

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

## DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



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### ***Imperial memory in postcolonial Japanese and South Korean short fiction***

The experience of colonialism and war shaped the postcolonial literary landscapes of South Korea and Japan in often remarkably similar ways, leaving a feeling of impotence on both sides. This paper explores South Korean and Japanese short fiction written between 1945 and the early 1970s that deals with the history and effects of Japanese imperialism in Korea.

Guiding questions are: How is the memory of the colonial period narrated in both countries? How is imperialism and its aftermath constructed as a national trauma, and what inferences are drawn from this experience concerning a collective Self and Other? The paper seeks to answer those questions in order to explore how the construction of memory created a discourse that shapes Japanese-Korean relations to the present day.

Focus will be on the theme of powerlessness and the multi-faceted play of inferiority and superiority as expressed through language, gender and nostalgia. By exploring the commonalities and rifts between both collective narratives, the paper highlights how the representation of power relations between Japanese and Korean characters produces a particular kind of memory marked by mutual rejection and longing. At the same time, this mode of depiction also mirrors East Asian postcolonial discourses within the Cold War world system.

On a broader scale, the paper finds itself in the tradition of an East Asian comparative literature and furthermore attempts to locate the specific Japanese-Korean case within the overall frame of postcolonial studies.

**Nadeschda Bachem** is a PhD candidate based at the Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies (CCLPS) at SOAS, University of London and currently a scholarship student at the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ). Her PhD project, tentatively entitled "Imperialism and National Identity in Postcolonial Japanese and South Korean Literature", is supported by the German National Academic Foundation and the Arts and Humanities Research Council UK.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum open to scholars working on Japan in any field of the humanities. It is organized by Miki Aoyama-Olschina and Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend, but prior registration ([weber@dijtokyo.org](mailto:weber@dijtokyo.org)) is greatly appreciated.

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