

# Korean cinema of perseverance: pushing the boundaries of quality during the Park Chung Hee authoritarian era, 1961-1970

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**Korean Cinema of Perseverance:  
Pushing the Boundaries of Quality During  
the Park Chung Hee Authoritarian Era, 1961-1970**

By  
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## Table of Contents

Tables and Figures	<i>page</i> vi
Abbreviations	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Abstract	x
Originality Statement	xi
 <b>Introduction: Korean Cinema Now and Then</b>	 1
Revisiting the Golden Age: Cinema of Perseverance	5
Methodology	11
Chapter Summaries	14
 <b>Chapter 1. Building A Propaganda Factory</b>	 17
1. Restructuring the Film Industry	18
1) Establishment of the National Film Production Centre	18
Newsreels ( <i>Daehan News</i> )	20
Cultural Film ( <i>Munhwa Yeonghwa</i> )	21
2) Consolidation: Pre-MPL Period	23
2. Rebuilding of the Film Industry with the Motion Picture Law (MPL)	25
1) Producer Registration System (PRS)	26
2) Censorship	32
3) Import Policy	38
Import Recommendation System (IRS)	39
Import Licence Reward System (ILRS)	40
3. Resistance: Anti-MPL Campaign	41
4. Conclusion: Impact of the MPL on Production, Direction and Genre	46
 <b>Chapter 2. Producer Registration System: Forming An Industry Cartel</b>	 48
1. The Cartel	50
1) The Janus Trade: <i>Daemyeong Jejak</i>	55
2) Import Licences as a Cash Cow	59

3) Bobbing for Presales with the Exhibitor-Investors	63
2. Shin Film and the Success of Industrialisation	66
1) The Political Favourite	68
2) Leading by Internationalisation	72
3) Focus on Education	76
3. Conclusion: Cartel – Core of the Golden Age	77
<b>Chapter 3. Propaganda Production and Anticommunist Filmmaking Efforts</b>	<b>79</b>
1. Origins of the Anticommunist Genre	81
2. Anticommunist Genre As A Super Genre	83
3. Transgenre Possibilities	88
1) Reproduction of War Memories Through Spectacle: <i>Five Marines</i> (1951)	89
2) Separation Melodrama And Emotional Tenderness: <i>South And North</i> (1965)	94
3) Cold War Politics And Spies: <i>Correspondent in Tokyo</i> (1967)	98
4. Post-Anticommunist Genre	100
5. Conclusion: Revisiting the Anticommunist Genre	102
<b>Chapter 4. Constructing Literary Films: Intersecting Genre, Policy and Industry</b>	<b>105</b>
1. Origin of the Literary Genre	107
2. Rise of Literary Films in the 1960s	110
3. Literary Film Themes	113
1) Praising Cultural Nationalism: <i>Deaf Samryong</i> (1963)	113
2) Traditionalism, Locality, Festival Films: <i>Seashore Village</i> (1965)	119
3) Exploring Modernism: <i>Mist</i> (1967)	126
4. Conclusion: The Literary Genre As Cultural Propaganda	131
<b>Chapter 5. Shin Sang-Ok and the Duality Between Film and Politics</b>	<b>133</b>
1. From Political Artist and Propaganda Creator to Industry Leader	134
1) Ideological Conformity: Escape From Poverty	138

2) The Pure Endorsement Film: <i>Rice</i> (1963)	143
3) Glorification of Militarism: <i>The Red Muffler</i> (1964)	146
2. Downward Spiral	149
1) Soft-pornography as Political Satire: <i>Eunuch</i> (1968)	151
3. Conclusion: Perseverance and Survival	156
 <b>Chapter 6. Lee Man-hee: Anticommunism Chaser and Genre Experimenter</b>	<b>158</b>
1. Anticommunist Filmmaking: Collaborating with the Powers	159
1) Quintessential Anticommunism:	
<i>Marines Who Never Returned</i> (1963)	161
2. Conflicts with Censorship: Becoming a Political Scapegoat	167
1) Portraying A Few Good North Korean Men:	
<i>Seven Female POWs</i> (1965)	167
3. Melodrama: Cinematic Experiment and Social Realism	174
1) A Life of Living Hell: <i>Holiday</i> (1968)	177
4. Conclusion: Negotiating Spaces For Integrity	180
 <b>Chapter 7. Yu Hyun-mok: Auteurship Challenges</b>	<b>182</b>
1. Authorship Within the Korean Context	184
1) Auteur Canvas: <i>Aimless Bullet</i> (1960)	186
2. Expansion of Auteurship: Spreading Beliefs in Film As An Art	193
1) Vanguard of Art Filmmaking: <i>The Empty Dream</i> (1965)	194
3. Beyond the PRS	201
4. Conclusion: Auteurship As Privilege	202
 <b>Conclusion. Cinema of Perseverance</b>	<b>206</b>
Cinema of Qualities	209
 <b>Appendix A: List of Interviews</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>Appendix B: Selected Filmography</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>220</b>

## Tables and Figures

### List of Tables

Table 1-1. Number of Changes of Registered Companies (1961-1970)	<i>page</i> 24
Table 1-2. Number of Domestic Feature Film Productions in the 1960s	29
Table 1-3. Summary of the MPL Changes in the 1960s	48

### List of Figures

Figure 1-1. Film Censorship Process in the Late 1960s	33
Figure 2-1. Registered Producers at the Centre of the Industry	48
Figure 2-2. <i>Daemyong</i>	55
Figure 2-3. Poster of <i>Rice</i> ( <i>Donga Daily</i> 15 November 1963: 4)	71
Figure 2-4. Election Campaign Poster ( <i>Donga Daily</i> 2 October 1963: 1)	71
Figure 2-5. Poster of <i>Last Woman of Shang</i> ( <i>Kyeonghyang Daily</i> 18 September 1964: 4)	75
Figure 3-1. Anticommunist Genre As a Super Genre: A New Canon of Genre Films	85
Figure 3-2. Poster of <i>South and North</i> ( <i>Donga Daily</i> 9 January 1965: 4)	97
Figure 4-1. Poster of <i>Deaf Samryong</i> ( <i>Kyeonghyang Daily</i> 10 Sept 1964: 4)	116
Figure 4-2. Poster of <i>Seashore Village</i> ( <i>Donga Daily</i> 18 November 1965: 6)	121
Figure 4-3. Poster of <i>Mist</i> ( <i>Donga Daily</i> 24 October 1967: 5)	127
Figure 5-1. Poster of <i>The Red Muffler</i> ( <i>Donga Daily</i> 4 March 1964: 4)	146
Figure 5-2. Poster of <i>Eunuch</i> ( <i>Kyeonghyang Daily</i> 7 December 1968: 4)	152
Figure 6-1. Poster of <i>Marines</i> ( <i>Donga Daily</i> 10 April 1963:6)	161
Figure 7-1. Poster of <i>Aimless Bullet</i> ( <i>Donga Daily</i> 21 October 1963: 4)	190
Figure 7-2. This Is How A Screenwriter Works ( <i>Silver Screen</i> August 1965: 58)	195
Figure 7-3. Poster of <i>The Empty Dream</i> ( <i>Donga Daily</i> 3 July 1965: 5)	198

## Abbreviations

Import Recommendation System	IRS
Import Licence Reward System	ILRS
Korean Film Archive	KOFA
Korean Film Council	KOFIC
Ministry of Public Information	MPI
Motion Picture Law	MPL
MPL Enforcement Ordinance	MPL-EO
MPL Enforcement Rules	MPL-ER
National Film Production Centre	NFPC
Korean Motion Pictures Producers Association	KMPPA
Motion Pictures Association of Korea	MPAK
National Archives of Korea	NAK
Korean Movie Database	KMDB
Producer Registration System	PRS
Screen Quota System	SQS
Supreme Court of National Reconstruction	SCNR
United States Army Military Government In Korea	USAMGIK
United States Intelligence Agency	USIA

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses film policy, production practices and genre construction under Park Chung Hee's totalitarian government, which ruled South Korea between 1961 and 1979. It offers new theoretical insights about the modernisation of film culture in Korea, which left a rich legacy for filmmakers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The period chosen for this study (1961-1970) is best known for the compressed industrialization that the nation experienced. This period called a golden age of the Korean cinema is known for struggle and success under the constraints of industrialisation, when the industry produced an average of 164 films per year. It was a time when the nation experienced the first post-liberation film policy since the end of the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), a new mode of cinematic production, the rise of master directors and the formation of new genres. Despite these remarkable changes, the golden age has been largely discussed in terms of the industry's development in quantity and aesthetic achievements represented by a small number of directors such as Shin Sang-ok, Yu Hyun-mok and Kim Ki-young. The dynamic and complex nexus between film policy, producers, directors and genres in the 1960s, which all contributed to build up the golden age, has yet to be fully explored. This study aims to situate the industrialisation of Korea's national film industry in the larger discussion of national cinema, film policy and genre studies while building upon earlier, albeit limited, scholarship on the Korean cinema. By analysing these complex and interconnected industrial activities, this thesis reveals how the industry operated in the 1960s, how the relentless activities of each stakeholder such as the government, producers and directors helped the film industry to reach a peak, and thus provides a more dynamic view of the 1960s Golden Age of Korean Cinema, that is, Korea's cinema of perseverance.

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## **Introduction: Korean Cinema Now and Then**

The global spotlight on the Korean cinema is a relatively new phenomenon, which began after the locally made blockbuster *Shiri* (1999) crushed the box office success of *Titanic* (1998) in the Korean market. This ‘David and Goliath’ accomplishment demonstrated new might for the Korean cinema at home and abroad in the face of Hollywood. Several overlapping attributes made this possible. First, Korean filmmakers experienced a new sense of freedom of expression in 1996 after the Constitutional Court declared pre-production censorship to be illegal. This was a draconian law that had existed since the mid-1960s. As a result of this change, a fairer Korea Media Rating Board was created in 1999, thus replacing the censorship system. Fresh spaces were now available for filmmakers to tell new and interesting stories that had been suppressed by previous military governments. Films created in the realm of this newfound freedom began gaining popularity in international film festivals for artistic achievements, noted by directors such as Lee Chang-dong, Park Chan-wook and Kim Ki-duk. Representative international film festival award-winning films include: Grand Prize of the Jury Winner at Cannes for *Old Boy* (Park Chan-wook 2004); Best Director Award at Berlin International Film Festival for *Samaritan Girl* (Kim Ki-duk 2004); Best Director Award at Venice International Film Festival for *3-Iron* (Kim Ki-duk 2004); and Best Actress Award at Cannes for Jeon Do-yeon of *Secret Sunshine* (Lee Chang-dong 2007). Second, since 1998 hundreds of new multiplexes were built to accommodate increasing numbers of both Korean and foreign films. Subsequent increases in local audiences also accelerated the growth of the local market and expansion of the market size. Third, proactive policy support driven by the Korean Film Council (KOFIC) established in 1999, improved the quality and diversity of local films and the industry itself by initiating a variety of financial assistance programs. Fourth, the number of audiences increased in tandem with the increase of the number of screens; between 2001 and 2007, the number of screens and audiences more than doubled, that is, from 818 to 1,975 cinemas, and from 8,936,000 to 15, 877,000 people (KOFIC 2008). As a consequence, the box office strength of Korean cinema grew in both the local and international markets.

Since 2004 a number of local films have reached more than the 10 million audience mark, becoming known as mega-box office hits or '*cheonman yeonghwa*' (10 million audience film) – the likes of which had never been seen before. They include: *Silmido* (2003), *Brotherhood* (2004), *The King and the Clown* (2005), *The Host* (2006) and *Haeundae* (2009).<sup>1</sup> In 2006 the industry celebrated 63.8% of the domestic market share, indicating a golden age of commercial success (KOFIC 2007: 495). In addition to this domestic success, exports increased. The number of exports, as well as the level of export profits, also increased: The total value of domestic film exports in 2005 was \$75,994,580 US dollars, which is 365 times more than that of 1995 (Kim et al. 2006: 179-80). In turn, this surge of revenue resulted in the rise of production values, gaining international attention for the Korean film industry and its output of films that mixed Hollywood elements with local flavors, that is, stories reflecting Korean sentiment and notions of traditional and modern culture. By crossing over the present-day genre boundaries with interesting fresh stories, the Korean cinema has been producing high concept and action spectacles, echoing the success of the Hollywood blockbuster.<sup>2</sup>

The global popularity surrounding the contemporary Korean cinema is shaped by the synergic effect of the abovementioned elements. It is filled with a new type of self-confidence, which has boosted artistic creativity and challenges from local and overseas markets.<sup>3</sup> At present Korean cinema is perhaps one of the most successful non-Hollywood cinemas to reach beyond its national and regional borders. Yet, this is not the first time that the Korean cinema has experienced such a golden age in terms of market expansion. In the 1960s Korea had enjoyed an earlier golden age under Park Chung Hee's dictatorial regime, during a time in which every facet of the country's growth and sustainability was being challenged.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> At the moment of writing, in early 2010, there has been only one foreign film to have reached this mark: *Avatar* (2010).

<sup>2</sup> Major Hollywood studios are buying the remake rights of some of the top-grossing Korean films. The first of contemporary Korean movie remakes – *Lake House* (2006) – stars Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock. There were many more to come, including *My Sassy Girl* (2001); *My Wife is A Gangster* (2001); *Old Boy* (2003); and *Host* (2006).

<sup>3</sup> This latest incarnation of Korea's film industry provides a model for looking at how national cinemas are changing and assimilating with Hollywood in a new era of globalisation. It is regarded as a 'small-scale emulation of Hollywood's deployment of big-budget entertainment to win international audiences' (Berry 2003: 224).

<sup>4</sup> Historically Korea has experienced three golden ages. First was the silent golden age (1926-1935) that flourished during the colonial period under the Japanese rule. Second was

While the achievements of the contemporary South Korean cinema (hereafter Korean cinema) are widely discussed in the relevant literature (Kim and James 2002; Shin and Stringer 2005; Jackson et al. 2006; Jin 2006; Lee 2006; Gateward 2007), its historiography to date has not been fully examined. This study examines the golden age of Korean cinema from 1961 to 1970 and attempts to provide a new understanding of its industrial and politico-economic history. For the nation, this period is best known for its compressed industrialisation. For the cinema, it is known for its struggle and success under the constraints of this industrialisation, producing an average of 164 films per year. It was a time that experienced the first post-liberation film policy, a new mode of production, the rise of master directors and the formation of new genres. Despite these remarkable changes, previous literature regarding the golden age has focused on industry development in terms of quantity and aesthetic achievements represented by a small number of directors such as Shin Sang-ok, Yu Hyun-mok and Kim Ki-young. The dynamic and complex nexus between film policy, producers, directors and genres in the 1960s, which all contributed to the rise of this golden age, has yet to be fully explored. This study situates the industrialisation of Korea's national film industry in the larger discussion of national cinema, film policy and genre studies while building upon this earlier, albeit limited, scholarship on the Korean cinema.

Previous studies highlight the outstanding performance of the Korean cinema during this time, paying tribute to an active and memorable filmmaking movement (Lee and Choe 1988; Ho 2000; Min et al. 2003; Lee 2004; Park 2005). Korea and Koreans experienced the rapid progress of industrialisation and policy construction, as well as prime mass entertainment (Byon 2001: 187). A great number of productions that stemmed from relentless energy shone a spotlight on a realm of passionate filmmakers and their artistic achievements (McHugh and Abelman 2005; Yi, Jung and Park 2005). Yet, one thing missing from these important studies is close attention to how policy, as well as industrial and artistic progress was organically connected to each other, and how they related to the buttressing of this golden age. Although their work of historiography provides extensive information about how a nation's cinema as an art form was formulated over the years, how it developed

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the one that is discussed in this thesis, covering the late 1950s to the end of the 1960s. Third is the ongoing one, which is being enjoyed by the contemporary industry since 1999.

‘unique (or undefined) form and style’ (Yi 2005: 148), it gives less of a politico-economic perspective.

An industrial approach to a national cinema is important because the industry comes before the cultural artifact (Moran 1996: 1). Film policy research in terms of a politico-economic point of view can be an effective formula, providing a more complete view of Korean cinema, which includes an examination of prominent auteurs and their aesthetic styles. As Hyangjin Lee states, this period and the 1970s under the Park regime could also be remembered as that of ‘government interventions and anti-communist policies’ (2000: 49). Having this in mind, there are still questions to be answered and/or re-examined: what was so great about the golden age and how it was achieved; who the major industry players were and how their roles developed; how policy was exercised on the progress of the industry; how film policy both limited and facilitated the notion of ‘quality’; and where the golden age stands in the formation or continuum of a Korean national cinema. Hence, this thesis addresses two key questions: first, how Korea’s film policy was developed; and second, the impacts the MPL had on production, direction and genre development. While scholars point to a ‘policy failure’ as the major cause of the decline of the industry, starting from the late 1960s (Ho 2000; Byon 2001; Lee 2004; Park 2005), archival research shows that national film policy did contribute in part to the reverse, in that it facilitated the industry’s industrialisation, suggesting policy failure may not be the sole reason for the collapse of the ‘golden age’. Larger questions of national cinema and genre studies are also involved: where the Korean cinema stands in the story of world cinema; and what happens when researchers begin to explore how Korean films fit into the film theories developed in the West. Scholars have yet to address these questions in any real depth, although this is understandable given the small number of researchers examining this period and Korean cinema history in general.

This thesis approaches these questions by contextualising the issues within the industrial and politico-economic events of the 1960s, notably the military coup. One of the most prominent Korean film scholars, Yi Hyoin (1994: 9), suggests that understanding Korean film history is a quest to learn about who Koreans were in the past as well as a necessary process to understand where they are at present. While it can be applied to any national cinema, it carries more resonance in Korea’s case

because its film history has not been well preserved due to century-long historical obstacles represented by the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945), the US army occupation (1945-1948), the Korean War (1950-1953) and military dictatorship (1961-1993) that have made it difficult to connect with the nation's full cultural legacy.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is argued that a re-examination of the neglected history of the Korean film industry in the 1960s will facilitate an understanding of its historical lineage and allow a re-inscription of it into the larger history of world cinema.

### **Revisiting the Golden Age: Cinema of Perseverance**

Before exploring the nature of Korea's national cinema, it is important to understand it within the context of both the development of Korea as a nation and the development of world cinema. Since the 1950s Korea experienced turbulent political, social and economic transformation. From the early days of the Rhee Government (1948-1960) attempts were made to prolong his presidential rule. In 1954, a constitutional amendment allowed Rhee to run for his third term, thus earning the Rhee regime the characterisation of 'something old and rotten'. He and his cabinet were accused of election fraud, prolonging a dictatorship, and damaging democracy (Seo 2007: 72-73). Power struggles between the ruling and opposition parties escalated throughout the 1950s (Kang 2004a). The result of these conflicts was a democratic movement launched in 1960, which became known as the April Revolution (19 April 1960). This eventually toppled the Rhee regime.

Hence, the 1960s began with a sense of freedom and hope. And, yet, Korea soon experienced a military *coup d'état* led by Park Chung Hee on 16 May 1961, which resulted in huge political turmoil and quenched the sense of liberation gained from the April Revolution. Park Chung Hee's authoritarian military government actively engaged with Cold War politics. It went against democracy by limiting freedom of expression, leading Korea to become a surveillance state. In the mid-

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<sup>5</sup> As of 2007 Korean Film Archive (KOFA) has 3,771 out of 5,795 films ever produced. For the 1960s, only one third of films (581 out of 1,506) are preserved. Collection and preservation of film heritage has been its focal mission. The recent discovery of four Korean films from the 1940s (*An Angel without a House* (1941), *Spring in the Korean Peninsula* (1941) *Volunteer* (1941) and *Straits of Joseon* (1943)) through its overseas film archive networks, has rewarded KOFA's relentless efforts. For more information, see <http://www.koreafilm.or.kr/index.asp> (Accessed 20 October 2007).

1960s Korea dispatched troops to the Vietnam War. At the same time, Korea experienced rapid economic growth and industrialisation. Under the strong political leadership of Park Chung Hee the nation, which was one of the world's poorest agrarian societies, shifted its industrial focus from agriculture to light and heavy industries for the development of the nation. The *chaebol*, (family-oriented conglomerate), was facilitated by the government as a core economic strategy.

Similar to many other countries in the sixties, Korea was experiencing revolutionary change at such a level that Koreans must have imagined that what they were experiencing was a worldwide movement. They were experiencing 'national liberation movements against colonialism and imperialism; new extra-party and extra-trade union organisational forms and new forms of political subjectivity; radical critiques of capitalism in politics, activism, cultural production and life; and radical forms of experimentation in everyday life' (Connery 2006: 545). The clashing elements of political, social, economic and cultural transformation had a major impact on the film industry.

For world cinema, the 1960s was a time for change originating from radical ideas flowing against conventional filmmaking traditions. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith indicates, 'the years around 1960 can be seen as a watershed, with developments across the world concurring to make the modern cinema different in many respects from that of previous periods' (1996: 463). For example, the French New Wave was brought out as a reaction against the classical filmmaking traditions, engaging filmmaking with social and political situations. American avant-garde filmmakers developed New American Cinema through experimental filmmaking styles. New waves were also spotted in Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic, as the influence of Stalinism faded in the late 1950s. In Latin America, the reaction to traditional filmmaking was expressed in the most intensive way. Latin American filmmakers used the camera as a 'gun' as a way of raising the public's social consciousness and inducing political movement (Burton 1978: 50).

Under the influence of these external elements, Korean cinema made remarkable progress. During the 1960s the film industry experienced the government-led modernisation in its efforts to industrialise the production system. At first, the changes the industry experienced seemed to be limited to the construction of the policy and production system. Korean filmmakers were not engaged with the

social and political upheavals the country experienced. They remained relatively silent. Living in a divided country made it difficult to express revolutionary ideas, and censorship was severe. Similar to what happened to the German, Italian and Soviet Union cinemas in the 1930s, the Park Chung Hee military dictatorship exploited films as propaganda tools to promote nationalism along with anticommunism and traditionalism, which were the country's ideological foundation. In the post WWII era, propaganda became 'a standard arm of statecraft' (Davison 1971: 7) and it was used to 'influence opinion, to mould attitudes into forms favorable to the propagandizing power, to create attractive images' (Goodfriend 1971: 105). As if the media were a propaganda agency, the Park Chung Hee military government used it to deliver the messages of 'social integration and control' as well as 'modernisation and economic growth' (Park et al. 2000: 112). Industrialisation, urbanisation and cultural Westernisation (or Americanisation) were also pursued and Five Year Economic Plans were exercised to accelerate economic development and the government's export drive became strong. In the 1960s people experienced tension whether because of poverty, because of censorship and public violence, or because of seriously unfair or unsafe working conditions. And, yet, the nation experienced rapid economic development and industrialisation, which was realised by 'the policy of nurturing the monopoly capital and repressing people' (Park et al. 2000: 112). As a result, during the 1960s Korea's annual exports expanded by over 40 percent and its growth rates reached to over 8.5 percent a year (Bank of Korea 2006: 6).

Korea's cultural policy was a pivotal part of government policy and thus understanding Korea's cultural policy requires understanding its political and socio-economic surroundings (Yim 2003: 9). The Park government was particularly proactive in constructing cultural policy. Under the banner of protecting Korea's cultural identity, laws, organisations, funds, institutions and many related administrative systems were installed under Park's command.<sup>6</sup> A new system of 'safeguarding' all kinds of cultural properties was set up with the government's strong intention of reinforcing nationalism, not just facilitating artistic activities in

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<sup>6</sup> During the early 1960s cultural facilities such as the National Gallery and the National Library were established. In terms of law, laws concerning public performance, recording, cultural asset protection and film were announced.

Korea, and thus it came with controlling measures (Maliangkay 2008: 52-53). This was part of a larger modernisation process, which was noticed in every sector of society in the 1960s. For the film industry, this began with establishing the National Film Production Centre (NFPC), the creation of the Ministry of Public Information (MPI) and the Motion Picture Law (MPL) all within the first seven months of its administration, giving birth to a new film industry. These initiatives strengthened propaganda efforts and pursued a 'profit making film enterprise' (Lee 1988: 143). The content of the MPL corresponded to the Park regime's overall economic policy, which aimed at rapid industrialisation and national prosperity, in a similar way noted with the British government's film policy in the 1980s (Hill 1996: 101). As a result, film policy focused on productivity, which was realised through adopting the 'Hollywood studio system' and other structural changes.<sup>7</sup>

Film policy was the foremost factor in nurturing a local film industry while forcing the industry's modernisation. Korean film policy expert Park Ji-yeon explains how the film policy contributed to Korea's golden age:

The motion picture policy was drafted at the time as part of the modernisation project, and the organisational structure of Korean cinema and film industry was established under the direct influence of this policy. Moreover, the government's industrialisation policy (i.e. the rearing of small sized business to plan for future growth into a major corporation) planned for the economic policy's promotion of enterprise to be equally applied to the film industry, and the Hollywood studio system was adopted as the model to commercialise Korean film industry a la capitalism. The heart of the policy was to take a business-minded approach to the film industry in order to forge profit by maximising film's economic results (2005: 150).

It is not clear how the Park regime benchmarked the Hollywood studio model and created the Producer Registration System (PRS). However, the new production system created under the Park regime as a 'major company system' (Lee 2004: 317),

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<sup>7</sup> Although film policy constituted Park's main cultural policy, it was only a very small part of the whole. For more information regarding the development of the whole entail, its characteristics as well as its implementation, see *The Emergence and Change of Cultural policy in South Korea* written by Yim Haksoon(2003).

shared similarities with the Hollywood studio system in its business operation. According to Schatz (1988: 9), the Hollywood studio system was a 'mature oligopoly – a group of companies cooperating to control a certain market.' To be part of this oligopoly, a company had to participate in a vertically integrated business structure that embraced production (both domestic and international), distribution and exhibition through its own theatre network. The Korean Motion Pictures Producers Association (KMPPA), representative of registered producers, worked in similar ways to how Hollywood has organised through trade associations such as the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). That is, the PRS became a business control through oligopoly, speaking with one voice for the purpose of protecting their interests. The scale of businesses may differ, but the intention of maximising profit is the same. Given the fact that the film policy corresponded to the economic policy, the Park regime may have chosen this mode of production, because the studio system model overemphasised the role of production (Maltby 2003: 131). Alternatively, it may have been impressed by the thriving Japanese film industry in both domestic and overseas markets since the 1950s, which was built upon 'a studio system much like America's' (Thompson and Bordwell 2003: 246). Either way, it served the government's core agenda. Hence, despite the fact that the studio system in Hollywood and Japan was weakened in the 1960s, the studio system in Korea flourished. This late adaptation of the studio system facilitated easier control over the industry as well because they had to work with the government's instructions in order to keep their business.

Understanding the nature of the relationship formed between the government and the film industry is important because it 'determines the nature of modern South Korean cinema' (Doherty 1984: 841). Under the influences of the MPL, filmmakers were forced to make certain types of genre films such as the anticommunist and literary adaptation films, helping disseminate the government propaganda. It is true that film industries in other countries such as the US also experienced political intervention to some extent. Under the strong influences of Cold War politics and McCarthyism the US government encouraged the industry to produce the 'red scare' (anticommunist) films. Hence, filmmakers such as Joseph Losey, Edward Dmytryk and Elia Kazan were arrested and investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC 1938-1975) for being communist filmmakers. HUAC and the

blacklist made many doubt ‘whether Hollywood would dare to venture beyond the safe and predictable forms of light entertainment’ (Schatz 1997: 382), proving direct and indirect political pressure practised in the US.<sup>8</sup> In Korea’s anticommunist regime the level of the interference was higher and more overtly exercised through strict censorship regulation that affected all stages from the pre-production to the post-production, and thus surviving as an artist was more difficult. While censorship has many forms, it was the kind of censorship that threatens people by way of random (severe) measures, which ultimately causes them to take on self-censorship for their security. Cooperation with the government was a necessary measure, not a choice, in continuing one’s career.

Though it may not have appeared as flourishing and radical as in other western countries, directors also tried to catch up with the global trends previously discussed. Since the wartime, they had been affected by expressive aspects such as Italian neo-realism and by the philosophy of existentialism. As the success of Italian neo-realism inspired the third world filmmakers such as Fernando Birri, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Humberto Solas and Satyajit Ray for ‘the mode of production adopted and the stance of the film makers themselves’ (Armes 1987: 81), it also instigated Korea’s filmmakers, and the appeal of the existentialist philosophy to Korean directors was apparent because they were living in a very difficult and politically contingent time. Under the influence of these external elements, each director responded to the pressured situations that had been brought upon them for the political reasons and by the constraints of production in different ways to best represent their interests.

On the one hand, they were busy making government propaganda films within a Hollywood studio system environment. Facing challenges that required changes in pursuing their directorial careers, they accepted working for the government and the registered producers for their security and money rather than voicing complaints in public and projecting rebellious contents on screen. On the other hand, however, while they did not involve themselves in revolutionary content

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<sup>8</sup> Films of Losey and Dmytryk were banned and their careers were destroyed after they were convicted as communists, but Kazan, who cooperated with the investigation and gave names of the Communist Party members to the HUAC, managed to safeguard his career (Schatz 1997: 382).

on the screen, individual directors such as Lee Man-hee, Yu Hyun-mok and Shin Sang-ok invented distinguishable survival strategies to sustain their work as well as pursue their cinematic vision. A director's crossing over different genre filmmaking emerged as a survival strategy, which later became a common characteristic developed in Korea's cinema.

The ways in which the Park regime influenced the film industry form the crux of this study. By examining the golden age of cinema from a politico-economic approach, it is hoped to provide a more complex discussion of national cinema and its links to policy, production and direction rather than looking at a simplified production history – that is, one based on the quantity and frequency of productions. One of the central claims of this research is that the golden age was an outcome of a combination of the establishment of protectionist film policy and state control, the subsequent new production system, and specific genre emergence and directors' developing survival strategies as responses to policy and production system development. Relationships between these key elements and players were built with continuous collaboration and negotiation.

As the case studies in this thesis demonstrate, this period represents a cinema of perseverance, which developed out of complex political, economic, social and cultural hardships, as well as conflicting interests between different industrial players. While certain characteristics of the Korean cinema have been previously covered by scholars such as Nancy Abelmann, Hyangjin Lee and Roald Maliangkay, to name a few, further examination of the idea of a cinema of perseverance is a key to understanding the compressed progress that the industry experienced while becoming known as a golden age. Without this persevering spirit, the Korean cinema of the 1960s as we know it would not have been possible. Hence, the first decade of the Park Chung Hee authoritarian period should be understood not only for the cinema's aesthetic achievements, but also for the degree of cultural and industrial richness that developed into an emerging national cinema.

## **Methodology**

This thesis uses historical research as its first method. In 2004 and 2005, during two field research trips in Korea, rare Korean language archival film industry

materials and films were collected from eight archives and libraries: the National Assembly Library, Korean National Library, Yonsei University Library, Korean Film Council Library, Korean Film Archive and Lee Young-il Archive in Seoul, National Archives of Korea (NAK) in Daejeon, and Kyongpook National University Library in Daegu. Government documents found at the NAK revealed the official MPI approach to film policy changes, showing there were heated discussions regarding the MPL between the government and the film industry. The editorials, news articles, reviews and advertisements in newspapers, as well as film magazines, are examined to understand how industry issues were discussed, and how certain films were marketed and reviewed by the then-contemporary press. They include: *Chosun Daily*, *Donga Daily*, *Kyeonghyang Daily*, *Yeonghwa Japji* (Movie Magazine), *Yeonghwa Segye* (Cinema World), *Silver Screen*, *Shin Yeonghwa* (New Films) and *Yeonghwa TV Yesul* (Film TV Art). The findings from journal articles, books and dissertations from Korean and US universities are incorporated into the thesis, helping to broaden the scope of the argument. Viewing rare Korean films representing a cross-section of the most important genre films of the 1960s at Korean Film Archive and Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF) was an important part of the research, which revealed the influences of the outer world and distinctive aesthetics developed by individual directors.

The second method on which the thesis relies is a series of interviews and discussions held between the author, industry people detailed below and academics mostly in Seoul and Busan in October in 2004 and 2005.<sup>9</sup> Interviews were conducted with industry experts, scholars, researchers, directors and producers. While it was time-consuming, and hard to collect correct information because people's memories fade and change over time, thus creating the need to verify all interview details later, their first-hand industry experience and diverse perspectives of the period facilitated a greater understanding of the period in its multiple aspects. Directors Im Kwon-taek, Lee Hyeong-pyo, An Cheol-hyon and Im Won-sik, who have directed films since the 1960s, shared their valuable knowledge about the production environment. Director Lee Chang-ho, representative director from the 1970s and 1980s, shared his memories of working as an assistant director at Shin Film in the 1960s. Director Park Gwang-su, well-known Korean New Wave director from the 1980s and the director

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix A for a full list of interviews.

of Busan Film Commission, shared personal insights into the industry development over the years. Their testimonies are used to refute certain authoritarian claims found in government-censored articles from the 1960s. Interviews with producers and policy makers enabled an observation of Korean cinema from the politico-economic viewpoint. Yi Wu-seok, CEO of Donga Export Co., who was a registered producer from the 1960s, testified how chaotic it was to pursue his business. Kim In-gi and Hwang Nam, who worked for registered production companies in the 1960s, enabled an appreciation of how the production process was executed in a frenzied way. You In-taek, contemporary producer representing Kihoik Sidae, shared his views of understanding the 1960s. Interviews with policy experts such as Kim Hye-joon, Kim Mee-hyeon, Kim Hyeon-jung from KOFIC and Kim Tae-hoon from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism confirmed the significant role that film policy played in the process of industry development. Interviews were also held with film scholars such as Kim Soyoung, Byon In-sik and Yi Hyoin, and researchers at the Korean Film Archive such as Chung Chong-hwa and Cho Jun-hyeong, and other interviewees with diverse backgrounds, including PIFF Festival director Kim Dong-ho, the former MPEA representative in Korea Cha Yun, screenwriters Baek Gyor and Kim Ji-heon, Seoul Cinema Complex owner Gwak Jeong-hwan and distribution manager Jang Gyeong-ik at Megabox multiplex. They shared their thoughts, insight and retrospective understandings, currently unavailable in either Korean or English sources, on the industry's evolution in the 1960s. Taken together, this unique body of information supplements, expands on, and sometimes brings into question the interpretations of a period found in the written materials.

