

Tsuki wa dochini deteiru - All under the Moon, filmed by Sai Yoichi:  
kure yoo ("Please lend me money")

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Sai Yoichi's 1993 film "*Tsuki wa dochini deteiru* - Where does the moon come up?" was the first successful commercial film about *Zainichi* (the resident Korean-Japanese population) in Japan. The film would have failed commercially had it not been for Sai's careful and tactful approach to the *Zainichi mondai* (problem). Himself a *Zainichi*, Sai knew exactly what the mainstream Japanese audience's reaction would be to a film which deals with the *Zainichi mondai*, i.e. he knew that the direct approach to the *Zainichi mondai* would offend such audiences, or at least fail to attract rank and file Japanese movie goers (including *Zainichi* people themselves) in mass media such as commercial film or TV broadcasting.

In this paper there is no room to trace the origins of the *Zainichi mondai* from a historical perspective or to fully investigate the issues relating to the *Zainichi* problem itself in Japanese contemporary society. Instead, I will investigate Sai's tactics to popularize this film. In particular, I want to discuss a certain kind of 'nuance' and 'energy' in the film - aspects which Sai successfully retains without directly addressing the subject matter of the *Zainichi* problem.

Finally, I will emphasise the significance of gaining popular coverage of the debate first, as demonstrated in Sai's approach to filming the issue of *Zainichi*. Sai took a circumspect approach to the Japanese film industry, evading the Colonial or Orientalist discourse of the dichotomized 'self' and 'other'. To conclude this paper, I will show an example of the 'public' voice of *Zainichi* in the performance work of Pagie Cho. Cho has carved out a methodological niche for himself through exploiting the dynamic hybridity of being a *Zainichi* in Japanese contemporary society in Osaka (Inoshino). It is this which makes Cho a 'super' Japanese.

*The Moon* was successful in the Japanese commercial film market and journalism since, as Iwabuchi puts it, "No other film has ever spurred such heated discussion, criticism and, in the long run, communication between and among resident Koreans and Japanese." (Iwabuchi, p. 71). It raised successfully the issue of *Zainichi* at the surface level of interest among 'ordinary' Japanese, thereby casting it in a favorable mode: something which has never happened in Japanese modern cultural history. Sai's approach, as some *Zainichi* critics point out, might fail to allow the audience to confront *Zainichi mondai* directly. However, the fact remains that Sai's film captured a wider audience than any other previous attempts to deal with *Zainichi* in film. Iwabuchi is right in concluding his paper with: "Whether such coalitions can be formed depends largely upon how Japanese people respond to the invitation." (Iwabuchi, p. 73) My concern in this paper, then, is how *The Moon* invites the 'public' audience, and into whose house is this audience invited, (Korean, Japanese, *Zainichi*, or some anonymous population?)? I want to tackle this issue by thinking through the meaning of "a more nuanced manner" or "a more nuanced subjectivity", referencing two passages of Iwabuchi's: "By rejecting the 'bargain sale' of the history of suffering and tragedy of resident Koreans, as the director Sai Yoichi put it (1994), the ambivalence that resident Koreans experience in their everyday lives is depicted in a more nuanced manner in *Moon* than in *Yun* [*no machi* as taken up by Kim U-Song, another *Zainichi* director, in 1989]," (Iwabuchi, p. 62), and "The film allows a subtle escape from the tyranny of collective memory to a more nuanced subjectivity, but one which is nevertheless embedded within history." (Ibid., p. 65)

Sai's strategy is to proceed with caution. The tendency of mainstream Japanese audiences is to react rather summarily when faced directly with issues that problematise Japaneseness and Japanese culture. The cinema is the most popular form of entertainment within popular culture, with the potential of reaching a vast number and cross-section of the population. Sai's methodology was to ensure that the issues he wished to confront in this context were not rendered 'black and white'. As Japanese film history tells us, the direct topicalization of the *Zainichi mondai* would keep audiences away. While it is a generalisation, it is the case that Japanese the movie audience does

not want to be engaged with moral dimensions such as those which arise from the *Zainichi* problem, and which are embedded in Japanese history. Thus, Sai's recourse to attract a broad audience was to ensure his audience did not face the problem in terms of compulsory moral issue, or moral correctness. Rather, his strategy was offer an 'armchair' position to the Japanese mainstream audience. In this way Sai could co-opt them into participating, in the context of mainstream entertainment, in the interior dynamics of *Zainichi*-Japanese everyday life.

