南北に分断された朝鮮半島の姿は21世紀の現代東アジアにおいて尚、冷戦構造が継続していることを象徴している。

本論は、1950年代の米国における朝鮮戦争の記憶の解明のため、ハリウッド映画がいかなる朝鮮戦争のイメージを構築したかを考察する。具体的には映画における民主主義的な米国像を補完するために登場する東アジア像に着目し、映画における日本と韓国との国家表象の分析を通して、ジェンダーとエスニシティが戦争のイメージ構築にいかにか動員されたかを分析する。

映画における国家像はジェンダー化され人種化された登場人物としてあらわれる。本論ではこの登場人物像を1950年代の米国・日本・南北朝鮮の政治的文脈の中で考察することで、映画表象から米国における朝鮮戦争像を読み解く。本論文の最終的な目的は、1950年代の東アジア情勢を背景とする、米国の東アジア支配への国家的欲望について、朝鮮戦争映画における東アジア人の表象から考察するものである。最終的に、日本と韓国の表象は、米国の支援国として巧みに配置され、朝鮮半島での米国の「警察行動」を支持するシナリオを作りだし、米国にとっての表象の欲望を満たすことに一翼を担うのである。

キーワード：冷戦、朝鮮戦争、ハリウッド映画、東アジア、ジェンダー、エスニシティ

Introduction

Why does American culture ignore the Korean War? Paul Edwards says the Korean War has been treated as a “forgotten war” (1) within American popular culture. The Korean War genre takes a minor role also in Hollywood. In fact, compared to the huge number of films concerned with World War II or the Vietnam War, the number of Korean War films released in English remains around 100 works (Lents 1). Geoff Andrew, in *Hollywood Goes to War* (2000) clearly shows that politics and Hollywood have historically bound themselves together easily, and that the U.S. government has in the past employed Hollywood in the production of War propaganda. Hollywood images and the American recognition of the Korean War in the 1950s are in line with this thinking.

The cause of few works featuring the Korean War is believed to be a less political and economical impact of this war itself. However, the Korean War significantly affected the Cold War system of

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the 1950s in East Asia. Haruki Wada notes that the Korean War was a crucial point for East Asian international political relations under the Cold War system (482). Viewing the clear differences between American and Asian narratives, this paper¹ analyzes how Hollywood in the 1950s produced images of the Korean War to establish the overall initial image of that particular conflict.

To understand fully the recognition of the Korean War in the U.S., in other words, requires the exposure from the East Asian side of the Korean War as a transition point for the Cold War system. The Cold War system drastically affected conditions in East Asia. Thus, we need to recognize elements of the Cold War system still inherited by the situation of East Asia today. The Chinese feminist scholar Dai Jinhua says that the East Asian situation of today is “post [cold war era] is not after” (Cultural Politics 24, English translation mine). It is a simple but definitive statement. The division into North and South at the 38th parallel of the Korean peninsula indicates that Cold War ideology continues to remain in East Asia in the “Post” -Cold-War world today. It is no exaggeration to say that the divided peninsula is the final geopolitical legacy of the Cold War in East Asia.

My analysis is how Hollywood created the Korean War images using film’s representations of gender and ethnic order. In order to satisfy an American mutual desire emanating from both the people’s and governmental authority’s level, Hollywood set East Asians as “Others” in film’s stories. This American desire of controlling East Asia at both political and representational levels I call a “national desire” for representations.

I refer to the films *Steel Helmet* (1951), *Retreat Hell!* (1952), *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1954), and *Sayonara* (1957), and the paper questions how Asian national images assisted in the self-definition of national images of the U.S. This paper is divided into three parts in order to describe the roles of Asian figures in films. The first part provides an overview of the political and historical background to the films. The second part discusses representations of Japan as a feminine ally, and the last part examines images of The Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) as a pitiful war orphan rescued by the U.S.

It is difficult to create appeal by only showing South Korean tragedy with communist Democratic People Republic of Korea’s (DPRK or North Korea.) and Red Chinese troops in the conflict. But American audiences (and also filmmakers) know little about the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, Hollywood features a former enemy, Japan, as America’s best ally in the 1950s, which is also the prospective figure of South Korea. The national images of both Japan and South Korea support the U.S. military intervention in this conflict, while passing over their responsibilities on this war.

