

The Digital Emergence of a New History: The Archiving of Colonial Japanese Documentaries on Taiwan

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Abstract

This paper explores the recent restoration in digital form of documentary films produced during the Japanese colonial period, seeking to address the significance of this digital archivization in relation to the construction of a renewed historical past. I argue that the digital versions are not simply copies or reproductions of the original films; rather, the digital archive actually creates an “incorporeal” space, a frontier one can term a “digital archival surface” where the archived meets the virtual. This “surface,” according to Michel Foucault’s analysis of archivization, references the immaterial effects that articulate a phantasm of history made more possible by the digital event. More significantly, these digitalized films are accessible to their viewers through a process of composition and editing through which a new history is created. History in this sense becomes less an event of historical duration than one that becomes phantasmatic by having effects that introduce discontinuities. This paper seeks to show how digital archivization can express or create a “new” history; it also explores the idea that this preservation project may become, as the project director has claimed, a truly “ethical” event.

Keywords

colonial Japanese documentary films, *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*, archivization, surface effect, phantasm of history, Japanese colonial memories of Taiwan

Introduction

In 2005, the National Museum of Taiwan History, in collaboration with National Tainan University of the Arts, launched a film preservation project which was to be completed in 2008. Using a complicated procedure, the project restored a total of 175 films, most made during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945) by the colonial administration and Japanese film companies. These films were transformed into several digital formats (M2V, WAV, and WMV) and then archived in the Museum. In 2008, the Museum published a collection of four colonial Japanese documentary films, including the famous propaganda documentary *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*. An illustration of the preservation process and four essays that comment on the value of the project are included in the film collection. This article focuses on *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*, and examines the significance of digital archivization in terms of the construction of the historical past through documentary films.

This preservation project underwent a complex process that included an examination of the condition of these films, their documentation, restoration, reproduction, digitalization, and finally their archivization. My article focuses particularly on the process of digital archivization, which functions as an essential part of the construction of a renewed historical past. I argue that digitalized films are neither simply copies of the original films nor their reproductions; rather, the process of digitalization functions as a new technology of memory, creating an “incorporeal” space, a new frontier that I term “the digital archival surface.” This digital surface is where the archival meets the virtual past. More significantly, the digital format enables the circulation of a film through DVDs and the Internet (e.g., YouTube), thereby transforming our understanding of the historical past and our perception of the history the documentary film records.

Many issues have been raised by this project, all of which concern the politics of reconstructing colonial memories. In his article “Colonial Object and Imperial Memory: The Politics of Memory in Repairing *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*,” which is included in the new collection, project director Jiing Yng-ruey (Jing Yingrui) proposes as an “ethic” the “archive as a third party”: presumably this will enable the transcending of the restraints of dualism and provide a broader perspective on the history (46).¹ Speaking in the context of Taiwan’s colonial experiences and memories, Jiing insists that this preservation project provides a

¹ This dualism primarily means the opposition between the colonizers and colonized and the dualistic thinking of colonialism.

means for the oppressed to “re-member” their repressed history and reconstitute their own personal “subjectivity” through a direct reconstruction of the past (46).

Jiing’s proposal deserves further attention. He does not simply advocate an alternative history of and for the oppressed, but rather he seems to suggest that the film restoration and preservation project involves the creation of a “new” history. However, what role the process of digital archivization will play in the reconstruction of historical memories remains unclear. In his discussion, Jiing speaks of the “encounter” between two “times”—the time of the film itself and that of the colonial past. The former, which really means the age or “aging” of the film itself and thus concerns its material “life,” is limited, while the latter belongs to the realm of memory and is thus inexhaustible. Jiing describes this inexhaustible timeframe as the “phantom” of colonialism that continually returns and haunts us long after its historical time has passed.

Curiously enough, Jiing also speaks of a third, more abstract form of time, the time “wrested from God” (49). According to Jiing, to preserve these films is to gain access to this time, to “see” this time. Thus it is important to digitalize the films to prevent them from a material death on the one hand, and on the other hand to allow the “phantom” of colonialism to re-appear in a more precise, distinct, and “truthful” form. It is in this regard that Jiing sees the film archivist as a physician, someone who not only treats and “heals” the physically damaged films but also heals the psychological wounds of the people caused by colonial oppression. Thus the restoration of the damaged films as a “healing” process involves an ethic, the ethic of historical justice. In prolonging the life of these films the archivist makes it possible for the phantom of the “true” past, which had been lost, to return and be seen again by present and future generations.