In terms of Romanising Korean words and names, the thesis generally follows the Korean government's Revised Romanisation System, except the cases where a different way of Romanisation was already established, such as presidents Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee, director Im Kwon-taek and *chaebol* (Korea's family-oriented conglomerate). When referring to Korean names, including directors, scholars and other industry people, the family name comes first before the given name, following Korea's convention. All of the translations from Korean materials and interviews are done by me. Titles of Korean films and box office figures used in this thesis follow the data provided by the Korean Movie Database, which is operated by the Korean Film Archive.

## Chapter Summaries

This study examines the 1960s golden age within the context of a reciprocal relationship formed between policy and production. It follows film policy changes over a decade and the impact they had on industry structure and mode of production. Given that Korea was under the leadership of a right-wing military dictatorship, analysing the changes made to the Motion Picture Law (MPL), Korea's first film policy promulgated in the post-liberation era, to understand the government's agenda is the starting point of the thesis. Examination of the connection between the film policy initiatives and subsequent responses noticed in the production system and genre development, and raised by each director, reveals more dynamic explanation for this phenomenon since members of the film community such as producers and directors share responsibility for the industry's rise as well as its decline.

Chapter 1 examines how the Park Chung Hee government utilised the cinema as a tool for national mobilisation through the creation of the National Film Production Centre (NFPC) and the launch and subsequent transformation of the MPL. Based on the colonial film policy established under Japanese rule (1910-1945), its strict regulations and censorship in particular, were key policy scaffolds used to reinforce the state's control.<sup>10</sup> While the NFPC produced hard propaganda that was overt, the motion picture industry was expected to produce soft or subtle propaganda.

Chapter 2 investigates the formation and the operation of the Producer Registration System (PRS), that is, the powerful production cartel created by the MPL. It links the PRS and the Park regime's economic policy of raising *chaebol* (family-oriented conglomerate), observing it being similar to the nature of the *chaebol* system, that is, a 'winner syndrome' based on friendly relationships and

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<sup>10</sup> Park's colonial experiences are an important factor in this regard. Park was born in 1917, seven years after the Japanese colonised Korea. He was educated as a Japanese military officer in Manchukuo in 1940 under Japanese colonial authority, which maintained rule over Korea until 1945. As a military dictator, he would have prioritised issues of national security and civil control above all other issues as did the Japanese colonial authorities (Yi 2002; and Yi 2003). It is no secret that he deeply admired Japan's Meiji imperial restoration that had led Japan's modernisation. Park once said that 'the case of the Meiji imperial restoration will be of great help to the performance of our own revolution. My interest in this direction remains strong and constant' (1963: 121). Park's experiences as a Japanese soldier completely transformed him (Kang 2004a: 126).

proven records of business performance (Kim 2004: 155-56). The PRS adopted the Hollywood studio system model to commercialise the industry and to maximise film's economic results. The PRS and the KMPPA fully utilised the nature of the Hollywood studio system as an oligopoly, controlling the industry by speaking with one voice for the registered producers.

Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate what types of genre productions were facilitated and encouraged by the government and the PRS, showing how far and wide the government's propaganda efforts reached into the film industry. Chapter 3 examines the historical development of the anticommunist genre within the context of Cold War politics, explaining how it is developed into a 'super genre' that crosses over different genre formats by analysing films *Five Marines* (1951), *North And South* (1965) and *Correspondent in Tokyo* (1967) in different genre formats of war, melodrama and spy action films, highlighting the development of transgenre possibilities. Incorporating anticommunist genre that is perceived as overt propaganda, chapter 4 reveals that the literary adaptation genre, which normally is considered to be Korea's arthouse cinema dealing with the nation's culture and tradition, also had an element of propaganda by endorsing themes of cultural nationalism, traditionalism and modernism. The analysis of three films *Deaf Samryongi* (1964), *Seashore Village* (1965) and *Mist* (1967) provides a new insight into how this genre was transformed.

Based on the knowledge gained from the previous chapters, chapters 5, 6 and 7 illustrate how directors responded to challenges coming from the policy, the PRS and the genre to find their own ways of overcoming these obstacles. Their stories are significant in a global context because they demonstrate the sacrifices directors made to protect their livelihoods while keeping their careers. Chapter 5 contemplates the relationship between an artist and political power by examining director Shin Sang-ok's career moves and his films. Shin's reputation as a director is compared with and contrasted to his status as an influential registered producer. *Rice* (1963), *The Red Muffler* (1964) and *Eunuch* (1968) are analysed to show that there is a kind of practical element going on in the directors' practice, which motivated him to continue filmmaking by working either for or against the ever-changing political and commercial situations. Chapter 6 expands the discussion concerning directors' survival strategies by following director Lee Man-hee's filmography and his

copyright experiences. Lee chose to extend and divert his aesthetics into a new field as a way of continuing his filmmaking under Park's censorship regime. An analysis is offered of Lee's representative anticommunist film *Marines Who Never Returned* (1963), the recently-discovered film *Holiday* (1968) and the censorship case surrounding *Seven Female POWs* (1965). All offer an understanding of how censorship could not control a creative mind. Chapter 7 ties Korea's cinema in with world cinema to show how Western film theories such as the auteur theory were consumed and developed in a unique way. Chapter 7 focuses on director Yu Hyun-mok, Korea's representative arthouse filmmaker and auteur, demonstrating how he developed his unique film styles while moving himself away from propaganda and commercial filmmaking. His two films *Aimless Bullet* (1961) and *Spring Dream* (1965) are analysed as case studies, illustrating how he developed his film style mixed with realist, expressionist and modernist elements.

By presenting this historical material in this way, the thesis proves Korean cinema in the 1960s was not just a golden age that deflated like a burst bubble, but a cinema of perseverance built by a host of industry players. This thesis shows that the spirit of this perseverance existed against all odds and still continues in a new way in the contemporary Korean cinema as the historical backbone of the Korean film industry's strength.

## Chapter 1. Building A Propaganda Factory

This chapter investigates the rise of state control over the National Film Production Centre and the Motion Picture Law, which became the central regulations that dominated Korea's national film industry for over 30 years. The government believed its significant use of the media could help overcome its lack of political legitimacy, which resulted from its rise to power through a *coup d'état*, by spreading specific messages. Film was central to achieving this goal because it was the most widely-available medium to reach the masses in the 1960s pre-television era, when low diffusion rates and higher costs of television sets enabled the cinema to maintain importance as both a recreational and a propaganda instrument in the public sphere.

During the 1960s, state control through various film policy initiatives was widespread across the former Soviet Union as well as in Latin American and Eastern European countries. This analysis of Korea's case fits into the larger global context by adding a deeper understanding of the relationship between authoritarian anticommunist regimes and film policy. Previous literature has presented the history and development of film policy in Korea (Kim 1994; Park 2001; Byon 2001; Park 2002; Min et al. 2003; Park 2005), but these details largely remain in a chronological format, which limits an understanding of the impact film policy has had on the transformation of the industry. In order to overcome this limitation in the current scholarship, this chapter examines how the Park regime developed the film industry as a propaganda factory and controlled all state-led and civilian productions by nurturing 'hard' and 'soft' propaganda, that is, 'campaigns of assault' and 'campaigns of assistance' (Rubin 1971: 81). By analysing film policy within a thematic framework, this study links film policy to production, direction and genre development in a new way.

This chapter begins with an investigation of the role of the National Film Production Centre (NFPC) as the nation's official propaganda generator, illustrating the scope of the government's propaganda efforts. It reveals how the NFPC produced newsreels and cultural films along with the feature film industry. The NFPC was divergent from the private film industry in terms of its ownership, but convergent with its primary objectives. Next, the development of the Motion Picture Law (MPL) is analysed in order to show how film policy ruled over all industry sectors including

production, importation and exportation, as well as censorship. Finally, industry responses to major MPL announcements delivered throughout the 1960s are examined through the actions of the Motion Pictures Association of Korea (MPAK), the industry's representative group (excluding registered producers). Following these reactions to policy changes facilitates an understanding of the real-world impact of the MPL and its top-down nature. Though scholar Byon Jae-ran (2001) advocates further examination of these industry reactions, this side of the story has yet to be explored by other scholars, including Byon.

## **1. Restructuring the Film Industry**

Immediately after the *coup d'état* on 16 May 1961, Park's Supreme Court of National Reconstruction (SCNR) began restructuring the government. On 20 May the Ministry of Public Information (MPI) was established and it began coordinating all media (print and radio broadcasting) campaigns. Within a week of the coup, cinemas that had been temporarily closed reopened their businesses (*Chosun Daily* 23 May 1961: 3), and by early June 1961 the MPI had asked all cinemas to play pre-recorded audio messages between film screenings to promote the new government.<sup>11</sup> Members across all parts of the entertainment industry were strongly encouraged to show their explicit support for the new government. The MPI aimed to promote positive views of the coup and the nation's new leader Park Chung Hee, utilising the cinema as a public stage for its national campaign. Print media in developing countries has been known to direct propaganda to flow in a one-way direction (Rao 1971: 94). Similarly, the political leadership in Korea chose what to show to the public by running the NFPC and deciding contents of the newsreels and cultural films.

### **1) Establishment of the National Film Production Centre**

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<sup>11</sup> It was a letter sent to the president of the Korean Theatre Association. Though the letter was written in a modest tone, rejection of this request would have been unthinkable, particularly given the military might of the government (unpubl., NAK #\_BA0170209).

On 22 June 1961 the National Film Production Centre (NFPC) was established to create newsreels and cultural films and to distribute these materials through commercial cinemas. The NFPC grew out of the Film Department of the Bureau of Public Information (BPI) that had been established in 1948 under the Syngman Rhee government (1948-1960). Previously this Bureau oversaw the production of newsreels (*Daehan News*) and cultural films (*Munhwa Yeonghwa*), which first appeared in 1948 and 1950 respectively (NFPC 1994: 1). By announcing the Motion Picture Law, discussed below, the Park regime mandated cinemas to run double-bill screenings of cultural/feature films in 1962, and then expanded it to triple-bill screenings of cultural/feature films/newsreels in 1963. This mandatory screening system exposed a large number of cinemagoers to a new form of state-to-public information, given that 79,046,162 people attended in 1962.<sup>12</sup> At the time, Korea's total population was 26,231,000, making the growth of cinema viewing per capita 2.3 times a year (KMPPC 1977: 156). Such NFPC films as *May 16th Revolution and National Reconstruction* (1961), *Song of National Reconstruction Groups* (1961) and *Fight Against Communist Attacks* (1962) followed a similar path and were disseminated through the industry's six-province distribution system, which was developed since the late 1950s: Seoul, Busan/Gyeongnam, Gwangju/Honam, Gyeonggi/Gangwon, Daegu/Gyeongbuk, and Daejeon/Chungcheong. Hence, at any one time only six prints of a film were allowed to circulate in Korea – one for each of these regions. Exhibitors who refused to screen these films were treated like criminals and subjected to fines or given sentences of hard labor. According to the Daejeon district court (unpubl., NAK #\_BA0514930), in 1962 an exhibitor, Kim Do-gyeong in the small farming county of Cheongyang-gun, was prosecuted for violating the mandatory double-bill screening policy. This occurred in a temporary theatre with Kim Do-gyeong's own projector and films. According to Jang Han-pil, a veteran projectionist since the early 1960s, the exhibitor had like-minded individuals grouped together to conduct this type of film screening service in rural areas. It was a growing business, which lasted well into the late 1960s and early 1970s (*Sun4in News* 9 February 2008). As a result, Kim

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<sup>12</sup> This measure was modeled on the 1939 Chosun Film Law enacted during the Colonial era, which aimed to screen propaganda films in as many public places as possible. The expression, cultural film, was originally adopted from the German Film Law under Hitler: *cultural film* is the literal translation of Germany's *Kulturfilm* (High 2003: 120).

was sentenced to pay 5,000 hwan (about \$3.5 USD), about 8% of an average income for an urban worker at the time, or serve ten days' labor in accordance with the criminal laws, confirming how strict the film policy was from the beginning.<sup>13</sup>

Touring screenings to rural communities and institutional screening centres were two other ways of distributing propaganda material. Under the touring service, up to sixteen trucks equipped with projectors visited remote areas without cinemas (KOFA 2006: 259).<sup>14</sup> Local police supported these touring screenings by mobilising local residents to attend screenings. At the same time, films were distributed to institutions such as the National Public Information Centre, the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), and the Rural Development Administration and Children's Hall (*Chosun Daily* 30 December 1970: 5).<sup>15</sup> These were key places that government officials, intelligence agents, farmers and children frequently visited for either work or entertainment. Newsreels for educational purposes could be run here all year-round.

### **Newsreels (*Daehan News*)**

The MPI, which was in charge of the NFPC's operation, created positive images concerning political events such as the military coup, the Korean Army's dispatch to the Vietnam War in 1966 and promulgation of the new Constitution Law (*yusin*) in 1972. An examination of one of the earliest *Daehan News* produced immediately after the coup shows how so-called explicit and official propaganda was presented to the public. The *Daehan News* (no. 315), produced on 27 May 1961, explains the meaning of the military 'revolution' and its progress. This twelve-

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<sup>13</sup> In 1962 the Park regime carried out currency reform, changing hwan to won with a 10 to 1 ratio. In 1963 an average monthly income for an urban worker was 5990 won (<http://www.kostat.go.kr>).

<sup>14</sup> The idea of showing propaganda material in rural areas using a traveling screening service was developed during both the Japanese (1910-1945) and the US (1945-1948) occupations. In 1942 the Japanese colonial government created a national travelling film network to mobilise farmers to participate in the Pacific War. Later, under the US occupation, mobile units were used to 'increase the public information service throughout the province' (United Army Forces In Korea 1947: 211).

<sup>15</sup> By 1970 *Daehan News* was circulated to all 640 registered cinemas nationwide for the duration of about 40 days. The NFPC produced a total of 50 newsreels (no. 758-808) in 1970 (*Chosun Daily* 30 December 1970: 5).

minute, black-and-white newsreel, shot in 35 mm, contains 12 news segments presented by the friendly voice of a middle-aged male newscaster speaking over the top of cheerful marching music. After the opening title credits, the newscaster introduces Park's six revolutionary pledges with on-screen text and images of a military march. Then it explains the purposes of the coup, the formation of a military junta and its immediate actions, such as food distribution and organising road traffic to create 'a new social order'.<sup>16</sup> By juxtaposing high-profile political news with suggestions that these events were brought about by the new government, this newsreel attracted public support for the Park regime. It is hard to know if the newsreel was successful because there is no known survey data concerning it, but it is possible to imagine that anyone watching it from their rural hometown with little media accessibility, for example, would have believed that the 'military revolution' was bringing a new order to society.

### **Cultural Film (*Munhwa Yeonghwa*)**

While *Daehan News* delivered information happening in Korea on a day-to-day basis, the cultural film (*munhwa yeonghwa*) used a documentary or narrative format to deliver specific messages. Cultural films such as *May 16th Revolution and Changed Society* (1961), *Raising Silk Worms in Yeosu, Gyeonggi-do* (1963), *The Way to Live Better* (1963), *Development of Electricity Industry* (1964), *How to Build a Ship* (1964) and *Necessity of Building Infrastructure* (1964) were officially identified as 'enlightenment' films for the general public, describing social events or customs and explaining their impact on larger economic and cultural phenomena (unpubl., NAK #\_BA0514930). Hence, all films dealing with a specific policy, cultural heritage or public education fell under this category. They functioned as 'utilitarian propaganda', showing the public what government policies and programs were being implemented and what benefits they would bring.

An analysis of *May 16 Revolution and Changed Society* (1961), one of the earliest cultural films after the coup, is provided to illustrate how directly these types

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<sup>16</sup> The *Daehan News* (no. 315) also presents: 1) the six revolutionary pledges; 2) the SCNR and the cabinet members; 3) distribution of food to needy people; 4) establishment of traffic order; 5) land development; and 6) promotion of the benefits of consuming Korean goods.

of films communicated with or educated the public. This 31-minute black-and-white film starts with a montage of a rising sun, a parade of military trucks and soldiers, and a phone ringing with the news of a baby born on the morning of 16 May 1961. The image of a new beginning is created by these connecting images and Mr. Park, the protagonist of the film, explains the special meaning of this day. The film ultimately promotes the 'revolution', which had promised to bring new micro-changes to society and macro-changes for individuals such as the Park family and their newborn baby. A scene showing Park holding the newborn baby in his arms dissolves to a busy street with people rushing to school and work. The film summarises the new government's social policies and achievements, highlighting how they have made the Park family rich in happiness, making life worth living.

The film intertwines Mr Park's life challenges with the government's economic and social policies. Park's troubled business receives help from the newly-established Industrial Bank of Korea, which aims to support small-to-medium-sized enterprises. An explanation follows about the housing and unemployment policies designed to help people. Park's brother, a wounded Korean War veteran, gets a job at the Seoul Train Station with support from the Office of Veterans Administration. Park's father, a farmer, comes to Seoul by train and delivers Park the news of a good harvest and of an enjoyable and convenient train ride. At dinner, the Park family listens to radio news about the new government's national reconstruction plan and praises the revolution. They decide to do whatever they can to help develop a new Korea. Production of these types of cultural films continued throughout the early 1960s, ensuring audiences that the government was progressing toward the nation's economic development and national security.<sup>17</sup>

The mandatory double-bill policy raised demand for cultural film productions and the NFPC became the largest producer of such projects (*Chosun Daily* 27 May 1962: 3). Between 1961 and 1962 the NFPC's cultural film production rose sharply from 25 to 70 (NFPC 1994). Many of these cultural films went on to win awards in the cultural film category of various domestic and international film festivals.

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<sup>17</sup> The genres of cultural films can be grouped into several themes such as national security, hygiene, agricultural information, social issues and manners. These are the same types of categories that can be found in Japanese cultural film productions during the Pacific War period.

Cultural films enjoyed longevity until 1998 when the new film policy removed the double-bill screenings of cultural films.

## **2) Consolidation: Pre-MPL Period**

The government's control of production and distribution of official propaganda materials (newsreels and cultural films) was easily achieved by taking charge of the formation and management of the NFPC. Nonetheless, controlling the private film industry sector was not as easy and needed detailed planning, because the private industry was full of producers, exporters, importers and distributors, all working for profit. Consequently, the process of controlling the industry progressed slowly through a series of policy implementations, beginning with the 1961 consolidation. This initiative first reflected that the film administration's industrialisation agenda was linked with Park's larger industrialisation policy (Park 2001: 172-173).

In September 1961, sixty-five producers were consolidated into sixteen new companies under the direction of the Ministry of Education (ME), which was the film administrator before the MPI. The ME obliged all producers to be registered, with just one condition applying: one should have produced more than fifteen films between 1955 and 1961 (ME Notification No. 148).<sup>18</sup> Consequently, anyone who could not keep up with this standard was forced out of business, or at least into partnership with those that could keep up. As a result, partnerships of convenience were created, forming alliances rather than consolidations.<sup>19</sup> Each company joined under a new company title and continued its regular business. Shin Film, owned by director Shin Sang-ok, was the only company that registered independently because

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<sup>18</sup> Most of production companies originated during the late 1950s and thereby did not have a high enough number of past performances to qualify for registration. It was difficult for one company to satisfy the standards. As a result, there were complaints among producers such as Dongbo Film Co., questioning the reliability of the points system (*Chosun Daily* 19 October 1961: 5).

<sup>19</sup> The other fourteen producers included: Hanguk Film Co.; Seoul Film Producer Club; Jeonguk Youngbae; Goryo Film Co.; Hanheung Film Co.; Donga Yeonghwa Heungeop; Gwangyoung Film Co.; Dongbo Film Co.; Daeyoung Film Studio; Sudo Film Ltd.; Geukdong Heungeop; Dongbae Film Co.; Yeonah Film Corporation; Hanguk Film Corporation; and Seoul Colour Lab.

of its record of high productivity.<sup>20</sup> Decreasing numbers from 1963 and 1967 corresponded to the MPL changes, which strengthened the requirements to become a registered producer.

Table 1-1. Number of Changes of Registered Companies (1961-1970)

Year	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
No.	65→16	16	21→6	10	19	26	25→12	17	19	23

Note: Arrow (→) means consolidation.

Source: KMPPC 1977: 48

Conceivably there could have been several reasons for the government forcing this consolidation process upon the film industry, the most plausible being that the industry was overcrowded with ‘unqualified’ producers, who pursued making films as speculative investments. They were often called ‘peddler tradesman (*bottari jangsa*)’ (The National Academy of Arts 1985: 745). The government viewed this situation as unproductive and unhealthy because they approached film production only as a way of making quick money without owning any filmmaking equipment and facilities (Cho 1998: 421).<sup>21</sup> Hence, the government facilitated industrialisation by re-organising the production system, with the intention of reducing the number of producers with whom the regime had to deal. Sixty-five producers were too many to control and subsidise.<sup>22</sup>

Industry members responded to the process in different ways and for different reasons. Park Ji-yeon (2001: 177) observes that the production industry voluntarily embraced this initiative as a strategic step to join the government’s larger

<sup>20</sup> Shin Film was one of the oldest film companies, owned and managed by director Shin Sang-ok. Its history began in 1952 during the Korean War under the name of Shin Sang-ok production, and produced regular box office hits such as *The Evil Night* (1952), *The Flower in Hell* (1958), *A Romantic Papa* (1960), and *Seong Chun-hyang* (1961). More detailed information about Shin Film and its trading activities is introduced in chapter 2.

<sup>21</sup> Since the late 1950s many film companies had been created and closed down. Most of them were small, with little capital, and thus easily went bankrupt after producing only one film (Kim 1994: 149).

<sup>22</sup> Similar incidents occurred in the newspaper industry. In May 1961 many daily and weekly newspapers were taken over and restricted by a forceful state-led consolidation, facilitating the regime’s control over, and use of, the press for propaganda. A handful of surviving news agencies received the regime’s support, growing larger as a propaganda tool for the Park regime (Kang 1999: 154-157).

industrialisation project. For example, Park Bong-hee, president of the *Gukje Yeonghwa* magazine, published an editorial ‘Film People, Go to the Frontline of National Reconstruction’, urging industry people to follow the government’s industrialisation drive (*Gukje Yeonghwa* July-August 1961: 47). Established producers such as Shin Sang-ok of Shin Film also claimed that producers should contribute to industrialisation for the nation’s development (*Gukje Yeonghwa* Feb 1960).

However, a majority of producers was unsure of the need for industrialisation because the scale of their trade was small. Thereby, from their point of view this ‘voluntary’ action Park suggests might have been simply an automatic protectionary gesture to protect their businesses, as opposed to a commitment toward industrialisation made by some producers. These two groups of producers, supporters and non-supporters of industrialisation, eventually became identified as registered and unregistered (independent) producers respectively. The task of consolidating the industry was more difficult than initially believed by the government because it was even harder to reach an agreement amongst producers concerning what they wanted. Therefore, as the next section shows, the film industry’s development for the rest of the 1960s involved continuous negotiation and compromise between the government trying to control the industry and different members of the industry trying to protect their businesses.

## **2. Rebuilding of the Film Industry with the Motion Picture Law (MPL)**

The new film policy was formally announced in 1962 as a set of twenty-two articles, which the whole film industry had to follow or else face fines or imprisonment. It was followed by ministerial decrees, the MPL Enforcement Ordinance (MPL-EO) and the MPL Enforcement Rules (MPL-ER).<sup>23</sup> Throughout the decade, each described in minute detail about forms and processes concerning screening permits, producer registration, importing, exporting and exhibiting films,

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<sup>23</sup> This three-tiered law-enforcement system formed a hierarchy: the broad strokes set by the MPL on top were supported by the fine details of the MPL-EO and MPL-ER. They consisted of fifteen and seven articles respectively. During the 1960s, there were nine revisions of the MPL-EO following its launch in March 1962 and four revisions for the MPL-ER following its launch in July 1962.

and censorship fees. Censorship standards, which will be discussed later in this chapter, became more integral to the MPL in 1966, increasing the scope of the power of Korea's film policy.

The MPL was in fact a replica of the notorious colonial film policy that was outlined by the 1941 Chosun Film Law (Chosun Yeonghwa-ryeong). The major consolidation that occurred in 1961, discussed above, was also similar to the forced consolidation of the industry that occurred in 1941.<sup>24</sup> Both the MPL and the Chosun Film Law shared the same primary goals, as specified in article no. 1: to facilitate the development of the film industry and to promote the national arts by elevating artistic standards. The tightening of production control, including the import quota system, script censorship, the mandatory screening of newsreels and cultural films, the producer registration scheme and the setting of penalties (imprisonments and fines) for violating the film law were also similarly adapted from the colonial film policy. It seems that the oppressive contents of colonial film laws were conveniently adopted by the MPL.<sup>25</sup> The three essential components formed part of the MPL are introduced below, that is, the Producer Registration System (PRS), censorship and import policy.

### **1) Producer Registration System (PRS)**

The PRS was a system by which all producers were required to register with the MPI. Similar to the consolidation case, explained above, one had to first satisfy the required standards and receive approval from the MPI in order to become registered. By regulating the number of registered producers and controlling their activities (production, importing and exporting) the PRS served as a key industry-controlling measure throughout the decade.

With the announcement of the MPL in 1962, the PRS was officially established, and all producers were again required to register with the MPI. Major

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<sup>24</sup> The Chosun Film Law was based upon the Japan Film Law announced on 1 October 1939 by the Japanese war cabinet during the Pacific War. The consolidation occurred in colonial Korea and resulted in a single production company controlled by the Government-General. See Yecies and Shim (2003) for more information.

<sup>25</sup> The central aims of this colonial film policy were so effective that the United States Army Military Government In Korea (USAMGIK) also copied the regulations when it governed South Korea between 1945 and 1948 in the immediate post-liberation era.

companies such as Shin Film, Geukdong and Dongbo, all of whom had survived the 1961 consolidation, welcomed this measure, praising it as the only way forward. In the eyes of these larger and better-established companies, other producers were ‘quack producers (*eongteori jejakja*)’ (*Chosun Daily* 20 May 1962: 3).<sup>26</sup> The film industry had been a rapidly-growing industry since the mid-1950s and was seen as a casino where everyone sought a jackpot. Hence, anyone dreaming of making money could enter the film business and establish a company, call himself a producer. For example, producer and director Shin Sang-ok invested 100,000,000 *hwan* to produce *Seong Chunhyang* (1961) and earned net profits of more than 200,000,000 *hwan* – the equivalent of USD \$153,846 (*Chosun Daily* 20 May 1962: 3). The film was the biggest hit of the year 1961.<sup>27</sup> It was a rare success story, but people were lured by the dream of making big money, and entered into the production business without professional training. As Gwak Jeong-hwan, veteran producer and president of the Seoul Cinema Complex states in an interview (2004), his entrance into the film industry also occurred by chance. At the time he was a retired major of the Korean Army.<sup>28</sup>

The minimum physical requirements to becoming a producer under the PRS included: one 35mm camera and the obligatory 50,000,000 *hwan* (USD \$38,450) capital reserve in the bank.<sup>29</sup> This was accepted with little dissent from the sixteen producers, who survived the 1961 consolidation project. Other producers, who could not satisfy the requirements and thus remained unregistered, later became illegal sub-contractors working for the registered producers. This elaborate subcontracting relationship between registered and unregistered (independent) producers, so-called

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<sup>26</sup> While this may be partly true, it is hard to believe that all the bigger companies truly consider all others imposters. This view that seems rather harsh may have represented the government’s voice. As it was previously mentioned, the press industry was experiencing a repressive state-led consolidation, and thus collaboration with the power (the government) was important for the surviving news agencies.

<sup>27</sup> The film attracted audiences in excess of 40,000 in Seoul, taking box office profits of over 260,000,000 *hwan*. The combined box office takings from other provinces reached about 780,000,000 *hwan* (*Chosun Daily* 20 May 1962: 3). During the 1960s, most statistics concerning audience numbers and box office takings were based on a film’s exhibition in Seoul. Hence, all data used in this dissertation also is limited to Seoul-based figures.

<sup>28</sup> Gwak had been one of the representative producers and exhibitors of the Korean film industry since the 1960s. Gwak produced 239 films (including *daemyeong*) and directed 9 films.

<sup>29</sup> According to the MPL-EO (March 1962), a company should have: 1 x 35mm camera; 50 KW lighting kits; a contract with 1 x experienced engineer; and 2 x established actors.

*daemyeong jejak* (hereafter *daemyeong*), was an unexpected consequence of the PRS and did not fit the government's blueprint of the industry. The emergence of *daemyeong*, which let independent producers continue to operate without being registered, showed that the PRS failed to restructure the industry. More detailed discussion about the *daemyeong* and how it worked is provided in chapter 2.

The government focused only on reinforcing the PRS, with little attention to *daemyeong* and its impact on the industry. Thereby, the MPL strengthened registration standards in mid-1963, making the entry level higher than before:

- 1) 3 x 35mm cameras;
- 2) 200 KW lighting kits;
- 3) 1 x 200 *pyeong*-size studio;<sup>30</sup>
- 4) 1 x sound recorder;
- 5) contracts with 3 x directors; 10 x actors/actresses; 3 x cinematographers; and 1 x recording engineer.

Apart from these new standards, mandatory annual quotas of at least fifteen films were required to sustain registration, requiring production of a film every three-and-a-half weeks. Of the twenty-one registered producers at the beginning of 1963, only six survived: Hanyang, Geukdong, Shin Film, Beoma, Hanguk Yeonghwa and Dongseong.

Since the draft of the 1963 MPL was publicised as early as December 1962, there had been some complaints. Independent producers, who were ready for registration, were frustrated because suddenly they were deprived of a chance of becoming registered producers. Registered producers such as Geukdong also worried about the prospect of losing their registration because only a few of them had the capacity to satisfy the new requirements (*Chosun Daily* 6 January 1963: 8).<sup>31</sup> Complaints from those who failed to sustain their registration after the announcement of the modified MPL intensified. Producer Song Yu-cheon of Dongbo Film Co., who failed to meet registration requirements, bitterly described the MPL as

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<sup>30</sup> 1 *pyeong* is equivalent to 3.3058 m<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> The KMPPA suggested to the MPL revisions to protect members' interests: 1) add special treatment for importing quality foreign films; 2) relax registration requirements; and 3) reduce the mandatory annual production quota (*Chosun Daily* 20 January 1963: 5).

an ‘unnecessarily harsh’ industrialisation measure (*Yeonghwa Segye* March 1963).<sup>32</sup> For Lee Byong-il, chief director of the Korean Motion Picture Producers Association (KMPPA), a representative organisation for registered producers, equipping with advanced filmmaking equipment required spending enormous amounts of foreign currency, which clashed with the government’s policy of saving foreign currency (*Yeonghwa Segye* April 1963). Consequently some companies incurred major debts for having to spend money to purchase required facilities and equipment, causing deep troubles for the solvency of their businesses (Cho 1998: 432). The large volume of complaints coming from both registered and unregistered producers showed that there was little consultation between the government and the industry concerning how the MPL should be designed and implemented.

Nonetheless, the privileges of becoming a registered producer increased because the merger of production, import and export businesses into a single operation enabled certain producers to become the locus of all industry activities while individual importers and exporters were forced to shut down. As it will be explained in chapter 2, this was similar to how all the *chaebol* were supposed to operate. The KMPPA was now only representing the newly-registered producers, maximising its members’ interests. Registered producers began making plans to produce at least fifteen films per year to sustain their registration, and achieved it, resulting in the production number increase (See Table 1-2). The production number decrease noticed in 1966 was a temporary change caused by the MPI’s intervention to control the number of film productions below 120, which is discussed in chapter 2.

Table 1-2. Number of Domestic Feature Film Productions in the 1960s

Year	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
No.	86	113	144	147	189	136	172	212	229	209

Source: KMPPC 1977: 46

The MPAK strongly resisted against the oligopoly of the PRS, leading the MPI to announce the second amendment of the MPL in August 1966. The MPI still

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<sup>32</sup> Song described this situation in his own words: as even before the first wound [the 1962 MPL] was healed, the deep-seated second scalpel [the 1963 MPL] came (*Yeonghwa Segye* March 1963: 41-43).

kept the PRS as a basis of industrialisation, but temporarily relaxed the PRS registration standards in response to the MPAK's requests: the annual production quota was reduced from fifteen to two films and the contracts with actors and engineers were removed. However, *daemyeong* was specified as an illegal practice, becoming one of the reasons for revoking a registration.

The outstanding feature of the 1966 MPL was the creation of the Screen Quota System (SQS), one of the backbone policies of the contemporary Korean film industry, providing a long-term legal ground to protect local film production. However, at the time it was designed to support the PRS by increasing business opportunities for the registered producers. That is, it worked as another financial aid to registered producers. Since the late 1950s, Korea's cinemas were separated into two groups: one specialising in domestic films and the other in foreign films. By mandating 'all' cinemas to screen domestic films for at least one-third of total exhibition days, the SQS enabled producers to negotiate with cinemas that specialised in foreign films, doubling their exhibition profits.

However, not all cinemas complied with the SQS. Those specialising in foreign films sometimes refused to follow the SQS because for them showing local films came with the loss of opportunities for showing more profitable foreign films and the damage to the reputation as a foreign-film-specialised cinema in the eyes of their audiences. Hence, exhibitors usually lined up domestic films for low seasons or rather chose to pay fines for violating the SQS, these being relatively small compared to the potential box office loss for not exhibiting foreign films (Yi et al. 2004). Since the protection of the local market was not the primary concern of the MPI, the MPI only cared for collecting the fines from cinemas and giving warnings to them, ignoring their violation of the SQS. It was not until the early 1990s when producers and directors fully utilised the SQS to protect local films against the invasion of US films. To enhance this protection, industry members formed a volunteer organisation called the 'Screen Quota Watchdog'. Exhibitors and the MPI were not part of this movement.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For more detailed discussion about the history of the SQS and Korea-US relationship concerning the film market, see Yecies (Spring 2007) and Lee (2005).