1 . Background of Representation in Hollywood

1 – 1 . The Cold War System and East Asia

The Korean War was a crucial event that heavily influenced Cold War politics in 1950s East Asia. After WWII, despite release from Japanese colonial domination, the Korean Peninsula faced another conflict. The U.S. and the Soviet Union ruled Korea, dividing it into South and North at the 38th Parallel. In the early morning of June 25, 1950, troops of the North Korea crossed the 38th Parallel and invaded South Korea, and the Korean War began. This is common historical discourse in both the U.S. and East Asian academic fields².

However, as Edwards says, “the Korean War has been called—and is still widely considered—the forgotten war [in the U.S.]” (1). Mark D. Van Ells explains the somewhat obscure position of Korean War images, noting that as it was “sandwiched between the titanic scope of the Second World War and the vitriolic debate over Vietnam, the Korean War never really captured the public imagination” (35).

In today’s American domestic narrative, this certainly accounts for popular images of the Korean

War. However, this phrase does not capture how significantly this war affected the Cold War system in East Asia and the drastic changes of U.S. foreign politics in the “Far East” and South East Asia as a result of the Korean War.

There are two simple reasons why the Korean War is treated as a “forgotten war,” with few cultural images in domestic narrative. First, the war was a joint “police action” by the United Nations Forces. The U.S. government submitted the United Resolutions Security Counsel Resolutions 62 and 63, and they were adopted. Second, the Korean War was the first War which the U.S. could not win.

Then, it is difficult to analyze the divided peninsula from the American domestic view alone, as the Korean War was fought in East Asia. Even though this research focuses on only the memory of the Korean War within the States, I refer here to some scholars from Asian Studies who discuss this memory from an East Asian context. Eiichiro Azuma points out that most scholars concerned about “Japanese-Americans” history tend to analyze “within the American domestic narrative” (5), and he argues for a more complete picture of the *issei* (first generation Japanese-Americans). He insists his research requires a “transnational approach” (5). Accordingly, this paper is the product of a need for interplay between Asian-American Studies and Asian Studies. Referring to East Asian perspectives, it is possible to reveal American “desire” radiating from American memory, from different disciplinary perspectives.

The Korean War has become a symbol of a part of the Cold War system that persists today (Dai, *Gender Politics* 5) in East Asia. Dai points out that the East-West standoff is still “a kind of reality which became transformed and atrophied” in the context of contemporary China. As Dai mentions, in the Chinese case, the divided Korean peninsula also retains a Cold War ideology, and the memory of the Korean War remains as a cultural “parameter” (12).

As geopolitical division embodies the Korean peninsula, we can easily find that the division image and war memory “embody” Korean cultural work.³ East Asia still affects the Cold War system. When we think about the meaning of cultural images of the Korean War in the U.S., we realize how cultural images differ between East Asia and the U.S. It is difficult to pluck missing images from invisible memory to manufacture visible representations. Nonetheless, I discuss a few images of the Korean War from 1950s film representations as illustration.

1 – 2. Historical Continuity

Van Ells’s historical “sandwich,” cited above, causes me to ask the next question: what about Korean War images before the Vietnam era? Focusing on the chronological continuity of American war representations, we find a clear continuance from the WWII era into images of the Korean War. Carol Gluck shows that initial images of WWII appeared while hostilities were still taking place or immediately afterwards, and participants appear as part of the primary memory of that war, explicitly representing either heroes or villains (196). Compared to those “good war” images of WWII, which were an ambiguous result of the war itself, it was difficult to maintain similar masculine, heroic images of the Korean War just by representing American GIs alone. Hollywood had to create heroic images by different means, and it did so by representing East Asians in a hierarchy of subjugation. The genre of Korean War films used these representations to create an overall “good war” image of the war itself.