This archivization project has been the subject of several excellent critical discussions. In another article included with the digital collection Chen Chang-jen, quoting André Bazin, maintains that the desire to preserve images, e.g., by making documentary films in the first place, is derived from the desire to preserve life and its vagaries—both its truths and its falsehoods. Therefore, the preservation of the images of a colonial society, especially by saving them in archived digital formats, can be seen as an effort to fight against the ubiquitous threat of death—the death of colonial experience and historical “truth” (Chen 73). Chen remarks that the physical life of material films is vulnerable and will inevitably confront its own death, while the digitalizing process defers the death of the film, that is, prolongs its “life.”

In fact, the retrieved archival images seem then to present to us the recurrence of the past, or the revival of a “dead” experience that has long since become

“spectral” in several senses of the word. The viewers of these digitalized documentaries perceive history through mere images that inform us about the past, where actually these images displace the “reality” of the past and produce a “ghostly” world that consists essentially of images. That is, the images break with the expected sense of a linear historical time and articulate a particular and unique form of time. These historical images become phantasms in the sense that they are historical effects, not so much “real” representations of a historical past as mere *repetitions* or replays of an event in history. The digital archive, as an incorporeal space, thus preserves historical images and makes them visible through repetition; the technology establishes a different relation with the past by creating a digital surface, a membrane upon which images of the past as phantasms may “encounter” images of the present directly. Timothy Murray therefore calls this digital surface an “incorporeal (immaterial) archival surface” (247), a term derived from Michel Foucault’s understanding of the archival surface. A digital archival surface is no longer merely a representation of any sort of reality, but rather an immaterial frontier where the past and present meet.

The question thus arises: How can the recurrence of these spectral historical images be related to the creation of a “new” history and how can they introduce an “ethic” for this preservation project? The project director Jiing, again, sees this project as a tool that will allow the oppressed to “remember” their own history; it gives us in effect “historiography” through images (49). Yet if these digitalized historical images are actually phantasms, deprived of their temporal and spatial correspondences and no longer representing reality, then what historical “justice” or “ethic” can be achieved through restoring and (re)viewing them? Also, if these phantasmatic images articulate a particular dynamic form of time, then how does the latter relate to the past and the present and, most importantly, to the future? Finally, how does the technology of digital archivization serve memory and consequently introduce a new “ethic” with regard to historiography? These questions are the primary concern of this paper.

The Digital Event and the Created Archival Surface

We know, from the extended explanations and illustrations of the process included in the collection, how the reproduced films were converted into digital formats through the use of the telecine (T/C) machine or so-called DV-CAM. In addition to the digital images and sound formats (M2V, WAV), this particular project used the WMV format for Internet use. A storyboard was also created for the

selected sections shown on the screen, allowing viewers to choose whatever section they want to begin with instead of starting at the beginning, as traditional projection films require.²

In his study of the digitalization process, D. N. Rodowick speaks of three principles: capture, synthesis, and composition (*Virtual* 165). According to Rodowick, essential to this process is the separation of “the image into mathematically discrete and modular elements whose individual values are open to any number of programmable transformations” (*Virtual* 165). He points out that the digitalization process “corresponds less to the duration and movements of the world than to the control and variation of discrete numerical elements” (*Virtual* 166). Consequently, it produces certain aesthetic effects that are the result of its own digitalizing technique and process. First, the image is always a “montage,” as constituted through digital capture and synthesis; more significantly, as Rodowick remarks, “digital conversion is a one-way street: the output from digital capture can write movement back into the image, but it cannot restore duration to a projected film, for the continuity of automatic analogical causation is broken” (*Virtual* 166). Rodowick in fact speaks of a new ontology or a new mode of existence of the digital image that is expressed through the electronic screen, which he characterizes as “an increased attention to the present and to the control of information” (*Virtual* 166).