In December 1966, the MPI again fortified the registration requirements, forcing the industry to go through a third consolidation.<sup>34</sup> The previous action of the PRS relaxation seemed to be the MPI's strategy to appease the MPAK before announcing the more-demanding PRS requirements. The number of registered producers was again on the rise and the Park regime needed to keep it low for its easy control. Less than two months were given to all producers to re-register with the MPI and during this time, an internal conflict occurred among registered producers. While most producers pestered the MPI for registration extension, to buy time, a few major producers such as Shin Film, Taechang Film Co. and Anyang Film Co. pushed the original plan (*Chosun Daily* 19 February 1967: 6). Eventually the deadline was postponed, and by September 1967 twelve producers were left in business: Hanyang Film; Hanguk Film; Shin Film; Hanguk Yesul Film; Segi Sangsa; Daehan Yeonhap Film; Hapdong Film; Jeil Film; Anyang Film; Taechang Film; Daeyang Film; and Yeonbang Film. In an interview, producer Kim In-gi (2005) recalls it was the time when the industry reached the peak of its organisation. These newly-registered members of the PRS became core members of the KMPPA, forming a stronger relationship with the MPI and speaking for the MPI on such matters as the script censorship and production quota distribution system.

While the industry was dealing with the policy changes, *daemyeong* continued covertly. Registered producers needed to keep independent producers as their production partners, who were also buyers that purchased production rights from them. This was operated by the simple principle of supply and demand. Nonetheless, with the initiation of the production quota distribution system, the price for *daemyeong* became exorbitant because of decreased number of production quotas, making it more difficult for independent producers. Seeing the impact of the changes on the industry, the MPAK hosted a National Film People Rally on 31 August 1968 and publicised the industry issues that appealed to the general public. This event, the first of its kind, attracted over 1,000 people at Namsan Drama Centre. From this were made three claims: 1) Removal of the production quota system; 2) Removal of the PRS; and 3) Censorship relaxation (*Chosun Daily* 1 September 1968: 5). As a

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<sup>34</sup> This measure was announced by the MPL-EO, which was a follow-up of the fine print under the 1966 MPL A. 2: 'type, standard and capacity of above-mentioned facilities and equipment will be announced later'.

practical way of pressuring the registered producers, the MPAK told the KMPPA that its members, people like actors, cinematographers, directors and other engineers, would be on strike if their requests were not considered seriously. Facing an imminent production strike, within one month the MPAK and the KMPPA reached an agreement to end the dispute by cancelling the production quota system. This measure had an immediate impact on production numbers. A film boom had begun thanks to film policies that emphasised productivity. As a result, the number of productions increased from 172 in 1967 to 212 in 1968 (KMPPC 1977: 47). The number of film viewings per capita per year reached to 5.7 times in 1968 (KMPPC 1977: 156). The popularity of film and incredible volume of production was also in part contributed by a newly emerging consumer culture and an increased urban population in the mid-late 1960s.<sup>35</sup> It may be an exaggeration, but Korea's top male actor, Shin Seong-il, was reported as starring in more than 50 films simultaneously (*Chosun Daily* 15 December 1968). Actors' simultaneously-starring in multiple films became more common, suggesting that the star system was actively employed in Korea. Other popular actors and actresses such as Choi Mu-ryong, Moon Hee, Nam Jeong-im and Um Aeng-ram starred in over 20 films a year in their heyday. This is one example of the film boom bringing a moment of vitality to an industry pressured by the restrictive film policy and production system.

## 2) Censorship

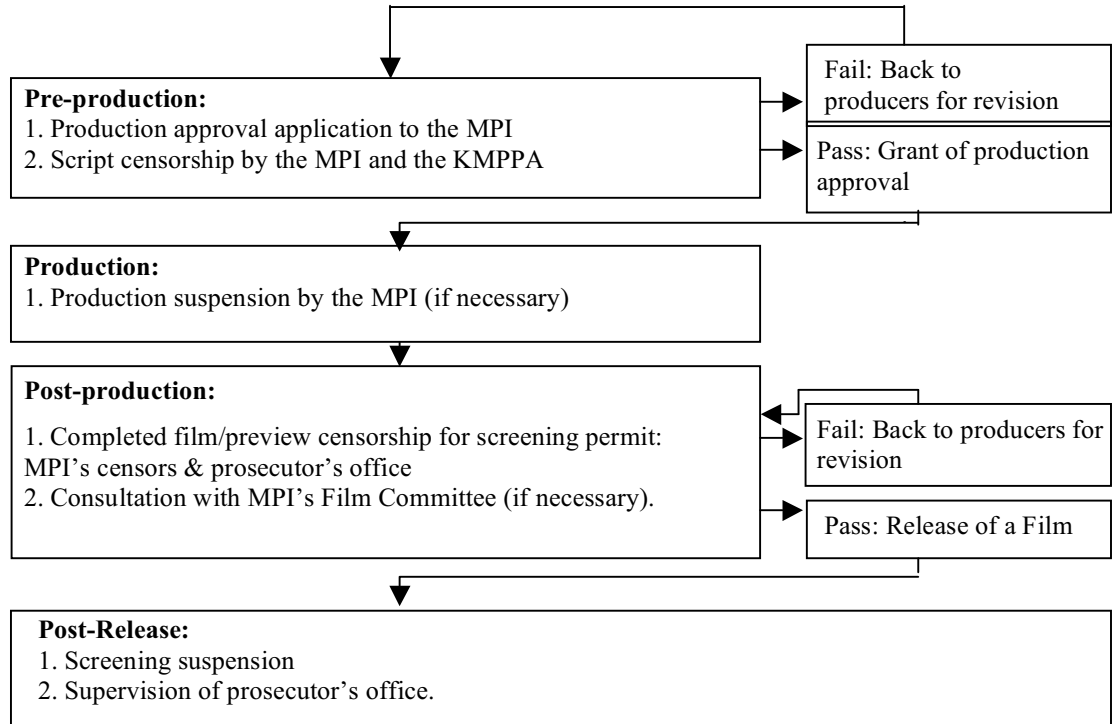
From the beginning, censorship under the Park regime was developed to 'legitimise the authoritarian rule of the hard-line right-wing regime' (Park 2002: 120). According to a government gazette (*Gwanbo*) published by the military junta on 21 May 1961 (unpubl., NAK #\_BA0188599: 2-3), all art events and films were required to pass censorship to prevent any possibility of harming the spirit of the 'military revolution', public morality or social ethics. All film producers and importers were forced to visit the censorship department, temporarily located in the Seoul Metropolitan City Hall, to introduce themselves and apply for censorship, with two copies of scripts and one censorship application form. Beginning with this measure,

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<sup>35</sup> For more information regarding Korea's demographic changes and urbanisation in the 1960s, and their historical and social impacts, see Park (1999) and Kang (1999).

Korea's censorship system was developed to be all-encompassing throughout a film's life from pre-production, through production to post-production stages.

**Figure 1-1. Film Censorship Process in the Late 1960s**



While freedom of expression was guaranteed under the Park regime by the Constitution revised and declared in December 1961, it contained a contradictory article (No. 18) allowing and justifying the regime's censoring of all entertainment media if and when public morality and social ethics mattered. In doing so, the regime made it clear that censorship was inevitable and thus, lawful (Bae 2004: 35). This paradoxical idea about controlling freedom of expression is well explained by Park Chung Hee's own words in *Our Nation's Path*, which was first published in February 1962:

Freedom of thought and speech is not unlimited, however. Licentious thought and speech out of the bounds of good sense, and those tending to disrupt national unity, cannot be condoned or tolerated either from moral or legal viewpoints, since they are bound to bring misfortune, instead of progress, to the society and in the end jeopardise the national existence and survival. Let us reflect for a moment how dangerous it would be if Communist imperialism,

in the guise of democracy, made use of the freedom of thought and speech for their propaganda and agitation (1970: 39).

The censorship process established by the 1962 MPL reveals how cinematic expression was filtered in stages. First, a producer was required to apply for a production approval by submitting a screenplay and a list of all production crew. After examining the application, censors could decide to issue production approval for the project or return it to the producer for revision. Second, upon the film's completion, the producer applied for a screening permit. Following the MPL-ER (Article No. 5), censors decided to cut and/or re-edit particular scenes, and refused to issue a screening permit when a film: offended the nation's reputation; offended allied nations or supported enemy countries; affronted any religious or educational leader; respected superstition; challenged court authority and law enforcement; justified any criminal act including vigilantism or revenge; or described brutal murders and obscene sexual scenes. Third, a film's screening could be suspended if any violations of the MPL were found later or there was a threat to public safety and customs.<sup>36</sup>

Censors made highly-subjective decisions following their individual opinions. Censor Park Jong-guk, who worked on domestic film censorship in the early 1960s, admitted that a censor's thoughts and ideas were central to the decision-making process (*Yeonghwa Segye* July 1963: 47). The problem was that, as director Kim Su-yong complained, censors were not professionally trained in understanding and appreciating film language (*Yeonghwa TV Yesul* July 1968: 87).<sup>37</sup> Under these circumstances, producers tried to stretch the regulations to their advantage by maintaining friendly terms with individual censors. As Lee Woo-seok (2005), representative of Donga Export, said in an interview, continuous tendering of the relationship with the MPI officers was crucial to the company's operation. Hence, producers often hired someone to pay regular visits to censors and often provided

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<sup>36</sup> Cinemas at the time had two seats reserved for local policemen to observe films and supervise audiences in the name of public safety. This practice dated back to the Japanese Colonial period since the 1910s.

<sup>37</sup> Director Kim Su-yong proposed three ways to improve censorship: 1) establish a Film Ethics Committee, including film professionals; 2) provide professional training for MPI's censors; and 3) This practice dated back to the Japanese Colonial period since the 1910s.

them with gifts to foster good terms. This was a customary practice, which producer such as Kim In-gi (2005), a veteran producer from the 1960s, does not necessarily think of in a bad way. Apparently this type of collaborative relationship between producers and censors was seen as a necessary evil for the smooth running of the industry.

In the mid-1960s, censorship applications became bound by criminal laws, especially anticommunist or obscenity laws, and thus involved the prosecutor's office. The Park regime's hard-line national policy of anticommunism was the regime's legal foundation, aiming at strengthening anticommunist ideology and securing the national defense system.<sup>38</sup> The obscenity law reinforced traditional morality based on the patriarchal family system, holding back liberal expressions of sexuality. Upon violation of these laws, directors were accused and interrogated by the prosecutor's office. The inclusion of criminal laws as part of the censorship process was something unexpected, causing extra anxiety over what and what not to express on screen. The most outstanding cases of censorship were with directors Lee Man-hee and Yu Hyun-mok in 1965, which are introduced in chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

Under the political situation during the Cold War, film scholar Lee Young-il (2004: 321) insisted that there was consensus among film community members that censorship concerning the Anticommunist Law should not be disputed. Yet, it is hard to know whether there was real consensus among industry members or not, because the 'consensus' might have been a fear toward strengthening censorship, rather than a commitment to the first national policy. The increasingly-strict application of anticommunist ideology to censorship was in fact becoming a source of complaint among directors. For example, *Born in the Liberation Year* (1967) dealing with a story of a North Korean woman escaping from North to South was censored because of a scene showing a North Korean lady wearing high heels (*Yeonghwa Japji* January 1969: 87). This little detail in her costume was seen as a sign of being rich to a censor's eyes, who considered it as a false, namely pro-communist concept.

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<sup>38</sup> Anticommunist law was established on 3 July 1961 in order to suppress all 'potential' anti-governmental activities. These so-called pro-communist activities included: affiliation with communist organisations; praising/worshipping communist countries; and communication with communist parties. The law grew stronger with the Park regime's political leadership being stabilised during the mid-1960s.

Censorship victims were mostly directors rather than producers. Producers were less affected by censorship accusations. It was probably because of their connection with the government through the PRS. At the same time, although they recruited, funded and managed film projects, as it will be explained in chapter 2, in many cases they put little of their own money in filmmaking and thus their economic loss was comparatively small. Thus, most censorship cases known to the public involved directors (e.g. Lee Man-hee, Yu Hyun-mok and Lee Hyeong-pyo) as the censorship victims. In part, of course, it was because of the power of directors as content creators. The authoritarian regime feared that directors might put a certain ideological statement on screen, threatening its political status (Wajda 1997: 107). It was also the reason behind the Park regime's combining the criminal laws with censorship in 1965, levying a more rigorous supervision over the minds of practitioners and thus, controlling the content of their art works. By 1966 MPL, the Park's censorship regime was almost completed: 1) script censorship by the MPI; 2) production suspension; 3) preview censorship; 4) the prosecutor's office in the completed product censorship; and 5) post-release supervision (See Figure 1-1).

Scholar Park Ji-yeon (2001: 186) argues that by putting heavier content regulation in the 1966 MPL, the MPI seemed to shift its focus from industrialisation to content control. However, it was a natural correspondence to the larger political change such as Park's upcoming second presidential election due in 1967, and had nothing to do with resigning the principle of industrialisation. Pursuing industrialisation was still a keynote national policy and censorship helped make this happen more quickly than before. Reinforcing censorship was part of the Park regime's ideological rearmament campaign, aiming at prolonging its political power.

In response to the new censorship protocol, the KMPPA volunteered to launch the Film Censorship Committee, a self-censorship apparatus, providing script censorship before the official MPI's censorship process, and added extra stress and difficulty for directors. This, self-script censorship committee, established in April 1967, functioned in a similar manner to Hollywood's Production Code Administration (PCA) during the Golden Age of Hollywood years, attempting to avoid and to reduce censorship by regulating film content in advance of the formal government processes. The difference between them might be for whom and how the self-censorship efforts were created and operated. According to Nowell-Smith (1996:

208), in Hollywood the PCA was organised to appease pressure groups such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches, which criticised the low morality of some movies. Under the leadership of Joseph Breen since 1932, the PCA examined both script and final products in order to catch in advance any offensive elements such as sex, drug use, politics or religion and facilitated smooth distribution of Hollywood products nationwide in the US and then worldwide. The motive behind the PCA initiative was to minimise the potential financial loss that would be caused by losing audiences (Garner 1987: xix). In Korea's case, the industry's self-regulation efforts aimed to please the government. With the government's continuous support toward the PRS, the KMPPA might have felt the need to show some favorable responses to the government. In 1967 the KMPPA took charge of executing the annual production quotas distribution system apart from the self-script censorship, showing its full compliance with the MPI.<sup>39</sup>

Censors also added more difficulties for directors. The article 'These Kind of Scenes Are Cut' (*Yeonghwa Japji* January 1969: 86-89) reveals how censors stretched their censorship understanding. Director Yu Hyun-mok's *Grudge* (1968) had 300 feet of film portraying a 'virgin ghost' cut because a censor saw it as being superstitious. Director Park Sang-ho's *Chic Ladies* (1968) was censored for its comical description of a heavy policeman, which was considered to be disrespectful toward authority. Any kinds of cinematic expressions could fall into the censorship trap, suppressing new and creative ideas. Film critic Kim Kab-ui stated that censorship ultimately deformed movies (*Yeonghwa Japji* May 1968: 82). Directors were getting more frustrated and fearful of intensified censorship. Director Kim Su-yong recalls that he expressed his anxiety over losing creativity at a forum 'Film Censorship and Its Limitation' held in May 1968: "You [censors] cut my fingers! Remember that our consciousness and blood runs through our films!" (Kim 2005: 67).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The KMPPA Film Censorship Committee worked together with the MPI for more than two years until the MPI established a new censorship committee in 1969 – Korean Film Censorship Committee (*Hanguk Yeonghwa Simui Wiwonhoe*) (KMPPC 1977: 39).

<sup>40</sup> The forum 'Film Censorship and Its Limitation' was held by the Christian Academy to share different perspectives about censorship. More than seventy industry people attended the forum: screenwriters, directors and producers, academics, and journalists as well as the Ministry of Culture and Public Information (MCPI – descendant of the MPI since 1968) representatives.

Censorship reinforcement was related to two major political incidents that occurred in 1968. Firstly, North Korean saboteurs attempted to assassinate President Park Chung Hee on 21 January 1968 by attacking the Blue House – the official residence and principal office of the President of Korea.<sup>41</sup> Secondly, two days later, on 23 January 1968, the USS Pueblo, the US spy vessel, and its crew were captured by North Korea, creating another diplomatic issue for the Park regime to deal with. These aggravating political backdrops made censors more alert and had the prosecutor's office more involved with the whole censorship process. Any scenes that might contain threats to social order, sound morality and national security were sent back to producers for revision or cutting. The arrest of three established directors (Shin Sang-ok, Park Jong-ho and Lee Hyeong-pyo) for violating the obscenity law in 1969 signified the censorship crackdown in the late 1960s. Similar to the cases with director Lee Man-hee and Yu Hyun-mok in 1965, the 1969 censorship cases also spread fear among directors toward censorship, nipping potential trouble in the bud. Borrowing the words of producer Gwak Jeong-hwan (2004), 'Film is about the life, freedom, love and hope of life. They were banned by Park Chung Hee to be expressed on screen.' Given the fact that Gwak was one of the registered producers in the 1960s who benefited from the PRS system, so it is hard to know if and when he ever objectively expressed his true feelings concerning his experiences during the 1960s. Nevertheless, his words suggest that he believed the Park regime succeeded in controlling filmmakers by establishing a full-blown censorship regime, leaving us to wonder what the film industry would have been like without it.

### **3) Import Policy**

The MPL regulated the foreign film importation and exhibition by designing the Import Recommendation System (IRS) and the Import Licence Reward System (ILRS). Under the IRS, the MPI decided the number and titles of imports to be allowed each year. Then, the MPI distributed import licences to registered producers

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<sup>41</sup> After the news about the attempt of 31 North Korean soldiers failing to assassinate Park at the Blue House broke out, it aroused angry reactions from the Park government and the general public, leading the regime to reinforce anticommunism (Kang 2004c: 202-207).

by a due standard, the ILRS. These two systems worked as supplementary censorship measures and the industry's financial subsidies respectively, facilitating the regime's easier control over the film industry. Both measures remained effective by 1986.

### **Import Recommendation System (IRS)**

The MPI controlled the number of imports and pre-censored film contents through the IRS. According to the IRS, which was first implemented in 1956 by the Ministry of Education in order to strengthen censorship of foreign films (KMPPC 1977: 247), importers submitted a list of films to the MPI for an approval (recommendation) for import and then the MPI could finalise and approved select films to be imported. The content regulation first occurred by importers' self-censorship because before making the list they had to view films to ensure they excluded those: 1) produced by an enemy (communist) country; 2) containing anti-government sentiment; and 3) 'harmful' to Korea's social order, customs and manners.<sup>42</sup> Then, second, the MPI approved select films from the list to be imported. The decision was made subjectively by the MPI in terms of what films would be harmful or offensive to Korea's customs and manners.

Every year the MPI decided the import numbers in accordance with the amount of foreign currency the government allocated to film imports, demonstrating that the IRS was working within the boundary of the government's larger economic policy and trade framework.<sup>43</sup> For developing countries, gaining and keeping foreign exchange for national development was seen as a priority. However, the downside of this measure was that purchasing better quality and more expensive foreign films became difficult when the supply of foreign currency was short. The outcome was that the market filled with re-runs and older B level films (*Chosun Daily* 20 October 1963: 5). Hence, in 1964 the MPI announced the import quota system and kept the number of imports to under one third of local production, which served as a catalyst

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<sup>42</sup> This guideline was given by the MPL-EO regulations.

<sup>43</sup> In 1964 the MPI initiated a maximum foreign currency expenditure cap of \$20,000 USD for all foreign films. A total of 51 films was imported in 1964. The cap gradually increased to \$40,000 USD in 1965, \$50,000 USD in 1966, and was eliminated in 1967 (KMPPC 1977: 249).

for a domestic film boom. The IRS remained until 1988 when Korea's film market was fully opened.<sup>44</sup>

### **Import Licence Reward System (ILRS)**

Linked to the IRS, which served as the primary import control policy, the Import Licence Reward System worked as a financial subsidy for the registered producers. Originating from the 1958 ME Notice No. 53, the system was designed to encourage local film production by distributing import licences to registered producers on the basis of: 1) production results; 2) export achievements; 3) international film festival awards; and 4) government-approved best film award results.

Producers such as Shin Film and Geukdong quickly made plans to make more films than the required annual production quota of a minimum 15 films to increase chances of receiving more import licences. Leading the way, for example, Shin Film announced a bold plan to produce more than forty films a year (*Yeonghwa Segye* June 1963: 50). At the same time, production of certain genre films such as anticommunist, enlightenment and literary adaptation films increased. The government encouraged these productions to propagate government policies such as anticommunism, industrialisation, and cultural nationalism. As a result, they were frequent recipients of domestic film awards and their productions were subsequently increased.<sup>45</sup> Amongst others, anticommunist and literary adaptation genres are discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 4.

An import licence at the time carried high monetary value. Foreign films were gaining in popularity, promising increased box office returns. Big-budget, spectacular films such as *Ben Hur*, *The Ten Commandments* and *South Pacific* were

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<sup>44</sup> From its early days the Park government showed a strong interest in hoarding foreign currency because controlling foreign currency consumption was one of the most effective ways of controlling the imports, and thus controlling Korea's financial institutions (Jang 1999: 91-94).

<sup>45</sup> One example for each category is listed here. As an anticommunist film, *Marines Who Never Returned* (Yi Man-hi, 1962) showed war spectacles with foregrounding nationalism and anticommunism. As an enlightenment film, *Rice* (1963) emphasised the importance of the Park regime's rural development policy. As a literary adaptation film, *Mist* (1967) illustrated the modernistic view of Korean society. All three films were awarded the Grand Bell Award – the MPI-approved best film award, and their close analysis is provided in later chapters.

winning-over audiences, drawing them away from domestic films (*Yeonghwa Segye* February 1963: 43). For example, though the number of domestic films screened outnumbered foreign films, larger audiences were drawn to foreign films: while a total of 133 domestic and 90 foreign films were exhibited in 1964, the average attendances for domestic and foreign films were 50,087 and 64,295 respectively (KMPPC 1977: 160). Despite the fact that costs to see a foreign film were slightly higher than those for Korean films, audiences chose to watch foreign films over domestic films (Kim 2004: 11).<sup>46</sup> Hence, import licences were traded among registered producers on the black market with added premium, which the MPI also acknowledged by calling it ‘property value’ (unpubl., NAK #\_BA0136798: 103).<sup>47</sup>

Thanks to the lead of the ILRS, the Park regime realised the goal of raising productivity by 1965: the production reached a total of 189 films, which was more than twice the 1961 production number of 86. The MPI then removed the production result from the ILRS categories in 1966, placing emphasis on export results.<sup>48</sup> Producers actively engaged with the export activities to obtain as many import licences as possible and often forged export documents only to receive more import licences (*Yeonghwa TV Yesul* September 1967: 16). For this reason, though export profits stayed small, film exports continued at a steady level. More detailed anecdotes concerning the registered producers’ faking export results are introduced in chapter 2.

### 3. Resistance: Anti-MPL Campaign

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<sup>46</sup> Admission ticket prices were set differently for domestic and foreign films. The 1965 ticket prices for domestic and foreign film admission were 65 and 70 won each respectively. Price differences in both domestic and foreign film admission tickets disappeared in 1990 (Kim 2004).

<sup>47</sup> This was a response to the enquiry of Dongseong Film Co. whose registration was cancelled in 1965. Dongseong made enquires as to whether it was possible to hand over their import licence to another registered company since it no longer retained the registered status. The MPI law office concluded that it was legitimate for Dongseong to transfer the import licences under this circumstance (unpubl., NAK #\_BA0136798: 103).

<sup>48</sup> Various government incentives were given to many industries in order to encourage exports. They included: financial assistance, tax and tariff exemption and/or reduction, and low-interest bank loans as well as administrative support. Selected exporters were also awarded by Park Chung Hee in recognition of their outstanding export results on the Export Day – 5 December (Kim 1999: 46).

Producers outside the PRS system felt deprived because they noticed the PRS receiving all the government support and protection interests of a few registered producers, not those of the whole industry. Gang Dae-jin, president of *Yeonghwa Segye* magazine, claimed the PRS was an oligopoly (*Yeonghwa Segye* March 1963: 41-43). Agreeing with this view, the Motion Pictures Association of Korea (hereafter MPAK), representative group for a whole-of-film-community including directors, cinematographers and actors, except registered producers, began the anti-MPL campaign.<sup>49</sup>

In March 1964, the MPAK claimed in public that there was a conspiracy behind the MPL establishment, that is, there was a secret connection between the government and a few major registered producers that formed the oligopoly (Cho 1998; Kim 2002; Lee 2004). The MPAK blamed the MPI for creating the PRS where only a small number of registered producers controlled the production, importing and exporting activities. This anti-MPL campaign was a bold expression of discomfort toward the Park regime's film policy of nurturing a major company system. Shin Sang-ok, director and producer of Shin Film, was accused the most by industry people for having immense influence on the formation of the PRS through his personal connections with Park Chung Hee (*Yonye Japji* October 1970: 64-65), a situation discussed in detail in chapter 3.

Industry people, especially directors, were afraid of the industry being controlled by the PRS. Director Kim Hwa-rang was displeased that the regime's management of the film industry appeared similar to that of the confectionary industry, in which the shapes of the cookies were fixed, with little attention being paid to creativity (*Yeonghwa Segye* August 1963: 43). The PRS seemed to have little space for directors to stand. Kim Su-yong, veteran director of 109 films, with experience reaching as far back as the 1950s, describes this situation:

When the market was saturated with domestic films, competition among producers grew fierce. Some producers, who failed in the free competition, had the government on their side and attempted to regulate the film industry.

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<sup>49</sup> According to the KMPPC (1977: 285), this organisation was established in 1962 with five committees representing: directors; screenwriters; actors; engineers; and music composers. In 1964, one more committee was created – a planning committee, which presumably was comprised of independent producers.

For example, they lobbied the government to put certain articles in the film law, which required a studio and filmmaking equipment ownership, and exclusive contracts with actors and directors (2005: 65).

Director Lee Hyeong-pyo, who directed more than 100 films from as far back as the 1960s, admitted in an interview (2004) that the film law was meant for people who owned something – money, studio, facilities, etc.

Hence, the MPAK sought abolition of the MPL, submitting a petition to the National Assembly on 1 March 1964.<sup>50</sup> The high level of the PRS requirements was the first thing to be criticised. The dispute over the ownership of import licences was second. As mentioned above, the unauthorised sub-contract system (*daemyeong*) was an arrangement between the registered and independent producers. The problem occurred when the film produced through the *daemyeong* practice received an award from the MPI-accredited film awards and subsequently received a reward of a foreign film import licence from the MPI. The ownership of the import licence, whether the registered producer or the independent producer, was the nub of the argument. The registered producers took the licence as a natural by-product of the *daemyeong* deal and used it as a lucrative money-making opportunity, while being aware of the increasing popularity of imports.<sup>51</sup> Knowing all the benefit of the import licence, independent producers claimed ownership of the import licence and the MPAK defended their position.

In response to the anti-MPL campaign, twelve national assemblymen, including Kim Dae-jung, who later became president of Korea (1997-2003),<sup>52</sup> submitted an appeal to the National Assembly, claiming to examine the MPL-related

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<sup>50</sup> The MPAK indicated four main problems of the MPL: 1) unnecessary equipment requirements and related expenditure for the PRS; 2) spread of unauthorised practices (*daemyeong*); 3) excessive emphasis on production quantity (minimum annual production quota of 15 films); and 4) impractical new talents (required contracts with experienced actors) (Lee 2004: 316-317).

<sup>51</sup> In early 1965, one year after the implementation of the ILRS, a couple of enquiries were made to the MPI to clarify the stipulations regarding import licence allocation and its transfer (NAK #\_BA0136798). Obtaining the import licence had become a major part of business.

<sup>52</sup> Kim Dae-jung was to become president and cultural advocate in 1997. Kim had shown a deep interest in cultural areas throughout his career. It was no wonder that he became known as the cultural president, who contributed to the building of a new golden age of Korean cinema after the late 1990s.

issues (KMPPC 1977: 37). A public debate between the MPAK and KMPPA was organised by the MPI to publicise their respective views to the media. On the one hand, director Yun Bong-chun, MPAK representative, showed a larger perspective concerning the balanced development of the whole industry including exhibition, distribution, direction and independent production, and criticised the negative side of the PRS, that of fostering the oligopoly. On the other, literary critic Baek Wan, KMPPA representative, claimed the opposite, the PRS reduction of excessive competition among producers (*Chosun Daily* 11 April 1964: 5). Baek's argument replicated the MPI's view of strengthening the production system, showing the KMPPA and the government standing on the same side.

In the meantime, independent producers tried to do everything they could to be part of the system, sensing the PRS would remain in existence. Accepting that they were short of capital and therefore unable to build a studio and purchase equipment, they set up temporary studios converted from sugar mills, steel factories and medical suppliers' storage warehouses to trick the MPI. For show, as director Kim Su-yong stated, they filled these temporary facilities with cameras and sound recorders borrowed from other producers during the equipment inspection period (*Sedae* September 1965: 303). As a result, the number of registered producers increased again.

On 26 December 1964 the MPAK submitted a proposal to the National Assembly, suggesting the establishment of a new production system and a financial support scheme to replace the PRS (*Silver Screen* January 1965: 110). However, this movement diminished in 1965 as other industry issues that surfaced became higher priorities, namely: director Lee Man-hee's imprisonment for violating the Anticommunist Law; and the possibility of re-opening the Korea and Japan cultural exchange after the liberation in 1945 tied in with the Korea-Japan normalisation treaty.<sup>53</sup> These events concerned the issues of freedom of expression and opening the local film market to Japanese films.

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<sup>53</sup> The possible influx of Japanese films gained attention from exhibitors, registered producers (as importers), and directors. The local market potential for Japanese films was high because of a lot of mature Korean audiences who knew and understood the Japanese language and culture from their colonial experience (*Film Art* August 1965: 78-84). In the end, the market opening for the cultural exchange was excluded. The Korea-Japan cultural exchange officially began in 1997. The first Japanese film import was *Hanabi* (1997).

The MPAK restarted its anti-MPL campaign in early 1966 after the MPI launched the production quota distribution system, setting an annual production quota of 120 and distributing them evenly to registered producers (*Chosun Daily* 3 February 1966: 5). It aimed at limiting the oversupply of local films because the number of productions reached 189 in 1965 while the number of registered producers was 19.<sup>54</sup> Combined with foreign films, which numbered 59, the total of films released in 1965 reached 246. As a result, the previous requirement levied on each registered company of producing fifteen films annually was annulled. While registered producers were rather content with this measure, because it relieved their mandatory film productions, independent producers, who were benefiting from the sub-contract system, faced the more difficult production situation of competing against each other for a smaller number of production rights.

Frustrated, the independent producers, though illegally existing, began publicising their importance to the operation of the production industry. They claimed that the new system ignored their contribution to the local industry in 1965, which occupied more than 80% of the total production (*Chosun Daily* 3 February 1966: 5). There might be some exaggeration in this figure, but it clearly demonstrated that they, not the registered producers, were the major contributors to production activity. Independent producers wanted the MPI to approve their existence and legalise the *daemyeong* practice because they believed it would end the import licence ownership dispute, remove the oligopoly system and revive their careers. Their moves aimed at pressuring the MPI, which was then drafting the new MPL.

Other types of resistance at this time included the reaction against the NFPC's operation. The Park regime's use of newsreels and cultural films for promoting its achievements and policy campaigns to the public was so effective that it incited the opposition party. In 1966 when the MPL was being revised, the opposition party demanded removal of the mandatory propaganda screening system. Although it did not happen, the opposition party managed to add a clause to the MPL: any newsreels and cultural films conveying direct endorsement of the government cannot be screened (*Film TV Art* September 1966: 83). That is,

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<sup>54</sup> Later, by the 1966 MPL, the number of film imports was also regulated to be under one-third of domestic film exhibitions.

politicians in the opposition party attempted to limit the Park regime's vigorous use of newsreels and cultural films for the purpose of creating and reinforcing the positive images of the regime – particularly in light of a presidential election expected in 1967. This was one case that demonstrated how politicians were aware of and feared the power of propaganda.

#### **4. Conclusion: Impact of the MPL on Production, Direction and Genre**

Almost immediately after Park Chung Hee's military government established control over Korea, the MPI systematised a near-total administrative control over production, exhibition, import and export activities in order to convert the industry into a propaganda factory. The MPI listed two types of propaganda, that is, a two-pronged instrument with the NFPC's direct propaganda composed of newsreels and short message films, and the MPL-controlled private film industry's oblique propaganda feature films.

Following this progress from 1962 onwards, illustrates how the regime increased its control over the production industry and how the industry responded to it. The PRS and the ILRS offered incentives for registered producers to follow government guidelines. A system of 'sticks and carrots' was proven to be effective in dealing with registered producers. Censorship incorporated anticommunist and obscenity laws, threatening severe punishment of directors who disobeyed the regime. Within four years, after conditions worsened, members of the industry gathered enough courage to fight back. The MPAK argued for the abolition of the MPL and battled the MPI over issues such as the PRS and *daemyeong*, which strengthened the power of registered producers, that is, the cartel.

The 1960s Korean cinema as a golden age was built upon these dynamic power struggles between the government and the industry, the registered and independent producers, the MPAK and the KMPPA. The chapters that follow reveal how the MPL affected producers, directors and genre development, and how producers and directors responded to the MPL's demands. Understanding the reasons behind their persevering spirit is vital to an understanding of how filmmaking survived under the strict film policy demands.

