

COMPLETION REPORT

Research Summary

This report describes the research work accomplished in the period from 1 April 2010 to 30 September 2011 under the support of the Sumitomo Foundation.

From the turbulent but prosperous days of Shōwa to Heisei, a period marked by economic recession and the emergence of Japan's neighbor such as China and South Korea, the ever-evolving role of the filmmaking industry--one of the main components of the Japan's soft power--in the promotion of nationalism is a worthy topic that deserves more attention. The title of this project is "Nationalism as Seen in Heisei Japanese Cinema." It aimed to enrich the understanding of nationalism in Heisei Japan by investigating selected works from contemporary Japanese screen. This project combined research methods including literature review, interviews, questionnaires and film analysis.

The PI showed Hong Kong university students from different backgrounds and majors Japanese movies related to nationalism, and distributed questionnaires with open ended questions. This was done in order to facilitate a comparison between the opinions of Hong Kong and Japanese audience. In addition, the PI traveled to Japan to collect research materials and conduct interviews with scholars and critics.

The research outputs produced under this project include conference presentations, invited lectures, journal paper and book chapters. This project revealed that nationalism in Heisei Japanese cinema is highly related to Japan's situation in Asia and in the world. Japan's sense of superiority was greatly challenged by the fact that the country had lost its power and influence since the early 1990s. This anxiety is reflected in movies with degrading masculinity including *Be with You* (2004, Nobuhiro Doi), *Crying out Love, in the Centre of the World* (2004, Isao Yukisada) and *Train Man* (2005, Shōsuke Murakami), which show fragile Japanese men seeking maternal love for rescue. At the same time, however, movies and TV dramas depicting determined Nippon danji who are ready to sacrifice themselves are frequently made. Examples include *Yamato* (2005, Satō Junya), *For Those We Love* (2007, Shinjō Taku) and *Clouds above the Hill* (2009, Takashi Isshiki). These works decorate nationalism with beauty and justice that justify the wars fought between Japan and other powers in the past. They also contribute to rebuilding the dignity of being a Japanese in the 21st century.

This project is highly successful as it helps us develop a better understanding of how modern Japanese view themselves and clarify our stereotypes on the Japanese society as a whole.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

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

Conferences

“The Loyal 47 Rōnin Never Die: Influence of Chūshingura on Japanese War Films,” The 63rd AAS Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, organized by the Association of Asian Studies, USA, 31 March-3 April 2011

“Saka no ue no kumo and Nationalism in 21st Century Japan,” The 2nd Annual International Conference on Visuality and Cultural Literacy, organized by Visual Culture Research Centre, National Central University, Chungli, Taiwan, 19-20 November 2010

Invited Lectures

“Therapy for Depression: Social Meanings of Japanese Melodrama in the Heisei Era,” Workshop on Japan in Crisis: From Aftershock to Aftercare, sponsored by the Harvard-Yenching Institute, USA, 13-14 May 2011

“NHK 21st Century Special Drama Clouds above the Hill,” organized by Asia in the Modern World: Images and Representations, MIT, USA, 7 March 2011

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

Journal Paper

“Rethinking the Meaning of Loyalty: A Comparative Study of Chūshingura 1/47 and Red Cliff,” Asian Journal of Japanese Studies, The University Alliance for Japanese Studies in Hong Kong, Macau and Guang Dong Province (UAJS), vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 26-45, June 2011

Book Chapters

“Interracial Romance as a Contents Business in East Asia,” Media, Cultures, Identities: Aspects of Contents Business in East Asia, Reinhard Zöllner, Harald Meyer & Takahiro Nishiyama, eds., Munich: Iudicium (Forthcoming)

“The Loyal 47 Rōnin Never Die: Influence of Chūshingura on Japanese War Films,” East Asian Cinema and Cultural Heritage: From China, Hong Kong, Taiwan to Japan and South Korea, Yau Shuk-ting, Kinnia, ed., New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

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

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