Rodowick’s points are fundamental to an understanding of our way of perceiving the display of a digitalized film such as *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*, either on a DVD or on YouTube via the Internet. The viewer’s temporal alienation from the past (the past-ness of the film itself and the historical past as presented in the film) is replaced by a process of composition or editing formulated in the present time; the causal chain of analogy is thus broken, and the image we watch becomes a montage, not a projection. The image shown on the electronic screen no longer refers to any actual “reality,” but simply delivers a “discrete alteration of image or sound data” internal to that image and open to any interactive manipulation (*Virtual* 166-67). In other words, the viewer fabricates his or her own imaginary worlds through an individual editing of the image and its sound data by managing the control panel, e.g., the DVD remote control or computer mouse (select, play, pause, replay, forward, rewind, repeat, etc.). Through this “editing” process, the composite digital images no longer represent actual movements and

² For example, *Southward Expansion to Taiwan* is posted on YouTube and divided into seven clips based on its various sections. Due to the digital format, viewers can enter the film at whatever point they wish at any time. The significance of this will be further discussed later.

durations in history, but instead are transformed into “modularized image[s] subject to a variety of algorithmic transformation” (*Virtual* 173). Rodowick calls this conversion process “the digital event” (*Virtual* 173).

What is at stake in such a digital event is that it introduces the medium as a “surface,” or, as Lev Manovich calls it, an “interface.” It makes electronic images on the screen visible. We need to look more closely at this “surface.” Rodowick emphasizes the display screen for these digital images; he remarks that the electronic images “are inseparable from display” (*Virtual* 135). This rather simple observation has great significance: the electronic display, which relies on an electric output device, delivers images subject to algorithmic manipulation and distinguishes them from a film that remains an independent and perceptible object. It is in this same vein that Rodowick claims that the electronic image is not actually “one,” or “identical with itself,” because it indicates no presence without a display (*Virtual* 135). The modes of existence of the film and the electronic images are very different. As Rodowick suggests, “The information in a digital file is not comparable to a film strip stored in cans,” for it does not physically exist as the film and suffer change in the same way (*Virtual* 135). What is significant, however, is less the two different modes of existence than the “medium” by or through which, in each case, time is perceived.

Rodowick argues that the cinema screen is a “passive surface” which simply receives projections and thus creates in the viewer’s mind a divided gulf between the past and the present. An electronic display, on the contrary, actually produces images and expresses the passing of actual or real time (*Virtual* 136). In other words, a projected film presents the time and causality of past events, while an electronic display expresses the temporal change or flow in real time, that is, in an immediate present. It is quite obvious then that the traces of a projected film always return us to past causation, while an electronic image directs us to the immediate present. As a result, every image on an electronic display becomes information, that is, new data open to any form of interactive manipulation. In sum, projection is the “laying on” of an image created in past time, while a digital image is the “now,” the very real creation of an image in current time, that is, from moment to moment.

Given the fact that the computational process changes the nature of the electronic image, Rodowick cautions us to understand the paradox of “perceptual realism” in digitalization. First, there is an insistence on preserving the “impression of reality,” and second, the criteria of digitalization are defined by analogy while no longer truly relying on analogical processes (*Virtual* 103-04). What is at stake here

is not so much whether digital images are representational,³ but rather the fact that these images have created a “represented” space through “similarity” instead of through analogy (*Virtual* 121). This perspective is provocative for our own viewing of the digital version of *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*, especially on the Internet. The viewers, or more precisely the information “users,” are aware that the cinematographic images produced by the Japanese colonial administration in Taiwan decades ago have now been converted into digital sound-image data and have thus lost their original temporal and spatial correspondence. The viewers are not necessarily drawn back to past causation or struggling to overcome the temporal alienation created by filmic analogy; rather, they are participating in a causal change in the immediate present while continuously “editing” the images on their computer screens. In short, these sound and image data have (re)created a simulacrum of wartime Taiwan under Japanese rule, but accomplished that goal through similarity rather than through mimesis.

