WHY DID THE FAKE TIGER MASK HAVE TO BE KOREAN?


The boxing manga Ashita no Jo (Jo of Tomorrow, drawn by Chiba Tetsuya, written by Kajiwara Ikki, a.k.a. Takamori Asao, 1968-1973) and the pro-wrestling saga Taiga masuku (Tiger Mask, drawn by Tsuji Naoki and written by Kajiwara, 1968–1971), were two of the most popular narrative comics of Japan in late 60s and early 70s. They helped shape an alluring but ambivalent masculine subjectivity that could serve as a metaphor for the nation’s reconstruction and developmental drive and attempt to reconnect to the global capitalist-international order, as well as an embodiment of its generational, socioeconomic and political discordance. This paper seeks to examine these and other works of postwar narrative manga in terms of their strategies for national/ethnic/cultural identity construction, by bringing a particular attention to the presence of Korean characters (usually as villains) in them. This paper will show that the Korean "villains" are conceived and portrayed in such ways that the authors could grapple with and overcome the potentially destabilizing mimesis of "Japanese-ness" as well as project "negative" historical and cultural traits in the Japanese selves to their bodies, in a mirroring strategy that simultaneously confirms and denies the mono-ethnic essentialization of the alleged Japanese identity.

Kyu Hyun Kim was born in Seoul, Korea. He received his Ph.D. in history and East Asian languages in 1997 from Harvard University. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard University (1996-1997), served a Japan Society for Promotion of Science Fellowship, and was nominated and sponsored in the United States by the Japan Advisory Board, Social Science Research Council in 2000.

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