

ASIAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES TRIPOS, Part IB

East Asian Studies

Wednesday 4 June 2014 09.00 – 12.00

AMES 1 CINEMA EAST

*Candidates should answer **THREE** questions, **ONE** from section A and **TWO** from section B.*

*All questions are of **equal** value.*

*Write your number **not** your name on the cover sheet of **each** Answer Book.*

STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS

*20 Page Answer Book x 1
Rough Work Pad*

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

none

**You may not start to read the questions
printed on the subsequent pages of this
question paper until instructed that you may
do so by the Invigilator.**

SECTION A

Answer **ONE** question.

All answers to questions in SECTION A should refer MAINLY (75%) to East Asian films studied during this year's course, although some use may be made of other films that offer important comparisons or contrasts or were made by directors included in the syllabus.

- (1) Film scholars tend to give more credit to directors than to actors. Analyse two performances in films studied this year to redress the imbalance.
- (2) How important are concepts of justice in East Asian cinema?
- (3) French critic Christian Metz once wrote that 'at the cinema, I am the *all-perceiving* . . . a great eye and ear . . . (it is I who make the film)'. Did he have a point?
- (4) The melodramatic mode is most often associated with 'women's' films, but it is equally as important for films focused on men's experience. Discuss.
- (5) What does cinematography contribute to the overall style of a film?
- (6) Discuss how people and the spaces they inhabit are shown in East Asian film through TWO significant examples from different film traditions.

SECTION B

The questions below are grouped in three sub-sections matching the main national traditions studied in the course: China/Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. Answer **TWO** questions which must be from different subsections.

- (7) **China/Taiwan** Answer **ONE** of the following:
 - a) Wu Yonggang intended the *The Goddess* to show the struggle of a street-walker living 'two lives' for her child. How can this be understood, literally and symbolically?
 - b) In what way is *The White-Haired Girl* a sister of *The Goddess* and in what way does she represent something different?
 - c) How does performance figure in Chen Kaige's *Farewell, My Concubine*?
 - d) How do mise-en-scène and cinematography contribute to the vision of the world that emerges from Jia Zhangke's *The World*?

- e) What is the family dynamic in Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A Time to Live and a Time to Die* and how is it expressed by mise-en-scène?
- f) Discuss the portrayal of children in Chinese films, focusing mainly on examples from the films studied within the course.

(8) **Japan** Answer **ONE** of the following:

- a) Shakespeare's *Macbeth* has been translated into Japanese several times and performed on stage many times. Yet it is Kurosawa's version, with almost no attempt to use the play's dialogue and poetry, which is generally taken to be the finest Japanese *Macbeth* ever produced. Discuss this apparent paradox.
- b) Naruse Mikio has been called a master of 'naturalistic pessimism' (Alexander Jacoby). Would that description hold for Keiko's life in *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs*?
- c) While Ozu became best known for his subtle, often tragic-toned family dramas, he had begun in slapstick comedy; with *Good Morning* he returned to his roots, bringing with him a deeper kind of cinematic humour. Discuss.
- d) How significant is Imamura's style of filming for the themes explored in *The Insect Woman*?
- e) What would be some of the advantages and/or disadvantages of shooting *The Throne of Blood* and/or *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* in colour?
- f) 'All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way' (Tolstoy). Test this famous proposition with regard to Japanese films studied this year.

(9) **South Korea** Answer **ONE** of the following:

- a) Is *The Housemaid* a horror film?
- b) Analyse the relationship of form and content/style and story in *Mandala*.
- c) The film *Joint Security Area* has been characterised as a 'blockbuster', a 'mystery thriller', a male melodrama, even as an anti-anti-communist call for re-unification. How can one film generate so many interpretations?
- d) In *Memories of Murder*, how does Bong Joon-ho combine history, humour and crime?

(TURN OVER)

- e) How would you characterise the way South Korean directors use genre conventions?
- f) Is politics more of a problem or more of a resource for South Korean cinema?

END OF PAPER