How did cultural representations operate to reveal national desire under the Cold War era? When we look at Hollywood films from the 1940s to the 1950s, we see that these films set the U.S. ideal of “justice” in opposition against war-causing Others by using and changing gender and ethnic orders to fit the situation of contemporary politics. The U.S. federal government was involved in creating American-style images using Hollywood representations.

1 – 3. The Red Purge and Hollywood

This section discusses the historical background of Hollywood's support for the objectives of the federal government in the '50s. How did the federal government attempt to control Hollywood? In fact, cinematic representations were very much controlled during the 1940s to 1960s, by the Production Code Administration (PCA) during WWII and by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) after WWII. Once WWII ended, anti-communist hysteria and the "red scare" spread throughout the domestic political arena of the United States. McCarthyism also had a powerful influence over Hollywood. The Federal government and organizations such as the HUAC or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) watched over Hollywood closely for any socialist-leaning content or people. Hollywood therefore created national images that served to support U.S. foreign policy.

Therefore, the image of the Korean War in Hollywood is far from reality. Today, the U.S. government officially calculates the American casualties of this war as 36,574, only limiting "the theater of death"⁴. It is difficult to view the war's tragedy only from a casualty number; however, the war significantly impacted American military history, considering the casualties of Vietnam were about 50,000 within a full decade.

A more complete recognition of this war must take much more into account: the Korean War was fought on the mainland of the Korean peninsula, with innumerable civilian casualties. The North Korean side suffered the heaviest casualties, losing twenty percent of its population. North Korea estimates 2.72 million casualties. South Korea estimates 1.33 million casualties. Total casualties of both North and South were around ten percent of the whole Korean population (Wada 448).

Papering over the actual horror and death, East Asian images of gender and ethnicity are rewritten in films to portray a simple American dominance over East Asia. Depiction of interracial love affairs between Americans and East Asians also imply the extent to which this war was committed to romanticized images. In the following sections, the paper analyzes the images of two nations—Japan and Korea—in order to reconsider images of the Korean War.

2. Japan as an Ideal Ally for the U.S.

2 – 1. Historical Background of Japanese Representations

After WWII, Hollywood changed East Asian representations dramatically. Japanese and Chinese representations reversed their roles. During WWII, the typical Japanese image was a savage Japanese male. Chinese were depicted as friendly allies. After WWII, the East-West standoff and "loss of China" changed Asian representations in films. In this context of a rising Chinese communist threat, backed by the USSR, films began to highlight representations incorporating both Japan and South Korea into the Western side ideologically, politically, and economically. In film, racial and gender images are translated and allocated by national desire.

There are many previous studies⁵ of Japanese and U.S. representations grounded in the U.S.-Japan ally relationship post-WWII. These studies explain how Japanese feminine representations connect with the U.S. and Japan's contemporary political relationship. However, there are few works which mention the Korean War.

In Korean War films, not only do Japanese become friendly allies who symbolize peace for East Asia, but also Chinese become communist antagonists; Hollywood also used this division to encode North and South Koreans. For the United States, political justification for involvement in the Korean War was support of democratic South Korea. In Hollywood-style Korean War films, images of Japan appear as "backgrounds" for describing the Korean War. Military bases in occupied Japan supply a factual reason

for this usage.

Lentz notes “one in six of all Korean War films feature scenes in Japan, which indicates Japan’s importance to the war, as well as Hollywood’s ever-interest in Japan” (441). Hollywood’s works do not present images of North/South Korea as a clearly defined battlefield, and representations of Japan are largely limited to a place for temporary lodging for American GIs. Why should these films be classified as “Korean War films” when they do not depict Korea itself? The answer is partly that Japan is more memorable than Korea for the U.S. In addition, U.S. soldiers, who served in Korea, experienced the Korean War through Japan, as most soldiers who served in Korea visited and rested in Japan.

According to Hideki Kan (306), after WWII the most serious international concerns of the U.S. government centered on the political and economic turmoil experienced by many of the victorious and all of the defeated countries. In 1947, the Truman Doctrine suggested international diplomacy as part of a recovery plan. In East Asia, the U.S. government expected the recovery and democratization of China. However, as the civil war raged in China, the U.S. began to consider Japan a highly important political and military stronghold in the region, more so after the “loss” of China in 1949.

