

Book Review**Kim, H. S. (2022). *Cine-Mobility: Twentieth-Century Transformations in Korea's Film and Transportation*. Harvard University Press.****Kwang Woo Noh**

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Mobility is a new dimension of understanding social transformation. It is a newly noticeable concept as we expect the spread of electronic vehicles and the experimentation of autonomous driving system in near future. Recently, some scholars have grasped the change in social life and modernity from the aspect of mobility. Han Sang Kim's book, *Cine-Mobility: Twentieth-Century Transformations in Korea's Film and Transportation*, is one example of those efforts. Especially, it is unique that Kim traces the rise of new mobility by analyzing relevant films from feature films to non-fiction films of newsreels, culture films, and propaganda.

The close relationship between cinema and mobility was already articulated from the first day of the film screening. On December 28, 1895, when Lumière brothers exhibited the short film, *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1895), at Salon Indien du Grand Cafe in Paris, viewers were shocked and feared by the image of a train's moving forward. They were afraid that the train would strike them. This episode is mentioned in this book. Kim provides us with the insight on the process of modernization, colonization, war mobilization and post-colonization in the 20th century Korea by considering the relationship between cinema and mobility—transportation apparatuses such as train, car, jeep, truck and express buses as well as indoor moving systems such as escalator and elevator. Viewers not only figure out what the world is but also indirectly experience the use of modern vehicles through cinema.

Although scholars may have different definitions of what modernity is, it is common that technology, or machine, is essential for the construction of modernity. Technological forms that ordinary people are familiar with and easily experience are consumer electronics, transportations, and communication technologies. In the academic discipline of communication or cultural studies, scholars have focused

mainly on how communication technology is related to human life and society. The former two items and their relations to humans are mainly considered research subjects for sociological approaches. Kim's book comes from the latter concern and provides us, communication scholars, with the opportunity to think about technology of communication and transportation.

This book consists of three parts and six chapters with an epilogue about the North Korean case. In his introduction, Kim provides basic concepts in his research—*heteronomous spectatorship*, *induced spectatorship*, *cine-mobility*, and *world-as-gesture*. Heteronomous spectatorship is “spectatorship constructed and maintained by force; the enforced screenings of propaganda by the military, police, and policy authorities” (p. 1). Induced spectatorship (p. 2) is “spectatorship under imperial expansionism and its counterparts in the post-imperial Cold War era” (p. 2). These two types of spectatorship are not in opposition to each other; rather, heteronomous spectatorship is considered a mode of induced spectatorship.

In terms of cine-mobility, Kim explains that it “is the virtual movement in cinematic media that conveys the viewer's gaze, as well as each individual film's ability to shape the viewer's perception of a world-as-picture” (p. 3). No matter what the authority's intention is, viewers construct their own image of the world through the experience of cinema viewing. Kim suggests the concept of the world-as-gesture which is dialectically related to Heidegger's notion of world-as-picture. Relying on Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and Giorgio Agamben, Kim indicates that viewers do not merely receive the image or information of the world or accept the preferred reading by authorities (the world-as-picture) in heteronomous spectatorship but construct their own understanding of the world (the world-as-gesture).

In Part I, *Train-Cinema Interface*, consisting of two chapters, Kim deals with the arrival of cinema and modern transportation systems, mostly train,

to Korea in the early 1900s and the Japanese occupation period by 1945. In Chapter 1, “In a Loop, on the Track: Locomotive Modernity in Colonial Korean Cinema,” Kim discusses the collectivity and centralizing movement of the train as well as individualism and consumerist desire affiliated with the automobile by examining various available colonial Korean films - *Sweat Dream: Lullaby of Death*, *Straits of Choson*, *Vow of Love*, *Volunteer*, *Military Train*, *Spring of Korean Peninsula*, *Fisherman's Fire*, and *Crossroads of Youth*. Through the collectivity and centralizing movement train signifies the imperial manifestation of imperial authorities and hierarchy among the Korean Empire and Japanese Empire and Japanese Emperor Taisho and, later, military mobilization during World War II. Through individualism and desire, automobile implies the urbanization and the mobility of women during the colonial days.