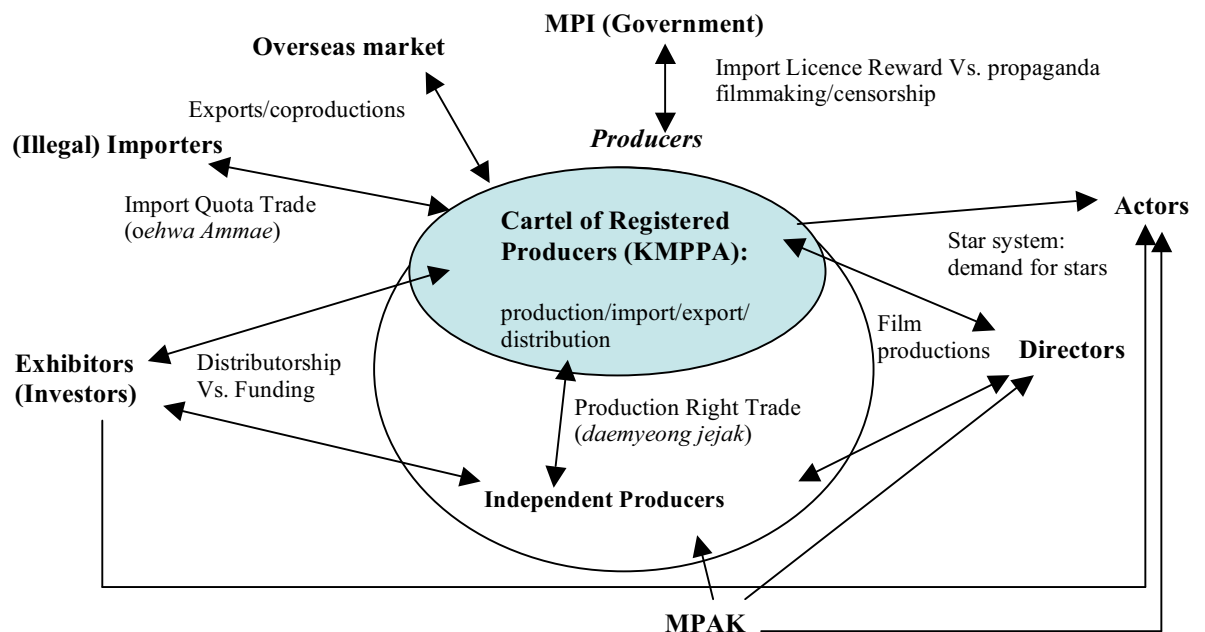
Table 1-3. Summary of the MPL Changes in the 1960s

	1962	1963	1966
<b>PRS</b>	<b>Inauguration:</b> 1) Registration requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 x 35mm camera;</li> <li>• 50 KW lighting kits</li> <li>• contracts with 1 x engineer; and 2 x actors</li> </ul>	<b>Reinforcement:</b> 1) Stricter registration requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 x 35mm cameras;</li> <li>• 200 KW lighting kits;</li> <li>• 1 x 200 pyong-size studio;</li> <li>• 1 x simultaneous recording machine;</li> <li>• contracts with 3 x directors; 10 x actors/actresses; 3 x cinematographers; and 1 x recording engineer.</li> <li>• Mandatory annual production quota of 15 films for each company</li> </ul> 2) Increased privilege: Merge of import/export under production	<b>Relaxation:</b> 1) Registration requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 x camera;</li> <li>• 1 x lighting kit;</li> <li>• 1 x studio;</li> <li>• No contracts with staff necessary.</li> <li>• Mandatory annual production quota of 2 films for each company</li> </ul> 2) <i>Daemyeong</i> banned
<b>Censorship</b>	<b>Inauguration:</b> 1) Pre-production Stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-production approval</li> </ul> 2) Post-production Stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Product Screening</li> <li>• Screening suspension</li> </ul>	<b>Involvement of the Prosecutor's Office:</b> 1) Attendance at final product censorship 2) Application of anticommunist/obscenity laws	<b>Censorship Reinforcement:</b> 1) Pre-production Stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-production approval</li> <li>• Script censorship</li> </ul> 2) Production Stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production suspension</li> </ul> 3) Post-production Stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final product/preview screening for screening permit</li> <li>• Screening suspension</li> </ul>
<b>Import Policy</b>	<b>Inauguration: The Import Recommendation System</b>	<b>Inauguration: Import Licence Reward System (ILRS)</b> Licences awarded by <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) production results</li> <li>2) export results,</li> <li>3) international film festival awards</li> <li>4) quality film awards</li> </ol>	<b>Modified ILRS:</b> 1) Removal of production results 2) Addition of co-production results
<b>NFPC's Films</b>	Double bill screenings of cultural/feature films	Triple bill screenings of newsreels/cultural/feature films	
<b>Screen Quota System</b>			<b>Inauguration:</b> Maximum of 1/3 of all films screened at cinemas should be domestic films

## Chapter 2. Producer Registration System: Forming An Industry Cartel

This chapter shows how the systematisation of producer registration requirements under the PRS scheme facilitated a cartel of producers, who operated from the industry's centre. It offers a deeper understanding of the Korean film industry's workings in the 1960s by demonstrating how this complex system simultaneously benefited film production and film quality while allowing corruption as a survival strategy. Figure 2-1 illustrates how the PRS operated and how major industry participants related to each other.

**Figure 2-1. Registered Producers at the Centre of the Industry**



Registered producers are placed in the centre, having a direct line of communication with the MPI and other industry participants. How they conducted day-to-day activities and developed relationships with other industry participants provides insight into the growth and development of the industry. Independent producers and importers were integral to the running of the industry, though MPL mandates in 1962 and 1963 respectively prevented them from making direct contributions. Instead, these unauthorised industry participants maintained covert illegal operations, positioning themselves as vital components of the industry. Exhibitors, who only operated within a specific province, were also crucial to the

industry, remaining on the periphery as investors, holding both these inner and outer participants together. There were two major industry organisations that operated, as briefly introduced in chapter 1: the KMPPA representing registered producers as a cartel and the MPAK representing the remainder of the production industry members.<sup>55</sup>

Most scholarship such as Kim (1994), Lee (2004), Park (2005) and Chung (2007) viewed the formation of the PRS as part of the government's larger industrialisation process and described the compulsory nature of the PRS scheme as a harmful influence on the industry. Nonetheless, albeit limited, Byon Jae-ran (2001: 233) tried to understand the PRS from the industry's point of view by linking it to the Hollywood studio system. She points out that there was a small number of registered producers such as Hanguk Yesul and Donga Heungeop who attempted to mimic Hollywood's practice of vertical integration, despite their failure due to lack of capital and a disorganised distribution system. In the 1940s US, the select studio owners ran Hollywood studios as 'a system of corporations' (Gomery 2005: 3), taking 'creative control and administrative authority' (Schatz 1996: 225) over filmmaking. Similarly the PRS model concentrated filmmaking powers among a small number of producers and the KMPPA operated as an oligopoly similar to the US trade association, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA).

In Korea its development was controlled by the overshadowing MPI and national film policy. However, through policy limitations discussed here, the PRS was unable to reach the business efficiency level achieved by the Hollywood major studio model. Instead, the PRS that started as a production cartel later grew to be a cartel overseeing all other areas including import, export and distribution under the protection of the MPI, which was similar to the growth pattern of *chaebol* supported by the government. The development of the modern Korean economy began in 1962 with the Park Government's first 'Five Year Economic Plan', which facilitated the industrial monopolies by promoting the growth of conglomerates (*chaebols*).<sup>56</sup> Both companies pre-existing from the 1950s, (e.g. Samsung, LG) and those newly-formed

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<sup>55</sup> The KMPPA was first established in 1957 in order to represent the interests of producers. In 1963, it became an interest group of registered producers, excluding independent producers from its membership (KMPPC 1977: 286).

<sup>56</sup> According to Yoo and Lee (1987: 96), the *chaebol* concept was an adaptation of Japan's prewar *zaibatsu* system, which referred to industrial and financial business conglomerates.

in the 1960s (e.g. Hyundai, SK, Daewoo), received enormous government subsidies and preferential treatment in pursuing their businesses. Though smaller in scale and less financially stable than *chaebols*, the cartels of registered producers worked in a similar manner, that is, each dealt with production, export and import under a single roof, diversifying their business. Like *chaebols* that grew with the government's financial support, a select number of registered producers were promised prosperity, subsidised by import licences as discussed in chapter 1.

In order to show the impact of the PRS on the industrialisation of the industry, this chapter investigates how the cartel of registered producers operated between their profit agendas and policy demands. Their three common strategies are then examined: 1) trading production rights (*daemyeong*); 2) exploitation of the Import Licence Reward System (ILRS); and 3) film presales. Finally, as a case study, the initiatives of Shin Film, the largest film major at the time, are used to illustrate how producers in the cartel actually optimised their chances of survival. By examining these underestimated characteristics of the PRS this chapter argues that this industry condition contributed something beneficial to the industry, leading the golden age to its peak.

## **1. The Cartel**

During the 1960s the registered producers had the greater opportunities for success. The status of a registered producer was not guaranteed for the life of the company and, thus, registered producers developed strategies to maximise their profit while their registration lasted. While conducting regular business activities, registered producers also developed illegal ways of earning profit by trading production rights and import licences, as well as falsifying results of domestic film exports and international co-productions. Presale of their films was the main way of attracting funding. Members of the KMPPA all used these three strategies at some point to raise productivity, satisfy demands from the government and maintain their advanced status within the industry.

As explained earlier, under the scheme of the PRS, a producer first had to apply for registration and then await the MPI's approval. As long as one fulfilled

certain requirements for the PRS, one could become and remain registered. There was no ceiling on the number of registered producers allowed within the industry, but requirements kept changing through policy amendments, and catching up with the new standards was the primary concern of registered producers. As shown in Table 1-1 in chapter 1, when the number of registered producers increased, the MPI raised the PRS standard to maintain the number of registered producers at a small but optimal level, resulting in the number of registered producers rising and falling.<sup>57</sup> That is, the KMPPA was a revolving group of registered producers. Many in the industry, whether they were producers or not, wanted to become registered and, thus, become members of the KMPPA, because of the members' privileged access to production, import, export and distribution.

There were three types of registered producers operating at the time: producers in the traditional sense; producers with importers' background; and short-term producers.<sup>58</sup> The producers in the traditional sense, such as Shin Film, Geukdong, Hapdong, Taechang, and Hanyang, set their hearts and minds on film production. From the beginning, they followed the original agenda of the PRS faithfully, treating production as their primary business and film import as a side business. It is not to say that this group of registered producers were passionate about filmmaking and operated their business without any illegal business operations, which will be discussed below. They also worked with independent producers as subcontractors (*daemyeong jejak*), and falsified the results of film exports and international co-productions, like the two groups of registered producers listed below. Nonetheless, their involvement with these unauthorised business transactions was comparatively lower than the other two groups of registered producers.

The second group, represented by Hanguk Yesul and Segi Sangsa, which had begun their import businesses as far back as 1953, prioritised importing over production. Under the PRS, which did not allow the import business as an independent section of film business, as early as 1963, they had to transform

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<sup>57</sup> Apart from two government-forced consolidations that occurred in 1961 and 1967, large and small film policy changes in 1963 and 1966 also impacted on changes in producer requirements. Detailed technical changes related to this have been introduced in chapter 1.

<sup>58</sup> This idea of categorising registered producers came from an article published in *Yeonghwa Japji* (December 1967: 226-229); at the end of the late 1960s the KMPPA was comprised of three types of registered producers: 1) producers in the traditional sense; 2) producers with importer background; and 3) producers with exhibitor background.

themselves into producers to preserve their profession. These big importers' swift move to the production industry was generally welcomed by the members of the industry because their stable financial statuses and well-established distribution networks were considered as bringing something positive to the industry (*Yeonghwa Segye* April 1963: 52). For example, Hanguk Yesul had distribution offices set up in Pusan, Daegu, Kwangji and Daejon. Segi Sangsa also had a cinema in Seoul and other branch offices in Incheon and Pusan. Both companies had potential to become vertically integrated companies. However, their business transition did not happen smoothly. Due to their limited production expertise, these registered producers became heavily reliant on working with independent producers by illegally subcontracting with them and selling production rights to them rather than building up their own production capabilities. Their anticipated positive contributions to industry operation did not eventuate.

Compared to these two groups of larger producers that survived multiple consolidations and policy changes by fulfilling changing PRS requirements, the third group consisted of smaller registered producers, including Shinchang, Aseong and Daeyoung. They managed to become members of the KMPPA, but failed to maintain their registered status, that is, the ever-changing PRS standards. These short-term producers that appeared in the mid-to-late 1960s included cinema owners, who were more interested in having advanced lineups for their cinemas than making films themselves, and thus *daemyeong* was their main way of filmmaking. They made profit out of selling production rights to independent producers and sometimes received import licences for the award-winning films made by *daemyeong* practice. Thus, their core business was working with independent producers and administering the necessary paperwork for making films. This type of registered producer was often described as 'a real estate agency' (*Yeonghwa Japji* January 1970: 148.).

As mentioned, Korea's PRS was loosely based on the Hollywood studio system. As in other countries such as Britain, Japan, India and China, who imitated the Hollywood models (Thompson and Bordwell 2003: 239), Korea also tried to build its own studio system. As is explained later in this chapter and in chapter 5, director Shin Sang-ok strongly believed in the necessity of industrialisation, and influenced the drafting of the film law. At the time, Shin was envisaging his production company, Shin Film, becoming like Columbia Pictures (Kim and Ahn

*Cine21* 16 November 2001). As *Variety* reports in 1968, Korea's 'present stage development is comparable to early Hollywood, with players under contract to the various studios' (17 April 1968). Similar to the Hollywood model, a registered producer controlled production plans with contract directors and actors, focusing on raising productivity.

However, differences also existed between Korea's PRS and the Hollywood studio system. Korea's studio system was created by the state. The shaping and keeping of the system was mediated by policy intervention, not a natural course of industry development. Following the regime's emphasis on productivity, the PRS was first designed as a production-centric industry system. As a result, it neglected developing two other arms of the industry (exhibition and distribution), and thus the real sense of vertical integration did not occur, signifying that industrial vulnerability and political passivity is a different issue although this is a significant aspect of industrial development under an authoritarian military regime.

At the same time, the rise of this cartel as the oligopoly and the systematisation of these operating methods was a by-product of the Park regime's policy of supporting *chaebols* – the family-run conglomerates. Both the PRS and *chaebols* were products of the developmentalist state policy. In pursuing *chaebols*, Park and his followers pre-selected and nurtured industrial elites based on friendly connections and proven records of business performance (Kim 2004: 206). In return, *chaebols* became the forefront of the government's export drive, which was also a critical part of the production industry.

The PRS was also a loosely-formed oligopoly with many changing members. While the Hollywood studio system enjoyed a 'mature oligopoly' (Schatz 1988: 9) in which specific major studios such as Fox Film Corporation, Paramount Pictures, Universal Pictures and Columbia Pictures controlled the US market, participation in Korea's PRS was highly dynamic. It was like a revolving door, frequently letting members in and out. As a result, the cooperation amongst the KMPPA members was not as stable as that in the MPAA. Even though the KMPPA technically worked as an entity for the members' interests, it was in fact incapable of dealing with internal

conflicts among members. For example, Shin Film often violated the members' agreements on film promotion campaigns, and did so with impunity.<sup>59</sup>

Before further discussion of the registered producers' business activities, it is useful to mention the melodrama, *Confession of An Actress* (1967), one of the few films made in the 1960s that shows the then-contemporary film industry. This melodrama, portraying the rising stardom of an actress, has three main characters: an actress, her father (an old star actor) and a producer. In this film, which was among the most popular melodramas released at the time, the heroine, Nam, experiences the transition from common girl to movie star, with the help of a fading actor, Kim Jin-gyu.<sup>60</sup> Kim happens to be Nam's father, which is only revealed to Nam at the end of the film. As a dashing young actor, Kim had an affair with an actress who later died while giving birth to their love child, Nam. Some years later, after learning that Nam is his daughter, Kim helps her to become a star.

Watching this film today enables us to read Nam and her father as exemplars of the then-contemporary film industry, and the industry was driven by greed. On the one hand, Nam represents Korea's burgeoning cinema industry, which was being systematised under the Park regime. In the beginning, Nam does whatever she can within her limited means to better herself as a performer. Then, as she becomes more confident, she tries to break from the mould by doing things her own way. Nam's metamorphosis corresponds to how the industry was changing, that is, reacting to the pressures of rapid industrialisation. On the other hand, Kim represents the formation of film policy, which helped Nam rise to the top in similar ways that the film policy helped the industry's reconstruction. Though Kim means well, he is no longer at the centre, caught unaware of the full realities of the industry. The producer in the film, who desires more control over Nam (industry), is a cartel. He is arrogant, flamboyant and greedy, and Janus-faced. He appears to listen to and accommodate complaints of directors, exhibitors and actors, but in the end makes all decisions based on profit motives because registered producers were given the exclusive benefit of making

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<sup>59</sup> In 1963 Shin Film had *Dad, Please Get Married!* (1963) advertised in newspapers more times than it was agreed upon (*Yeonghwa Segye* July 1963: 48). In 1965 *The Sino-Japanese War and Queen Min the Heroine* was advertised in a full page when the agreed largest size of newspaper advertisement was restricted to a quarter of a page.

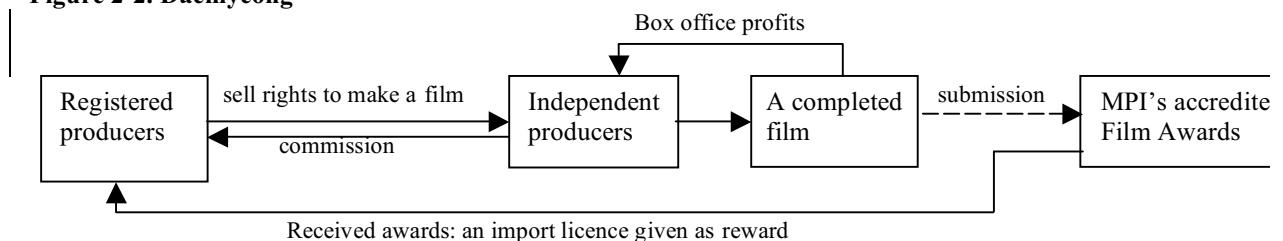
<sup>60</sup> Leading actors (Kim Jin-gyu and Han Seong) and actresses (Nam Jeong-im and Jeon Gye-hyon) use their real names as characters' names in order to enhance reality.

money under the PRS. The next section considers three business initiatives registered producers developed to maximise their profit-making opportunities.

### 1) The Janus Trade: *Daemyeong jejak*

*Daemyeong jejak* (hereafter *Daemyeong*) was perceived by registered producers as a subcontracting system absolutely necessary for remaining competitive, that is, to keep their registration status alive by utilising independent producers to fulfill their required film quotas. While its literal meaning is a production of a film under another company's name, it specifically refers to a production of an independent producer's film by using (borrowing) a registered producer's name. This practice emerged in late 1961 after the PRS was introduced, and permitted only a handful of registered producers to produce films, and as Lee Woo-seok, representative of a registered production company, Donga Export Co., in the 1960s, states, this was a business practice each and every registered film company became involved in (November 2005). Under this scheme, registered producers covertly subcontracted independent (unregistered) producers to produce a film. Since by law independent producers did not exist, they also cooperated with this scheme for their benefit, using the name of a registered producer to file paperwork such as a production application to the MPI and to get approval for it. In other words, production rights were traded as if they were tangible commodities. In return, registered producers gained a false production record and later collected commissions for letting independent producers use their names and have a production right, that is, profiting from selling a production right. As for independent producers, though illegal, they still had opportunities to produce films. Figure 2-2 explains how *daemyeong* worked.

**Figure 2-2. Daemyeong**



The nature of *daemyeong* changed over time. In the beginning *daemyeong* was born as an exchange of favors between registered and independent producers in a ‘you scratch my back and I’ll scratch your back’ way without exchanging any money. After the PRS was implemented in 1961, unregistered producers were forced to close their businesses and/or look for new jobs because they officially could not make films. The registered producers gladly extended this favor because in those years it was a small industry in which everyone knew everybody. There was no reason to be hostile towards their industry friends. In return, they, not independent producers, received production credits from the MPI. *Daemyeong* rapidly increased in 1963 in reaction to the revised MPL, which raised the annual quota of the minimum fifteen films for a registered producer. Even though they hurriedly planned for fifteen film productions, their human resources were limited. This situation afforded independent producers numerous opportunities to repay their favors to the registered producers. Small favors were simply expected and easily granted. This was how *daemyeong* was born and, thus, as producer Kim In-gi recalls in an interview conducted in 2005, his experiences of *daemyeong* in the early 1960s were pleasant<sup>61</sup>:

*Daemyeong* was not bad. ... We knew everybody. So, we asked registered producers to submit the film production application on behalf of us. ... It was not illegal. ... Even the MPI ignored *daemyeong*. In case of making a *daemyeong* film, in the opening credit we put two types of producers: producer in charge [*jejak damdang* – independent producer] and producer [*jejak* – registered producer] together (2005).<sup>62</sup>

An unexpected outcome of this practice was the copyright issue. While independent producers were busy making a film, partnering registered producers dealt with all legal paperwork including tax files on box office results because their

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<sup>61</sup> Kim is a veteran producer who worked for 162 film production companies between the 1950s and 1980s. Kim established Kim In-gi Productions in 1961 and produced three films under this practice: *Ondal the Fool and Princess Pyeong-Gang* (1961) with Sinmi; *Undercover Agent Park Munsu* (1962) with Tongbo; and *Sad Miari Pass* (1962) with Geukdong. Later he worked for registered producers as Taechang and Segi Sangsa.

<sup>62</sup> An independent producer was either marked as *jejak damdang* or *chong jihwi*, both meaning a producer-in-charge.

company titles were on every document necessary to produce and release a film. Because of this complicated production situation, Kim later on had to fight for recognition as the producer of his own films. In 2002 the EBS (Educational Broadcasting System) in Korea wanted to broadcast Kim's films on TV and contacted him to look for the producer (registered producer). Kim had to prove his copyright ownership of his films by presenting still photos taken from his office with film crews and letters from directors testifying Kim as the 'real' producer of these films.

In 1964 when the cartel became stronger, positioning themselves in the centre of the industry, the equilibrium of *daemyeong* holding give-and-take relationships together began to break down. The registered producers began charging a commission for lending a production right in the form of an advanced tax payment on future box office revenues. As Park Haeng-cheol, Shin Film's contracted producer, says, half of the commission was used to pay tax and the other half went to a registered producer's pocket (KOFA 2003: 195). Yet, when the box office result was better than expected, additional money was charged to independent producers for paying the difference in tax.

Soon *daemyeong* became a bone of contention between the MPAK and the KMPPA because registered producers aggressively took advantage of *daemyeong* as ways of earning extra revenue. First, they gradually increased commission. Second, they took import licences when an award-winning film was created by *daemyeong*. As early as March 1964 the MPAK identified these issues and accused registered producers of exploiting independent producers.<sup>63</sup> However, despite this situation, *daemyeong* progressed under the MPI's connivance: 130 out of 189 films were *daemyeong* in 1965 and it occupied two-thirds of the total production of the year. As expected, there were hardly any registered producers that achieved mandatory production of fifteen films a year on their own (*Chosun Daily* 3 February 1966: 5). Independent producers considered *daemyeong* one of the only ways to contribute to the film industry without being registered. They still could make films and potentially gain box office profits without investing large amounts of capital in the

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<sup>63</sup> Director Yun Bong-chun, who was president of the MPAK, wrote a column accusing registered producers of being greedy, taking advantage of independent producers twice by selling production rights and then taking import licences (*Silver Screen* January 1965: 110).

form of a studio and filmmaking equipment. Thanks to *daemyeong*, young and passionate independent producers such as Ho Hyeon-chan and Choi Hyeon-min still could enter the industry and produce art house films, which were not often attempted by registered producers.<sup>64</sup> Even though it was an unauthorised system, the MPI did not hinder *daemyeong* because it helped the industry reach the level of productivity the MPI wanted to see.

With the help of this subcontract system, the industry's productivity rose from 86 in 1961 to 189 in 1965 (KMPPA 1977: 46). *Daemyeong* was apparently one essential part of the industry, contributing to the productivity. This sudden increase, nevertheless, overloaded the industry's exhibition system: over 50 completed films produced in 1965 could not find cinemas for their release despite being scheduled for 1966 release (*Yeonghwa Yesul* January 1966: 132).

In 1966 *daemyeong* practice again met a turning point. The MPI intervened with this situation and banned *daemyeong* because the government's primary goal of inspiring productivity had been achieved by the mid-1960s. The MPI warned that any registered producer involved with *daemyeong* would lose its registration, and announced the production quota distribution system, limiting the annual production quota to 120 for the whole of the production industry. The KMPPA members agreed to stop selling their rights to please the MPI, but some still secretly offered their rights to independent producers for higher commission (*Silver Screen* March 1966: 70).<sup>65</sup> Increasing cost of *daemyeong* made independent producers suffer, while reducing their chances of getting *daemyeong*. One extreme case involved the death of an established director, Noh Pil, in late 1966.<sup>66</sup> Director Noh was in great debt and tried to compensate for it by making a profitable film. His plan failed because he could not afford to buy a production right, which apparently forced him to commit suicide (*Film TV Art* January 1967: 50; and *Yeonghwa Japji* January 1967: 102). Noh's death caused shock and grief among the film community and raised new

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<sup>64</sup> Ho was a film journalist and critic before he became a producer in the early 1960s. Ho produced six feature films and more than fifty documentaries and his most important work is *Late Autumn* (1966), which by most film critics is regarded as one of the best Korean films in history.

<sup>65</sup> According to director Lee Bong-rae (*Yeonghwa Segye* November 1966: 173), *daemyeong* commissions in 1966 were between 40,000 and 50,000 *won*. In 1968 it was raised to between one and 1.5 million *won* to buy a production right (*Shin Dong-a* October 1968: 359).

<sup>66</sup> According to KMDb, Noh (1928-1966) debuted in 1949 with *Pilot An Chang-Nam* and directed a total of sixteen films. Most of Noh's films were melodramas.

ethical issues about *daemyeong*. The MPI's new annual quota system was blamed for the worsening situation, ultimately causing his death. Film magazines and newspapers made a martyr of Noh as a way of raising awareness about this abusive practice.

Hence, toward the late 1960s as explained in chapter 1, the MPAK condemned registered producers, charging such high *daemyeong* commissions to independent producers and taking import licences away.<sup>67</sup> Under the threat of the MPAK's waging a nationwide strike of members, the KMPPA agreed to eliminate the annual quota limit and the MPI legalised *daemyeong*. A so-called 'PD [independent producer] System' was created, allowing each registered company to contract with five independent producers (*Shin Dong-a* October 1968: 359). The impact of these measures came instantly. On one side, independent producers were first pleased to see their activities being legalised. The number of productions soared from 172 in 1967 to 229 in 1969 (KMPPC 1977: 46) and about 80% of film productions were made by *daemyeong* in 1971 (*Modern Cinema* December 1971: 23-31). A total of 21 registered producers had between one and eight films produced by this practice, reaffirming how widespread *daemyeong* was. On the other hand, this PD System allowed only a handful of independent producers to work with registered producers, while the rest still had to pursue *daemyeong* out of the PD System. Furthermore, even those fortunate independent producers had to bribe the registered producers in order to maintain their contracts with them (*Shin Dong-a* October 1968: 359). Consequently, this measure worsened the production environment, for independent producers and some registered producers kept registrations only to earn *daemyeong* commission, eventually contributing to the dark age.

## **2) Import Licences as a Cash Cow**

As previously explained, the fact that the foreign films did better business at the box office began to raise eyebrows in the mid-1960s. Hong Kong martial arts films, spaghetti westerns and 007 James Bond action films, in particular, were

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<sup>67</sup> According to *Shin Dong-a* (October 1968: 359), more than 600 film people gathered, asking for amendment of the MPL and abolition of the production quota system. It was the first of its kind to demonstrate the collective power of the MPAK.

gaining popularity and making more profit than domestic films.<sup>68</sup> Hoping to get audiences back, domestic filmmakers quickly adapted these foreign film genres. For example, some popular martial arts series such as *One-Armed Swordsman*, which was first released in 1967, were adapted and re-created by Korean producers as the *One-Legged Man* series in the 1970s (Kim 2006). Spaghetti westerns were reshaped as Manchurian westerns, portraying Koreans in Manchuria fighting against the Japanese Army and Chinese bandits during the colonial period. The 007 James Bond series were transformed as South vs. North Korean espionage films. Nonetheless, foreign films were still luring audiences away from domestic films and foreign films were screened at cinemas for two weeks or more while local films were screened at cinemas for about a week. The Screen Quota System announced in 1966, requiring that one-third of all films screened per year should be of domestic origin, was often ignored. A new generation of younger filmgoers believed that foreign films were better quality in terms of narrative and aesthetics than domestic films (*Korea Cinema* September 1972: 99-103). Profitability of domestic films was increasingly lower and lower. Hence, more and more producers clamoured to receive import licences because it was seen as an easy tool to make money.

According to the Import Recommendation System (IRS), since 1962 the MPI set import quotas in the beginning of each year and distributed the set number of import licences to registered producers in accordance with the Import Licence Reward System (ILRS). Licences were based on production results, quality of finished products, domestic film exports, co-productions and international film festival submissions and awards. The government used the ILRS as an industry-controlling measure, and thus the focus of the ILRS changed from production outcome to film exports and co-productions, corresponding to the government's larger economic plans.<sup>69</sup> With the increasing popularity of foreign films the battle between registered producers to earn as many import licences as possible became

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<sup>68</sup> For example, in 1968 the number of domestic films screened was 204 while the number of foreign films was 80: roughly one-third of domestic films. In comparison, average audiences for foreign films were more than double those of domestic films: 107,269 and 40,271 (KMPPC 1977: 160).

<sup>69</sup> This reward system originated from the 1958 ME Notice No. 53, concerning preferential treatment to encourage domestic film production. According to this notice, a certain number of import rights were given to producers of high-quality domestic films, international award winning films, exported films, and importers of cultural or news films and high-quality foreign films (KMPPC 1977: 243).

fierce. Registered producers developed three ways of earning import licences, exploiting loopholes in import policy. First, they illegally traded an import licence among themselves or with import agencies for hard currency. Second, they falsified local film export results, raising numbers in order to gain more import licences. Third, they falsified international co-production results to serve the same purpose.

From early on, import licences were sold on the so-called black market. While registered producers tried to acquire as many licences as they could, most of them did not know how to engage in import business and some found that it was too complicated to manage on their own.<sup>70</sup> An example demonstrates how unprepared they were for the importation business. In 1965 the 12<sup>th</sup> Asian Film Festival was held in Japan and a group of registered companies visited Japan to participate in the festival. They had a hidden agenda of talking to foreign film sales agencies individually in regard to the purchase of foreign films. Due to the heated competition amongst them, the price for importing films was raised in general, resulting in their financial loss (*Yeonghwa Yesul* July 1965: 123). It was all because of their inexperience in the import business. As part of this black market process, illegally-operating import agencies also rose to the occasion to assist with the import business. According to *Film and Entertainment Yearbook* (1969: 133),<sup>71</sup> in 1968 there were 18 import agencies in operation and they handled about 90% of foreign film imports (about 50 films out of 60). They purchased import licences from registered companies for 3-6 million won each and negotiated with import agencies in Japan on behalf of registered producers.

Export results were falsified from the mid-1960s onwards. Since the early 1960s some films such as *Marines Who Never Returned* (1962), *The Red Muffler* (1964), and *Love Me Once Again* (1968) were exported through official channels and released overseas, in countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan.<sup>72</sup> Film export

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<sup>70</sup> Producer Gwak Jeong-hwan says in an interview (Kim 2003: 87) that he focused on film productions because he did not know what to do with foreign films.

<sup>71</sup> Importers officially disappeared from the film industry in 1963. From then on, import agencies worked clandestinely and their activities were rarely documented. *Film and Entertainment Yearbook* (1969) was the only document that enabled the author to trace and prove the existence of import agencies and their activities. Though *Film and Entertainment Yearbook* only briefly discusses import agencies, it was a great help in constructing the role of import agencies concerning the import licence trade.

<sup>72</sup> Korea's biggest export markets were Hong Kong and Taiwan, which occupied 70-80% of total exports, with a smaller percentage going to Japan and the US (KMPPC 1977: 77).

prices varied significantly. In most cases a film was exported for between \$5,000 and \$10,000 USD, including royalty and printmaking expenses (KMPPC 1977: 77). One of the most expensive films exported in 1966 was *Heart*, which was sold for \$5,000 USD. However, not all films were treated this way. Many films were exported with little money only to generate the necessary paperwork to receive an import licence: the lowest price paid for a film export in 1966 was \$100 USD (*Yeonghwa TV Yesul* January 1967: 52). In this case, profits from exporting a film were minimal, and a film's printmaking and shipping expenses were more than the royalties received. In another case, a cache of old Korean film prints was found in a Taiwanese customs warehouse (*Yeonghwa TV Yesul* September 1967: 16). They were merely sent to Taiwan, were never claimed by anyone, and there was no evidence that they were ever released. The increase in falsifying export results was directly related to the Park regime's strengthening export drive. In 1969, the MPI gave domestic export results the most import licence allocation. Hence, compared to 24 film exports that occurred in 1968, the number rose to 138 films in 1969 and hit a record high of 253 films in 1970 (KMPPC 1977: 156). While falsifying export results increased, the MPI took little action to prevent or stop them since they did not have the skill or manpower to monitor every suspicious deal.

Similarly, registered producers modified official reports making it seem as though the number of co-productions increased. In 1966 the MPI allocated more import licences to co-production results and counted them as local films. Registered producers falsified making co-produced films for two reasons: firstly it was to receive import licences and secondly it was to import Hong Kong films to Korea outside of the narrow import restrictions (*Wolgan Yeonye* January 1970: 50). According to producer Kim In-gi (2005), with the rising popularity of martial arts films, registered producers flocked together to import Hong Kong films, which were much cheaper than Hollywood films and did well in the box office. The easiest way of importing Hong Kong films was to introduce the film to the MPI as one 'co-produced' with Hong Kong companies. Counterparts in Hong Kong (mostly Shaw Brothers) seemed to understand this situation and agreed to sign co-production contracts with registered producers for show even though they were in fact selling their films to Korea (Cho 2004: 20). This kind of fake international co-production lasted until the early 1980s. Director Lee Hyeong-pyo who experienced this kind of

secret deal said that registered producers simply provided Hong Kong partners with a list of Korean names to include in the credits to make it look like a co-produced film. That was how a co-produced film such as *Duel to the Death* (1982), which has Lee's name listed as a director, was completed without his physical involvement with the production (26 October 2004):

That is not my film. That was a fake co-production. I was never on the set. I just gave my name for the credit. This kind of practice was prevalent and it was designed and pursued by film companies.<sup>73</sup>

Director Lee's experience is from the early 1980s, but the basic tricks used were the same, giving a sense of how this crooked process worked. Sometimes, a short scene with a random Korean actor was inserted into a film to make it appear as a co-produced film. At the same time, Shaw Brothers' films in the late 1960s and the early 1970s that were directed by and starring Koreans such as Chung Chang-wha, Chang Il-ho and Kim Ki-joo, who were building their careers in Hong Kong, were introduced to Korea as co-produced films (Cho 2004: 20). Fake co-production films such as *Journey To The West* (1966) and *Valley of the Fangs* (1970), which only had one short insert of a Korean actor in the entire film, were caught by the MPI because they contained an obvious lack of the previously discussed co-production features. Yet, most other films passed censorship without being discovered, enabling registered producers to continue cashing in on the system.