Within this historical background of Japan—as—ally for the U.S., a Japanese female depicts a mature woman who targets a male American main character for romance. Both gender and ethnicity are controlled to show American supremacy.

2 – 2. Japanese Figures as Ideal Asian Partners for the U.S.

Turning Japanese images into attractive and feminized figures was a U.S. Cold War strategy in East Asia. By feminizing Japan, Korean War films create a national image of a Japan that was no longer a threat, but instead a faithful partner. Attractive Japanese lovers represent how postwar Japan became a key figure in Asian diplomacy for the U.S., indispensable to rationalizing involvement in the war on the Korean Peninsula.

Sayonara and *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* are largely depictions of Japan. These films emphasize the “marriage” of the U.S. with Japan. *Sayonara* is an interracial love story between a U.S. Air Force major, Lloyd Gruver (Marlon Brando), and Hana-Ogi (Miiko Taka), a top-star of the Japanese girls’ review Takarazuka. Gruver has a fiancée who is a general’s daughter, Eileen Webster (Patricia Owens), yet he falls in love with Hana-Ogi and decides to marry the Japanese woman.

The second film, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*, is the story of a heroic white American and his family. Lieutenant Harry Brubaker (William Holden) is a veteran of WWII serving in Korea as a pilot. Before carrying out his mission to bomb the Toko-Ri Bridge in Korea, Brubaker meets his family, while other single GIs meet Japanese girlfriends. In the film, Japan becomes the place for a momentary peace.

As the Japanese women in these films form alliances with American men, post-war Japan takes a role as feminine and attractive ally for the U.S. in order to support a masculine American national image. The stories show Japan as a willing political partner for the U.S. In the last scene of *Sayonara*, in which the Japanese female protagonist publicly declares her marriage, Hana-Ogi becomes a life-partner for the American GI, Gruver. (See Figure 1.) Such representations also conceal the fact of Japanese re-militarization during the war.

The partnerships between American men and Japanese women emphasize the dominance of American masculinity. In *Sayonara*, the attractive Japanese fiancée, Hana-Ogi, fascinates the male American main characters. However, even she appears as an idealized Asian heroine, and finally she hints at the utter subjugation of Japan.

The Bridges at Toko-Ri is not cast with Japanese as the main characters. Japan appears only in the background of the story. The Japanese female character Fumiko (Keiko Awaji) appears only as a

Figure 1 : Hana-Ogi (left) and Gruver (right) declare their marriage for the U.S.-Japan mass media. (*Sayonara*. Dir. Joshua Logan. MGM Home Entertainment LLC. 1957. DVD. Released by 21st Fox Home Entertainment Inc. Japan, 2005.)

temporary girlfriend for American GIs. The main character, Brubaker, spends his truce time with his white family. In this film, peaceful images of Japan display American desire for the future of East Asia, reinforcing the reason the American military serves in Korea, in order to keep the East Asian peace. Japan as a peaceful, settled image of the East cannot appear as a sexual single woman (or expecting wife); instead, it appears as a happy family.

As The Brubaker's family enjoys a short-term rest in a Japanese-style hotel in Tokyo, they experience Japanese-style family bathing. Brubakers bump into a Japanese family. Brubaker's confusion facing the native Japanese family thaws the Japanese family's calmness.

This film does not depict Japanese women as main characters because it was released in 1954—just after a truce was formed between North and South Korea and also only two years following the end of American occupation of Japan. There was a hesitation to depict Japanese as sexual objects for American soldiers. Japan's image as a native family is suited to an ally. Also, this film, made in cooperation with the Department of Defense (DOD), supplies a plot giving tacit approval for the U.S. to join this war under U.N. forces. The film has a much more propagandistic tone than *Sayonara*. Showing a marriage that could be viewed as miscegenation was no doubt a sensitive matter in this era. A comparison depictive of muddy battlefields in Korea and the peaceful temporary home in Japan functions to show the American GIs' courage in the police action in Korea in order to keep order throughout East Asia. 1950s films do not present South Korea as a particularly attractive nation.