There are several sets of modules which are taken up in *The Moon* which permit the audience to settle themselves in the 'unworried armchair', even as they are exposed to 'worrying' issues. The first is a particular locution, repeated many times in *The Moon* such that it becomes a cliché.

The retired punch-drunk Japanese boxer (Hozo), who seems mentally impaired with aphasia and delusion, repeatedly states to the protagonist Tadao (Ch'ung Kang), the same statement. It consists of three phrases (like three balls) which are repeatedly thrown to Tadao: "Orewa Chosenjin wa kiraidakedo, daga Chusan wa sukida, kane kashite kure yoo" (I do not like Koreans, but I like Ch'ung, so please lend me some money!). Hozo throws them to Ch'ung as a one-set. The first 'ball', "Orewa Chosenjin wa kiraida" is a definitively derogatory expression against *Zainichi*, and is provocative enough to threaten the comfort of the audience. The term 'Chosenjin' is originally a generic term for Koreans, but has been used in everyday Japanese as an implicitly racist remark (in everyday use Japanese, 'Kankoku jin' sounds more proper and neutral). Thus, it is a provocative and racist term, and the phrase "Chosenjin wa kiraida" itself reflects an undercurrent 'mainstream' Japanese antagonism towards *Zainichi*. Occasionally this racist undercurrent surfaces in more public expressions, for example, on the occasion of a natural disaster such as *Kanto dai shin sai* (Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923).

Sai's strategy is to mitigate the racism of the first expression by following it with a second 'ball', "(*kirai dakedo*) *Chusan wa sukida*" and then the third 'ball' follows: "*Kane kashite kure yo!*" This third ball is intense, imperative. Unlike the two expressions preceding it, this third expression is delivered with speed and evident purpose.

By using the tactic of three balls in one-set Sai is able to sabotage the initial racist comment within the three-part cliché by completing the clichéd set with the request to borrow money. This of course addresses a major (and possibly universal) concern in modern Japanese life: the pursuit of money. Sai is very observant in his portrayal of the cliché - the particularities of the grammar of this locution aimed at borrowing money from an acquaintance. For example, typical of the locution of 'money borrowing' is that first, the hopeful borrower sets the scene by explaining the difficulties which he or she is facing (tragedy). Second, he or she attempts to elevate the status of the lender in relation to the borrower (flattery). Third, finally he or she manages to express the real issue directly to the lender (getting to the point). In a style similar to pitching in baseball, the first ball is to threaten the batter, the second ball is to disconcert, and the final ball is to kill. The cliché is useful for Sai as a means by which to play one utterance off against another: the unmistakable pejorativeness of the first phrase is attenuated by the necessary condition of the grammar of begging to borrow money. Thus, Hozo's pejorative comments about *Zainichi* and then his amiable attitude towards Ch'ung (Tadao) are both rendered meaningless and redundant by the emphasis which ultimately falls on fact that the purpose of the exchange is not really to borrow money from Ch'ung, but to say something. Through its repetition by the slightly psychotic Hozo, whose "*Kane kashite kure yo*" comes closer to being a meaningless set of sounds, like a musical refrain.

This ploy of attenuating an otherwise offensive expression after it has been uttered, is like placing a threatening (or potentially problematic) first ball at a great distance, or behind an invisible barrier. For the film's audience, this first derogatory expression is experienced from behind the safety of a 'window' on the situation. The audience experiences the sense of not really being touched by the *meaning* of the phrase directly; but rather, of experiencing the *voidness* of the meaning. But Sai also, I think, makes use of the cliché very tactically, and tactfully, in his attempt to bring the initial pejorative expression back to the audience for them to interpret in their own way. I am not sure whether this is necessarily successful in the film or not, however, Sai's attempt deserves applaud. I will explain the importance of the tactic in terms of

interpretation and the necessary 'distance' between viewer and object.

