

Research Summary

This report describes the research work accomplished in the period from 1 April 2007 to 31 July 2008 under the support of the Sumitomo Foundation. The theme of this research project is “Asia through the Eyes of Japan – A Study of the Asian Elements in Contemporary Japanese Cinema.” The study aimed to examine Japan’s changing view of its Asian neighbors, and how the perception of its own identity alongside these countries has changed as time passes, through the study of the various Asian elements found in contemporary Japanese cinema. It is hoped that by developing a better understanding of the current Japanese perceptions of Asia, this project will provide a clearer picture of Japan’s position and values in an Asian context. This project combined research methods including historical analysis, cultural studies, and film criticism. The PI had traveled to Tokyo to collect research materials and conduct interviews with scholars and film critics. The research outputs produced under this project can be classified into several categories: conference presentations, journal papers, book chapters and invited lectures.

This research reveals that Japan’s attitude towards its Asian neighbors has been highly related to its situation in Asia and in the world. When Japan rose to power in the early 20th century, its sense of superiority was reflected in *tairiku eiga* and propaganda films in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea. In these films, other countries of Asia are feminized so as to produce a superior, masculine image of Japan. After the war, Japan initiated the establishment of the Southeast Asian Motion Pictures Producers Association to open up Asian markets for its products, and strengthen Asian film networks to counter Western cultural influences. However, most of the Japanese movies still held a superficial view on Asians, such as demonizing Asia by portraying the area as a centre of poverty and crime.

In the early years of the Heisei period, when Japan was faced with various economic and social problems from within as well as outside challenges from China and South Korea, Japan began to reconsider its relation with its neighbors and its position in Asia. Japanese movies made afterwards reflect Japan’s new perception of Asia. Directors such as Iwai Shunji and Miike Takashi no longer follow their predecessors by simply depicting Asia as inferior or evil. Meanwhile, Asian stars like Kaneshiro Takeshi, Bae Yong-joon and Choi Ji-woo represent the image of “fashion.” There are also Japanese films such as *Pacchigi!* (2005, Izutsu Kazuyuki) that encourage Japanese to take the initiative in communicating with Asian people. These new attitudes suggest Japan’s wish to befriend its Asian neighbors, signifying its desire to re-enter Asia that it once wanted to separate from. However, the end of the Cold War, the burst of Japan’s bubble economy and the rise of China and South Korea also contributed to the growing popularity of neoconservatism in Japan. This has led to movies such as *For Those We Love* (2007, Shinjō Taku) which uphold a reserved attitude towards Asia and their history.

This research project is highly successful as judged from the research outputs listed below. It represents a systematic analysis of “Asia” as seen on the Japanese screen. It also provides numerous research possibilities in the future. I would like to express my sincere gratitude towards the Sumitomo Foundation for supporting this meaningful research project.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Conference

Yau Shuk Ting, “**A Study of the ‘Asia’ Presented in the Post-1990’s Japanese Cinema,**” The Third Annual Conference of Asia Association of Global Studies (AAGS), organized by Kobe Gakuin University, Kobe, Japan, 28-29 March 2008

Yau Shuk Ting, “**Neoconservatism and Japanese Cinema,**” Cross-cultural Perspectives on the Current State of East Asian Cinemas: An International Symposium, organized by City University of Hong Kong, 3-4 July 2008

Invited Lectures

Yau Shuk Ting, “**Reception of Japanese Cinema in Hong Kong,**” organized by Department of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, University of Tokyo, 25 June 2007

Yau Shuk Ting, “**Can We Know More about the East Asian Cinema?**” organized by the Center for East Asian Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 17 January 2008

Yau Shuk Ting, “**Korea as Seen on the Japanese Screen,**” organized by Shaw College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 18 April 2008

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Journal Papers

Yau Shuk Ting, “**アジアの中の日本人—現代日本映画にみるアジア的要素について**” (The Asian Elements of the Contemporary Japanese Cinema), University Press, Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, July, 2008 [Japanese]

Yau Shuk Ting, “**From Godzilla to Train Man—A Study of the Japanese Self Image in the Context of the West,**” *Asian Profile*, Canada: Asian Research Service [English] (Accepted for publication)

Book Chapters

Yau Shuk Ting, “**A Study of the ‘Asia’ Presented in Japanese Cinema,**” *Developing Asia*, Florida: Brown Walker Press/ Universal Publishers, Inc. [English] (In Press)

Yau Shuk Ting, “**Facing Challenges in a New Age: A Multicultural and New Generation Identity for Japan, through Kaneshiro Takeshi and Kubotsuka Yōsuke,**” *Globalization, Localization and Japanese Studies in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Kent: Global Oriental Ltd [English] (Under Review)

Yau Shuk Ting, “**Neo-conservatism and Japanese Cinema,**” *Cross-cultural Perspectives on the Current State of East Asian Cinemas* [English] (Under Review)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

Book

There will be a plan to publish a book which covers the research achieved in this research project.