Produced in 1940 when the Japanese empire was dealing with wars in China and Southeastern Asia,⁴ the documentary film *Southward Expansion to Taiwan* introduced the colony of Taiwan to Japanese imperial subjects and, more importantly, publicized the “Southward Expansion” project that gave Taiwan a central position in economic, military, and ideological terms. This film attempted to present a modern colonial Taiwan by featuring industrial and military infrastructure, agricultural production, architecture, the daily lives of local residents, etc. It emphasized the great achievements of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan since 1895 and the island colony’s crucial role in the “Southward Expansion” project, that is, its role in establishing the foundation of the great Japanese empire. The images of Taiwan’s buildings, landscapes, human figures, faces, gestures, clothes, etc. are accompanied by a voiceover, whose narrative organizes them and situates them within a broader Japanese imperial rhetorical context.

Thus the film’s images of colonial Taiwan were deployed to create an abstract

³ Following Rodowick, I use the word “representation” to define “spatial correspondence.” Rodowick notes that “the concept of realism in use by computer graphics professionals has a rather restrictive and circular definition. It does not correspond to an ordinary spatial sense of the world and actual events taking place within it, but rather to our perceptual and cognitive norms for apprehending a *represented* space, especially a space that can be represented or constructed according to mathematical notation” (*Virtual* 103; emphasis in original).

⁴ According to the documents there were two versions of this documentary film, but what is preserved is the one that was remade in 1940. For discussion of this version and its making, see, for example, the essay by Chen Yi-hung, “The Perspective of Seeing: A Historical Analysis of the Documentary Film, *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*,” which is also included in the film collection.

idea, the idea of “Japanese imperialism” in all its power and glory. What the images present is a “discursive formation” rather than a true representation of the island colony under Japanese rule, and our sense of distance from the material, historical facts is only heightened by the effects of digitalization. First, the film’s division into seven clips allows us to enter it at any point we choose, thus creating our own temporal-historical order. Secondly, perceptive viewers of the digitalized images today may feel removed from actual historical causation because they are experiencing constant reformatting of images with all the freedom of editing accorded them by the digital technology. The instantaneousness of these images on the screen, mixed with the “unnatural” noise that informs us of the past-ness of the original film,⁵ further reinforces our sense of a remote historical past.

Here we are really speaking of the temporal gap that opens up between our sense of the film as a present and as a past reality, where the sense of the past-ness of the digitalized and restored film reinforces the conventional sense of the film’s past-ness. The gap becomes widening and even insurmountable when the viewers of the restored film increasingly come to realize that the digitalized images are deprived of any spatial or temporal correspondence with actual, empirical historical facts or events and thus take the viewers away from “historical memories.” The viewing experience, as a result, becomes an activity of the brain. Every composition of the images constitutes a fragmentary intellectual understanding of them, and this intellectual activity invokes a temporal “leap,” so to speak, whenever an image of the past emerges.

Thus we may link the digital image with the idea of an “immaterial archive” and the display surface to an “archival surface,” as Murray describes it. With his notion of the immaterial archive, Murray emphasizes the increasing reliance of memory on technology, self-repetition and self-representation in the digital age (244-45). The idea of an “archival surface” draws on Foucault and Gilles Deleuze’s reflections on the archive. The “surface effect” is closely related to the Deleuzian philosophy of phantasm discussed in *The Logic of Sense* and in *Difference and Repetition*. For Deleuze, the “surface” should not be seen as the mere horizontal base or basis of mimesis or as an insufficient supplement in relation to the original, but rather as “the empowering event of the frontier of the present-past and the future-past” (Murray 248). For Deleuze, then, the surface is an “event” that suggests the power of becoming and transformation.

Murray points out the momentum (the “eventfulness”) in/of the archival

⁵ The noise may come from the film itself, which has been ruined by time and cannot be repaired. The digital format records these “rotted” sounds too.

surface, embodied by its “immateriality” as phantasm (247). He further links the surface to the digital event, arguing that technological progress has helped reveal the surface (248).⁶ It is from this perspective that the archival surface takes on the positive role of (re)production. If seen in this light, the digital images of the Japanese colonial documentary films re-produced by computational technology are no longer representational, as typically defined by temporal and spatial correspondence (i.e., images of Taiwan as a Japanese colony in wartime); rather, they bring forth a Deleuzian surface that serves as an “incorporeal materiality,” a phantasm that is the repetition of memories and the becoming of time itself.⁷ And yet we cannot forget that this process of becoming or transformation has to be embodied by the viewers in the present moment-to-moment act of viewing.