In Chapter 2, “Cinematic Railway Tourism in the ‘New Order in East Asia,’” Kim examines how the tourism code in cultural films, propaganda and newsreels enforces the Imperialistic imagination of the Japanese Empire from Japan through Korea to Northern China. Especially, Kim does textual analysis on *Tokyo-Peking* (1939), a promotional documentary film. According to Kim, the film has brought various and typical localities of Japan, Korea, and Manchuria as tourist spectacle and integrated them to the multicultural side of Japanese Empire. It was intended to lead viewers into interpreting them as local culture in one imagined community.

While train is affiliated with Japanese Imperialism in Part I, automobile symbolizes the value of post-WWII modernization in Part II, *Automobile-Screen Interface*. In Chapter 3, “My Car Modernity: U.S Army Jeeps and Private Car Ownership,” Kim examines activities of the Department of Public Information in the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) and discusses the implication of U.S. newsreel films which might have been

shown during the 1950s. The Department of Public Information in the USAMGIK organized and managed the mobile unit for screening U.S. propaganda films which showed and promoted the American life style and political system to Koreans. The mobile screening was mediated through trains, military jeeps and trucks. Trains were used to transport films and screening units from city to city; jeeps and trucks from train stations to remote areas. In film examples, which Kim chose from National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), cars appear as a significant medium for everyday American lives. It may have led some Korean viewers to yearn for American life and system and getting ideas of democracy, which was mediated through car ownership. That is, yearning for car ownership could be related to yearning for democratic life.

In Chapter 4, “Birth of Happiness? The Nationalization of Automobility”, Kim examines Saenara Motors case, the image of Park Chung Hee on a military Jeep at May 16th Coup, and the construction of Kyōng-in expressway and Kyōngbu expressway in order to trace how Park’s power was constructed in relation to the rise of automobile manufacturing and nationwide building project during the 1960s. Kim grasps Saenara Motors case, one of “the four major scandals during the Park junta” (p. 103), as the interest of Park’s government in visualizing its agenda to localize the automobile industry. Park’s government replaced Si-bal, which was remodeled form of U.S. jeep, with Saenara, the licensed production of Nissan Bluebird model. The image of Park Chung Hee on a military jeep signifies his personality of “maneuverability” (p. 110), which expectedly breaks the stagnant politico-economical condition of the 1960s. Following the discussion of Park’s image on a jeep, the next sub-chapter, *The Führer in a Postcolonial State*, deals with the Park’s construction project of expressways in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Park’s government emphasized the construction of the expressways as the key point of economic

development and decolonization by denouncing the railroad systems as an outdated and colonial legacy. In the former chapter, Kim mentions the Eisenhower administration’s emphasis on the U.S. Highway system. In this chapter, Kim refers to Hitler’s Autobahn with its undemocratic decision-making process and its applause for Hitler and Park.

Part III, *Post-Cine-Mobility*, deals with how cine-mobility declined as television replaced cinema from the 1970s to the 1980s. In Chapter 5, “Imagined Geographies of the World: Television, Aviation, and Koreanness”, Kim begins the chapter with the satellite broadcasting of Apollo 11’s lunar landing on July 20, 1969. Television and international telecommunication system brought the concept of ‘global village’ to Korean audience. They did not need to go to a public place such as a movie theater. In Korean film history, the 1970s is considered a stagnant period, mostly due to the decrease of attendance, which resulted in the decline of cine-mobility. Kim writes that this early stage of globalization has led partially to the emphasis on “Koreanness” in Korea. To trace the establishment of Koreanness in filmic and televisual texts, Kim introduces Pae Sok-in’s non-fiction films and comedian Kim Hui-kap’s visit to America as well as their co-work, *P’aldogansan* (팔도강산) series. This chapter is basically the summary of Kim’s Korean book, *Sightseeing Modernization of Korea* (Joguk Geundaehwa-reul Yuram-Hagi: 조국 근대화를 유람하기). Pae Sok-in, a film director, made many newsreel films which Koreanized American newsreel and culture films. In these films, Pae tried to adapt U.S localism into his films for the construction of Koreanness. Kim Hui-kap and Hwang Jeong-sun took the leading roles of an old couple in *P’algogansan* series. In this road movie franchise, they visited their daughters and son-in-laws who lived in different provinces. They found cultural distinctions in each area, and viewers who were identified with Kim and Hwang witnessed the achievement of the modernization project. Even there was a