### **3) Bobbing for Presales with the Exhibitor-Investors**

As mentioned above, the PRS was developed along lines similar to *chaebol*, but on a much smaller scale. Size mattered because 'bank loans, source of most business and industrial funds in Korea, are not in general available for film financing' (Wade 1969: 10). Hence, a large percentage of most film funding was recruited within the industry, provided by exhibitors based on six regions: Seoul, Busan/Gyeongnam, Gwangju/Honam, Gyeonggi/Gangwon, Daegu/Gyeongbuk, and

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<sup>73</sup> Director Lee's other co-production film is *Schoolmistress* (1972). It was shot in Korea with Hong Kong actress Li Ching and Korea's top actor Shin Sung-il. Lee referred to this film as a 'real co-production film'.

Daejeon/Chungcheong. This region-based distribution network had been established since the late 1950s when the film market suddenly expanded, requiring more film supplies and advance screening line ups (Kim *et al.* 2003: 17).<sup>74</sup> Since then, exhibitors invested in productions and in return received exclusive screening rights in their own province.<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, only six prints of a film were allowed to circulate nationwide and sometimes competition occurred between exhibitors within the same province because both wished to have a distribution right for the same film.<sup>76</sup> In 1969, there was a total of 569 exhibitors in the country. Amongst them only 24 stood out as powerful players. They included 1<sup>st</sup> run cinema owners such as Samhwa Film, Jeil Film and Myeongbo Film, which often distributed their procured films to 2<sup>nd</sup> run cinemas in their regions (*Gukje Yeonghwa* 1970: 200-205).

Within this funding scheme, producers only had to invest less than 20% of the total budget, which covered writing screenplay and contracting directors and actors.<sup>77</sup> As a result, there was a significant reduction of risk for producers. Furthermore, if producers attracted funds in excess of the set budget, then the remainder became pure profit. As mentioned in an interview, in the eyes of a producer such as Gwak Jeong-hwan, the benefit of this funding scheme was obvious: ‘as long as a producer worked hard, he never lost money’ (2004). Producers could continue to produce a film with little money of their own because if one maintained

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<sup>74</sup> At that time, cinemas were short of films to run and thus provincial exhibitors clamoured for producers for more films, agreeing to invest in the films (*Wolgan Yeonye* December 1970: 38). See *Study on History of Motion Picture Distribution in Korea* written by Kim Me-hyun et al. (2003) to understand Korea’s distribution system. Despite the lack of industry statistics and publications regarding this topic, this book offers an insight into understanding how the old distribution networks, which existed before the introduction of multiplexes to Korea in 1999, worked under the given industry’s circumstances.

<sup>75</sup> According to Han Gap-jin, exhibitor from Busan/Gyeongnam, exhibitors initially paid about 60% of the advance payment to producers in exchange for the exclusive distributorship and paid the rest when receiving the print (Kim *et al.* 2003: 174).

<sup>76</sup> The number of prints was limited to six until 1988, which was the year Korea and the US agreed that the US could begin direct distribution of Hollywood films in Korea. As a result, in 1989, the number of prints allowed to circulate at any one time was increased to twelve. Between 1990 and 1993 each year saw an increase of one more print. In 1994 the print number regulation was abolished, and thus nationwide release of a film became available (Ahn 2005: 296-297).

<sup>77</sup> In extreme cases, producers put up only about 8% of the total investment. It seems that there was a set amount of investment allocated to exhibitors from each province. For example, in 1968 the ratio was: Seoul (16-17%), Busan/Gyeongnam (21-23%), Gwangju/Honam (17-18%), Gyeonggi/Gangwon (15-16%), Daegu/Gyeongbuk (17%), and Daejeon/Chungcheong (8-9%) (Kim *et al.* 2003: 12-24).

his credit, that is, a moderate success rate and diligent work attitude, exhibitors were ready to invest their money in his project. Past relationships and track record were important.

This practice, however, was risky for an exhibitor-investor. Exhibitors' profit was always unpredictable because their investment was somewhat like placing a blind bet:

Relationship between theatre owners and producers is economically reciprocal, which insures producer a  $33\frac{1}{3}\%$  profit before a feature goes before the cameras. Theatre owners apply to playdate a film before it is completed and popularity of the film is only incidental, ... (*Variety* 17 April 1968).<sup>78</sup>

Thus, both registered and independent producers were encouraged to maintain strong relationships with exhibitors-investors, often inviting them to Seoul to discuss a film project. They held events for exhibitors called *dokhoe*, which involved acting out the screenplay with voice specialists to get a sense of the project. The quality of a script, as well as the popularity of the cast and the reputation of a director drove presales, which had a local nickname, that is, provincial business (*jibang jangsa*). The stature of exhibitors is well described in *Confession of An Actress* (1967). When a film project was halted by Nam's protest of joining shooting, the producer was so upset that he almost fired her from the project. Yet, exhibitors insisted on keeping her because of her popularity in their provinces. The producer had to make every effort to Nam and exhibitors' suggestions because they controlled the money. This scene demonstrated the level of the power exhibitors had on the film production.

Exhibitors had a strong sense of what did and did not succeed in their provinces through their experiences. These exhibitor-investors amongst them were calling the shots just like 'New York Bankers' did to Hollywood films (Wade 1969: 10).<sup>79</sup> However, this interference, which focused on increasing box office results in

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<sup>78</sup> This article is written based on an interview with one of the registered producers, Joo Dong-jin, who was visiting the US to study American filmmaking.

<sup>79</sup> Exhibitor-investors seemed to be more professional because of their accumulated knowledge about the film market than New York bankers who worked at Wall Street,

particular provinces, often upset some producers and directors because it was seen as meddling in the other's realm. In extreme cases exhibitors requested that a certain star actor/actress be cast and a certain storyline be made to please their regional audiences. When this happened, the relationship between producers and exhibitors became known as that of master [exhibitors] and slave [producers] (*Silver Screen* August 1965: 58). Nonetheless, it should be remembered that this voice of being victimised might be less than accurate. As exhibitor Han Gap-jin says, competent producers would not have admitted the exhibitors abused them (*Kim et al.* 2003: 176).

Ultimately producers became overly dependent on a pre-sale investment, failing to develop other types of funding schemes, and thus leaving the industry vulnerable.<sup>80</sup> There were attempts to build an alternative and more stable funding scheme. Earlier in 1962 the MPI created an industry funding system called the Film Credit Union, which soon disappeared with lack of interest and participation from producers. In 1968 the MPI again announced a funding support by arranging bank loans from the Industrial Bank of Korea, but it never came to fruition. Attracting funding from overseas investors was anticipated through co-production vehicles, but producers exploited the co-production only to gain import licences. By the late 1960s the film market was oversupplied with products – mostly quota quickies, that is, ‘many cheap second-rate domestic films’ (Standish 1994: 73). With lower quality, exhibitors could not earn enough return on investment and thus began passing bad cheques (*Geundae Yeonghwa* December 1971: 23-31). Hence, the cash flow in the production industry became clogged with bounced cheques, aggravating the industry's poor financial situation.<sup>81</sup>

## 2. Shin Film and the Success of Industrialisation

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dealing with numbers more than the film market updates. In the US, bankers had been criticised for the tendency of investing in mediocre Hollywood films (Wade 1969: 10-11).

<sup>80</sup> A similar phenomenon occurred to the contemporary film industry in Korea. In the early 2000s Japanese buyers were in a frenzy about purchasing Korean films even before they were completed, contributing almost 70% to 80% of all Korean film exports in 2003 (\$40 million US dollars) and 2004 (\$60 million US dollars), leaving Korea's producers heavily reliant on the Japanese market (*The Hankyoreh* 10 June 2006).

<sup>81</sup> The aggravating financial situation in the late 1960s was not only spotted in the film industry. Between 1969 and 1971, Korean firms in various industries had financial problems. Thirty firms went bankrupt and 90 more were on the verge of bankruptcy in 1969. In 1970, 200 firms were bankrupt even after receiving foreign loans. Korea's external debt was raised to 30% of GNP (Cummings 1997: 362-63).

All of the above strategies of *daemyeong*, exploiting import licences and using presales were commonly used by registered producers, including Shin Film. However, for a company like Shin Film, which emerged as the largest major film company during the 1960s, these were only part of its business strategies. While most registered producers were busy following the MPI's lead, its representative Shin Sang-ok was envisaging Shin Film becoming like Columbia Pictures (Kim and Ahn *Cine21* 16 November 2001). From today's point of view, Shin Film occupying half of the industry's capacity (Yi 2008: 46), represented the epitome of the Park regime's industrialisation plan. As Shin Sang-ok recalled, Shin Film became so powerful that its rise caused a split in the industry: Shin Film vs. Chungmuro (the rest) (Lee *Cine21* 2003).<sup>82</sup> Such was Shin Film's reputation, and thus Shin Film's business plans included more than the common strategies detailed above.

Shin Film was created in 1961 as one of the sixteen registered producers.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, Shin Film's business soon grew much larger than anyone could have imagined. According to *Hanguk Daily* (13 August 1964: 7), by 1964 Shin Film grew as a company that employed over 250 staff, including directors, assistant directors and actors.<sup>84</sup> At the time Hanyang, one of Shin Film's competitors, had only 80 staff members – less than one third of Shin Film's. While other registered producers operated only one studio, Shin Film ran two studios: Wonhyoro and Anyang. Shin Film also later became a mother company of three other registered producers: Star (1965), Anyang (1967) and Shina (1968). Shin Film attempted vertical integration of its business by streamlining production, exhibition and distribution activities through his two cinemas, Hollywood and Myongbo in Seoul.

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<sup>82</sup> This talk of separation seems to have originated because of different locations of Shin Film and other film companies. While most film companies located in Chungmuro, Shin Film was based in a different area, Wonhyoro in Yongsan (Kim *The Hankyoreh* 12 April 2006).

<sup>83</sup> Shin changed his company names many times. Shin's first company was Visual Art Association established in 1952. The name was changed to Film Art Association (1954), Seoul Film Company (1958), and Shin Sang-ok Production (1959) before Shin Film was established.

<sup>84</sup> In 1963 Shin Film anticipated producing forty films per year while the other producers made plans to make fifteen to twenty films per year (*Yeonghwa Segye* June 1963: 50). Director Lee Jang-ho, who began his career at Shin Film in 1965, recalls that Shin Film owned a large properties storage building, a technology department, a planning department, an art department, an editing room, an acting studio and a directors' suite (*Cine21* 1999: 82).

Unlike other producers who focused on short-term goals of obtaining import licences, Shin Sang-ok dreamt of further industrialisation (Shin 2007: 18). Hence, apart from its regular use of aforementioned profit-seeking strategies, Shin Film sought after sustained development by initiating other long-term strategies: 1) flattering the regime; 2) embracing internationalisation; and 3) emphasising education.

### **1) The Political Favourite**

During the 1960s Shin Film rose to become an empire within Korea's film industry. While this growth resulted from its highly productive output, it was also aided by unprecedented support from the government. Producer Shin had friends in high places and he maintained good relations with the Park regime. Shin's personal relationship with Park Chung-hee began with *Evergreen Tree* (1961), which promoted the importance of the rural village development.<sup>85</sup> Apparently, the film impressed Park and he later invited Shin to the Blue House, Korea's presidential residence. It was to be the start of a long relationship. This film probably helped promote Park's agriculture policy in the 1960s, which focused on constructing infrastructure for the rural community. According to its policy, the government introduced modern agricultural machinery and farming methods, established the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (*Nonghyeop*), that is, a federation of agricultural cooperatives, and rural development administration, and announced the rural development law (Han 1999: 112-128). One of the military government's revolutionary pledges was to eradicate poverty and the rural development campaign was an important means to achieve this. In the early 1960s, Korea was predominantly an agrarian society with about 70% of its population based on farms. Chronic problems such as famine and high unemployment plagued an overwhelming proportion of society. The Park regime advocated the advancement of agricultural methods in order to increase the rice harvest. It also might have influenced building

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<sup>85</sup> This film was based on Shim Hun's novel *Evergreen Tree* published in 1935. This colonial novel dealt with young and passionate college graduates coming to a rural village to teach farmers modern agricultural techniques and to educate village kids.

Park's vision of *Saemaeul Movement*, a rural community development campaign that he launched in the early 1970s. Throughout the 1960s Shin and Park remained close.

Others such as producer Song Yu-chan and directors Yoon Bong-chun and Kim Su-yong looked upon Shin Sang-ok suspiciously, insinuating that Shin had influenced the content of film policy and caused changes to the industry system (*Yonye Japji* October 1970: 64; Kim 2005). Responding to them, Shin (2007) denied he ever had that much power: as a friend he simply agreed with Park's ideas for industrialisation. However, as Yi Hyoin (2008: 51) points out, Shin's frequent meetings with Park during the critical time of drafting film policy suggests that he 'cannot be free from such criticisms, regardless of the truth or falsehood of such claims.' Furthermore, given the fact that Shin received favours from the government, it is possible to say he 'collaborated' with Park and benefited from the cartel.

The benefits Shin Film enjoyed came in various ways. For example, the government was lenient about punishing Shin Film when it was caught violating laws. In 1962 the police investigated Shin Film for tax evasion because the company forged documents regarding staff salary and actor payments (*Chosun Daily* 10 April 1962: 3). A press conference was held by the police, briefing the case as well as giving credit to Shin Film for its contribution to the overall development of Korea's film industry. The investigation was kept out of the newspapers, and Shin Film was pardoned by the police. Another case occurred in 1963 when Shin Film began shooting *Dad, Please Get Married!* (1963) without lodging the mandatory production application to the MPI, which by law was illegal (*Yeonghwa Segye* July 1963: 48). After the hearing of complaints from other companies, Shin Film received a verbal warning from the MPI and lodged its application belatedly. It was processed quickly by the MPI, enabling the company to keep making the film. Sometimes President Park seemed to give a helping hand to Shin Film. The release of *The Sino-Japanese War and Queen Min the Heroine* (1965) was scheduled for mid-1965 when Korea was expecting to sign a normalisation treaty with Japan. Because this film dealt with a historical figure, Queen Min, who was killed by Japanese ninjas in 1907, most government officials opposed releasing the film at the time for fear of provoking the Japanese government. Nonetheless, according to Shin Sang-ok, Park believed the film showed that Korea's national spirit was still alive and advocated its

release as planned (Shin 2007: 79). Members of the industry considered Shin Film untouchable.

Shin Film's acquisition of Anyang Studio in 1966 might be the biggest case demonstrating how Shin Film was close to the core of political power. Anyang Studio was opened in 1957 with state-of-the-art facilities with the support of President Syngman Rhee (*Silver Screen* January 1965: 104-105), but closed its operation and was seized by Korea's Industrial Bank in 1959 because of financial difficulties.<sup>86</sup> Seven years later when Shin Film expanded business, he purchased Anyang Studio with aid from Park Chung Hee. His wife and actress, Choi Eun-hee, testified that the money used to purchase the studio was given to Shin out of Park's election campaign fund with the help of Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil (Choi and Lee *Oral History of Korean Arts*).<sup>87</sup>

In response to these favors Shin Film promoted the Park regime. The most outstanding example comes in the form of the production of *Rice* (1963). This film can be interpreted as Shin's overall attitude toward the Park regime, promoting the national rural development campaign. In this film, the military government is described as a friendly helper for farmers. *Rice* emphasised the Park regime's efforts to help farmers, in contrast to those of the previous inefficient and bureaucratic government. Apart from the content, which is discussed in detail in chapter 5, the ultimate symbol of support came with the timing of its release. Earlier, in 1961 the military government had promised that it would turn power over to a civilian government in two years. In mid-August 1963 the government announced the election would be on the 15th October 1963. The film was released in September 1963, which was during Park's presidential election campaign, and became a giant advertisement that generated positive publicity about Park and his agenda. Figures 2-3 and 2-4 show two posters and how they harmonised in terms of the message they wanted to deliver to the general public. Park's campaign poster had a similar image

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<sup>86</sup> This studio established by Hong Chan, president of Sudo Film Company, had been unused since 1959 because of the Sudo Company's accumulating debts and continued box office failures.

<sup>87</sup> *Oral History of Korean Arts* is a project that has been organised and operated by the government-sponsored organisation, Arts Council Korea, since 2003, aiming to collect oral history of representative senior artists in various fields. The outcome of this project, A/V materials and transcripts of each interview, except parts interviewees refused to publicise, is stored in a web archive and open to the public. This ongoing project, however, does not specify when each interview was conducted.

found in that of *Rice*: smiling farmers. In its campaign poster, the catchwords appeared: ‘Newer, Stronger Rural Developmental Plan’. A picture of Park Chung Hee and an old smiling farmer with a handful of rice-sheaves is printed on the left side of the poster. The right side of the picture reads: ‘Son of a Farmer, Diligent worker’. The ruling Liberal Party’s symbol was the cow.



Figure 2-3. Poster of *Rice* (*Donga Daily* 15 November 1963: 4)



Figure 2-4. Election Campaign Poster (*Donga Daily* 2 October 1963: 1)

The exhibition pattern of this film was also something of special note. In Seoul, it was screened not only in a regular cinema (Myongbo cinema), but also screened at a Seoul Citizen Hall, a public cultural venue designed for theatrical performances, exhibitions and concerts (*Chosun Daily* 24 September 1963: 6). Given

that most films were released at only one cinema in one region at a time, showing *Rice* in a Citizen Hall apparently increased the film's exposure rate, maximising its reach to general audiences. Even though there was the previous case of *Seong Chunhyang*, which also used two cinema venues, it was the result of accommodating overcrowded audiences, not the result of pre-planning. The use of a Citizen Hall for the release of *Rice* apparently ensured the film's message should reach larger audiences. In this sense, the audience number in Seoul must have been a lot more than 50,000 (KMDB) because this box office figure only represents that of cinema audiences. At the same time, the Park regime may have shown this message film for free in remote villages, industrial complexes, and poor neighbourhoods, where there was little access to media. The MPI already had established a free film screening service with 18 mobile screening teams in June 1961 to serve these aforementioned areas. They were sent out to different provinces for a one-month period with different programs consisting of newsreels, cultural films and select feature films with certain messages (*Donga Daily* 28 June 1961: 3).<sup>88</sup> In December 1963 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Korea was launched with Park Chung Hee as president. Shin Film's closeness to the government ensured that Shin Film sustained its leading position in the industry.

## **2) Leading by Internationalisation**

Another distinctive feature of Shin Film was its constant pursuit of international projects. It was first publicly noticed and reported by the media in 1962 when Korea hosted the 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Film Festival, which aimed at facilitating cultural exchanges through film screenings among Asian countries. Shin Sang-ok hosted Korea's first international film event as festival director, while the KMPPA was the official host of the event. This was an important cultural event for the Park regime to show neighboring countries how stable Korea was after the coup, and how advanced Korea's film industry was. Over 80 industry people came from five countries (Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia) and Hollywood star Rita

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<sup>88</sup> These activities were also led by the police force. This so-called guidance for ideological enlightenment was abolished in 2007 for its content being outdated (*The Hankyoreh* 30 October 2007).

Hayworth was a special guest. This event produced some interesting outcomes. First, Japanese films were exhibited in Korea for the first time since liberation. Second, Run Run Shaw, Hong Kong media mogul and the owner of the Shaw Brothers studio at the time, expressed his interest in co-productions with Korea (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 10 May 1962: 4). This was realized with Shin Film's first co-production with Shaw Brothers, the historical epic *The Last Woman of Shang* (1964).<sup>89</sup> While the festival primarily served its function as a cultural exchange among those attending, Korea utilised this event as an opportunity for enhancing her national image. International guests were invited to avail themselves of various tours to visit different places in Korea, including Panmunjeom, located in the middle of the demilitarised zone (DMZ), and the Blue House to see Park Chung Hee (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 14 May 1962: 3).

The festival was described by the popular press as a success in terms of its scale and smooth management of events. Korea won six awards at the Asian Film Festival including the best picture (*Mother And A House Guest*).<sup>90</sup> Industry members gained confidence in the quality of Korean films after seeing that they were recipients of almost half of the awards.<sup>91</sup> For Shin Film's part, the festival became an opportunity to declare that its cinematic quality reached to the top of the line. All of the six awards went to three films produced by Shin Film: *Evergreen Tree*, *Mother And A House Guest* and *Prince Yeonsan*. Shin Film also began moving toward international co-productions. The event lasted for five days, starting on 12 May 1962, and the closing date was set for 16 May, apparently for a political reason, to celebrate the first anniversary of the military coup d'état. Other cultural events such

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<sup>89</sup> This was the second time for Shaw Brothers having co-productions with Korea. Previously, in 1957 Korea's Hanguk Yonye and the then-Shaw's Co. Ltd. co-produced *Love with An Alien* (1957). Four more co-productions occurred in 1958 and 1959. These 1950s co-productions were initiated by Korean companies and thus more tailored to Korean audiences than to those of Hong Kong and Taiwan (Kar 2004: 31). Co-productions in the 1950s ceased when the Hong Kong partner pulled out because of insufficient box office returns on his side (Cho 2004: 16).

<sup>90</sup> The detailed list includes: best film (*Mother And A House Guest*); best actor for Shin Young-gyun (*Evergreen Tree*); best original score for Jeong Yun-joo (*Evergreen Tree*); best art direction for Jeong U-taek (*Prince Yeonsan*); best screenplay for Kim Gang-yun (*Evergreen Tree*); best supporting actor for Heo Jang-gang (*Evergreen Tree*).

<sup>91</sup> According to a column published in *Donga Daily* (18 May 1962: 4), the festival award-winning results show the advanced quality of Korean films and helped industry people overcome their 'inferiority complex' about Japanese films.

as the Seoul International Music Festival and the Seoul Industrial Exposition were held around the same time for the same reason.

Immediately after the festival, Shin Film started to pursue its international co-production projects with countries such as the US, Hong Kong and Japan. Shin Sang-ok's pursuit of internationalisation, which was demonstrated four years earlier than that of the MPI, suggests Shin's ambition aimed beyond Korea's borders. The MPI first announced its internationalisation agenda (by decree) in 1966. In mid-1962, immediately after the Asian Film Festival, Shin met with Philip Ahn, Korean-American Hollywood actor, and discussed the possibility of making a co-production film tentatively titled *Long Way From Home* (*Donga Daily* 29 July 1962: 4; *Seoul Newspaper* 29 July 1962: 4). This news was reported as being something bigger, that is, an 'international co-production with Hollywood'. In 1963 Shin Film announced its working with Shaw Brothers for co-productions (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 27 February 1963: 8). Two years later in 1965, Shin Film attempted a co-production project with the Japanese film company Daiei (*Chosun Daily* 26 December 1965: 7). Only co-productions with Shaw Brothers came to fruition, and yet Shin Film's continuous internationalisation efforts reveal where its priority was set.

Shin Sang-ok and Shaw Brothers focused on making large-scale historical dramas, which were based on a consensus of sharing stars, crews, locations, funding and markets. Hong Kong partners were interested in utilising Korea's locations such as old temples, ocean, mountains and snowy fields because they provided something similar to that of mainland China (Cho 2004: 18). The film's being a large-scale historical epic was a point of marketing and thus facts concerning production details appeared in film posters to impress readers. As the poster below shows, after a brief description of the film's heroin Tanji, it read: '1 year production period, 2 year pre-production period, 15,000 extras and 3,500 horses'. Its production budget was 500,000 USD (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 12 September: 8)



Figure 2-5. Poster of *Last Woman of Shang* (Kyeonghyang Daily 18 September 1964: 4)

*The Last Woman of Shang* (dir. Yue Feng), a Chinese historical piece about Ju-wang and his queen Tanji, who became his wife in order to take revenge on him, was shot at the Shaw Brother's Clearwater Bay Studio in Hong Kong for court scenes and in open fields in Korea for battle scenes. Korea's top actor Shin Yong-gyun was the leading actor and Hong Kong's top actress, Linda Lin Dai was the leading actress. A special Korean version was made with actress Choi Eun-hee and director Choi In-hyeon. The outcome was the perfect marriage of best resources from two companies and two countries:

Shaw Brothers' magnificent costumes, production designs, and highly developed filmmaking techniques met Shin Film's know-how of open location filming based on previous productions of war films and period pieces, relatively cheaper crew costs, and many wide open locations in Korea (Cho 2004: 119).

Shin Film earned an opportunity to show its (co-produced) films to overseas markets on a regular basis because Shaw Brothers released them to other Asian

countries including Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore through its networks. Shin Film kept its distribution right to the Korean market. The work relationship, built up through this co-production, paved the way for several others to follow: *The Goddess of Mercy* (1966), *That Man in Chang-an* (1966), *The King with My Face* (1966), *The Bandits* (1967), *The Thousand Years Old Fox* (1969) and *The Ghost Lovers* (1974).<sup>92</sup>

### 3) Focus on Education

Shin Sang-ok had shown interest in education from as early as 1962 when he established an acting studio within Shin Film. At first, his interest in education may very well have been strategic, that is, Shin's involvement with education originated for a practical reason. Shin Film grew larger and produced about 30 films a year, but there were not enough production crews and actors who could support its production activities. Shin Film needed to have more people to work with and more new faces to star in new films. Shin Film acting studio offered a one-year training course taught by contracted directors and actors concerning various themes, including vocal exercise, horse riding and dance (Shin 2007). There were two other acting schools, International Actors' Academy and Korean Actor Professional Institution, but in terms of curriculum Shin Film provided better quality since it utilised top star actors and directors contracted with Shin Film as guest speakers to share their experiences and inside information.

When Shin Film acquired Anyang Studio in 1966, its involvement with education expanded by opening a film institution called Anyang Film Art School within Anyang Studio site. It was a government-approved academic institution, aiming at training new talents in various fields. At the time, Korea had only a few film institutions. Seorabeol Art College was the first established in 1953, providing two-year courses. Three universities launched theatre and film departments at the end of the 1950s: Chungang (1959), Hanyang (1960) and Dongguk (1960). Anyang Film Art School was somewhat different from these academic institutions because of its

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<sup>92</sup> *The King with My Face*, *The Bandits* and *The Ghost Lovers* were produced not by Shin Film, but Anyang Film, Deokheung Film and Shin Production respectively. All of these film companies were owned by Shin. For more information about how Korea and Hong Kong developed their co-production relationship, see one of the Pusan International Film Festival's publications in 2004: *Rediscovering Asian Cinema Network: The Decades of Co-production between Korea and Hong Kong*.

close working relationship with Shin Film and its ability of accessing the state-of-the-art filmmaking facilities and teachers who were working in the field professionally, including actress Choi Eun-hee. Choi Eun-hee, Korea's top actress and Shin Sang-ok's wife, became principal of the school from 1967. The school offered a two-year course and had three departments – acting, music and dance (Choi 2009). It consisted of six classes and each class had 60 students. These students received valuable lessons from established members of the industry who were invited through Shin and Choi's connections. Even though the abduction of Choi and Shin to North Korea in 1978 caused the management of the school to be void and Anyang Film Art School to change its name to Anyang High School of Arts under a new management, when they came back to Korea two decades later, Shin and Choi again engaged themselves with education, opening up Anyang Shin Film Art Centre.<sup>93</sup> Whilst it may be that all they could do was to run the Center (because of a general lack of other job opportunities), it appears that Shin used education to reconnect to the past.

### **3. Conclusion: Cartel – Core of the Golden Age**

Throughout the 1960s the PRS nurtured central industry players in the form of registered producers who fought to remain members of the import, export and production cartel. With its quasi-Hollywood studio model, the PRS provided the foundation for further industrialisation by giving a cartel control over directors, popular actors and actresses, and the ability to earn money from both domestic and foreign film exhibition. Hence, registered producers were the biggest contributors and beneficiaries of the 1960s Golden Age of Korean Cinema.

The cartel then relied on legal and illegal activities to make the system work. Some of their business strategies may seem absurd and retrogressive, but they were effective in Korea. More constructive business strategies were attempted by Shin Film. As the 'major studio' during the 1960s it demonstrated the level of capacity to pursue a long-term goal of sustaining its development, attempting to modernise production skills and engage with internationalisation. Desire to achieve and retain this status was so intense that it brought a dynamic force to drive the film industry.

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<sup>93</sup> Anyang Shin Film Art Centre was closed in 2006 after Shin Sang-ok died.

Money and the promise of prosperity drove productivity, helping the industry reach and enjoy the golden age. The Golden Age of Korean Cinema, nevertheless, moved to the next stage, which was starkly contrasting since it was called as the dark age. The 1970s was the time when the industry shrank, and also registered producers' operations shrank, too. The film industry was basically a victim of the developmentalist state policy of the 1960s.<sup>94</sup> However, filmmakers were not merely victims of the military regime. They entered the industry to survive, and so they benefited regardless of whether they were registered or not.

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<sup>94</sup> While the film industry share many similarities with the *chaebols* in terms of its development pattern, there is also difference between them: *chaebols* still continue to exist while the PRS disappeared in 1980s. Chung et al. (1997: 42-45) provides three reasons for how the *chaebols* survived: 1) the government became overly dependent on them for economic reasons; 2) the *chaebols* became less dependent on the government; and 3) chaebols' leaders remained in their posts while political regimes changed.

### Chapter 3. Propaganda Production and Anticommunist Filmmaking Efforts

The two previous chapters have explained how film policy and censorship were used to control the development of Korea's film production system and how producers adapted to new modes of production. Pushed by the government's overall industrialisation drive, the film industry rapidly expanded in terms of the number of films produced. New genres such as anticommunist, enlightenment and literary adaptations were developed under the government's heavy-handed legislation. This chapter investigates characteristics of one of these conspicuous genres, the anticommunist genre, and how it rose under the heavy influence of Korea's political and cultural background.

During the 1960s, popular film genres such as melodrama, comedy and historical drama shared similar features frequently seen in Hollywood films.<sup>95</sup> Other genres such as martial arts came from Hong Kong, and they too fitted into traditional genre discussions. The literary adaptation genre, which is discussed in chapter 4, was an implicit form of propaganda that visualised previously-published literature within the traditions of art house filmmaking based on realism, authorial expressivity and modernity. The anticommunist and enlightenment genres were two explicit propaganda genres that shared close connections with government policy. Anticommunist films in particular were encouraged and often coerced by the government because of their overt anticommunist stance, stemming directly from the regime's first national policy, which defined the political identity of the South Korean government under Cold War politics.

A great percentage of films produced in Korea in one way or another dealt with Korea's modern political history, which included colonisation, civil war, national division, military coup d'état and rapid industrialisation. Many of political, social, economic and cultural events and incidents that happened in Korea were often embedded in genre films. This is not to say that commercial and industrial concerns had less impact on genre constructions. Rather, Korea's political situation played a larger role in the formation of local genre conventions and limitations.

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<sup>95</sup> A total of fifteen categories of film genre were in the market: melodrama, comedy, action, thriller, historical drama, mystery, military, bio-pic, religion, music, martial arts, literary adaptation, enlightenment, anticommunist and all others (KMPPC 1977: 46).

This chapter discusses the generic evolution of anticommunist films, attempting to evince the conventional role of national policy films in supporting the regime and justifying its ruling ideology. It analyses how the anticommunist genre developed into a 'super genre', showing how it transformed along two closely-linked political and commercial lines. On the one hand, it engaged several different narrative forms such as war, melodrama, comedy, horror and spy action film as a way to maintain its livelihood and to follow the shifting emphasis of the anticommunist policy in Korea's fast-moving political circumstances. On the other hand anticommunist films were made as large-scale entertainment by registered producers in order to maximise box office potential.

This genre-traversing characteristic, which it is argued typifies its super-genre nature, is key to understanding the complex development of the anticommunist genre. To me, the genre became a super genre, not in terms of the popularity of anticommunist films, but in terms of how many different genres adopted anticommunist elements. As the name suggests, the genre propagated anticommunism, encouraged nationalism and criticised communist North Korea,<sup>96</sup> and thus it became defined by its philosophical integrity, rather than for a set formula such as setting, style or plot. This special quality enabled films to cross over genre boundaries. Hence, the anticommunist genre became a showcase of 'a level of genre intermixing rarely attempted in Hollywood movies about the war' (Diffrient 2005: 23). A brief history of the anticommunist genre is first provided in order to understand its origin and then three representative cross-genre films are analysed: *Five Marines* (1961) as a war film, *North and South* (1965) as a melodrama and *Correspondent in Tokyo* (1967) as a spy action film. These three case studies are used to illustrate how different anticommunist films utilised diverse narrative structures and conventions to create new super-genre conventions.

A notable gap existed between what the Park regime wanted, that is, a popular form of propaganda, and what producers and directors wanted to make for the public. For the government, the anticommunist genre needed to communicate

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<sup>96</sup> After Park Chung Hee commanded political leadership in 1961, one of the first orders he made to the military and the police was to arrest pro-communist sympathisers. More than 4,000 people were arrested and imprisoned. This measure announced the regime's ideological identity to the Korean public as well as to the US – Korea's biggest allied nation (Kang 2004a: 322).

that communists were brutal and dangerous enemies (Ho 2000: 142). For producers, anticommunist films needed to make money either by box office returns, or by winning lucrative import licences. For film directors, making an anticommunist film gave them a chance to apply their artistry on the big screen.