Spectral Images and Emergent History

Technical discussions of digitalization have prepared us for a deeper understanding of how digital images are composed, and of the alternative history that can emerge from viewing them. In his article titled “Spectral Images, Bodily Traces: The Anti-Imperial Gaze Concerning *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*,”⁸ Gong Jow-Jiun (Gong Zhuojun) describes the intriguing yet inspiring experience of watching this particular documentary film on a DVD. Curious to learn more about Taiwan’s colonial history, he enthusiastically viewed this DVD many times by himself, with his family, and (more often) with guests and friends. Among other images that he saw, Gong constantly identified a scene (V. 2, 6 min., 38 sec.) that was typically ignored by viewers. In it a local boy is doing somersaults under the bridge that spans the Tamsui River. The scene appears as the narrative is introducing the natural environment of Taiwan, in particular the Tamsui River that surrounds Taipei City. The boy’s action moves against the narrative line suggested by the eye of the camera. One may argue that, if the eye of the camera assumes the

⁶ Here Murray quotes Heidegger saying, “*Technē* belongs to bringing-forth, to poiesis; it is something *poietic*. . . . It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *technē* is a bringing-forth” (qtd. in Murray 249).

⁷ In the article “Theatrum Philosophicum,” which is a review of Deleuze’s two books, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, Foucault describes “this conception of the phantasm as the play of the (missing) event” (177).

⁸ As the original title of the article indicates, Gong uses the term “non-imperial” to describe the alternative gaze of Japanese colonialism. However, I would argue that he in fact proposes a “de-imperial” or an “anti-imperial” narrative through the particular digital images presented, as they are lodged against the imperial framework that represents the primary narrative of the film.

vantage point of the imperial discourse, this scene, caught accidentally (or “unconsciously”) by the camera, exceeds the intended imperial framework, thus presenting a counterforce to the Japanese colonial discourse of the film.

Arguably, this often-ignored sequence of images might be used to construct an alternative version of colonial history in contrast with the viewpoint composed and presented by the colonizers. Gong, however, perceives it very differently. He played the DVD forward and backward to locate the images of the boy, stopped and rewound the film and replayed the scene in slow motion. He claims that such manipulation of the image transforms it into something different, an image deprived of duration and movement. Gong describes this new image as a “phantom” which preserves itself in the film and distinguishes itself from any “movement-image” indicating a particular place, a historical past, or a definite action (Gong 21). By the term “phantom” Gong means an image whose effect lies beyond the reality presupposed and intended by the film.

Gong’s obsessive, repetitive manipulation of the DVD illustrates the striking difference between cinema viewers who are perpetually attentive to past causation and digital image manipulators (information users) who are obsessed with the immediate present and the possible reformulations of the viewing experience. In addition to the emerging images now seen as phantoms, Gong emphasizes his personal bodily engagement: “[The boy’s] action excites my great passion and affection. . . . My body travels across time and returns to my juvenile body; obsessed with the obscure figure of the unknown boy, I somersault freely in the vast area of the riverside” (22). For Gong, this projected bodily experience is not simply an “affection” passively triggered by the images he views, but rather a new sort of sensation that serves as a creative means whereby one can leap outside of the actual image frame, just as the spectral image of the boy also moves outside of history. What Gong calls the “anti-imperial gaze”—made possible through the viewer’s bodily intervention and his/her own editing—counters and critiques the larger narrative of Japanese imperialism.⁹

Gong’s description of watching this digitalized film on a DVD suggests a vital dimension of the digital event, namely its spectral or phantasmatic image. Drawing on the Deleuzian notion of the “time-image,” Gong describes the phantasmatic

⁹ Gong’s experience of watching the digitalized film on DVD should be considered, *not* as a special situation, but rather as a general one that any contemporary viewer would encounter. Likewise, the alternative images to those of Japanese imperialism that Gong’s manipulation of the display creates should be regarded as something that has been preserved in the digitalized film, regardless of the knowledge or intentions of the viewer.

