

least, her primary concern is that more people may not have the chance to benefit from the project's more critical provocations and insights.

The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan.

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Michael Baskett's ambitious work on imperial Japan film culture is a significant contribution to the historical studies of modern Asia as well as that of cinema. Rather than confining cinema to national history, the book contextualizes it as an integral part of the imperial history which encompasses Korea, Manchuria, China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. In so doing, it offers a total vision of the Japanese empire, a vision that hitherto rarely has been achieved because the majority of historians limit their scope to one or two countries. Baskett also provides a broad perspective into film culture by analyzing not only the representations of films but also the industrial system of production, distribution, and exhibition as well as a wide range of film-related media, including books, magazines, cartoons, and music. Moreover, he positions imperial film culture within global history by examining its differences from and relationships to practices in Hollywood, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and other regimes.

While the book brings to light such vast geographical and cultural arenas, it is organized into a concise volume with 154 pages of main text and 27 pages of endnotes. As this format suggests, Baskett's account is not exhaustive of all aspects of imperial film culture. Rather, he selectively divides into five chapters his investigations of media representations, practices, and institutions that sought to build an "attractive empire." In the introductory chapter, the author defines this phrase as a notion that Japan envisioned "would unify the heterogeneous cultures of Asia together in support of the 'Greater East Asian Film Sphere' in which colonizer and colonized alike participated" (p. 3). The concept of "empire" is crucial here in that this analytical viewpoint enables us to go beyond the conventional scholarship that describes prewar cinema exclusively in the context of war and national history. The notion of "attractive" is also vital because it suggests that film culture did not so much *impose* a vision of empire on the people of Asia, but rather *enticed* them to actively participate in Japanese imperial enterprise. In addition, the author emphasizes the importance of taking into consideration the imbalanced world power relations among Japan, other Asian nations, and the West.

The design of the chapters principally reflects these assumptions, while it also draws on categories of geography, film genre, film work, and distinguished filmmakers. The first chapter sets up a geographically wide scope on the empire by offering an overview on the historical contexts of imperial film culture in Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, and the Greater East Asian Film Sphere (Dai Tōa Eigaken), the latter of which Japanese film critics, filmmakers, and film personnel began to advocate around 1941 as an offspring of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (Dai Tōa Kyōeiken). What is telling in this chapter is the author's analysis of the two sides of the same coin in imperial culture. That is, while most filmmakers and critics envisioned serving the integration of different Asian regions and people into the Co-Prosperity Sphere through film, each region had its own particular history. For example, the colonial governments both in Taiwan and Korea held tight rein over their respective film industries; but the former was most concerned with film distribution, in the form of protecting the indigenous population from possible influence by films from mainland China, whereas the

latter's largest effort was made to promote "the production and promulgation of films that would properly educate and assimilate Koreans as imperial Japanese subjects" (p. 22). In Manchukuo, a semi-official corporation called the Manchurian Motion Picture Corporation (known as Man'ei), established in 1937, "broke away from the sort of colonial management mentality" (p. 29) and maintained its independence from Japan under the charismatic leadership of the managing director Amakasu Masahiko.

After providing a rough layout on the historical contexts of Japanese imperial film culture in the first chapter, in Chapters 2 and 3 Baskett moves on to the analyses of the representations of films and other media. In his discussion two motifs intertwine: one is the way in which media tailored for Japanese audiences the idealized images of Japanese characters as the leaders of Asia, and the other is the way that they created the positive images of Pan-Asian co-prosperity for audiences in Asia. Divided into sections based on such genres as comic books, animated films, and musical films, Chapter 2 demonstrates how the media represent Japanese heroes and Asian characters for the sake of building Japanese empire. Comics such as *Daring Dankichi* (*Bōken Dankichi*) published in the 1930s, for instance, depicted young boys as heroes "who represented Japan's civilizing presence in Asia as both natural and beneficial" (p. 49). This echoes the idea of Noma Seiji, the publisher of *Boys Club* (*Shōnen kurabu*), who saw blending entertainment with education as publishers' "responsibility to prepare their young readers to become the next generation of imperial soldiers" (p. 43).

Chapter 3 is less oriented by genres than by geographical categories such as China, Korea, and Southeast Asia, and shows how Japanese feature films each constructed an image of an idealized Pan-Asian subject that transcended ethnic and cultural differences. Throughout the book but especially in this chapter, Baskett strategically uses the term "subject," by which he designates not flesh-and-blood audiences but modeled spectators with whom films implicitly expect indigenous people to identify. This enables us to see, for instance, how imperial subjects are both differently and commonly set up through the image construction of Ri Kōran in the goodwill film (*shinzen eiga*) genre such as *China Nights* (*Shina no yoru*, 1940) and that of the Korean character in *You and I* (*Kimi to boku*, 1941). Ri was represented not based on her actual Japanese nationality but as a Chinese with a Japanese education, so that her image was a good model for audiences to "see and hear what a united Asia under the Japanese might actually look and sound like" (p. 79). *You and I*, on the other hand, epitomizes the rhetoric of "imperialization" (*kōminka*) through its narrative process whereby the Korean character becomes an "imperial Japanese subject" rather than "Japanese." That is, while the colonial regime barred a Korean from achieving the same status as that of any Japanese, the film models the Korean character as an ideal imperial subject who willingly joins the imperial Japanese army as a volunteer soldier.

