

Cine-Mobility: Twentieth-Century Transformations in Korea's Film and Transportation by Han Sang Kim. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2022. xv, 252 pp.

This single-author monograph by a relatively unknown scholar working at a small university in Korea is perhaps *the* best academic book produced on the subject of Korean literature, film, and culture over the past twenty years. It is difficult to recall another title in Korean studies that takes a more singular and unorthodox approach toward understanding twentieth-century Korean history. The book does not attempt to explain the exact origins of the Korean War, nor why the vestiges of pro-Japanese sentiment remained so powerful in South Korea, nor how chaebol groups such as Samsung and Hyundai were able to rise as post-war global powers. Yet, by connecting interesting dots between various disciplines such as film and media studies, history, sociology, literary studies, and Western critical theory, this book provides clues to many questions that intimately connect some of the perplexing and burning issues of twentieth-century history regarding how South Korea emerged from the literal ruins of colonial devastation and bloody civil war to claim a global leadership role in economics, culture, and technology.

As a high-quality academic work, *Cine-mobility's* focus on a specific national socioeconomic model makes necessary intellectual leaps that help readers reconceptualize dichotomies such as local vs. global, colonizer vs. colonized, tradition vs. modernity, ideological propaganda vs. individual art, documentary vs. fiction, and automation vs. human labor, ones not necessarily oppositional but indivisibly related and mutually engaged. Spanning the entirety of the twentieth century in Korea, Kim's remarkable book is divided into three parts: Part I chronicles the train-cinema interface during the Japanese colonial era; part II focuses on the militarized auto-mobility ushered in by the American military occupation during the three decades after the Korean War; and part III examines post-cinematic mobility, when the regime of small screens—televisions, ATMs, unmanned machines, and computers—helped South Korea open a new chapter in the twenty-first century.

In the first part, "Train-Cinema Interface," Kim lays out his book's foundational focus, which is the entanglement between screens and mobility that engineers the scopic regime of modernization and helps establish what the author calls "Japan's railway imperialism" in Korea. This enmeshment of cinema and trains is explained not only through written archival materials from the early twentieth century, but also by drawing on early visual materials that

include innumerable feature-length fiction silent films, short subject films, travel spectacles, and state-sponsored documentaries made by Americans, Japanese, and Koreans—many of them from obscure sources and archives that testify to the author's intense labor and passion for historical research. Kim pores through early moving pictures such as the 1937 *Journey to Chosŏn and Manchuria*, sponsored by the Osaka Commercial Shipping Company, and the “Tyosen” episode of the Japan Tourist Bureau's 1939 *Tokyo-Peking: Through Tyosen and Manchoukuo* in order to advance his theory that railroad and screen were ultimately tied to the existing imperial order, which was in need of an ideological fulcrum that would be irresistibly appealing and modern for all of its colonized subjects. In the fields of American or Japanese film studies, such an intense archival dedication to early cinema is not uncommon. And yet in the context of Korean film studies, *Cine-Mobility* is the only English-language book I have come across that features a sustained study of early Korean cinema. This is a brilliant book, not only because of its rarity, but also because it displays an unusual breadth of knowledge in both archival documentation and modern critical theory, which ranges from philosopher Martin Heidegger to film scholar Anne Friedberg.

In part II, “Automobile-Screen Interface,” Kim moves the question of mobility from railways and trains to highways and automobiles. In much the same way that the Japanese empire frantically sought to earn legitimacy by constructing efficient and reliable rail lines throughout East Asia during the first half of the twentieth century, in the latter half of that century Korean military dictator Park Chung Hee (1961–1979) consolidated his Führer-like invincibility by completing the Kyongbu Expressway. This modern highway linking Seoul and Busan became a central symbol for the fast-paced industrial projects that characterized the dictatorship. By examining popular serialized newspapers and television dramas, documentary newsreels sponsored by the US Information Services (USIS), and theatrical feature films, Kim continues to convincingly unfurl his theory that collapses the boundary between physical mobility and visual regimes. As he demonstrates, the new postcolonial and post-war Korean identity aligned with Park Chung Hee's industrial ambition was also triangulated with the anti-communist, small-town ideals of the United States, which helped ensure that South Korea remained in the column of its ally, especially after the expensive toll of the Korean War.