image as one that is extracted from movement and duration in its very repetition. Deleuze's complex notion of the time-image refers to a new breed of image that was developed in post-war cinema, e.g., in Italian Neo-Realism and the French New Wave, characterized mostly by the slackening of the sensory-motor link. In short, this time-image signifies "pure optical and sound situations" that are deprived of sensory-motor connections. In our context, then, the digital images are retrieved from the sound-image data, and the narrative line is recognized as a new kind of image that provokes new optical and sound situations. Deleuze characterizes the time-image as a direct image of time, in contrast to montage which is an indirect image of time given by the movement-image. Therefore, to regard the historical images of this digitalized film as time-images raises ontological questions about the nature of time and history. In Gong's description of watching the digitalized documentary film, he introduces an alternative form of time, which he says is the *time of the specters* or the *time of spectators*. We also see there to be at work in his viewing process a strange form of time, one that intertwines the present and the past. That is why Gong calls himself a conjurer or someone who can bring about a different perception of time and produce an alternative perspective on colonial history.

Yet, if these digitalized historical images are actually phantasms, now deprived of their temporal and spatial correspondence and no longer representational of reality, what "different sense of history" can be gained by viewing this digitalized film? The latter sense would not be created by the images that represent moments of a historical past, but rather produced by a phantasm produced via a process of composition according to similarity rather than simple analogy based on the archival surface. Here, history becomes, not the totality of past moments, but rather a singular effect, in the way the time effect operates in what Deleuze terms the "crystal-image." Deleuze says time "splits into two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past" (*Cinema 2* 81). Therefore, every "edition" of a digital image signals an encounter between the present and the past, the actual with the virtual; history then becomes not merely a historical duration but a phantasmatic effect that introduces a "perpetual *self-distinguishing*" of time (*Cinema 2* 82; emphasis in original). The latter again suggests the "anti-imperial" gaze that is constituted or "disengaged" simply through the composition of digital images.

To reflect further on this idea of the emergence of a historical past as a singular event in history, it will help to go back to the actual composition of digital images. As mentioned above, the digital sounds of image data are transcoded into

images based on similarity rather than analogy and also based on express discontinuities in time rather than the duration of time. This way of perceiving a film interrupts its presentation, creating intervals that divide the latter into a series of images rather than connecting them. In effect, these irrational intervals of “in-between” function no longer as “an operation of association but of differentiation” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 179). They introduce discontinuities of time and transform duration into a form of recurrence (not return). A series of phantasmatic images is thus produced on the archival surface, as the viewers/users continue to compose these images through editing. These intervals sustain a new form of time, thus introducing an “effective history” in the form of an interstice or in-betweenness (Rodowick, *Reading* 197-200). The intervals remain outside the space-frame of the image series and yet remain immanent to it. Time here is only perceived as virtuality whereas the event is seen as a repetition of time itself.

When the viewers of this historical documentary regard each digital image as a form of “crystal-image,” the emergence of a new history becomes clear. Deleuze argues that the crystal-image has two sides, actual and virtual, and more significantly that the crystal-image is the fundamental operation of time: it indicates a crystallizing process where time as “becoming” wrests itself from the restraints of representation. Deleuze writes that “[time] has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past” (*Cinema 2* 81). Or to state his idea more precisely, “one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past” (*Cinema 2* 81).

Seen in this light, then, history is not simply the discursive remnants embedded in colonial discourse or the debris buried in the strata of imperial knowledge. Rather, to use the words of Walter Benjamin, history “crystallizes into a monad” whose subject and meaning wait to be grasped (262-63). Thus we can also say that the composition of these digital images produces a new sense of history. The intervals produced by pauses and repetitions create an interstice or in-betweenness where the archival encounters the virtual and actualizes the past in the immediate present. Moreover, viewers may now become engaged in the process of actualization as the images emerge before us, and new conceptions of subjectivity, time, and history thus arise.