In Chapter 4 the author takes yet another approach. He highlights Japanese imperial culture in its relationships with two Western colonial forces: Hollywood and Axis film cultures. In this attempt to contextualize Japanese empire within global power relations, Baskett not only scrutinizes film production and representations but also legislation, distribution, and exhibition. Japan and Hollywood, he demonstrates, adopted the same basic paradigm of expansionism and imperialism as they competed over Asian markets for the distribution of their films. Tension between them also grew as the Japanese imperial government strove to prevent Hollywood's negative representation of Japan from being disseminated in world film markets. The interactions of Japanese imperial culture with Axis film cultures were much more complex. The Japanese government and film industry sought cooperation with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy at all levels of legislation, distribution, and marketing, as well as co-production and reception, but their efforts resulted in little success. Japanese and German co-production of *The New Earth* (*Atarashiki tsuchi*, 1936) is a typical example. Not only did the appointed Japanese director Itami Mansaku leave the production due to his dislike of

German partner-director Arnold Fanck's Orientalist taste, but also Japanese critics "were disappointed at Fanck's inability to see Japan's 'true essence' as being anything more than picturesque representations of cherry blossoms and Mt. Fuji" (p. 129). Baskett does not forget to add to this episode the fact that "[i]ronically, however, it was also at this time that the Japanese film industry was similarly Orientalizing other Asian races under the auspices of building a new order in East Asia" (p. 130).

The final chapter turns toward the postwar period. Although Japan's empire physically collapsed at the end of World War II, on screen, the author argues, the rhetoric and ideology of the empire have continued to be used to the present. Postwar films, he argues, began by 1950 to be obsessed with representing Japanese suffering and nostalgia for the lost Japanese empire, without questioning Japan's role as an aggressor in prewar Asia. "Victimization" films like *Hear the Voices of the Sea* (*Kike wadatsumi no koe*, 1950) and *The Bells of Nagasaki* (*Nagasaki no koe*, 1950) personify the war and fix this idea; in other words, by defining "war" as the new enemy filmmakers merely have used it to enact a convenient replacement of "prewar models like Chinese or the Americans" (p. 137). The rest of the chapter is then comprised of a series of his close analyses of the films, *White Orchid of the Desert* (*Nessa no byakuran*, 1951), *Bengawan Solo* (*Bengawan soro*, 1951), *Woman of Shanghai* (*Shanghai no onna*, 1952), *Dear Mr. Emperor* (*Haikai tennno heika-sama*, 1963), and its sequel *Dear Mr. Emperor II* (*Zoku haikai tennno heika-sama*, 1964). The first three films, he reveals, invariably take over the conventions of prewar imperial depictions in that they showcase the familiar relationship between a misunderstood Japanese character and an uncomprehending Asian character, or represent Southeast Asia only with an exotic atmosphere. In contrast, the author argues, the Emperor series was a counter example of the "victimization" films, a series that humorously foregrounded Japanese and Chinese non-elites who supported imperial Japan rather than resisting it.

Ranging from the late nineteenth century to the present and from Japan through Asia and Euro-America, Baskett's wide-ranging discussion provides a new angle for understanding the history of cinema and imperial Japan. Still, we might perceive some problems. The way of allocating topics and issues into chapters is relatively inconsistent. For instance, while Chapter 3 covers issues related to China, Manchuria, Korea, and Southeast Asia, Chapter 1 lacks a historical overview of the latter. Likewise, the book does not offer any insights into what was the relationship between such genres as comics, animated films, and musical films discussed in Chapter 2 and the legacy of the empire in the postwar era. It also is unclear how we can make sense of the case that the representation of the empire was attractive for Japanese people but unlikely so for other Asians. The author, for example, points out that *Daring Dankichi* and other comics represented the stereotype of sneaky villainous Chinese characters (p. 44), and *Southern Winds II* (*Zoku Minamino kaze*, 1942) showcases non-Japanese characters as "being comic, odd, and irretrievably foreign" (p. 102). But probably indigenous audiences who identified themselves with the characters would not like to accept the stereotyped images. This poses a fundamental question. Did the Japanese empire or its onscreen image really stand up as something attractive for other Asians? In the end – the author himself suggests this problem when he refers to the unfavorable reception of Ri Kōran's films in China (p. 82) – the Japanese empire could not be reduced to something attractive. Indeed, his research largely relies on Japanese-written primary sources, so that we must be cautious about accepting the validity of his proposition of relying on them to investigate how indigenous people responded to imperial Japanese films. This, however, does not undermine his overall argument. Rather, it would be a good incentive for other scholars to make further inquiries into imperial history by consulting reading materials in other languages. Baskett's *Attractive Empire* is undeniably recommended reading for students and scholars in media and Asian studies.
