

Cultural Memory and Globalisation: The Politics of Heritage Sites and Media in Korean and Japanese Cultural Production

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Abstract:

Following Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910 and its subsequent colonial rule until 1945, an inextricable link was formed between Korean and Japanese cultural media and heritage. The most prominent example of this would be the initiation of the government-led cultural campaigns that were accelerated by globalisation: Korea's *Korean Wave* (also known as *Hallyu*), which celebrates the liberation of their cultural identity, and Japan's *Cool Japan*, which symbolised the nation's pivot in interest from hard power to soft power in the post-war era. These global phenomena, often seen as separate entities or competing cultural exports, are inherently tangled by the roots of their inception through shared history and sociocultural influences.

This paper seeks to examine how heritage and media are used as an arguably politicised representation of shared memory of the past in Korean and Japanese cultural media, as well as how globalisation amplifies this dynamic. It also seeks to assert that historical tensions rooted in the memory of colonization and national trauma often manifest in the narrative and aesthetic of media productions. Prior to *Hallyu* and *Cool Japan*, the intertwining of cultural themes in post-war media laid the groundwork for the inception of these initiatives, which elucidates the emotional weight imbued in these cultural media and shapes the global reception of their respective products.

The argument within this paper is explored through three case studies: 1) the contested symbolism of Gunkanjima (Hashima or Battleship Island), a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the former site of forced labour under Japanese colonial rule, is explored through its use as a filming location for both Korean and Japanese entertainment programme, 2) Hirokazu Koreeda's 2009 film *Air Doll* is analysed for its controversial casting choices and unsettling parallel to Korean comfort women for Japanese soldiers, and 3) *The Diary of Yunbogi*, a political film that reflects upon the economic and social struggles in Korea during Japanese rule, is examined as a reflection of the poverty and social fragmentation that were left in the wake of imperialism.

Through these case studies, this paper aims to provide insights into the emotional narratives and political dimensions of heritage sites and cultural media. Furthermore, the paper reflects how global audiences interpret these cultural products, which highlights the importance of media representation in a global arena.

Keywords: heritage and preservation, culture and society, identity, globalisation and culture