## 1. Origins of the Anticommunist Genre

From the beginning, anticommunist films were identified by their obvious political messages. The so-called first anticommunist film *A Fellow Soldier* was produced by the USIA (United States Intelligence Agency) based in Seoul and released in August 1949 shortly after the right-wing Syngman Rhee government (1948-1960) took over Korea's sovereignty from USAMGIK (United States Army Military Government In Korea).<sup>97</sup> It tells the story of two brothers who escape from the North because of deteriorating living conditions and find a new life in the South. Once in the South one brother becomes a soldier and the other becomes a policeman, each working to eradicate communism. The ideological split between the South and North was soon embraced on a larger scale by the film industry as a popular topic. The Korean War (1950-1953) resulted in the deaths of 5.2 million soldiers and civilians (over one-sixth of Korea's total population) and also left about 300,000 widows and 100,000 war orphans (Jang *Tongil Daily* 25 June 2007). Seeing hundreds and thousands of casualties and experiencing the separation of families left people traumatized, which became another topic that producers were interested in. As a result, between 1949 and 1960 a total of seventeen anticommunist films were produced (KMPPC 1977: 47). Although this number may seem small, various subjects derived from the nation's ideological and physical separation were tested before eager audiences returning to the cinema.

War, split families, partisans and armed infiltrators to the South, as well as spies, provided a new source for a variety of stories. For example, director Lee Kang-chun's *Arirang* (1954) deals with the Korean War with a story of a family in the North and two wounded American soldiers who found shelter with them. Young-

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<sup>97</sup> According to the USIA website (<http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/>), USIA is "an independent foreign affairs agency within the executive branch of the U.S. government. USIA explains and supports American foreign policy and promotes U.S. national interests through a wide range of overseas information programs."

jin and Young-hui, the daughter and son of the family, run away with the US soldiers to escape from the communists.<sup>98</sup> Director Han Hyeong-mo's *Breaking the Wall* (1949) is a tragic family drama set in the chaotic post-liberation period, portraying ideological conflicts that are impacting on each family member.<sup>99</sup> Another film by Han Hyeong-mo's *The Hand of Destiny* (1954) is about the double life of a female North Korean spy, who is torn between love and loyalty to the Communist Party. Margaret, who disguises her identity as a bar girl, is described as a beautiful and innocent human being who resisted becoming a cold-blooded communist spy.

Director Lee Kang-cheon's *Piagol* (1955) focused on a communist partisan's story. Lee pictures North Korean partisans who remained in the South after the armistice in 1953. The film depicts their pursuit of survival and conflicts arising between them. Disillusioned by their harsh life on the run in the mountains, Ae-ran who once was committed to the Communist Party leaves the mountains and turns herself in to the South Korean government. The final scene of *Piagol* is famous because of its censorship case, that is, how the government intervened and transformed the scene to endorse anticommunist ideology. In the original version, it was unclear where Ae-ran was heading. The ambiguity of this scene caused trouble with censorship. The dramatic character development, which added a sense of reality and elicited sympathy from the audience, was perceived by the censors as negative and pro-communist. The film's sense of realism boldly touches the human side of these communists. Praising this attempt, film scholar Lee Young-il, the so-called 'father of Korean Cinema studies', called the film 'one of the earliest anticommunist humanism films (2004: 245)'. Yet, because of this, the film was initially banned from public screenings, becoming a victim that clashed with the nation's anticommunist ideology.<sup>100</sup> Apparently, director Lee worked on re-editing the movie in order to overcome this criticism and to release the film. After the last scene was

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<sup>98</sup> As the name of the film suggests, director Lee's *Arirang* pays homage to Na Un-gyu's silent film classic *Arirang* (1926). Names of main characters and the initial setting of a narrative are borrowed from it.

<sup>99</sup> The film was released in October 1954, two months after *A fellow Soldier* was produced. It was produced by a private film company, Kim Bo-chul Production. Considering that *A Fellow Soldier* was produced by the USIA, *Breaking the Wall* was the first Korean-produced anticommunist film.

<sup>100</sup> According to the Ministry of Education, the film was not seen as an anticommunist film and therefore might negatively impact on society because it described South Korea as an unruly country without a military or police force (*Chosun Daily* 25 August 1955: 3).

dissolved with the image of the Korean flag, suggesting Ae-ran was headed for South Korea in the end, the film passed censorship and was screened in cinemas across the country.

In the late 1950s anticommunist film productions were minimal: 0 (1957); 1 (1958); 1 (1959); and 1 (1960) (KMPPC 1997: 47). Anticommunist film production in the overt style discussed with the above films, nearly ceased to exist by the end of the 1950s. The Syngman Rhee government did not fully utilise film to mobilise the public, at least not in the same aggressive way that can be seen in the Park Chung Hee era. Despite the Rhee government's strong attempt to stay in power, it lacked insight and a detailed plan to engage the media as an advocate for its political power and change. In a sense, for the Rhee government the anticommunist ideology was less important than the anti-Japanese ideology, which was also emphasised more in order to promote President Rhee's participation in the independence movement before liberation (Cho 2001a: 333). After Park came to power, this would soon change. As the next section shows, the Park regime utilised the anticommunist ideology as a way to support its power and spread its messages nationwide by encouraging production of propaganda materials through the NFPC and private industry.

## **2. Anticommunist Genre As A Super Genre**

A genre is created on the basis of following a traditional formula, which is a 'coherent, value-laden narrative system' (Schatz 1981: 16). It contains recurring and overlapping elements such as plot, aesthetic styles, emotional expectation, settings, locations, motives and textual conventions (Maltby 2003: 75). Audience responses to these elements are believed to be a major force in the process that motivates filmmakers to improve a genre's conventions through 'repetition in difference' (Neale 1980: 50). Hence, the genre has a life of rising and falling: 'the genres that are successful at the box office become immediately fashionable, are widely imitated and spoofed by inferior quickies, and then, as soon as the genre or type has peaked and the market performance drops, fall out of favor' (Yau 2001: 4). This is how a new genre replaces an old genre.

However, the conventional formulae that explain the livelihood of a genre are unable to accurately describe the anticommunist genre found in Korea. The 'reciprocal' relationship between the audience, filmmakers and businessmen (producers and exhibitors) (Schatz 1981: 5) is missing from Korea's anticommunist genre. The transformation of the anticommunist genre was largely supported by direct government persuasion and financial subsidies coming from the Import Licence Reward System (ILRS). That is, the primary demand for anticommunist film came from the government. Responses from filmmakers, businessmen and audiences were an afterthought, resulting in a 'top-down' design, rather than a project with mutual contributions.

Looking at the characteristics that are deeply entrenched in the anticommunist film enables an understanding of how this genre developed in complex ways. The anticommunist genre can be identified as one dealing with anticommunist ideology, which is one of the Park regime's core political ethos. The genre aims to inspire people to fight against communists and spread disillusionment about communism (Cho 2001a: 332). Ho Hyeon-chan, film reporter and independent producer in the 1960s, depicts this overt nature below:

The anticommunist genre was the outcome of the era where anyone should wear anticommunist ideology around themselves. Under the slogan of anticommunism, even bloody revenges and slaughters were allowed to be expressed on screen because creating an anticommunist hero needed fearless and heroic action sequences. Audiences enjoyed entertaining action sequences and narrative structures seeking justice were often utilised. However, this genre failed to reach far to explore the nature of the communist ideology (Ho 2000: 143).

Because of its obvious links to South Korea's core social, political and cultural identity, the anticommunist genre emerged as one of the representative genres of the 1960s. The total number of anticommunist film productions during the 1960s reached 75 out of a total of 1666 films, which followed behind melodrama (831), action film (278) and comedy (160) genres (KMPPA 1977: 47). Given the fact that production of anticommunist films continued over three decades until the 1980s

when the Cold War protagonism began collapsing, and many newspaper and film magazines published articles about the state of the genre, one can say that the anticommunist film was perceived as one of the better-established genres of the period. Yet, even despite its relatively low numbers, one of the least-known traits is its ability to cross over all other genre forms such as melodrama, war and action films which, if analysed in a different way, easily make the anticommunist genre the largest category of films produced during the 1960s.

One distinctive feature of the anticommunist genre is that there are no particular structural genre conventions to follow as long as it touches upon the theme of anticommunism. In other words, the typical characteristic of an anticommunist film was the infusion of the anticommunist ideology in content. Thus, filmmakers could invent new trends over time depending on the genres popular around the time, pleasing audiences as well as satisfying producers' commercial interest (See Figures 3-1). (See Figure 3-1).

**Figure 3-1. Anticommunist Genre As a Super Genre: A New Canon of Genre Films**



According to the *Yeonghwa Japji* article *Problems of the Anticommunist Films*, the ultimate goal of the anticommunist genre was to inspire anticommunist ideology and, thus, there are no set structural rules that will limit its spread (March 1968: 66). Absence of a consistent system in the anticommunist genre has

continually caused confusion about how to address this genre, which seemingly covers a wide range of genre conventions. Schatz stresses that a genre has to equip consistent cinematic formats:

To identify a popular cinematic story formula, then, is to recognise its status as a coherent, value-laden narrative system. Its significance is immediately evident to those who produce and consume it. Through repeated exposure to individual genre films, we come to understand the system and its significance. We steadily accumulate a kind of narrative-cinematic gestalt or “mind-set” that is a structured mental image of the genre’s typical activities and attitude (1981: 16).

For this reason, film scholar Lee Young-il (2004: 365-378) overlooked the anticommunist genre as part of his discussion of the eight dominant genre productions during the 1960s and placed the anticommunist films under the thriller/action genre category.<sup>101</sup> Apparently Lee found the anticommunist genre hard to fit within his nominated genre classification standards such as style, plot and theme. Although the term ‘anticommunist genre’ was often used in newspapers, film trade magazines and government documents, Lee’s avoidance suggests the genre’s yet-to-be established status in Korea’s film history.

Yet, the unique character as a ‘super genre’ that crosses over conventional genre boundaries has been explored by contemporary scholars such as Cho Jun-hyeong and David Scott Diffrient with the concept of ‘parasitism (*gisaengseong*)’ (Cho 2001a: 333) and an ‘umbrella genre’ (Diffrient 2005b: 23) respectively. The present discussion of this genre as a super genre is built upon their ideas, and expanded to explain its rare transcending nature. Cho uses the notion of a parasite to explain how the anticommunist genre feeds upon other genre conventions. According to Cho, when anticommunist film met a different genre, it acted as a catalyst for change in the encountered genre system. Nonetheless, this overly simplistic idea does not explain the full capacity of the anticommunist genre and how it merged with other genres under its wings. The aggressive side of the

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<sup>101</sup> These eight genres included: melodrama; comedy; thriller/action; historical drama; youth drama; art house cinema; co-productions (Lee 2004: 344-45).

anticommunist genre can be better described as a nurturing host rather than a parasite for its influential power over other genre films.

Compared to Cho, Diffrient's concept of an 'umbrella genre' better explains the genre's ability to embrace other genre films. The 'umbrella genre' helps an understanding of its nature of including 'everything from war films and division dramas (narratives centered on divided families and ideological conflicts) to espionage thrillers and melodramas' (2005: 23), giving a clearer sense of this genre than that of Cho. However, Diffrient's discussion about the anticommunist genre also has its limitations because he encloses his discussion within the boundaries of war films. This becomes clearer when Diffrient shows how the anticommunist genre is really about 'military enlightenment' (2005b: 22), which contradicts his first idea of the 'umbrella genre'. Given the fact that Korea's first anticommunist film, *A fellow Soldier* was released in 1949, four years after the country's ideological split between the North and the South in 1945 and a year before the Korean War, Diffrient's limiting discussion of the anticommunist genre disregards its historical origins – beginning from the liberation in 1945 and the following split of the US-led South and Soviet Union-led North. War film is only part of the anticommunist genre's realm. Within the boundaries of the anticommunist genre all types of genre systems and conventions co-existed.

Both Cho's and Diffrient's understandings of the anticommunist genre fail to capture the broad and dynamic possibilities of anticommunist genre, which expanded its relationship with all other major genres. Understanding the anticommunist genre as a super genre leads to an understanding of how it was built effectively as a genre for the purposes of promoting propaganda on a wider scale. The super genre concept is a key to understanding the genre's progress and longevity. The strong point behind the anticommunist genre is its use of different conventions and formats as a regular practice. This super genre quality, that is, similar to what is noticed in a super hero character, has a power that goes above and beyond the conventional borders. It merges with the other genre that it encounters, and becomes stronger.

This decision to traverse over genre boundaries was made deliberately by producers and directors in calculation of the popular genre of the time and artistic consideration. They had to please the government as well as the audiences. It is important to remember that the funding did not come from the government. As

discussed in chapter 2, financial support was raised from provincial exhibitors, who had to please their patrons. Under these complex circumstances, a director had to strike a balance between delivering the government ideology and commerciality to the audience. Producers pursued the anticommunist filmmaking projects as long as they resulted in either an import licence or box office success. Hence, the anticommunist genre was represented in the forms of war, action spy, melodrama, literary adaptation, comedy and horror as Figure 3-1 showcased.

### 3. Transgenre Possibilities

Anticommunist ideology had been one of the core concerns after the Syngman Rhee Government was formed in 1948. Thereafter, film directors had experimented with mixing anticommunist ideology and various popular film genres without prioritising a single dominant genre convention. Anticommunism as a national focus was strengthened in scope when Park Chung Hee came to power and declared it as the first national policy. Its importance was underlined with the subsequent establishment of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency and the launch of the Anticommunist Law in 1961. As discussed in chapter 1, the Park regime used this ideology to promote the new military government and legitimise its rule, and chose film as the primary medium to carry this mission.

Anticommunist filmmaking efforts were noticed in both official and private filmmaking scenes. The National Film Production Centre (NFPC) produced newsreels and cultural films concerning the new government and its military revolution, and the private industry also had to participate in making a ‘*revolutionary film (hyeokmyeong yeonghwa)*’ to celebrate the achievements of Park Chung Hee and his fellow military leaders (*Gukje Yeonghwa* October 1961: 49). Anticommunist film became part of the revolutionary movement, reassuring the public that the military government would lead them to safer lives by protecting them from military invasion. Similarly the anticommunist film in the US helped the nation’s strengthening of its security system:

The Cold War cultural consensus produced political power in the 1950s. It helped to build national security apparatus. That apparatus survived the

breakdown of the consensus and survived the 1960s. By the time the cultural consensus stopped producing power, the power institutions were in place (Rogin 1984: 18-19).

Gaining ideological consensus was the first and foremost step in strengthening the national defense system. For this reason, the Park regime continually supported the anticommunist film production as well as its exhibition for free screening to remote areas through the MPI's mobile film screening service.

With this in mind, different producers and directors used this support to couch anticommunist ideology in different ways. In accordance with the external political, social and cultural contexts, some dominant narrative forms and styles that appeared amongst others included war, spy action and melodrama films.

First, war film conventions were quickly embraced in the early 1960s as a dominant form of the anticommunist film production. The subject of the Korean War was used to recall the communal memory from the Korean War, which was still very much 'felt', to illustrate the dichotomy of good South vs. bad North. Second, action/thriller conventions became a new dominant form of the anticommunist genre production in the late 1960s. This was under the influence of popular international spy film imports in the mid 1960s, best represented by the James Bond series. While the government's policy support of the anticommunist filmmaking increased to generate more productions, the genre encountered difficulties in re-inventing itself because of its boring stereotypical storyline of emphasising ideological education and, thus, little audience support for the genre existed. Third, melodrama conventions were often utilised in the anticommunist productions throughout the 1960s in a way to engage the ongoing issue of the separated family tragedy. These three points are best exemplified in an analysis of these previously unrecognised films listed below.

### **1) Reproduction of War Memories Through Spectacle: *Five Marines* (1951)**

Anticommunist films generally showed people how brutal the communists were by stirring up recent memories of Korea's war and created a continuous reminder of the threat from the North. The anticommunist genre ultimately aimed at

educating the public about the need to strengthen national security because the Korean War not only killed and wounded millions of people but also ‘left its scars on an entire generation of survivors, a legacy of fear and insecurity that continues even now ...’ (Eckert *et al.* 1990: 346). The war film conventions were introduced for this reason and used to depict brave South Korean soldiers on the battlefields.

The early adaptation of the war film conventions to the anticommunist genre filmmaking appeared to be caused by two reasons. First, producers could easily show their cooperation with the government’s emphasis on the propaganda filmmaking by making war films. Second, they could attract audiences to cinemas for their entertainment with war spectacles. It seems that in the beginning producers perceived the ‘anticommunist’ film as a commercially attractive genre. As Lee Young-il (2004: 368-371) observed, the war films, which depicted either the Korean War or the Vietnam War, were perceived to be more entertaining than other genres by offering such spectacles. That is, many anticommunist films were made primarily because the audience as well as directors and producers wanted to make them for entertainment and to show the evil of North Korea. The war films were perceived as commercial films whether they were propaganda-driven or not, and commercial success was a significant reason behind their productions.

However, a more rigorous approach to the anticommunist genre may be required because when making war films some directors seemed to approach the subject matter in ways to deal with ‘issues related to recent history and social reality: rather than how far they fulfilled the ideological demands of the government’ (Lee 2001: 51). As the following analysis of *Five Marines* illustrates, director Kim Ki-duk encapsulated the war situation in an entertaining way by focusing on growing human relationships among marine squad members.

*Five Marines* was one of the first anticommunist films produced in the post-May 61 era, describing marines’ bravery and achievements during the Korean War. According to the Korean Movie Database, it was released in October 1961 and attracted audiences of 50,000 in Seoul. Director Kim Ki-duk states the idea of making this film originated from the real experience of Marine General Kim Dong-ha, one of the coup members (KOFA 2005a: 26). General Kim used his personal relationship with Cha Tae-jin, Geukdong’s representative, in order to make a film promoting the marines’ bravery. The idea was in line with the Park regime’s

revolutionary filmmaking efforts, which advocated South Korea's proud military history. General Kim facilitated the film production with in-kind support.

In the beginning the film introduces different marine squad members and shows how they get close to each other by sharing their backgrounds and experiencing the loss of two squad members. In the meantime, North Korea's top military secret of building up an ammunition storeroom is discovered and the headquarters decide to send commandos to destroy it. Platoon leader Oh and four marines volunteer to take revenge on the deaths of their fellow soldiers. They infiltrate into the North Korean army camp at night by crossing a river, and successfully blow up the storage. Four are killed during the escape and only one marine comes back to the headquarters with the tragic news.

In her discussion of *The Stray Bullet* (1960), Hye Seung Chung mentions that the film 'commingles and intermixes Hollywood melodramatic tropes and realist South Korean aesthetics' (2005: 119). This is a sensible observation given the fact that Korea had had a historical relationship with Hollywood cinema since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Brian Yecies observes that the influx of Hollywood films into the Korean peninsula during the Japanese occupation period was so immense and thus calls the years between 1926 and 1936 as 'Hollywood's First Golden Age' in Korea (2005: 59). The flood of American films circulated in Korea during this time stimulated local film production and provided a sense of modernity among Korean filmmakers. Later, during the US occupation period, Hollywood's position in Korea was intensified after the CMPE (Central Motion Picture Exchange), a semi-government body under the USAMGIK and representative of the Motion Pictures Export Association of America, seized power over all film imports and distribution.<sup>102</sup> The flood of Hollywood films in Korea continued after the Korean War and made significant impacts on the genre formation of the film industry, which was recovering from the ruins and ashes of the war.<sup>103</sup> Hence, Korea's melodramas of the 1950s and 1960s 'register palimpsestic traces of Hollywood's tropes and iconography' (Chung 2005: 123) and so did the war films. The story of *Five Marines*

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<sup>102</sup> For more details about the Hollywood film domination over Korea, see Yecies (2007).

<sup>103</sup> In 1960, a year prior to the coup, a total of 182 films was exhibited in Korea and more than two-thirds of them (127) were from the US (KMPPC 1977: 99-105). Some of the popular Hollywood films shown in 1960 included: *Casablanca* (1942), *The Key* (1958), *Man From the Alamo* (1953), *The Brothers Karamazov* (1958) and *Touch of Evil* (1958).

employs a familiar narrative found in Hollywood's WWII commando film *Darby's Rangers* (1958), which was released in Korea in 1960. *Darby's Rangers* tells the story of Major Darby and his ranger battalions, whom he selected from among the volunteer US army soldiers, going into a war zone to fight against the Germans. At the battle most of the battalion members died or were captured and only seven came back alive. *Five Marines* is set on a smaller scale dealing with a team of five commandos who blow up the enemy's explosives storage.

Apart from the similarity found in the plot, one scene particularly shows Hollywood's influence on this film. This is the scene in which the squad leader meets his death after being shot by the enemy. He makes a report to Second Lieutenant Oh about the enemy's plan of building up the ammunition storage and sends his farewells to his squad members. Into this sad and solemn scene a chaplain with the Bible in his hand enters:

Squad leader: Chaplain ... here you are. Why didn't you come visit us when Private Ha died?

Chaplain: Please be brave. Have faith in God.

Squad leader: Isn't it too late to believe in God?

Chaplain: Jesus still cares about a little lost lamb more than other ninety-nine sheep he has around.

After this conversation, the camera shows a close-up of a squad leader looking around and naming his fellow marines. A face filled with sorrow and acceptance is soon turned down, indicating his death. The chaplain disappears from the scene without any words just as he walks into the scene without any previous indication of his coming or anyone's wish to have him come over to the deathbed.

As much as the scene of a chaplain visiting the squad leader's deathbed is unexpected, it does not make any significant contribution to the narrative development. The familiar scenes of a chaplain visiting the wounded soldiers' deathbed functions as a structural canon within the long tradition of Christianity in the US as a way to escalate grief over wasted lives of human beings, in war especially. Nonetheless, this scene of the chaplain's visit to the squad leader is treated as if it were the standard military procedure in a country like Korea, which is

a country with a long Confucian culture. Thus, it gives the impression that it was a conventional scene adopted from the Hollywood war film.

According to director Kim Ki-duk, he wanted to make a war film of showing how people with different backgrounds grouped together in the military and built a comradeship (KOFA 2005a: 26). As a result, *Five Marines* was not explicit propaganda, but a film about the development of the mosaic of human relationships within the context of the nation's tragic war. For example, Second Lieutenant Oh is craving for love and approval from his father, the battalion leader, showing a subplot of a father-son relationship. One squad member, Young-sun misses his newly-wed wife, writing long letters to her every night. Another member, Heung-gu misses his elderly mother, trying his best to be a good soldier for her. Apart from the titillating and exciting crossfire and explosion scenes toward the end, Kim's skilful development of stories of these different characters into one probably contributed to the success of this film.

Nonetheless, the anticommunist sentiment permeated the narrative due to the fact that the film was set in the Korean War and they were fighting against the North Korean soldiers. The gallant commandos are portrayed as strong and affectionate male heroes, helping people recover from the scarred memory of being defeated and escaping from the threat of the North Korean soldiers. Their volunteering for the commando mission was to protect their loving wife, mother, or family. Their passionate and self-sacrificing images and their bravery appealed to the country's sense of nationalism, justifying the need to uphold the honour of the defense force. With this film, Kim received the Best New Director at the 1<sup>st</sup> Grand Bell Award in 1962.

Despite the war film's commercial appeal, making a war film was a difficult decision for producers for financial reasons. War film production in general involved bigger budgets than other genre films such as melodramas and comedies since it involved special effects and more extras for spectacles of the combat scenes. Yet, as shown in the success of *Five Marines* (1961), the in-kind production support from the military (e.g. explosives, guns and bullets, and soldiers as extras) and relaxed censorship treatment apparently made producers more interested in war film productions than before. Under these circumstances, following the similar patterns of *Five Marines*, other war films were produced: *Fighting Lions* (1962), *Soldiers of*

*YMS 504* (1963), *Marines Who Never Returned* (1963), *The Red Muffler* (1964), *Incheon Landing Operations* (1965), and *Legend of Ssarigol* (1967).

In the mid-1960s the war film productions expanded. The ideological focus was more acute than before with the intensifying Cold War environment, that is, the Vietnam War (1962-1975). Hence, in his address to the National Assembly in early 1965, once again Park Chung Hee emphasised the significance of strengthening the national defense system:

Meanwhile, in the field of national defense, the upheavals in South Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian nations, the traditional expansionism and nuclear testing of Communist China, and the incessant military build-up and threat of southward invasion by the North Korean Communists will require us to strengthen our defense capability more than ever (Spring 1965: 142-43).

Korean combat soldiers were dispatched to the Vietnam War in 1965. The new development of the political stage added a new dimension to the anticommunist war film productions.<sup>104</sup> The Vietnam War was quickly picked up as a new anticommunist film subject, showcasing the South Korean army's brave fights against the communist regime's Viet Cong. Films engaging with the Vietnam War included: *Major Kang Jae-gyu* (1966); *Operation Tiger* (1966); *Vietnam Is All Right* (1966); *Female Viet Cong No. 18* (1967); and *Bridge over Gobo River* (1970).

## **2) Separation Melodrama And Emotional Tenderness: *South And North* (1965)**

While most anticommunist films in the early 1960s were war films, some of them began engaging the melodrama conventions as a way of adding complexity to understanding the war. The type of films dealing with family tragedy caused by war were categorised as 'separation (*bundan*) melodrama' (Cho 2001b: 336). The focus on the post-war trauma on an individual level such as war-torn family, war orphans, and split communities provided emotional depth to the anticommunist films. It was a humanitarian approach to viewing the war, which had a universal appeal. For

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<sup>104</sup> While Park's assistance in the Vietnam War was ideological, there was also an economic reason behind it. Many people have suggested that the Vietnam War was a significant factor in the eventual rise of the South Korean economy.

example, as is discussed in chapter 6, in *Marines Who Never Returned* (1963) a war orphan, Young-sun, becomes a little sister of the marine squad members, forming a 'quasi-family' relationship with them. Hence, the more her relationship with the marines grows, the more the audience bemoans the loss of the marines in the final scene. The audience becomes emotionally charged by the death of the marines and the fate of Young-sun, about to experience yet another family separation.

Another example of using melodrama elements is director Shin Sang-ok's *The Red Muffler* (1964), which is analysed in more detail in chapter 5. While it promotes the strength of the Korea Air Force, the main narrative is constructed around a love triangle between a war widow, Ji-seon, pilot Na and pilot Bae, and thus the film becomes a wartime melodrama dealing with teary, sweet and emotional love relationships. With its mixture of female melodrama and spectacular aerial warfare scenes, the film showcases the 'genre hybridity' (Diffrient 2005b: 163). In this film the melodramatic elements play a significant role in escalating the tension of the story as the narrative progresses.

Relying on melodrama narrative conventions in war films is also found in Hollywood film productions. For example, *The Bridges at Doko-Ri* (1954), a Hollywood film dealing with the Korean War, also blends family melodrama tradition in developing its narrative:

The film's ability to justify and rally support for the global containment policy is further eroded by blending combat genre conventions with the emotionally excessive, ideologically ambiguous dynamics of Family melodrama, a plot motif of many Korean War films (Worland August 1999: 360).

Scenes of people holding each other and crying over the loss of loved ones are almost used as a cliché in many of Korea's war films. Young-sun in *Marines Who Never Returned* and Ji-seon in *The Red Muffler* shed their tears for the loss of friends and families, deepening the emotional pain and inviting people to feel the sadness. The use of melodrama elements in films is best exemplified in the following analysis of *South and North*, demonstrating how the melodrama conventions were used in constructing an anticommunist film.

*South and North* is based on a true story of separated families set in the Korean War. It involves three people: North Korean officer Jang, South Korean officer Lee and the woman they love, Ko Eun-ah. During the Korean War Ko is separated from her lover Jang right before the marriage and escapes to the South. She settles down in the South with Jang's son, believing Jang is dead. While working as a military nurse, she meets South Korean officer Lee and marries him. In the meantime, Jang surrenders himself to the South to look for Ko. Jang makes a deal with a South Korean officer, Lee (Ko's current husband) that he will trade military top secrets if the army can find and bring his lost love back to him. Lee is put in a dilemma. However, headquarters decides to bring Ko to the army base in order to gain possession of the top secrets and the three people (plus the son) finally meet. Jang and Lee cannot both claim to be husband to Ko, who is crying over her agony. Lee volunteers for the battlefield and dies in battle. Hearing the news, Jang goes out to take revenge for Lee, but falls off a cliff to his death.

It is a tragic story of separated lovers and family during the war. The scene in which Ko, Jang and Lee meet together represents the epitome of the national tragedy of separated families. Jang cries over his lost love. Ko reproaches herself for not having waited for Jang. Lee does not know what to do while standing in front of Jang. The war has left them a scar that cannot be healed. By focusing on the pain and difficulties individuals had to deal with during the war, director Kim raises a question of what the war was about. The original score composed by Park Chun-seok, 'Has anyone seen this person?', adds sorrow to the movie with tender lyrics and sad melody. Screenwriter Han Un-sa wrote the lyrics, encapsulating Jang's desperate feeling to look for his lover. This song later became a theme song for the national campaign looking for separated families in 1983, and also was used for another separation drama, *Kilsodeum* (1985), directed by Im Kwon-taek. The title of the song was also used as a promotional tag line, summarising the theme of the film. In the poster below, the title of the film, *South and North*, is placed in the middle in different colours (black and white), signifying the nation's separation, and above the title is read: "Has anyone seen this person? Though I crossed the line of death with heartrending stories to share with her ..."



Figure 3-2. Poster of *South and North* (Donga Daily 9 January 1965: 4)

According to a film review published in *Chosun Daily* (12 January 1965: 5), producer Cha Tae-jin and director Kim Ki-duk succeeded in attracting a ‘sea of crying (*nunmul bada*)’. Nearly 100,000 audiences in Seoul came to see this film, sympathising with the family tragedy (KMDB). Although it was set in the frontline of the Korean War, the minimal use of the battlefields, only noticed by sounds of bombshells and bullets, suggests that projecting the war images was not the primary objective of this film. The melodrama genre was the main focus of this film and the anticommunist genre element was downplayed. The only obvious sign of preaching ideology might be the final scene in which Jang rushes out to the battlefield in order to avenge Lee, crying “who [evil North Korean] killed such a good person [good South Korean]”. That is, though *South and North* is constructed as a melodrama, by ending the film with the anticommunism reinforcement, it sealed itself as an anticommunist film.

Separation melodramas were continually produced even after the 1960s, examples being: *Kilsodeum* (1985); *Berlin Report* (1991); and *The Echo of Love and Death Part I* (1991).

### 3) Cold War Politics And Spies: *Correspondent in Tokyo* (1967)

The advance of spy action films coincided with the government's revised MPL in 1966, which strengthened the ILRS. Under the direction of the government, the Grand Bell Award, one of the government's appointed quality film awards, in particular set up two new categories, the best anticommunist film and the best anticommunist screenplay, and provided an import licence as a reward for the award-winning film for the best anticommunist film.

However, spy action films became popular in the late 1960s for more complex reasons. As previously mentioned, since the mid-1960s foreign films were more popular than domestic films, one of the most popular being international spy action films such as the James Bond series. In 1965, two 007 films (*From Russia with Love* and *Dr. No*) were released consecutively as the first of their kind, becoming the most popular foreign films of the year, placed first and second. Outside Korea, the James Bond espionage movies were so popular that many films and television series imitated their 'formula of gangster-as-international-conspirator versus gangster-as-government-agent' (Cook 2004: 415).<sup>105</sup> Crimes were often set on an international scale, challenging the government and its proficient agents to stop them. This new representation of the gangster genre within the context of the Cold War was soon embraced by the Korean film industry.

The box office success of the James Bond series became the catalyst for creating the boom of spy action filmmaking in Korea (Kim 2003; Lee 2004). Lee Woo-seok (2005), producer and representative of Dong-A Export Co. since the 1960s, admits that whenever a certain genre film made a big hit, producers copied similar types of the films with the hope of making money, creating a new trend in filmmaking. The boom in spy action filmmaking followed this pattern. Director Lee Hyeong-pyo (2004) also maintains that this was the usual way of creating a new trend: Directors copied popular foreign films.<sup>106</sup> As shown in the discussion of the

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<sup>105</sup> According to Cook (2004), representative works include the US television series such as *Secret Agent* (1965-66), *I Spy* (1965-68) and *Mission: Impossible* (1966-73) and films such as *Where Bullets Fly* (1966), *The Silencers* (1966) and *The Ambushers* (1967).

<sup>106</sup> It should be noted that spy action films had been already produced in 1962 as part of revolutionary filmmaking efforts. However, spy action films dealing with domestic espionage activities were outnumbered by war films and soon disappeared. They included: *Body Is Sad* (1962); *Red Roses Are Gone* (1962); and *Find a Secret Path* (1962).

war films, the spy action films also represented the strong influence of Western film culture, alive in Korea.

There were a couple of characteristics noticed in spy action films. First, similar to the spy action films developed in the West, they also utilised international locations such as Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand in order to offer a new and exotic landscape to audiences. Though most locations were limited to a few Asian countries, albeit excluding Western countries entirely, it was still exciting for audiences, who had little chance themselves of going overseas.<sup>107</sup> Some of them are: *The International Spy* (1965); *International Gold Robbery* (1966); *Harimao in Bangkok* (1967); and *Correspondent in Tokyo* (1968). Second, the main plot of these films was easily adapted to Korea's political situation, that is, dealing with North Korea's increasing international spy activities (Lee 2004: 375). The continual press coverage over North Korean spy incidents in and out of Korea enabled producers to create spy action films in a more realistic way. Third, spy action films easily replicated the level of the ideological conflicts in war films and yet required lower budgets to make, compared to war film. Fourth, the proven commerciality of the action film genre, the second most popular genre in Korea after melodrama, encouraged producers to pursue spy action film.

*Correspondent in Tokyo* (1967) was one of the spy action films that followed these characteristics. Set in Tokyo and Seoul, the film deals with both South and North Korean spies. Ji-suk is living in Tokyo with her husband, who is a correspondent of *Dongyang Daily*. Her husband, who is writing a critical report about the repatriation process of members of the pro-Pyongyang federation of Korean residents in Japan (pro-North Korean association), has a traffic accident and dies immediately. In the meantime, Ji-suk kills a man in a car accident. A stranger named Wan-bae, a North Korean spy, approaches Ji-suk, who is confused and afraid of going to jail. He helps her get rid of the body with the intention of obtaining the information Ji-suk's husband has. Then, a mysterious man appears and blackmails her for money regarding her car accident. Bewildered by the whole situation, Ji-suk returns to Korea, accompanied by Wan-bae. The mysterious man also comes to

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<sup>107</sup> At the time in Korea overseas trips were a privilege limited to upper class citizens with permission given by the government on a case-by-case basis. Overseas travel and especially immigration were difficult for all Koreans until the late 1980s after the Seoul Olympic Games. .