This documentary film functioned as a political propaganda piece advocating the Japanese “Southward Expansion” project and citing Taiwan as the foundation of the Japanese empire in economic and military terms. It emphasized the achievements of the colonial government, and as a result various images of colonial

Taiwan, including its landscapes and the daily lives of ordinary people, were organized in such a way as to provide a greater knowledge of Japanese imperialism rather than give a true presentation of the island colony living under Japanese rule. Now those images are digitalized and available either on DVD or online, and information users can enter this film at whatever point in space and time that they choose, pause it, restart it, and watch it repeatedly. In other words, contemporary viewers can experience a constant, repetitive formation of the images through an ongoing process of composition and editing. How then will they enable the appearance of a different history, different from the one intended by the Japanese filmmakers decades ago?

Taking the sequence of shots that appear in the film's first section as an example, after a short introduction of how colonial Taiwan has become the foundation of the Japanese empire, the documentary provides a series of snapshots of magnificent works of architecture newly built by the Japanese government. These images present Taipei as a modern city, one whose modernization has been a great benefit of being a Japanese colony. For contemporary viewers, however, these images undoubtedly indicate a remote historical past, as if all the colonial memories had been preserved by the images. The historical past emerges again as these historical images are retrieved from their digital data, but the technological process of this retrieval also constantly reminds viewers/users of an immediate temporality that permeates the space in-between the past and present. Each image thus processes a dual temporality, for it seems to present an indiscernible zone where the present and the past, the actual and the virtual, are joined yet interchangeable.

Each present image, then, connects to its own past, and furthermore the composition of these images refers to the virtual past. This is why these digital historical images can be perceived as crystal images and how contemporary viewers can produce their own new history, one that is quite different from the old history. And yet the fact remains that what contemporary viewers gain from these historical images is never a "true reality" of the historical Taiwan as Japanese colony, but a sort of "perceptual realism," a produced history that belongs also to the present, a just-emerged or emergent history.

The Instant and the Archival

Finally, we might ask, what exactly was preserved by the digital archivization

project?¹⁰ This is a very complex question. Mary Ann Doane in her discussion of the archiving of a film says that this involves two interrelated aspects, the film as historical artifact and the moment as historical event (223), where the former may concern the history of audio-visual production and the later an audio-visual historiography. Doane's questions in relation to this project of archiving colonial Japanese documentary films include the following. Is the project's aim to preserve the films as films that were originally used as propaganda during the Japanese colonization of Taiwan, or to observe the imperial ideology underpinning the making of these documentary films? Or, is the purpose to retain the reality of the island colony, including the industrial infrastructure and the daily lives of ordinary people? Or, might the digitalization project have still more profound meanings?

These inquiries return us now to the question raised above in the Introduction: How can the process of digital archivization, functioning as a new technology of memory, produce a new history and announce a new ethic even if the digital images are proven to be non-representational? In fact, the discovery of these damaged films was met with a certain amount of excitement. Scholars were immediately wondering whether these films might fill in the gaps in the local history of audio-visual production, and whether with their visual "reality" they could be regarded as witnesses to Taiwan's colonial history. However, the historiography based on the colonizers' standpoint, that is, the ideology that underpinned these films, soon invited severe criticism. Most critics agree that these documentaries have preserved the colonial past and made it perceivable, and yet caution us about the colonial ideology underlying the historiography behind the films and consequently the organization of the films.

In addition, the argument that audio-visual historiography may invite revision introduces the whole problem of temporality of the present in relation to that of the past, and of the complex spatio-temporal effects of digitalization discussed above. It is undeniable that the restoration and preservation project is accompanied by the desire to uncover a more reliably "true" repressed history, in keeping with Taiwan's nativist, post-colonial movement that began in the late 1980s. However, this question about historical "truth" or "reality" becomes complicated given the digitalization of the documentary films, such that their digital information is now viewed through a repetitive process of composition and editing. Therefore, one might, once again, wonder: To what extent can this digital archivization project be regarded as an "ethical" event?

¹⁰ I am paraphrasing here Doane's question: "What exactly is being archived in the preservation of an early film" (223).

