

Representations of "*zainichi*" in Post War Japanese Visual Media: The case of Japanese Film and Television

Yang In-Sil

This thesis analyzes how "*zainichi*" are represented in post war Japanese visual media, with a focus on Japanese film and television programs. Understanding visual media to be a kind of "social practice", this thesis investigates how *zainichi* have been treated in a variety of media, including self-representational *zainichi* texts, in the post war period.

In post war Japan, a broad range of genres within a variety of media have presented the figure of the *zainichi*. In this thesis, I examine these representations of *zainichi* with regards to the historical, social and political circumstances under which they were produced. As a result of this study, I have concluded the following.

First, during the period of the golden age of Japanese film and the early period of television broadcasting (roughly from the 1950s up until the 1970s), representations of *zainichi* appeared predominantly in the genres of "social cinema" (*shakaiha eiga*) and "education cinema" (*kyōiku eiga*). While the structure of *zainichi* representation, which became an issue in this period, has been reworked since then, in many ways it has continued on unchanged into the present. Also in televisions during this period, there were many incidents involving the cancellation of *zainichi*-related programming; as a consequence, the broadcasting of programs, which deal with the topic of *zainichi* or portray *zainichi* themselves, continues to be a sensitive issue. It should be noted that, because of the influence of "repatriation projects", a principal characteristic of the portrayal of *zainichi* in this period was built on the assumption of their requisite return to the "homeland".

Second, I examine the image of *zainichi* in popular yakuza movies in the same period. In yakuza movies, which are constructed around a distinct dichotomy between good and evil, *zainichi* were assigned the role of the "bad guy". However, what is clear is that there is a limiting element in the superficial image of the "bad guy"; the "bad guy" image cannot fully explain the social demands placed on the identity of second generation *zainichi* at the time. As was the case in "social cinema", the identity of second generation *zainichi* was incomplete.

Third, with the stagnancy in the film industry beginning in the 1970s, television programs became the main venue for the presentation of images of *zainichi*. Although *zainichi* did begin appearing in fictional dramas in the 1990s, *zainichi* could mainly be seen in "nonfiction" programming. Of note among these are the representations of second generation *zainichi* portrayed by Harimoto Isao. Harimoto, who had come to be represented as a hero both in South Korea and in the *zainichi* community, plays the role of a *zainichi* gangster in the yakuza movie *Shura no mure* (1984). Furthermore, in the media of this period, great emphasis came to be placed on the gap separating the first generation *zainichi*, who stressed their connection to the "homeland", and the second and third generation *zainichi*, who, having been given opportunities to experience the "homeland", were returning to Japan.

Fourth, beginning at the end of the 1970s, there was a shift from *zainichi* being the object of others' representation to becoming the subject of their own self-representation. This came in response to a movement which demanded a "new" model of representation. However, the self-representing *zainichi* films, rather than

becoming part of the countercultural movement, merely inherited the gender biases and the perception of the first generation from the conventional visual media. That is, they functioned to structuralize the "gaze" of the majority. What is more, in these films the first generation *zainichi* were represented as the majority to be resisted by the second and third generations.

Fifth, the gaze which came to be most firmly structuralized was the one focused on the image of *zainichi* women. The image of *zainichi* women was valorized as a national symbol of first generation *zainichi*, emphasizing their bond with the "homeland". However, in these films, the representation of *zainichi* women was not connected to issues of the "homeland." Rather, it was a problem internal to Japanese society. Yet, because the representation of *zainichi* women was constructed as a product of the nostalgia of the first generation *zainichi*, the "gaze" from within Japan was concealed.

Finally, through the analysis described above, this thesis demonstrates both how the representation of *zainichi* came to be formed and how it is structuralized in the visual media in post war Japan. Moreover, recent manga and weekly magazines make it evident that the problem of the reproduction of visual representations of *zainichi* requires continued examination in the present.

Although the representation of *zainichi* in the post war Japanese media is clearly a problem internal to Japan, it is important to recognize how the problematics of the continued connection to the "homeland" and of *zainichi* nationalism have become obscured. Having examined this problem surrounding the representation of *zainichi*, the time has come for visual media to work toward breaking down the established representations of *zainichi* which it has created. Efforts in this direction have already begun. It is important that the results of these efforts continue to be critically evaluated. Only then will the possibilities for "symbiosis" on the level of the "cultural imagination" begin to be realized.