This talk concerns repetitions that have occurred in the course of genre cycles and these repetitions’ paradic nature, focusing on the recent revival of the Manchurian Western genre in South Korean cinema. In these repetitions, a not only historically contingent but also autonomous drive has compulsively propelled the genre cycles despite their intermittence. What force brings about the Manchurian Western more than once in Korean (film) history? If this specific genre returns at certain junctures, what are the corresponding circumstances? Are these repetitions inevitable or coincidental in the making of Korean national cinema? Most of all, why that historical content of Manchuria always assumes a particular form, that of the Western?

The recent advent of blockbuster Manchurian Western, The Good, the Bad and the Weird (dir. Kim Jeewoon, 2008) draws scholarly attention on the historicity of this over-determined genre. With the framework of transnational cultural exchanges, it has been often highlighted how mutant male subgenre it was. I attempt to stratify another layer, however, by locating a colonial Western, Deathband of a Watchtower (dir. Imai Tadasi, 1943) as the first occurrence of this second coming of the genre. In so doing, a recurrent obsession with Manchuria will reveal the mechanism of transference between imperial film cultures and the making of Korean national cinema.

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