To interpret something, it is necessary for there to be some distance between oneself and the object of inspection. When observing passersby on the street from a seat at some cafe, for instance, the quality of observation that occurs when observing people through a window pane is quite different psychologically to when observing them while occupying the same atmosphere with them (for example, when sitting outside, or if for some reason there is no glass in the window). When one occupies the same physical space at a cafe with passersby, it is difficult, on the basis of one's imagination alone, to think about a passing stranger (i.e., make a summary analysis of the person's character or life-style, habits, attachments, etc.). By contrast, when there is 'distance', between oneself and the stranger - when that shared space is divided by the glass of the window - then one will find it much easier to imaginatively explore or analyze that person. It is partly because with no division, one occupies a shared space in which there is the potential for contact (especially physically). From a psychoanalytic perspective, one is susceptible to possible 'attack'. When one is on the other side of the glass, however, one is safely separated from any physical encounter: one is free to retreat into an attitude or status of detached observer, free from the permutations of participation with the object. This observation is similar to that of Deleuze's concerning why people prefer painting to music, and why, as he puts it, "aesthetics took paintings as its privileged model" because "it 'scares' people less". (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 303)

This film's principle tactic, then, is to "scare" people less". *The Moon* presents itself as an entertaining film that puts the agenda of the *Zainichi* issue into the public discourse in a non-threatening way. Sai succeeded in this, evident by the fact that, as Iwabuchi notes, "*Moon's* success caused some popular magazines to run feature stories about resident Koreans in Japan". (Iwabuchi, p. 67)

Further evidence of Sai's tactic can be found in the scene in which a Japanese passenger in Tadao's taxi, seemingly knowledgeable and even sympathetic about the *Zainichi* issue, nevertheless turns out to be a taxi-fare cheat. I use Iwabuchi's excellent description of the scene here:

When the cab reaches the destination, however, the customer dashes off without paying. Tadao, after a long chase, catches the customer. Outraged and exhausted, Tadao nevertheless does not even touch him, takes money from his purse, gives him the exact amount of change, and says loudly ("Doumo arigatou gozai mashi ta") "Thank you very much." The customer, now intimidated, groveling and begging not to be hurt,.... Tadao for his part spews out all his grudges against him by kicking a rubbish bin. (Iwabuchi, p. 60)

There remains some ambiguity here about why Tadao did not hit (or even touch) his wayward customer. Whether it is due to a deep hatred and disgust for 'ordinary' Japanese, or whether Tadao is merely following the moral code that all taxi drivers are expected to adhere to is uncertain. The unfathomable distance between *Zainichi* and 'ordinary' Japanese as expressed by Tadao not physically touching the body of the 'ordinary' Japanese puts the issue, for the audience, safely behind the 'window pane' of detached observation.

What we can now refer to as Sai's 'window pane' strategy manifests in the film through a variety of Japanese characters, non of which come across as 'ordinary' in the context of Japanese society: a punch-drunk ex-boxer, other equally deranged colleague taxi drivers, a fare cheat, and Yakuza characters. The conspicuous lack or voidness of sane, 'ordinary' Japanese characters in this film, who might otherwise be confronted face to face with the *Zainichi mondai* without the 'window pane', is a polemic feature of this film. We see that this voidness of 'ordinary' Japanese is absolutely intentional. This is evidenced by Sai's modification of the original text by a *Zainichi* novelist, Wui Sin Chong, where he changes the important background details of key characters in this film. In the original text, the owner of the taxi company is a Japanese. However, Sai rewrote this character as a *Zainichi*, an old friend of Tadao, and similarly changed Tadao's lover to a Filipino woman (originally she was a *Zainichi* woman). In my reading of *The Moon*, all Sai's tactics converge on the use of the 'window pane' strategy in this

film.

So what is the content of this film, and what by what 'nuance' of expression in his film does Sai attempt to address his 'ordinary' Japanese audience? It may relate to a subtle nuance of human relations, which transgresses racial issues or post-colonial discourse. This aspect is well explored the casting of Tadao, whose character is nonchalant and irresponsible, but sincere (or transparent) about a couple of things: love and friendship. Also Tadao (this applies to most of the cast) was played by a Japanese actor, selected by way of the usual audition process. Rather than casting a *Zainichi* actor in the role of *Zainichi* in the film for the sake of 'realism', Sai intentionally allowed the orthodox casting procedure to select an appropriately nonchalant personality for the character of Tadao. Thus Sai managed to transfer to his audience the nuance of human relations beyond the burden of the *Zainichi* issue.