Strategically, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* does not draw Korea as a battlefield, though. A plotline presenting the reality of the tragedy in Korea would be inconvenient for the American government; film rewrites the history of the war itself as a comparatively small event and highlights the tragedy of weak children, whose lives the U.S. should save.

3 . South Korea as an Asian Orphan in the Fifties

3 – 1 . Images of the Peninsula

Hollywood never sought to capture the massive damage and casualties of the Korean War in images. As a result, these films are lacking in the sorts of heroic battlefield images that can be found in WWII films. Furthermore, South Korean representations used to maintain the image of a masculine America thus required other modes of representation in the Korean War genre, as Korea's unsettled status required that it be distinguished from Japan, whose subjugated status as an ideal ally in East Asia

could be portrayed using Japanese females for sexual objects.

The image of Korea disappeared spatially within film. In battlefield scenes, it is difficult to distinguish between the images of North Korean troops and those of Chinese communists. Images of the South Korean military alliance with America are totally unseen, as are Korean women.

Both North Korean and Chinese troops are massed images without any sense of individuality. In order to salvage American dignity under the Cold War system, the East and West needed to be clearly delineated. The U.S. government wanted to prove its righteousness in the name of democracy. In film representations, the political ideology also shows deeply binding national or ethnic images. Koreans share a common ethnicity, and the peninsula was once a united nation before the period of Japanese occupation, so it became troublesome for the U.S. to show the division of North and South Korea caused primarily by the U.S.-Soviet ideological confrontation.

3 – 2. South Korean Figures as Pitiful and Weak War Orphans

It was convenient to portray South Koreans as weak and innocent children in order to show that South Koreans needed the American military's support. Just a mass image of refugees appears as the background of the battlefield of the Korean Peninsula. South Korean refugees appear non-verbal and are made up only of old people and children's groups. 1950s films do not set South Korean characters as either soldiers supporting U.S. soldiers or as attractive single women who can be sexual objects for U.S. soldiers⁶. On one hand, Japanese figures are mature female characters, but on the other hand, South Koreans appear as immature characters.

In both *Sayonara* and *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*, images of North and South Koreans are absent. Therefore, I discuss two different films—*The Steel Helmet* and *Retreat Hell!* *The Steel Helmet* is the first film that takes up the Korean War as its main subject. The story provides Sergeant Zack (Gene Evans) as the only survivor of his platoon. A South Korean orphan called "Short Round" (William Chun) rescues him, and they advance on a Buddhist temple to establish an observation post.

Retreat Hell! is a typical heroic war story. The story shows the war from the Inchon operation to the advance on the Northern area of Korea, with most of the scenes emphasizing how U.S. marines battled bravely against communists, somewhere in Korea. Before deploying to the Korean Peninsula, Captain Paul Hansen (Richard Carlsen) spends a transit rest in the U.S. camp with his white American family. At this point, the film is similar to *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*. In contrast to Brubaker, however, Corbett and Hansen (both are this film's main roles) never question the justification for the war.

South Koreans other than war orphans rarely appear in these films. Neither film depicts both North and South Korean people, nor do they show images of the Korean land. Due to a lack of definitive images of victory in this war, representations of the battlefield in Korea were decisively vague. It was difficult for the U.S. to show a heavily damaged Korea and yet maintain the powerful image of America overwhelming communism in Asia.

The role of the figures of Korean War orphans is simply to require American military support, in embracing a heroic image of America in the Korean War as rescuer and restorer-of-order. In *The Steel Helmet*, the war orphan Short Round concludes: "South Korea welcomes the U.S. campaign". One of the American GIs, Zack, shows a paternal love for Short Round. (See Figure 2.) South Korea as a young boy under the guidance of America furthers the masculine image of the U.S. Finally, the tragic death of Short Round emphasizes the importance of continued American protection for South Korea and that the U.S. has democratized the childlike country.