We recall project director Jiing's proposal regarding "the archive as a third party." According to Jiing, who advocates an ethic of historical justice through digital archivization, the archive preserves colonial memories, preserves a time he calls the "phantom of colonialism," a time "wrenched from God" (49). But while Jiing believes that digitalization may defer the literal death of those damaged films, he does not suggest that the digital archive will exist forever. As he still contrasts the transient time of digital archivization with God's eternal time, digital data, like the film itself, will "die" due to the constraints or historical transience of all technology. For Jiing, the point is that the digital archive creates an "immaterial surface" where the digital images express themselves as phantasms, deprived of spatial correspondence and duration. History in this sense is perceived as an "effective history," a simulacrum composed of images on an immaterial surface. These digital-historical images as mere phantasms have never been truly representational or revealed any of the "truth" or "reality" of history.¹¹

I am suggesting then that we may give a certain priority to the power of transformation that operates through phantasm as "the play of the (missing) event and its repetition" (Foucault 177). This viewpoint is essential if we are to understand the process of using these digital images. Our perception of the digitalized documentary film *Southward Expansion to Taiwan* shows that history emerges through the present-day viewers/users inasmuch as the historical image appears as an indiscernible zone where the past encounters the present and the virtual meets the archival. Thus, the digital image may be seen as a "crystal-image" in the Deleuzian sense, for the image becomes a composite of actual-virtual coupling, a coalescence of present and past images.

The reproduced digital image can arguably express a new sense of history and anticipate a new subject. Moreover, it can provide a means of examining our own relationship to time, memory, and history. Again, we recall that Jiing advocates both an "ethic" and historical "justice," whose task must rely heavily on digital archivization to restore historical memories and rewrite an alternative historiography for the oppressed. Referencing colonial theorist Franz Fanon's and American writer Toni Morrison's work, Jiing hopes this preservation project may revive a traumatic past, help us to uncover a repressed history, and thus make

¹¹ To emphasize the non-representational quality of digital images that reveal no actual truth or reality of history does not necessarily suggest the power of representational images—e.g., film projection based on analogical causation—to render the true reality of history. The politics of representation, for example, the form of narrative and the narrative perspective, should also be taken into consideration when one is considering the representation of history.

possible the constitution of a more complete cultural subjectivity. However, Jiing's proposal of "the archive as a third party" in fact implies an empty space and an absolute time that exists outside of history. As digital images cease to be spatial and representational, they no longer represent any "true" history. Therefore, the concepts of both "ethic" and "justice" need to be re-considered. An alternative historiography should not simply be imagined as one that counters that of the oppressors—e.g., the history of the colonized as opposed to that of the colonizers—but instead as a genealogy in the Foucauldian sense that "seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us" (Foucault 162). It is from this perspective that this digital archivization project can introduce a truthful ethic, an honest "genealogy" of time.

This new conception of time and history also calls for a reconsideration of the idea of archiving itself. Doane has pointed out that "the archive is a protection against time" and that "film is an archival process, the task of which becomes that of preserving time, of preserving an experience of temporality, one that was not necessarily 'lived'" (223). Hence the time preserved in the digital archive is not necessarily an indication of the actual historical past, but rather simply an experience of temporality that must proceed *from* the future. As Doane puts it, "The artifact's significance is a function of what it 'will have meant'" (223). It does not simply function in actual or present time, but in the future-to-come. The digital images of these repaired documentaries, which function as crystal images, preserve the pure past as the virtual and facilitate the actualization of the virtual.

Thus this film preservation project can also be linked to Jacques Derrida's conception of the archive. Derrida insists that "[t]he archive has always been . . . a token of the future" (*Archive* 18). Perhaps the passion for this project was in reality both inspired and driven by an "archival desire" to preserve the historical past, and yet what is ultimately preserved becomes rather an experience of temporality that emerges as a quite different "future-to-come" (*Specters* xix).¹² Likewise, what Jiing recognizes as "inexhaustible time" is essentially time as "eternal recurrence"—or a genealogy of time as incorporeal surface that is in Deleuzian terms the becoming of time itself—as opposed to an absolute, unchangeable linear history. This may be the deeper meaning of this archiving project as an ethical event.

¹² As the English translator Peggy Kamuf notes, "future-to-come" is a transition of the French word *l'à-venir* used by Derrida, which spaces out the ordinary word for "future," *avenir*, into components of the infinitive "to come," *venir*. The infinitive, with a strong sense of a coming and an advent, is essential to our understanding of the temporality experienced when we are viewing the digital images of those repaired documentaries.

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