For example, Hozo kept annoying Tadao by asking to borrow money, even calling Tadao while he was in the middle of having sex with his girlfriend. Hozo actually punched him in face after having said "Ore wa Chosenjin wa kiraida". However, Tadao's attitude towards Hozo remains compassionate and tolerant (though whether as a colleague, or as a 'tragic' figure is unclear). When Tadao meets Hozo at the police station after the latter is criminally involved in a traffic accident, Hozo, as usual, asks for money in the usual way... "Ore wa Chosenjin ga ..... Kane kashite kure yo." Tadao, with sincerity, takes money from his wallet and gives it to Hozo. Hozo, very interestingly, shows no interest in the money, is seized by police and taken away for probable detention of some sort. This episode highlights the meaningless and redundancy at the heart of the clichéd "Kane kashite kure yo". Moreover though, it emphasises an aspect of their shaky but persistent friendship which conveys some of the realities of maintaining a relationship between *Zainichi* and Japanese. Sai sets up this relationship as one which may go beyond a single-minded engagement with the *Zainichi mondai*. This emphasis on humanity as proposed by a *Zainichi* director, beyond the entangled relationship between *Zainichi* and Japanese, shows that the representation of the *Zainichi* in Japanese society is not inflexible, but is inevitably changing. This change is well exemplified by Pagie Cho, a *Zainichi* singer (who also appears in David Suzuki and Keibo Oiwa's The "Japan We Never Knew: A Journey of Discovery")

Cho is a resident of Ikaino, a famous *Zainichi* village in Osaka. Cho became an activist and singer on *Zainichi* and other ethnic and minority issues. He now uses two names: in his teaching profession he is known as Cho Hiroshi, in his singing profession he is Pagie Cho. Apart from the different media they are using, Cho's tactics to address 'ordinary' Japanese can be said to be more progressive than Sai. Cho is well aware of the success of the 'window pane' strategy in addressing 'ordinary' Japanese audiences. However, he intentionally does not use it: rather, he attempts to crush the 'pane' altogether with the 'energy' of his being a 'super' (i.e., surpassing ordinary limits) Japanese. Cho executes his 'super' Japaneseness by correcting errors, both in Japanese broadcast and print media, as well as in day to day language context. He also does this by being an authentic *Osaka-jin* with a strong, colourful Osaka accent. Cho boldly confronts 'ordinary' Japanese both in his performance and teaching, without the use of any strategy which might attenuate his approach to the *Zainichi mondai*. Cho's 'super' Japaneseness comes from his being an authentic *Osaka-jin*; with being a multi faceted *Zainichi*: fluent in English and Russian, as well as Korean language and all associated cultural practices (songs, dances, and music instruments). Cho does is not concerned about delineating Koreaness from Japaneseness (or any other cultural boundaries). His concerts are a spectacular mixture of different types of musicians and music styles: popular folk songs, jazz, blues, Korean traditional, African, Noh theater percussion, and many others. Thus, he directly addresses the *Zainichi* issue to the audience without the concession of any 'window pane'.

Sai's 'window pane' strategy is a necessary device for constructing a means to address 'ordinary' Japanese audiences in the context of the *Zainichi* issue. Despite its limitations (concessions) it is beginning for the *Zainichi*'s voice to reach 'ordinary' Japanese. Aside from the fact that he uses different media from Sai, Cho is evidently a different type of activist on the *Zainichi* issue. Cho has engaged with the possibility of tackling the *Zainichi* issue through performance and through the participation of his audience in his direct but open strategy.

Both Cho and Sai offer us possibilities of an approach to 'ordinary' Japanese

audiences on these issues. Not only by addressing the commonalities of human relationships of love and friendship. It is in their use of different media, each of which has particular and inherent mediatory qualities: the power of film as a medium for exploring the *Zainichi mondai*, can be contrasted here to political activism as performance. In *The Moon*, we see a different and nuanced kind of activism which touches the reluctant 'ordinary' Japanese audience.