Another example of the genre, *Retreat, Hell!*, engages in a similar discourse. In this film, the war orphans parallel the protagonist's own American children, and he therefore protects the orphans. The

Figure 2 : South Korean War orphan Short Round (right) follows Zack (left) (*Steel Helmet*. Dir. Samuel Fuller. Lippert pictures. 1951. Videocassette. Weiss Global Enterprises, 1997.)

plot emphasizes American soldier's role as the embodiment of patriarchal America, as the "good father" who rescues the war orphans of Korea. In both *The Steel Helmet and Retreat Hell!*, pathetic South Korean children are used to encourage the view that military involvement by the U.S. in Korea is absolutely necessary in order to save that country.

A lack of images of American victory meant that the war was difficult to recreate visually as a triumphant war in Hollywood. Hollywood thus characterized South Koreans as pitiful and sympathetic war orphans in need of the masculine figure of the U.S., thereby justifying military action in Korea. These film images set aside complicated East Asian history. Japan serves roles as attractive allies and South Korea provides pitiful war orphans. These films simplify international relationships into delineation between friend and communist enemy in East Asia.

Conclusion

The Korean War was a turning point for both the U.S. and East Asian countries, remapping the East-West standoff in the fifties. However, cultural images of the Korean War are set aside as "forgotten". However, the Cold War system still remains "surrounding" (Dai, Gender Politics 5) in East Asia. When we think of today's diplomacy between the U.S. and the Korean Peninsula, how do we conclude and connect filmic representation in the fifties to today's situation?⁷ To understand how the nature of U.S. recognition of the Korean War led to the political situation on the Korean Peninsula today, it is important to capture original images of the Korean War in the fifties.

This study analyzed the film representations of Japan and South Korea as Korean War images during the 1950s. Film presentations recreate this war to fit images of a brilliant American military in the WWII era. In order to identify American national images by themselves, Hollywood cast East Asians as sub-characters. The first section discussed the historical and political background behind the Korean War genre of Hollywood films, pointing out that previous studies undervalued the historical continuity between the contexts of WWII and the Korean War. The state of American—East Asian diplomacy and that of international relations after WWII are critical in understanding the sorts of images created by 1950s Hollywood.

The second and third sections looked at how East Asian alliances were represented in Hollywood and how they served to support the image of the Korean War. The representations of Japan as a sexualized female sub-partner for the U.S. unflinchingly prop up the existent gender and ethnic hierarchies to maintain a white, heterosexual, married couple as the ideal. The last part examines

South Korea as pitiful children's images. The national images of both Japan and South Korea support the U.S. military intervention in this conflict, passing over their responsibilities in this war. Korean War films do not depict battlefields, but rather tend to trace the recovery of 1950s Japan. The main character solves his conflict involving un-triumphant war via Others' positional ties as sub-characters. Then, the conflicting story representing "children," both U.S. and South Korean, preserves white American kinship and supremacy.

The deployment of East Asians as sub-characters in films was a key to analysis of the U.S.'s desire for national representations of American justice. The characters from both Japan and South Korea are products of the international affairs of East Asia during the 1950s and had supporting roles in maintaining the image of American supremacy in this period. When the U.S. government redirected its East Asian diplomacy in the Cold War, Hollywood depicted Asians using gendered and ethnic images. The U.S. national image in the Korean War was constructed by showing Japan and Korean "Otherness" in Hollywood.

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(Endnotes)

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- 2 In this paper, I do not mention about many-years controversy that “Which side started this war.”
- 3 For example, within only several few years, you can find easily today’s high box office works *Taegukgi hwinalrimyeo : Brotherhood of War* (2004) and *Welcome to Dongmakgol* (2005). These films were released also in Japan, owing to the “Hanryu” boom (The Korean Cultural movement in Japan).
- 4 Causality’s list from the website of the Korean War Veterans Association
- 5 See Klein (2003), Machetti (1993), and Murakami (1995).
- 6 However, in *Battle Hymn* (1957), it appears an attractive South Korean female character. She is attractive main character, but finally she lost her life to save an orphan girls’ body.
- 7 Further, what does today’s commemoration of the Korean War bring to former images of the Korean War in the U.S.? This issue will be clear for the next paper.