Korea, continuing contact with Ji-suk. Later on, it is revealed that Wan-bae is Ji-suk's brother, who was left behind in North Korea before the Korean War. His mission is to kidnap his father (prof. Nam) to North Korea. While Wan-bae and his accomplices try to abduct prof. Nam, the mysterious man appears in South Korean army uniform and saves prof. Nam. Wan-bae surrenders himself to South Korea, reuniting his family members.

The film deals with the subject of the repatriation of members of the Pyongyang federation of Korean residents in Japan (*Jocheongnyeon*), which was then and is still now the bone of diplomatic contention between Japan and North Korea. *Correspondent in Tokyo* introduces this matter in the beginning as a backdrop to showing the evil of North Korea. This film directly criticises the sending of Korean residents in Japan back to North Korea as political injustice, and warns that there is a larger spy network involved in the process. As a propaganda film, *Correspondent in Tokyo* focuses on evil images of North Korean spies, which increase toward the end when Wan-bae tries to abduct his own father to North Korea. The complex storyline set in Tokyo and Seoul serves only to illustrate how wicked and widespread North Korean spies are. As an anticommunist film, stereotypical lines such as 'Communists are like the devil with no blood and tears' and 'I have never imagined South Korea to be developed like this' are placed throughout the film, reminding the audience how lucky they are to live in South Korea.

#### **4. Post-Anticommunist Genre**

In the late 1960s Park Chung Hee fortified the regime's anticommunist policy as well as Korea's defense system because of the intensified Cold War situation represented by two political incidents that occurred in early 1968. First, 31 North Korean commandos attempted to assassinate president Park Chung Hee on 21 January 1968. Although the mission failed, the fact that they reached within 500 meters of the Blue House, Korea's presidential residence, shocked the public.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> For more information, see Kang (2004c). This so-called '1.21 incident', named after the day it occurred, resulted in 30 deaths, with 52 injured. Three North Korean soldiers escaped back to the North and one was captured alive. The survivor, Kim Shin-jo, stated at the press conference that 31 commandos came to invade the Blue House with the purpose of beheading Park Chung Hee.

Second, two days after this attack, North Korean troops captured the USS Pueblo, a US Navy ship, in the East Sea, holding 82 people hostage. Threatened by these situations, reinforcement of anticommunism was carried out on a statewide level. On 1 April 1968 the reserve forces were established by the direct order of Park Chung Hee to support the armed forces in case of a national emergency. Anticommunist education at school level was also expanded and the Ministry of Education encouraged primary schools to hold anticommunist posters, slogans and speech competitions regularly.<sup>109</sup> Voluminous articles and opinions were published in daily newspapers and film magazines, encouraging anticommunist film productions. Anticommunist ideology was given the highest priority and thereby anticommunist film productions increased. The number of anticommunist film productions increased as a result of these escalating political tensions between the South and the North. In 1968 officially-recognised anticommunist film productions grew to 22 from only 5 in 1967 (KMPPC 1997: 46). However, as a super genre there could be almost 10 times as many anticommunist films than recognised in these official statistics.

While the quantity of anticommunist films increased, their quality decreased: many films were quota quickies tailored to receive the import licence rather than to pursue a box office success, and thereby failed in the box office (*Shin Donga* September 1968: 415). The MPAK organised a seminar called *Anticommunism and Films* on 12 August 1968 in order to discuss ways of uplifting anticommunist film productions and their quality, or lack thereof. Producers, directors and other industry representatives, as well as MPI officers, attended this seminar. Producers and directors complained about difficulties they had while making anticommunist films, but in the end they all reconfirmed that all had a national obligation to try harder (*Yeonghwa TV Yesul* September 1968: 26).<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> The Charter of National Education was declared in December 1968, setting primary educational objectives that included anticommunist values: The love of country and fellow countrymen together with the firm belief in democracy against communism is the way for our survival and the basis for realising the ideals of the free world (Lee 1974:17-18). The anticommunist education was replaced by the reunification education in the 1980s.

<sup>110</sup> Director Yu Hyun-mok in particular argued at the seminar that there was an oversupply of anticommunist films, audiences were bored with them, and censorship pressure on directors was high. Other complaints raised during the seminar included the lack of information about the North. Yet, the MCPI officers made no response regarding how to solve the problems (*Yeonghwa TV Yesul* September 1968: 26).

In the 1970s with the help of the KMPPC (Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation) the anticommunist film was given a chance to re-invent itself. The KMPPC, which was established as the government film body in 1973, engaged in national policy film production, of which the anticommunist filmmaking was the major part. Between 1974 and 1975, the KMPPC produced five big-scale anticommunist war films: *Testimony* (1973), *I won't cry* (1974), *The wild flowers in the battle field* (1974), *A Spy Remaining Behind* (1975) and *The Tae-Baeks* (1975). Nonetheless, the MPI was unable to recoup the investment due to the low box office results from these films, so its involvement with the film production ended. Instead, in 1976 the MPI mandated all producers to produce national policy films, encouraging anticommunist filmmaking to be undertaken by the private film industry. In 1985 the annual film policy no longer emphasised the production of anticommunist films, which led to the cancellation of the best anticommunist film/screenplay category from the Grand Bell Award. Today, traces of the anticommunist genre are found as part of Korea's contemporary war, and espionage films such as *Shiri* (1999), *The Spy* (1999), *JSA* (2002), and *Brotherhood of the War* (2005) within the bigger political and historical context. However, propagation of the anticommunist ideology is hardly the core part of the films.

## **5. Conclusion: Revisiting the Anticommunist Genre**

Anticommunist film production is not unique to Korea. It was also produced in Taiwan, which shared similarities with Korea due to its ideological split from Mainland China. Hollywood also produced anticommunist films under the name of the 'anti-Red' and the 'Communist-as-gangster' films in the 1950s and 1960s. However, Korea is one of the few countries whose anticommunist films as a genre lasted more than a decade. This phenomenon is surprising given that the making of genre films in other countries under military control, such as Taiwan, Greece and Brazil, were not as heavily influenced by the government as in the case of Korea. In Korea, the government provided systemic support, including financial subsidies and censorship lenience for this genre, encouraging the production of more and more anticommunist films. The promise of this valuable assistance eventually inspired filmmakers to transform the anticommunist genre into a dynamic super genre,

enabling films of this type to overcome the limits of all other genre categories and conventions. This was only possible because the anticommunist genre was defined simply as one with the thematic integrity of 'anticommunism'.

In the beginning, this genre progressed rapidly because it was driven by contentions generated between the government and filmmakers (producers and directors) in regards to what they wanted to make. While the government simply wanted the public to see propaganda films on the screen, producers pursued commerciality and directors sought after technical and aesthetic experimentation through the making of anticommunist films. As shown in the case studies, *Five Marines* and *North and South* projected a different view, enabling audiences to see the war within the context of the anticommunist genre. The explicit educational concerns of Korea's anticommunist policy were put aside by the images of fierce battle scenes. Underneath the obvious point of propagating anticommunism, these films soothed the scars that were caused by civil war, and in doing so appealed to the communal memories of the audience. However, this complexity began disappearing in the late 1960s when the censorship regime became even stronger and the Cold War politics intensified. The genre also reached saturation point because increasing censorship pressures left directors little room to move in the making of the anticommunist films and thus their quality was lowered significantly even though the type of films still increased in quantity for being part of quota quickies. Directors were forced to make stereotypical state-propagating films with little technical and aesthetic prowess. Here a gap existed between what the government wanted and what filmmakers wanted, leading to productions of spy action films that simply promoted the superiority of South Korea's social, economic and political system over that of North Korea.

Schatz mentions that 'the end of a genre's classic stage can be viewed as that point at which the genre's straightforward message has "saturated" the audience' (1981: 38). The anticommunist genre had defied this norm by extending its cycle through crossing over genre boundaries. As a result, an overabundance of anticommunist films burdened the film market in the late 1960s with many similar action films that delivered the same ideological messages. Presence of this type of film in the film market over decades states that the government preferred a one-way delivery system of propaganda messages. Dynamic aesthetics and technical attempts,

while crossing over different genre boundaries witnessed in the early 1960s anticommunist films, eventually waned. Nonetheless, they were still produced through the 1970s dark age as big-scale stereotypical policy films, planned and funded by the Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation (KMPPC), that is, the government-sponsored film body. The next chapter discusses the development of another propaganda genre, the literary genre, and analyses how this genre developed in different ways.

## **Chapter 4. Constructing Literary Films: Intersecting Genre, Policy and Industry**

This chapter offers a new insight into how the literary adaptation genre (hereafter the literary genre) covertly showcased propaganda content by engaging with these understudied elements of cultural nationalism and two other different but overlapping aspects of traditionalism and modernism that appeared in the process of the genre's evolution. Compared to the anticommunist genre, which chapter 3 analysed as a form of overt propaganda that endorsed government policy, the literary genre provided a space to create covert propaganda and promoted the nation's culture and tradition. To expand further on genre construction under the military regime, this chapter seeks to explicate the complexity of the literary adaptation genre, as it evolved. It has been considered as 'art films' based on the previously published literature since the 1920s and differentiated from other commercial films (Lee 2000; Ho 2000; Kim 2002; Byon 2003). In doing so, this chapter offers a better sense of how the Park regime facilitated the creation of propaganda in different forms and from different directions.

Korea's literary films have been treated in similar ways to literary films made in the West where scholars have regarded them as a 'high art branch of cinema' (Elliott 2003: 127). In Korea, this genre initially referred to films that were based on previously-made literature. Although scholars, such as Kim Nam-seok (2003: 5-6), argue that the literary genre should include films based on adaptation of all kinds of external sources such as novels (artistic or commercial), folk tales, radio dramas and cartoons, pointing out the importance of an 'adaptation process' required in literary filmmaking, they fail to discuss any conventions created through this process, which constructs the genre. In the 1960s, literary films developed two distinct conventions linked to the publishing eras of the original text, colonial and post-war literature, and they were considered as gems of the golden age of Korean cinema because they represented a 'high level of artistic quality' (Lee 2004: 396). Based on this general notion of praising literary films in terms of their artistic achievement, Hyangsun Yi states that the genre as a pure art cinema, which has contributed to the industry's expansion as a producer of 'a medium of art' (Yi 2002: 70). Yet, she misses the fact

that the literary genre was used as a propaganda tool under the Park regime, spreading cultural propaganda in a covert way.

As this chapter demonstrates, literary films were used for propaganda purposes by the government and thus the rise of literary films was more than the outcome of filmmakers' enthusiasm for making art house cinema. Many scholars such as Hyangjin Lee (2000), Ho Hyeon-chan (2000), Kim Hak-su (2002), Hyangsoon Yi (2002), Byon Jae-ran (2003) and Kim *et al.* (2006) admit that behind the growth of literary films was policy support, namely the ILRS, which was explained previously in chapter 1. Other scholars such as Moonim Baek (2002) and So-in Hong (Hong 2003) referred to literary films produced in the late 1960s as quota quickies for their link to the ILRS and their lowered quality. Nonetheless, the genre's critical relationship to the government and its role as a different form of cultural propaganda has not been fully investigated. A similar case existed in the Australian cinema. In Australia during the 1970s and the early 1980s a film trend called the 'AFC genre', which had a strong literary tradition, was created with funding support from the Australian Film Commission (AFC).<sup>111</sup> According to Dermody and Jacka, the genre prioritised the kind of visual aesthetics that the AFC preferred, which was 'positively projecting a middle-brow cultural worthiness' (1988: 32).<sup>112</sup> By showing 'signs of national differences, country of origin, geographical and cultural 'sights'' (Dermody and Jacka 1988: 31), the AFC genre films aimed at declaring the nation's 'self-esteem and national maturity' to both the domestic and international audiences (Dermody and Jacka 1987: 45). The AFC genre played a role of 'quasi-official representatives of, rather than representations of, a nation' (Rayner 2000: 60). The advance of Korea's literary genre can be understood in the same context.

Hence, this chapter first introduces the history of the literary genre and the reasons behind its rise to popularity among filmmakers in the 1960s. The genre's

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<sup>111</sup> It was a government agency established in 1975 in order to provide financial and policy support for the film industry. For more information about the establishment of the AFC and its development, see *The Screening of Australia Volume 1: Anatomy of Film Industry* (Dermody and Jacka 1987)

<sup>112</sup> The AFC genre was not commercially successful, nor perceived as the mainstream filmmaking trend, but obtained its status as the most outstanding aesthetic category. The representative AFC genre films were period films, which included: *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *My Brilliant Career* (1979) and *Gallipoli* (1981).

characteristics are analysed and the impacts that the government, producers and directors had on the construction of this genre are explored.

The ways of constructing covert propaganda in literary films are examined by case studies. First, *Deaf Samryongi* (1964) is analysed to show how the theme of cultural nationalism was conveyed. Cultural nationalism is a basic term that means preserving the nation's traditional cultural identity. It became the foundation for Korea's cultural policy after the Japanese colonial period ended in order to restore Korea's cultural identity and heritage. In the government's view, cultural nationalism was considered 'not only as the root of Korean cultural identity but also as a solution to the issue of cultural identity' (Yim 2003: 155). Literary filmmaking was considered as a primary vehicle for restoring Korea's cultural identity because it projected Korean national culture on big screens, which in turn visually reminded audiences about their cultural roots.<sup>113</sup>

Linked to the idea of cultural nationalism is traditionalism, which was delivered through 'festival films'. The production of 'festival films' demonstrates how the combined efforts from the government and filmmakers manifested Korean-ness by creating 'an imaginative landscape that draws on the shared history and values of the Korean people before the partition' (Doherty 1984: 846). Festival films showcased a quintessential 'Korean-ness' that represented traditional thought, values and sentiments. One of the festival films, *Seashore Village* (1965), is analysed to illustrate this point.

On the far side of the art filmmaking spectrum, there existed an exploration of modernity, generally illustrating directors' desires to critique modern Korea on the verge of industrialisation via literary films. Korea's modernisation in the post-war era evolved around simultaneous processes of Westernisation (a.k.a. 'Americanisation'), industrialisation, decolonisation and the Cold War. Modernist films captured and depicted the confusion that people encountered in the midst of this complex process in a disconcerting way. *Mist* (1967) is provided as a case study.

## 1. Origin of the Literary Genre

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<sup>113</sup> This direction also appeared in the productions of bio-pics dealing with national heroes. For example, *Great Hero, Lee Sun-sin* (1962) was produced with the support of government funding.

The history of literary films, in fact, goes back to the Japanese colonial period. According to the Korean Movie Database website, the first literary film on the record is Lee Kyeong-son's *The Pioneer* (1925) produced under Japanese colonial rule. Based on representative colonial writer Lee Gwang-su's novel, the film celebrated the pioneering spirit of a scientist. However, the notion of considering literary films as art cinema with realist tradition was developed from the Japanese literary film trend called *bungei-eiga* in the 1930s and the name *munye yeonghwa* was also borrowed from *bungei-eiga*. Film critic Iizima Tadasi stated the nature of literary films in an article *Japanese Films in Review 1938-9*:

the spirit of seeking reality ... it is not a result of commercialism. We see artistic progress in the desire to make an *ensemble* of the motion picture and the realities of life (Tadasi 1939: 21).

Japanese literary films tended to be 'more faithful to real life, and by using them, filmmakers could move closer to the lives of ordinary people and achieve more realistic portrayals' (Richie 2001: 95). This description could be applied to the characteristics of Korea's literary films in the colonial period, which included: *When the Sun Rises* (1927); *Deaf Samryongi* (1929); *Oh Mong-nyeo* (1937); and *Altar for a Tutelary Deity* (1939). In the post-liberation era, literary films such as *A Hometown in Heart* (1949), *The Evil Night* (1952), *Dream* (1955), *An Idiot Adada* (1956), *Love* (1957), and *A Drifting Story* (1960) were still continually produced. However, the genre takes a turn in the mid-1950s, developing the idea of literary films as art films by allowing only artistically-renowned novels as its basis, differentiating them from films based on pulp fiction. For example, *Madam Freedom* (1956) based on Jung Bi-seok's popular newspaper serial is viewed not as a literary film by critics and scholars at the time, but as a commercial melodrama. At the time of release, *Madam Freedom* caused controversy for its subject of adultery, insertion of kissing and love scenes, its description of materialism and the generation gap, and for showing audiences how to look at the new Korea in the post-liberation era (Lee 2004: 249-

250).<sup>114</sup> Kissing scenes in particular were seen as something unacceptable, according to Korea's traditional moral standard, which was described to be 'premature for Koreans to see' and 'vulgar' (*Donga Daily* 10 June 1956: 3). Despite the controversy, it was the top box office hit film in 1956.

Before further discussion of literary films in the 1960s, it is necessary to define the 'art film' within Korea's context. Few, if any, scholars have attempted to show how the government or the industry defined the term 'art film'. On the one hand, it was because Korea's genre conventions for art film had not been established during the 1960s (Lee 2004: 296-297). On the other hand, it was because the MPI used the name *literary films* as a generic term for an art film, without defining the art film, and invited all 'art' films to be included under the name of literary films. Hence, the term 'art cinema' is used in this chapter as a 'mode of film practice' represented by the use of 'realism, authorial expressivity and ambiguity' (Bordwell 2004: 779), which shares commonality with that of the post-WWII art film movement that attempted to 'turn its back on popular traditions and identified itself with experimentation and innovation in literature, painting, music, and theater' (Thompson and Bordwell 2003: 357).

The three elements mentioned above are easily noticed in Korea's literary films. First, realism in Korean films had a long history stemming from the colonial period. Represented by the nationalistic film *Arirang* (1926), which was produced with a focus on expressing local sentiment and local landscape, this realist tradition continued to the 1960s. Quintessential literary films in the 1960s included *Aimless Bullet* (1960), *Deaf Samryongi* (1963) and *Kim's Daughters* (1963). They dealt with the people's lives affected by social circumstances while conveying a strong sense of realism. Second, the 'authorial expressivity' stood out by a few literary filmmakers such as Yu Hyun-mok, Kim Su-yong and Lee Seong-gu, who developed their own styles by engaging their views to see the world despite restrictive production conditions, demonstrating that auteurship was alive. It is the concept of viewing a director as the core creative element in the process of filmmaking. More detailed discussion on the auteurship is explored in chapter 7. Third, the theme of modernity

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<sup>114</sup> The film was released after the Ministry of Education cut about 100 feet of the film containing kissing and dancing scenes during the censorship process (*Donga Daily* 10 June 1956: 3).

was also explored by portraying modernisation as a process that embodied both positive and negative sides. Films such as *Mist* (1967) and *The General's Moustache* (1969) showcased similar technical and narrative features noticed in other modernist film movements in the West such as Italian Neo-realism and French Nouvelle Vague. For example, non-conventional storytelling was attempted through devices such as flashbacks, adding ambiguity to film texts.<sup>115</sup> However, in Korea's art house cinema there is one more aspect to be considered: cultural propaganda. As explained before, Korea's particular political situation should be appreciated in any understanding of the genre's formation because, unlike the European art house cinema, the development of Korea's art films was related to the promotion of nationalism.

## **2. Rise of Literary Films in the 1960s**

The rise of literary films in the 1960s was not a simple outcome of filmmakers' passion to make art house films in Korea. In a production industry where the interests of government, registered producers and directors were interrelated, the reasons behind the genre's progress were complex and intertwined. The most obvious reason behind productions of literary films was policy support through the ILRS. After 1963 the government began supporting propaganda filmmaking (anticommunist, literary adaptation and enlightenment films) through the ILRS and increasing its support over the subsequent years. This provided a specific reason for producers to pursue literary filmmaking. Hence, policy was the reason behind 'a boom of literary films' in 1967 (*Yeonghwa Japji* May 1968: 106).

The relationship between art films and government subsidies was not unique to Korea, but something that was commonly observed in other countries as well because of the government's involvement with the genre for the purpose of using it for cultural propaganda. For Nowell-Smith:

After 1945, government policy in many countries specifically favored the meaning of films that would serve as vehicles of national cultural expression.

Though these policies were often ambiguous, both in intention and in effect,

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<sup>115</sup> For more information about the modernist film tradition from the West noticed in Korean films, see Lee Gil-seong (2001).

they opened up spaces in which non-mainstream film-making could be financially viable, if not a reliable source of profit (1996: 567).

The seemingly incompatible themes of cultural nationalism, traditionalism and modernism could co-exist in the realm of art cinema thanks to the policy support behind. As O'Regan (1996: 71) observes from the case of Australian cinema that the types of films subsidised by the government have a tendency to 'subscribe to state purposes, to the dominant national cultural purposes in a bland mainstream feature film-making'. The importance of facilitating art cinema in terms of national cinema becomes clearer:

Those ... are more elitist and more targeted at export markets for financial and cultural reasons. ... National pride and the assertion at home and abroad of national cultural identity have been vital in arguing for art cinemas. Central, too, have been arguments about national cultural and literary traditions and quality as well as their consolidation and extension through a national cinema ... (Crofts 2006: 45).

It seems that a national cinema should be distinctive from that of other nations in order to achieve this goal. In other words, how to differentiate a nation's film from those of the rest of the world was key here, that is, by illustrating its unique customs and manners, landscape, costumes, history and cultural heritage. A process of building a national cinema conveys 'ideas of coherence and unity and stable cultural meanings associated with the uniqueness of a given nation' (Dissanayake 1994: xiii). The delivery of a nation's 'cultural meanings' to audiences was probably something the MPI valued in literary films and that was the reason the government subsidised the genre's progress.

Second, members of the film industry such as directors, screenwriters, critics and independent producers had the general intention to enhance the quality of local films. According to popular press reports, literary films raised the level of local film quality by emphasising visual aesthetics. Screenwriter Shin Bong-seung described the literary films as an upgraded 'visual service' to audiences (*Shin Sajo* 1963: 251). Film critic Woo Gyeong-sik also pointed out 'explosive images' of literary films,

something unique this genre offered to audiences (*Yeonghwa Segye* July 1963: 52). Making literary films were perceived by young independent producers and directors as an opportunity to work with new visual and narrative styles (Ho 2000: 164). They were excited about the genre, associating it with a new film movement that enabled them to attempt visual or technical experimentation and to explore various subjects by challenging conventional narrative styles.

Independent producers approached literary filmmaking for the art's sake. As previously explained, they produced many award-winning films through *daemyeong*. Independent producers such as Yu Hyun-mok (director), Ho Hyeon-chan (former film journalist) and Choi Hyeon-min (former theatrical director) publicly proclaimed that they put priority on art-filmmaking over the pursuit of entertainment and commerciality (*Chosun Daily* 19 January 1965: 5). They had no access to lucrative import licences, nor did they make profits out of box office takings, because art films were in general not popular. Their literary filmmaking efforts were more driven by their artistic ambition than by anticipated monetary gains. Compared to them, registered producers were interested in literary filmmaking to receive the import licences attached to award-winning films.

Some directors saw obvious advantages in working on the literary film projects because the literary film was an outlet for creativity. First, they had fewer worries about box office results. As long as their films received awards, they had a certain amount of freedom. Besides, they had less censorship pressure when dealing with subjects such as traditional values and Korean-ness. The unique production environment, which prioritised the reception of an import licence before box office success, put directors in a position from which they could control directorial power in terms of aesthetics and technical experiments. As chapter 7 shows, the rise of director Yu Hyun-mok as an auteur was partly due to the rise of the literary genre in the 1960s. Acknowledging this situation, veteran screenwriter Shim San explains the literary film as a niche market:

Making a film without considering commercial potential is such a magnificent work condition. Many of Korea's classical films came to exist through this niche market of literary adaptation. ... This genre sought after not commercial values but the completeness and/or artistic value of a film

and thus a lot of literary adaptation films were quality art films (*Cine21* 2001: 106).

Third, there was the industry's need to outsource quality scripts. The industry's particular need for a fast recovery from the post-war ruins made an impact on the need to secure literary sources because Korea had a noticeable lack of original screenplays dating back to the late 1950s (Ho 2000: 163). Original film scripts were hard to find and screenwriters were pressured by time constraints, over-relying on remakes of foreign films.<sup>116</sup>

### **3. Literary Film Themes**

The development of literary films as art cinema evolved around this government's agenda and artists' pursuit of art cinema. In the middle of this process three distinctive themes were explored: cultural nationalism, traditionalism and modernism. While the first two were dominant aspects for literary films throughout the 1960s, modernism was noticed more toward the late 1960s.

#### **1) Praising Cultural Nationalism: *Deaf Samryongi* (1963)**

Nationalism was employed by the Park regime as a vision for the country to legitimise its governance and to rally the public toward its objectives (Shin 2006: 103). In literary films it was expressed as a form of cultural nationalism. As Park Chung Hee commanded in 1962 after the coup, every Korean should abide by a 'duty to fully explore and further develop our own culture and then to introduce it abroad' (1970: 229). For example, in January 1962 the Park regime announced the Cultural Properties Protection Law, allowing Korea's traditional performers to perform overseas and thus helping to 'boost feelings of national pride' (Maliangkay 2008: 51). Similarly, the literary genre helped resurrect the nation's weakened

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<sup>116</sup> At the time, the official cultural exchange between Korea and Japan was forbidden, but Japanese film books and magazines were often brought to Korea through personal connections. As screenwriter Shin Bong-seung says, industry people used them for self-education purposes and to follow new film trends (KOFA 2006: 118-122).

cultural identity and restore the positive images of the past by portraying respectful customs and manners, and sound morality from the past.

The Park regime understood the importance of regaining its cultural identity and pursued its reconstruction by presenting its historical heritage and tradition as the nation's coda. Here, in Park's own words, the future direction of Korea's cultural policy is declared:

We will establish a new concept of national society, a new view of Korea on the basis of our original tradition and sense of independence ... We will make people feel proud of their new culture, new social atmosphere and preserve that which has been traditionally "ours". We will eliminate the sense of loss of the self, a tendency to despise our people, emphasis on vanity and parasitism, and replace them with the spirit of a fresh start. ... We will increase our national strength, rejuvenate ourselves and advance toward the world proud and strong (1963: 192).

Under the guidance of Park, the film industry produced literary films that enabled audiences to visualise a sense of 'traditionally ours' so as to identify their own culture. The literary films that followed this direction had something in common, that is, many of them were based on the colonial literature that was seen by contemporary critics as a vernacular of cultural nationalism during the colonial period.

The literary films based on colonial novels directly advocated the cultural nationalism in an attempt to preserve traditional Korean values and sentiments, which was fast disappearing because of the industrialisation of the 1960s. The types of colonial literature adapted to literary films were originated in the 1920s and the early 1930s. After the March First Independent Movement in 1919, Japan established a somewhat softer cultural policy in order to suggest a kind of acquiescence to Koreans. After 1919, Koreans were allowed to embrace limited freedom of expression, leading to the rise of a cultural movement in the 1920s, and also providing 'a catalyst for the expansion of the nationalist movement as a whole'

(Eckert *et al.* 1990: 279).<sup>117</sup> Novelists such as Yi Kwang-su, Kim Dong-in, Kim Dong-ri and Hwang Sun-won explored the themes of independence and self-awareness as they applied to both individuals and the nation (Gwon 2006). For example, Yi Kwang-su, one of the representative colonial novelists and cultural nationalists, was interested in ‘the relationship between modern literary practice and nation-building’ since the mid-1910s, believing that Korea’s literature ‘would become the new medium for national self-definition’ (Jager 2003: 20).<sup>118</sup>

This type of literature was easily transferred to and recreated as film language. Cultural nationalism was represented in films in a subtle way by highlighting the importance of traditional values such as loyalty, and the beauty and serenity reflected in the life of the rural village. The nationalistic sentiment of the colonial texts, which aimed at exploring such ideas as independence, self-awareness and values placed on tradition, was directly transferred to the film, attempting to recreate, restore and visualise Korea’s cultural identity. Most well-known films based on colonial novels include: *Mother and a Guest* (1961), *Deaf Samryongi* (1964), *When the Buckwheat Flower Blossoms* (1967), *Potato* (1968) and *Spring, Spring* (1969). The other source for literary films was post-war literature that was written by novelists such as Oh Young-su and Kim Seung-ok. They explored the issues of modernisation, existentialism, industrialisation and post-war human conditions, which are discussed later in this chapter.

*Deaf Samryongi* (1964), Korea’s version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939), was produced by Shin Film and directed by Shin Sang-ok. Its artistic achievements were proven by winning many awards from local film awards and by receiving invitations to several international film festivals, including those in Berlin and Venice.<sup>119</sup> At the time of release, it was reported as a highly stylish literary film with outstanding acting (*Chosun Daily* 10 November 1964: 6).

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<sup>117</sup> For more information, see Yecies (2005).

<sup>118</sup> Yi Kwang-su also wrote the statement ‘Declaration For Korean Independence’, which was announced by Korea’s leading nationalists when declaring the March First Movement. Films based on Yi’s novels include: *Cool and Cold* (*Mujeong* 1962); *Great Monk Wonhyo* (1962); *A Sad Story of Danjong* (1963); *Affection* (*Yujeong* 1966); *Soil* (1967); *Dreams* (1967); and *Love* (1968).

<sup>119</sup> Its award-winning list includes the best picture, best director, best music and best producer from the #4 Grand Bell Award in 1965. It was invited to six international film festivals in 1965 and 1966: Asian Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, Venice



Figure 4-1. Poster of *Deaf Samryong* (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 10 September 1964: 4)

Set in a rural village during the colonial era, the narrative revolves around four characters, house servant deaf Samryong, housemaid Chu-wol, junior master Kwang-shik and his newly-wed wife Sun-deok. Kwang-shik is a troublemaker, liaising with Chu-wol. He in fact despises and abuses his wife, who is from a higher social class but married him for money. Samryong respects Sun-deok, sympathising with her situation. When Man-soo, Chu-wol's husband, finds out about Kwang-shik and Chu-wol's relationship, a fist-fight occurs between them and Samryong defends Kwang-shik. Sun-deok's gift to Samryong to show her appreciation for defending her husband is misunderstood by Kwang-shik as a sign of affection and he beats Samryong, throwing him out of the house. That night, Man-soo sets fire to the house in revenge. Samryong comes back and attempts to rescue Sun-deok from the burning house. During Samryong's second attempt to save Kwang-shik, the roof of the house collapses over them.

The beginning of the film shows a beautiful world of silence with a hand signing in the air on a black-and-white wide screen. The traditional Korean music

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International Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival, Melbourne International Film Festival and San Francisco Film Festival.

comes in later, adding sentimentality to the scene. The scene quickly moves into a house where Kwang-shik places a hot cotton ball on the foot of Samryong, who is sleeping on the floor. Samryong is startled, while Kwang-shik cannot stop laughing at it. Old master Oh comes in, rescuing Samryong and scolding Kwang-shik. Samryong stops Oh from shouting at his son, smiling at Oh and shows he is all right, so there is no need to worry. Oh smiles back at him, saying “You’re so faithful.”

Loyalty and being ‘faithful’ are the main themes in the film. This traditional value is testified to by deaf Samryong through his dedication to his masters Oh and Kwang-shik, and Sun-deok who is often referred to as lady Oh. His loyalty, stemming from the traditional class system of master and servant, in fact originates from his childhood memory of Oh taking him under his wing, after being abandoned by his mother. Oh is a pseudo-father for Samryong, who occasionally expresses his affection toward Samryong. After saving Samryong from Kwang-shik’s beating, Oh tells him to run away and says, “Just let me know when you’re settled down. I’ll visit you.” Oh even pleads with Samryong to forgive him for having raised a bad son like Kwang-shik. His unyielding loyalty to Oh’s family is a product of this circumstance. As the ending of the film shows, Samryong sacrifices himself while attempting to save junior-master Kwang-shik’s life, despite all the sufferings he has caused to Samryongi.

However, the social class system described in this film is more complicated than the simple master-servant relationship represented by Oh and Samryong. Even in the ‘master’ class, there is a division between the higher social status, which was a group of the traditional scholars (*yangban*), and the lower social status, which was a group of rich landlords (*jiju*). In this film, the horizontal class conflict is represented by Kwang-shik, a rich farmer’s son and Sun-deok, the daughter of a scholar.

The traditional social class system from the Chosun Dynasty had been officially destroyed in 1894.<sup>120</sup> Yet, people including old master Oh still think highly of scholastic qualities. Kwang-shik and Sun-deok’s arranged marriage was pursued by master Oh on the grounds of this notion. Sun-deok’s family is described as culturally rich, but financially poor. Although it is a noble family following the lofty

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<sup>120</sup> In 1894 the Korean government announced a social reform that included the abolition of a social status system that had fostered the dominance of scholars (*yangban*) over commoners, and slavery. Under the old system, scholars were often landlords. For more information see Eckert *et al.* (1990: 222-230).

values of Confucius, the family does not have any choice but to marry out daughter for money when challenged by poverty. For Kwang-shik, it is hard to tolerate marriage to such a noble lady. He is already liaising with Chu-wol, who is outspoken and sexually attractive. Lady Oh lacks these qualities, and her gracious attitudes toward him and others are compared to Kwang-shik's mischievous behaviours, which often result in his physical abuse of Lady Oh. Representing the traditional Confucian values of the past, Lady Oh is described as a human being who is graceful, polite, elegant and compassionate. Paralleling Kwang-shik's violence towards her with the moments of her showing nobility, the film 'foregrounds the radical destruction of Confucius value' (Ahn 2007: 63).<sup>121</sup>

The film shows a world that is comprised of two sides: the materialistic modern world of Kwang-shik and Chu-wol versus the traditional world of Lady Oh and Samryong. The qualities coming from Samryong's loyalty and Lady Oh's Confucian values are shown as being superior to those of the materialistic world. Despite the fact that they are fast disappearing in the world of rapid modernisation, traditional values are represented as something respectable and honourable to keep, compared to those of the modern world, confirming that a nation's long tradition is worth remembering and preserving. This film presents audiences with the nostalgia of vanished values and norms in a poignant way, thus complementing the virtue of the tradition, which should be remembered or even re-visited.<sup>122</sup>

The San Francisco Film Festival's review of the film, written by critic Albert Johnson in 1965, gives a glimpse of how the film was viewed by Western audiences at the time:

The progress of Korean cinema has been exceptionally haphazard, and past Festival audiences have been bewildered by the naive treatments of melodramatic domestic triangles or sentimental epics. Therefore, *Samryongi* came as a surprise to the Berlin Festival and its delicate observation of a mute

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<sup>121</sup> In 2007 the Korean Film Archive published the Shin Sang-ok DVD Collection. The Collection contains five DVDs: *Seong Chun-hyang*, *My Mother And the House Guest*, *Deaf Samryongi*, *A Romantic Papa* and *One Thousand Year Old Fox*. A small booklet written by Jin-soo Ahn is attached to help understand Shin's filmography.