In the third part of the book, “Post-Cinemobility,” I found the first chapter on “television, aviation, and Koreanness” both deeply interesting and slightly confusing. Here, Kim discusses fascinating case studies of the global vernacularization of American pastoral and communal values, an effort that

was spearheaded by propaganda films produced by the United States Information Services (USIS), such as *Small Town Editor* (1952), which made a foray into the Korean mass media market through Korea's own mimicked film *Korean Editor* (1958) and other divergent adaptations. I had not previously known about the latter film, despite publishing my own 2021 book examining Korea's mimicked cultural identity in the wake of the US military occupation in Korea starting in 1945. Kim argues that the local, small-town everyday American values that were inculcated and exhibited in these state-sponsored films can be found not only in documentary television programs coproduced by Korea and the United States, such as *Korea-America Today*, but also in popular television series of the 1970s that were widely disseminated by the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS). For instance, he shows how *Blooming P'aldogangsan*, which features an older Korean couple taking full advantage of the newly opened expressway and visiting their married children scattered throughout every local province in South Korea, promotes not only Park's ideological agenda but also an American ideology that championed local small-town entrepreneurial values. After reading this brilliant chapter, however, I remain mystified as to how it fits into the scheme of "post-cinemobility": *Blooming P'aldogangsan*, a television spinoff from the successful film franchise, does not adhere to a sentiment of post-cinemobility, but shows an affect of automobile-screen interface. Kim's second chapter in this third part, focused on automated mobility, is also quite remarkable, examining many themes found in Korean films of the 1980s and 1990s that played on the tension between humans and automated machines. As Kim demonstrates, the focus on this tension was ushered in both by political democratization, which demanded greater transparency in banking and early computing, as well as by the technological advances of Korea's giant electronical corporations.

The book's incorporation of works by Western theorists Jonathan Crary and Martin Jay, which explain the relationship between capitalism and ocular modernity, is both necessary and illuminating in a study that defines the relationship between screen and mobility. However, somewhat disappointing is the lack of sustained energy for deeply embedding these modernist theories within the Korean experience throughout the book. Sometimes these theories, although intellectually inspiring, seem shortchanged and even slightly awkward, thereby hindering a smooth flow of the historical narrative Kim seeks to present. Despite these shortcomings, however, it remains clear that native Korean intellectual Han Sang Kim has achieved a feat in the English language that no one outside Korea has yet to match—that of telling a fascinating story about the intimate relationship between Korean socioeconomic phenomena

(transportation) and media (screen) throughout the twentieth century. This study helps explain the ascendancy of *hallyu* throughout the world in the twenty-first century.

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The Comfort Women of Singapore in History and Memory by Kevin Blackburn. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2022. 208 pp.

In his nuanced yet bold study of the highly politically charged comfort women issue, Kevin Blackburn convincingly refutes the influential statement of the longest-serving, inaugural Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, that Korean comfort women had “saved the chastity of many Singaporean girls” (17), and uncovers the underexplored discourse of collective, “male-centric” (21-22) comfort women memory in Singapore. By engaging extensively with the experiences of Korean comfort women and skilfully utilizing sources—such as *Ilbon gun wianso gwanliin ui ilgi* [Diary of a Japanese military comfort station manager]—on the recruitment of Korean women and running of the comfort stations in Singapore, Blackburn brings to light the untold stories surrounding Singapore comfort women, both during and after the Pacific War. As such, the book examines the discursive production of an officially zero Singaporean comfort woman myth, and unlocks a relatively unknown world of those women, hitherto existing in parallel with their fellow comfort women, but being discursively suppressed to silence.

Revolving around three keywords—silence, diversity, and deception—the seven chapters of the book can be divided into the following parts. Chapters 1 and 2 examine how masculinist memories of the local Singapore comfort women, which were awakened firstly by Lee Kuan Yew in 1992, operated within the discourse of authority / popular memory, in spite of the fact that local women had in many ways been involved in the Japanese military sex industry. Such a “masculinist hegemony over memories of the comfort women” (13) becomes a salient reason behind local women’s silence about their past. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the diversity of the comfort women in Singapore, who came from different parts of Asia, although the majority were Korean