television drama version of *P'algongsan*. After Bae Sok-in and Kim Hui-kap's experiences, Kim deals with the transition from cinema to television in terms of governmental propaganda and international news reporting. Television is more effective for governmental propaganda in terms of spreadability. Without going to the cinema, that is, without leaving home, people can experience the news report of Korean journalists on international issues as well as local ones.

Chapter 6, "Technopia! The Neoliberal Utopia of Automated Mobility", deals with the 1980s rapid spread of technology such as automation and computerization: the Fordist mode of assembly line production, copy machines and word processors in office, the adoption of ATM and Real-Name Financial Transaction systems in banking services, computerized communication systems, and surveillance systems. "Technopia," the neologism to combine technology and utopia, was the motto in the publicity of Gold Star (now LG). Automation and computerization changed the mode of human engagement in the workplace as well as at home. The adoption of technology saves, or expels, human labor, and makes human less engaged. It also grasps monetary flow with the digitalization of information, called as transparency. These transformations were mediated by big corporations, which made Kim search for many 1980s and 1990s private commercial feature films (*The Age of Success*, *Hwa-Sun*, *Millions in My Account*, *Channel 69*, *Runaway*, *Days of Rose*, *Man with a Gun*, and *The Contact*) rather than governmental propaganda. Epilogue, "Railroad Mobility in North Korea", briefly deals with the traditional railway-centeredness of North Korean mobility as well as the influence of South Korean popular culture through smuggled USBs on North Korea.

In a narrow sense, it seems that mobility is related to the transportation system and social change. In this narrow sense, Han Sang Kim did not deal with urban metro system or aviation

system in this book. It is worth studying how the public transportation system in Seoul in the 1980s and early 1990s has constructed not only Seoul citizens' mentality of manner but also a cultural distinction of Seoul from other regions. In the globalized era after the mid-1990s, many films and TV shows used Incheon airport for their significant background. Aviation and airport signify international tourism and migration, another aspect of mobility. In a broad sense, however, it seems that mobility includes human movement which is influenced by the adoption of technology. It leads Kim to conduct analyses and examination of materials less or indirectly related to transportation: U.S. cultural films and propaganda films during the USAMGIK period and the Syngman Rhee's presidency.

Despite Han Sang Kim's laborious works on Korean mobility with cinema, some topics have yet to be explained. First, Kim did not explicate sufficiently how the prominent changes of automation, computerization and surveillance systems in the 1990s Korea were related to the change in mobility. Second, technophobia is not mentioned or examined in this book, even though it is a theme worth examination and already included in the episode of *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*. Considering most authorities in Korea have applauded technological advance and used it for justification of their reigns, it may be hard to find any critical discourse on technological innovation in his research.

Nevertheless, it is noticeable that Han Sang Kim has made a great effort to examine the huge amounts of newspapers and governmental documents as well as visual materials from both Korea and the U.S. In this book, Han Sang Kim presents his persistent endeavors to integrate his reading on colonial Korean films and Japanese newsreels, U.S. newsreels and propaganda films, Korean newsreels, Korean commercial films and broadcast shows from the 1960s to the 1990s. Overall, this book is helpful in understanding modern Korean socio-

cultural history from the axis of transportation and consider Korean modernity other than communication technologies and popular culture. In the near future, we will see the commercialization of autonomous driving systems, or other convergence of communication and transportation. Whoever is interested in convergences, especially in Korea, may trace a relationship between communication and transportation from historical aspect in this book.

REFERENCES

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