<sup>122</sup> The Park regime actively supported the rebirth of traditionalism. For example, in the late 1960s the regime introduced the idea of using Korean only for printed materials, and the process of worshipping Korea's national hero, Admiral Yi Sun-shin, was accelerated.

servant's love for his employer's wife revealed a tragic, lyrical sense that was entirely unexpected. Shin is a romantic, but he handles the subject matter with honesty and restraint; when the story bursts into violence, Western audiences may be dismayed by the rigor of the physical cruelties depicted, but one is left with the final impression of an Oriental folk tale, seen from a distance, wistful in attitude, half fancy and half truth.<sup>123</sup>

The review admits the film delivered ‘the final impression of an Oriental folk tale’, but it is not clear what kind of impression it is talking about. In fact, it may be the case that the film’s central theme was not fully understood by the foreign audience. At the time, film reporter Ahn Byeong-seop reported back to Korea that when the film was shown at the festival it received harsh criticism in the US: its ‘local flavor’ was received as ‘old-fashioned’ and ‘sentimental’ rather than unique and different (*Yeonghwa Yesul* December 1965: 90-93).<sup>124</sup> Given the fact that *Deaf Samryong* scooped the pool in Korea’s film awards, affirming itself as one of the best films of 1964, its disappointing critical reception in the foreign press apparently was a let-down to industry people. However, Ahn concludes that it was about the directorial style, not the subject matter, and thus the pursuit of ‘local-flavor’ should still continue.

## **2) Traditionalism, Locality, Festival Films: *Seashore Village* (1965)**

Linked to the notion of cultural nationalism, traditionalism was embraced as another thematic element in literary filmmaking. The MPI devised and encouraged producers to put traditionalism into films by announcing its support of ‘festival films’ in January 1965.<sup>125</sup> It began catering for what was expected for ‘festival films’ rather than leaving it entirely up to individual producers, making a plan of submitting

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<sup>123</sup> This review is found in the San Francisco Film Festival’s history site: [http://history.sffs.org/films/film\\_details.php?id=4345&searchfield=samyong](http://history.sffs.org/films/film_details.php?id=4345&searchfield=samyong). (Accessed 14 August 2009)

<sup>124</sup> Ahn’s article was based on film reviews published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Francisco News-Call Bulletin*.

<sup>125</sup> This direction was officially declared in January 1965 by the MPI through the announcement of the 1965 film support strategy, including strict application of the MPL, support for ‘sound’ film (e.g. literary, anticommunist and cultural films), and international film festival submissions (*Shin Donga* February 1965: 353).

a total of 39 local films to major international film festivals and distributing them through overseas embassy networks (*Shin Donga* February 1965: 353). This support verbally promised for the festival films was followed up by the 1966 MPL, which allocated more import licences to films invited to international film festivals. Films were tailored to deliver traditionalism and pursuing representation of 'Korean-ness'. Presentation of Korea's typical landscape and locality, which would differentiate the look of Korean cinema from other national cinemas, was regarded highly. In doing so, 'festival film' intends to achieve a political goal of flagging a country's unique cultural position in the world:

Films from nations not previously regarded as prominent film-producing countries receive praise for their ability to transcend local issues and provincial tastes while simultaneously providing a window onto a different culture (Nichols 1994: 16).

While this view seems to reflect what the government wanted to see from festival films, Tom O'Regan gives us a more balanced explanation of how the government and filmmakers benefited from making festival films on the Australian context:

The festival circulation of director as auteur and the close proximity of self-expression and personal vision to national and inter-subjective vision, ensures that the kind of attention the festivals and related circuits confer upon a film generates a certain kind of public reputation. It gives Australian cinema generally more value, just as it permits the construction (as well as auteur-based projects) of a singular career and a star persona (1996: 116).

Apparently the government's initiative to support festival films was specifically welcomed by independent producers and directors. A similar case was found in Korea. The independent producers such as Ho Hyeon-chan and Choi Hyeon-min, and directors such as Yu Hyun-mok and Lee Sung-gu were already busy making literary films, which easily could be turned into festival films.

As a producer who had experienced some international film festivals, Ho Hyeon-chan suggests a different approach to exploring the theme of humanity was necessary in order to maintain a universal appeal for modern audiences as well as to represent Korea's geographical specificity (*Silver Screen* August 1965: 65). In other words, while different landscape, culture and sentiment in a film would represent Korea's exotic locality, they should be coupled with the theme of humanity in order to reach out to foreign audiences. As observed in the case of *Deaf Samryongi*, foreign audiences failed to understand the film's love story set in the complex social representation of class struggles. Ho proposed the Japanese cinema as a model to follow because it had successfully showcased exotic subjects and oriental themes since the 1950s, receiving invitations to, as well as awards from, international film festivals (*Yeonghwa Yesul* September 1965: 119). *Seashore Village* represents the type of the festival film that Ho tried to create.

Based on Oh Young-su's short novel, the film was directed by Kim Su-yong, who is mostly known as a director of literary films. When *Seashore Village* was released, it made a decent box office success of attracting over 100,000 patrons in Seoul (KMDB) and it was praised as a new form of 'poetic cinema' (*Chosun Daily* 18 November 1965: 5). As shown in the film poster below, *Seashore Village* was promoted as an A-level local film aiming for the best picture of the year.



Figure 4-2. Poster of *Seashore Village* (*Donga Daily* 18 November 1965: 6)

*Seashore Village* received several awards from domestic and international film festivals including the Grand Bell Award, the Buil Film Festival and the Asian Film Festival.<sup>126</sup> With the success of this film the third time producer Ho Hyeon-chan, who was previously known as a film journalist of *Dong-a Daily*, clearly made his name known to the industry.<sup>127</sup> *Seashore Village* set a precedent of a literary film being both commercially and artistically successful (Ho 2000: 139; Kim 2003: 73), challenging the conventional belief that a literary film was only good for the artistic value that might bring the import licence to a producer, and opening up an era of future literary films.

The film portrays the lives of fishing villagers living on an island. On this island there is a shortage of working men, but there are plenty of widows on the

<sup>126</sup> The award-winning list includes: best assistant actress, best photography and best editing at the #5 Grand Bell Award (1966); and best picture, best director, best supporting actress, best cinematography, best original score and best new actors at the #9 Buil film festival (1966); best picture, best director and best actor at the #2 Korean Theatre Film Art Award (1966); and best black-and-white cinematography at the #13 Asian Film Festival (1966).

<sup>127</sup> Before making *Seashore Village*, Ho produced two films: *Only for You* (Yu Hyun-mok 1962) and *Madam Wing* (1965).

island who have lost their husbands at sea. The film particularly follows the story of Hae-sun, a young widow who lost her husband after only 10 days of marriage. She joins the widows' diving community in order to live alone and support herself, but her beauty is pursued by village lad, Sang-su, ultimately resulting in her having an affair with him. Hae-sun and Sang-su decide to leave the island and go to the mainland, but life on the mainland is tougher than on the island. Sang-su dies by falling over a cliff, and Hae-sun comes back to the island and joins the diving widows again.

When the film starts, the camera projects the images of a fishing village and its villagers, and the ocean in a wide screen, by panning. Jeon Jo-myong's camera captures the beauty of the fishing village in such a peaceful way, almost as if it were a native paradise. With a panoramic view of the location, a narration comes in as a prologue:

The village ladies continue their living in this seashore village despite hardships the nature had offered them by accepting it like a natural process of going through ebb and flow.

After the narration ends, the camera follows the villagers who are getting ready for another day of fishing. In the midst of busy activities, there is some talk of inauspicious signs and of having bad dreams. Despite this, since fishing is their life-long work, a pregnant wife, a newly-wed bride, as well as many other family members wave their hands to the boats, wishing for their safe return. However, shortly after their departure, the weather turns wild. Bad weather, dark clouds, strong winds, stormy rain, and lightning and thunder cause panic amongst the people. Soon women flock together in front of the village's sacred tree and Dragon God's altar, praying hard while being drenched and whipped by the storm. The next scene shows all the villagers flocking together at the cliff, waiting for their families to come back. The weather clears and the boats return. The villagers cheer, rushing down to the harbour, but find some of the fishermen are dead. The villagers cry. This opening sequence functions as an epilogue of the film, explaining why and how the villagers continue to live on the island without running away.

The life of the villagers is bound by the sea, and what is shown is a cycle of what they often experience. Many village women, including Hae-sun's mother-in-law, have lost their husbands. Hae-sun's brother-in-law still goes out to sea in order to make a living. The images of villagers before, during and after the boats' fishing trips are juxtaposed in a way of showing this continuous cycle. There is a notion of acceptance amongst the villagers that their lives are at the mercy of the sea. The ocean is described as a mighty one that controls the life and death of villagers. It is an object to fear as witnessed in the beginning, but also gives widows the necessary life force, which is provided by a generous food supply and means for living, and a place to let out their agonies. While some widows accept their way of life and find a way of living together with the ocean, some do not get over their being widowed. The tragedy of being a widow is clearly represented in the next sequence showing a woman walking out into the ocean, leaving her baby behind. She is the one who lost her husband during her pregnancy. Losing her mind, even after she delivered the baby to the world, she drifted around and chose to die.

In addition to Hae-sun's story, widows play a symbolic part in this film. They are the prime workers on this island as they say when marching to the sea, "How come these mothers are out for working? Where are the fathers?" They collect clams from the sea in order to support their families. They establish a diving community, forming a strong sisterhood amongst each other as a protection for their weak social status of living and raising a family alone. These women are described as strong, honest, compassionate and lonely. These characteristics of widows are well-presented in a scene when widows come out to the beach on a sleepless night, lying down and listening to the waves under the moonlight.

The sound of waves crashing on the shoreline accompanies the widows' traditional song. The camera pans, capturing widows grouped here and there. Some are lying against each other's laps, some are lying on a boat, some are looking outside from home, and some are washing at the river and sharing a cigarette. In Korea, leading a life as a widow was a great challenge. Under the Confucian tradition, a widow was expected to live with and support the husband's family. Remarriage was hardly a choice for them. As one of the widows says, they live alone to protect their social reputation, not because they want to. That is, the life of a woman living as a widow was forced rather than chosen. While this dictum is true,

*Seashore Village* provides a twist on this idea. What the film shows is not how the widows follow the social norm, but how they cope with it, each in her own way.

The strong sisterhood they build up through the diving community is one marvelous example of their way of protecting social vulnerability. Within the protection of their community they talk openly about sexuality, which is believed as taboo in the traditional environment. Among farming and fishing communities, sex was much less taboo than among the aristocracy, as many folk songs and folk stories will attest to. Sexuality in this film is described as the origin of their being (Lee 1988). They actively pursue chances of exploring their sexuality instead of hiding their sexual desire. Living on an island where survival is prioritised to customs and manners works favorably for their search for sexuality. For example, the village's fishing net collecting event becomes an open ceremony for widows to physically chafe their bodies against village men's bodies. Hae-sun gets practical advice from one widow to keep on good terms with Sang-su, not worrying about the talk of others. The scene showing widows on the beach in particular describes the widows' sexuality in a candid way, projecting the images of real women, not grieving widows, full of energy, passion and life-force.

Ho had commented that a 'festival film' should present a country's unique cultural backdrop and theme of humanity to reach out to foreign audiences. *Seashore Village* achieved that. The film emphasised spatial representation of the locality by showing the beautiful scenery of a Korean fishing village. The story of diving widows demonstrated a unique cultural aspect, and the timeless subject of sexuality touched the universal theme of humanity. Similar types of literary films dealing with traditionalism aiming for festival invitations were continually produced, including *A Water Mill* (1966), *Stroller* (1967) and *An Old Potter* (1969).

Even after the 1960s, this direction of seeking traditionalism continued. The most representative director dedicated to this theme is probably Im Kwon-taek, who began building up his art film filmography since the late 1970s. David James remarks how traditionalism was realised in Im's films: 'successful evocation of premodern culture recovered lost traditions that became a source of popular domestic

pride and the basis of the films' international prestige' (2005/2006: 5).<sup>128</sup> This was the same goal the 1960s festival films aimed to achieve.

### 3) Exploring Modernism: *Mist* (1967)

While cultural nationalism and traditionalism were dominantly adapted for literary films, the idea of modernity was also explored in films by some directors. For example, in *Deaf Samryongi*, director Shin Sang-ok explored the idea of traditional values being weakened and vanishing by modern materialistic values. Director Kim Su-yong compared life on an island with that on the mainland, implying the progress of modernisation. Yet, the idea of modernity became incorporated into films in the late 1960s by engaging post-war literature, as previously mentioned. At the time in the literary field, writers such as Kim Seung-ok, Yi Cheong-jun and Seo Jeong-in already had explored the individual's inner transformation while undergoing the larger society's industrialisation (Kang 2001: 105-110).<sup>129</sup>

Filmmakers saw the social, economic, and cultural changes brought about by industrialisation and as a result they tried to comment on what was happening to them. Inspired by post-war literature written by abovementioned novelists, directors began adapting their novels, expressing desire to critiquing the fast industrialising society. The techniques of the European postwar modernist filmmakers, such as long takes and open-ended narratives, and their styles of exploring the world of unconsciousness as well as the obscure idea of modernism, were equally experimented-with by Korean directors.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Im's art films share the same characteristic as a festival film. For example, Im's films such as *The Genealogy* (1978), *Adada* (1988), *Surrogate Mother* (1984), *Sopyonje* (1993), *Chunhyang* (2000) and *Chihwaseon* (2002), as was done in many literary films, attempted to project Korea's history into a cinematic world, exploring a way to reinstate Korea's traditional values and sentiments. This does not include Im's works as a Minjung director and Im's work in the 1960s because of the different status quo.

<sup>129</sup> The 1960s novels dealt with two subject matters: war/ideology and industrialisation. The theme of industrialisation was developed into two sub-themes: 1) searching for the meaning of modernisation by showing the side-effects of rapid industrialisation; and 2) individuals alienated from the process of modernisation (Kang 2001: 97-98).

<sup>130</sup> It should be noted that several European modernist films, including Italian Neo-Realism films and French Nouvelle Vogue films were often introduced to Korea after the 1950s. The list included: *Eclipse* (Michelangelo Antonioni 1962); *La Ragazza di Bube* (Luigi Comencini

Modernist films such as *Mist* (1967), *The Guests of the Last Train* (1967), and *The General's Mustache* (1968) appeared, conveying similar criticisms concerning the modernised Korea. The appearance of these films coincided with the completion of the Park regime's first economic development plan (1963-1967) (Yi 2001: 374). This occurred as the public became aware of the impact of industrialisation after witnessing an increase in exports, a restructuring of the agrarian system, and a rapid economic growth rate of over 8% per year. At the same time, the impact of modernisation or industrialisation on society began to be noticed.

*Mist* was based on Kim Seung-ok's short novel *Mujin Travelogue* published in 1964 and created by director Kim Su-yong in 1967 as the representative modernist film of the 1960s that utilised various editing techniques such as flashbacks, montages and long takes (Yi 2001; Byon 2001; Kim 2003). Its focus on visual aesthetics and surreal atmosphere sustained throughout the film was the obvious promotional point when the film was released. Jose Quirino, film critic from the Philippines and one of the jury members of the Asian Film Festival in 1967, noted that *Mist* was reminiscent of the works of Ingmar Bergman and *Man and Woman*, French film that won the Grand Prix at the 1966 Cannes Film Festival (See Figure 4-2). Director Kim received the best director awards from the 14<sup>th</sup> Asian Film Festival and the Grand Bell Award for his use of the montage editing, amplified sound effects and non-linear narrative structure using flashbacks. .

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1965); *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (Jacques Demy 1964); and *Un Homme et Une Femme* (Claude Lelouch 1966).

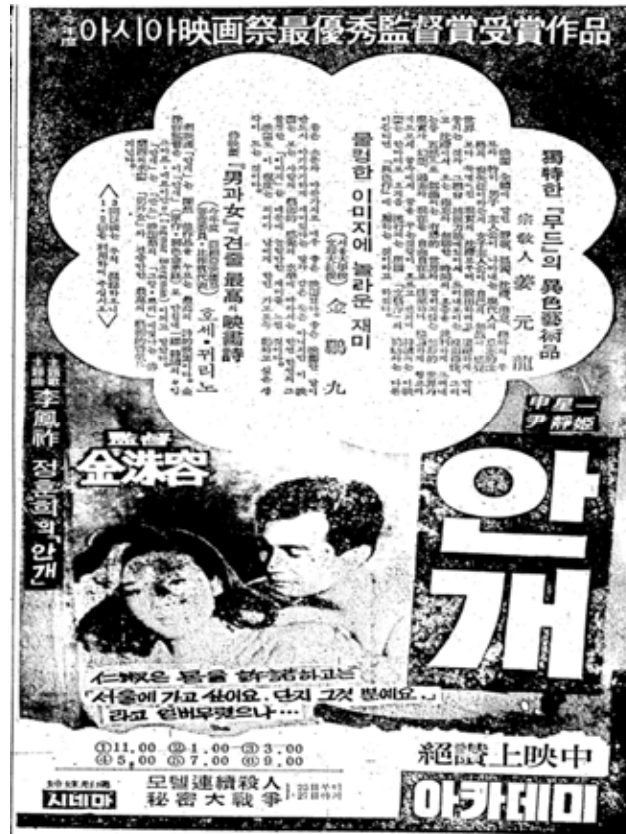


Figure 4-3. Poster of *Mist* (*Donga Daily* 24 October 1967: 5)

The story is rather simple. Yun Gi-jun, who is married to the daughter of the president of a big pharmaceutical company in Seoul, takes a short trip to visit his hometown Mijin while his wife tries to close his promotion deal. During his stay he spends time together with his old friends and has an affair with a music teacher. After receiving a call from his wife, Gi-jun heads back to Seoul. Nonetheless, this rather simple story is built upon a complicated narrative structure created by stylish use of narration and flashbacks of shifting time and spaces back and forth.

The opening sequence shows the landscape of Seoul, seen through a window. The camera pans and pulls back, showing the inside of the office where Gi-jun is sitting on the desk, reading a book. Gi-jun, startled, pulls back from his desk. The camera captures the close-up of the book where ants are crawling around. Gi-jun takes a pill, drinking water. Then, an employee comes in to get his signature on some paperwork. Following shots are montages of close-ups of typewriting, picking up the phone, the employee opening and closing the office door mixed with salient sound effects. When Gi-jun opens the window, the noise from the busy traffic comes into the office, mingling with other noises from outside. Seoul is a modern urban sphere

with rapid industrialisation in progress. The strident synthetic noises, seemingly hallucinating effect of ants and Gi-jun's reaction to it all signifies his feeling about his cramped living in Seoul.

When sitting on a train going to Mujin, his memory about his hometown unfolds and his narration starts:

Is your hometown affluent, comfortable and beautiful? My hometown Mujin is the opposite. Mujin is rich with strong sun, thick fog and twisted minds inflicted by the poverty. When growing up, my biggest wish was to leave Mujin.

*Mist* declares that it is not going to be another literary film dealing with cultural nationalism and traditionalism, describing the rural village as a space for innocence and nostalgia as two previously analysed films did. The image of young Gi-jun coming out of the attic, shouting "I cannot stand hiding here" is inserted. Following Yun's stream of consciousness, the film unravels his memories.

Geographically, Mujin is a rural area enveloped in thick fog, which Gi-jun describes as the only thing Mujin is known for. While it is a rural area that expects less change than cities, the space owns its secret desire to catch up with the vibrant cities. *Mist* offers audiences the opportunity to think of Seoul and Mujin, not as modern versus premodern space, but modern versus want-to-be modern space (Kim 2003: 76). Going back to Mujin enables Gi-jun to experience an unexpected adventure to reflect on his past, present and future, offering him an opportunity to examine the real meaning of modernisation.

Tax officer Cho, Gi-jun's friend, represents Mujin's opportunistic, authoritative and condescending side by showing the negative modern elements in Mujin. Gi-jun's first reunion with Cho happens at Cho's house, where he holds a card game party. Later on, the freeze frame of people playing a card game is presented with Gi-jun's narration: in Mujin everyone thinks people are snobbish. From then on, the image of Mujin, a microcosm of all the problems the modern city embodies, is gradually constructed.

At night after the party on the way home Gi-jun realises the little alleys of Mujin are full of people desiring sexual relationships or trades. During the day he

visits Cho's office, finding Cho's life in Mujin is a carbon copy of his life in Seoul. While Gi-jun is waiting for Cho in his office, Cho's employee comes in to get a signature on paperwork. He opens up the cover of a stamp for Cho, and receives and hands over the phone for Cho. The next shot is the inserted close-up of Gi-jun's face, which shows a look of contempt. Another employee comes in, repeating the same actions of the previous employee. The typewriting noise becomes louder, the camera tilts when Cho gives a signature for the second paperwork, and the typewriting scene is shown with a close-up. It is the exact way that Gi-jun's office life was described in the beginning. With a comic relief in the middle of this scene, two employees bumping heads when they pass by each other, this scene seems to be created as a black comedy, delivering a message of mocking the bureaucratic office space in general. In the end, Gi-jun's disdain toward Cho is ultimately about himself.

Parallel to his new findings about Mujin, Gi-jun also takes up a personal journey of meeting his past through talking to his past self and meeting the music teacher Ha, who he describes as a person partly symbolising his past-self. He suffered from a lung disease during the war. At his mother's request he agreed to hide himself in the attic to avoid being drafted into the war, but as a result, Gi-jun's consciousness suffered severely to have become a coward. Putting his shameful past behind, Gi-jun tries to legitimise his actions, searching for his own safety and success in life. In the midst of dating with Ha, Gi-jun sees his present-self and past-self walking together in front of him, talking and seeking reconciliation on a beach road. The close-up of his present-self is captured on screen and says: "Look. I am mature enough not to see the world with sentimentalism. In the end, it was a good thing to marry a rich widow. What do you think?" The past-self looks at him, sneering without saying anything, and he spits out.

Whatever Gi-jun's moral standard in the past was, the present Gi-jun outgrows it now. In a sense, this trip to Mujin was a necessary passing ritual, acknowledging his transformation. Toward the end of his visit, Yun sees a crazy girl, whom he met on the day he arrived, dead on the street, being carried away by the police. It is almost like a command that whatever Yun experienced during his stay should stay behind. Upon receiving his wife's telegram to come back to Seoul, Gi-jun takes a bus, leaving Mujin. His narration comes at last, showing that he has not closed his past yet:

For once, once and for all. Let's accept Mujin, crazy loneliness, popular songs, suicide of a bar girl, betrayal, and responsibility. For once, once and for all.

#### **4. Conclusion: The Literary Genre As Cultural Propaganda**

While the anticommunist genre was created as an overt form of propaganda, the literary genre became the genre that was covert in its presentation. Under the authoritarian regime the literary genre was transformed by engaging with aspects of cultural nationalism, traditionalism and modernism. As a result, it was developed not as a 'pure' art house cinema, but as a 'political' art cinema – a hybrid of propaganda and art films. The re-definition of 'art film' from a Korean perspective highlights the strong political nature of 'literary films' as cultural propaganda produced during the period.

The government supported productions of literary films because they offered an opportunity to promote Korea's refined artistry to the world. While receiving this support, producers tailored literary films to the masses rather than to an art-house audience, out of commercial motives. For filmmakers, literary films provided chances to experiment with new narrative structures, visual styles, diverse themes and international fame. The theme of cultural nationalism, traditionalism and modernism became naturally important in literary filmmaking for both parties because these themes helped them reach their respective objectives. This is a political compromise and a kind of collaboration. The literary films produced during the 1960s were covertly political. With the different agendas each player had in mind, the end-result was the facilitation of the *political* art cinema in Korea, which was commonly characterised by stylistic visual representation and technical experiment through the use of editing, sound and narrative structures.

While the genre's rise benefited from policy support, its decline was also anticipated in 1969 when the MPI withdrew its support, confirming its characteristic

as a cultural propaganda.<sup>131</sup> In 1986 Korea's import policy, namely the Import Recommendation System and the Import Licence Reward System, were finally abolished from the MPL. The literary genre had officially lost solid ground. However, it left its legacy. The three remaining chapters introduce three representative directors in the 1960s and how they strove within the restrictive production environment while pressured by the meddling government and their artistic consciousness.

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<sup>131</sup> In 1969 the literary films were excluded from the ILRS categories, and in 1970 the ILRS was completely removed from the MPL. In 1973, with the 4<sup>th</sup> MPL revision, the ILRS was reinstated, reviving a short boom of literary filmmaking in the mid-1970s.

## **Chapter 5. Shin Sang-Ok and the Duality Between Film and Politics**

Since the 1940s, many parts of the world have been ruled by a variety of authoritarian regimes. Cultural productions in different modalities and in different ways have been guided by policies promulgated by these authoritarian regimes, whether communist or anticommunist. Within this milieu, cultural producers experienced dilemmas because their concept of creativity and artistry were undermined by commercial sensibilities and policy. Even in the US industry there were similar quandaries despite the fact that Americans and American filmmakers for that matter enjoyed a relatively higher degree of freedom than in many other countries. Nonetheless, directors under authoritarian regimes experienced a double burden of political and commercial pressure because they were subjected to the ‘imposition of sociopolitical definitions and restrictions on artistic expression’ and yet they were ‘relying on box office returns to define success’ (Goulding 1985: 171).

Similar points can be made about cinema in Korea. As chapter 1 explained, the state set the rules for all filmmakers and artists to follow. Provided that artists worked by these rules, which encapsulated the government’s ideological guidelines, their careers, and in some cases their lives, flourished. As explained before, with limited opportunities to travel abroad, Korean directors could hardly think of escaping to a different country that promoted creative freedom. The achievements of Glauber Rocha and Milos Forman, for instance, who fled from authoritarian regimes to the West to pursue their artistic dreams, were unimaginable for Korean directors. Thus, they had to endure censorship that was forced upon them while devising different methods to overcome creative restraint. They persevered through the processes of negotiation, compromise and assertion.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 show how directors negotiated spaces to showcase their artistry while avoiding the pitfalls of censorship and the PRS. The cases of directors Shin Sang-ok, Lee Man-hee and Yu Hyun-nok are used to illustrate how directors developed individual strategies for surviving the industry conditions set by the authoritarian regime.

This chapter focuses on Shin because Shin was the representative director demonstrating ever-changing dynamics present in between political power and an artist. It examines his filmography and analyses how his ideological engagement was

transformed by and impacted on Korea's larger media landscape. First, it traces how Shin reached the apex of his career in the early 1960s by collaborating with the political power and by initiating a series of practical business decisions. As previously introduced in chapter 2, Shin exercised vast influence over the film industry from the early 1960s and his personal connections to the Park regime played a critical role in his reaching a high point.

Second, this chapter investigates Shin's personal philosophy, because his connections to the Park regime rested almost exclusively on his complicit agreement with its ruling ideology, which was represented by industrialisation and economic development. By explaining this understudied topic of how and why Shin's political proclivity originated, the chapter demonstrates how Shin's collaboration with the government is far more complex than previously believed. Shin's early propaganda films *Rice* (1963) and *The Red Muffler* (1964), which promoted the government's national agenda of the rural development campaign and nationalism respectively, are analysed to show Shin's political alignment with the government.

Third, this chapter analyses how Shin's downfall occurred in the late 1960s and explains the implications that this had for the film industry. Shin's career met with a series of challenges from the mid-1960s including cash flow problems and violation of the obscenity law in 1969. Subsequently Shin Film's registration was cancelled in 1970. Exacerbating Shin's weakening personal reputation and industrial influence was the rise of television, which the Park regime saw as the new propaganda tool that could possibly supersede film in terms of nationwide distribution and accessibility. *Eunuch* (1968) is analysed as a case study to show the change of attitude Shin developed toward political power surrounded by these external changes.

## **1. From Political Artist and Propaganda Creator to Industry Leader**

There has been a consensus among film scholars and critics that Shin Sang-ok (1925-2006) was a gifted filmmaker with outstanding skills, who could appeal to the critics as well as to mass audiences. Shin was 'the most artistically skilled master', versatile in every possible genre achievable through the use of the state-of-the-art technology available through his company, Shin Film (Yi 2008: 17). He was

also known as ‘a master of mise-en-scène’, singling out his talent in constructing mise-en-scene in amongst other areas such as art direction, cinematography, editing and screenwriting (Kim 2003: 115). Peer directors also praised him highly. Director Kim Soyoung (2007) praises him as a master of genre, who freely crossed lines between genres while preserving the unique conventions of each genre. Director Jeong Jin-woo confirms that most members of the film industry envied him and wanted to outdo him because ‘Shin Sang-ok’ represented the highest level of domestic and international success in terms of reputation and creative talent (Lee *Donga.Com* 13 April 2006). Given this critical reception it makes sense that outside of Korea Shin was remembered as Korea’s Orson Welles (Martin *The New York Times* 13 April 2006).

According to his biography, Shin was born in Cheongjin in 1925 in the northern part of Korea where Korea’s representative colonial filmmaker Na Un-gyu (1902-1937) was born and raised.<sup>132</sup> Since his father was a Korean herbal medicine doctor, he grew up with little worry over financial difficulties, concentrating on two things: painting and film watching. From an early age Shin was known for his artistic talent and frequently received awards for his paintings and won contests at school. In his free time he watched as many films as possible at the second-run cinemas in the neighborhood.<sup>133</sup> Apart from Na Un-gyu’s films Shin also watched many Hollywood films including Chaplin’s *Modern Times*, *The Gold Rush*, *The Great Dictator* and other films like *The Birth of A Nation* and *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Shin claimed that Na and Chaplin were his early cinematic mentors although his training as filmmaker actually started by becoming an apprentice under director Choi In-gyu in 1946 (PIFF 2006: 25). The level of passion Na and Chaplin dedicated to filmmaking, and their working style of playing versatile roles such as actor, screenwriter and director while taking full control of their filmmaking, inspired Shin to develop his authorship in similar ways. Emphasising Shin’s enthusiasm for film as a driving

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<sup>132</sup> Na was Korea’s silent film star actor and director whose reputation soared high with the success of his first film *Arirang* (1926). For this film, Na wrote the screenplay, directed, and acted as main character. He was only aged 25. *Arirang*, which covertly dealt with resistance to the Japanese colonialists, enjoyed national popularity and helped to develop Korea’s silent golden age and also contributed to the establishment of the concept of a national cinema today (Lee 1997).

<sup>133</sup> Second-run cinemas run films that have already been released through the first-run cinemas and provide discounted ticket price.

force of his career, screenwriter Han Un-sa (2007), who worked with Shin on *The Red Muffler*, describes him as someone crazy about filmmaking. Director Lee Kyeong-tae (2007: 197), who was apprenticed under Shin, calls him a perfectionist who always looked for the best. As Shin's life story shows, he unremittingly pursued filmmaking at every opportunity whether he was in South Korea, North Korea or in the US, until he died in 2006.<sup>134</sup>

In 1944 Shin entered the University of Tokyo to study art. Similar to other directors such as Eisenstein and Kurosawa, Shin's art skills became an important base for his filmmaking because he learned how to get close to and express the nature of an objective. By the time the Japanese colonial period had ended, Shin's short stay in Japan had taught him about how to watch films closely (primarily Fascist Italian and Nazi-era German films) as well as how to appreciate art theories such as surrealism. For Shin, film seemed to capture moments in a more dynamic and consecutive way compared to photographs that merely held moments in a freeze frame.

After coming back to Korea, Shin found that there was little he could do. So, he began working for the US Army Military Government as a painter, making large posters for movie screenings. Shin's interest in films continued to grow and after watching Korea's representative post-liberation film *Viva Freedom* (1946), he decided to enter the film industry. Shin met with Choi In-gyu, director of *Viva Freedom*, and began working for him as an apprentice, designing and making sets, and taking still pictures.<sup>135</sup> Shin was not the only one who was being trained by Choi, who is considered as the father of modern Korean film industry as he also trained other young directors such as Hong Seong-gi and Chung Chang-wha in the immediate post-liberation period (Kim and Jung 2001). Under the guidance of Choi,

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<sup>134</sup> One of the interviewees I met in 2004 speculated that Shin's abduction to North Korea in 1978 might have been his own choice because at that time his film career had ended in South Korea. While this is only speculation, it shows there was the general concept around about him being so crazy as to do anything for films.

<sup>135</sup> Choi's technical expertise ranged from sound recording and editing to screen writing and directing. Apart from his reputation as Korea's representative director in the post-liberation era, he was also a controversial filmmaker for his making pro-Japanese films such as *Tuition Fee* (1940), *Angels On the Street* (1941) and *Children of the Sun* (1944). During the Korean War Choi was abducted to North Korea and little record of his whereabouts has been kept.

Shin gained substantial knowledge about editing and shooting, and grew familiar with members of the film industry.

After long years of apprenticeship, Shin debuted with *The Evil Night* (1952), portraying one day in the life of a poor writer meeting with a *yanggongju*, who used to be his student. The literal meaning of ‘foreign princess’ is a prostitute that mingles with foreigners (especially US GIs), implying that the woman has a lower social-economic status in Korea’s Confusian society and is a social outcast. According to Shin (2007), *The Evil Night* was an experimental film shot in 16mm by using film scraps collected from the US Army bases and adapted documentary aesthetics of Italian Neo-Realism.<sup>136</sup> This was the film movemenet that fascinated other young directors including Yu Hyun-mok, Lee Seong-gu and Kim Su-yong. They were apparently impressed by stories of poor working-class people in Italian Neo-Realism films such as *Open City* (Roberto Rosellini 1945) and *Bicycle Thief* (Vittorio De Sica 1948) because, firstly, they reminded them of their own poor living in post-liberated Korea and, secondly, were enthralled by a new film aesthetics portraying the world without any modification, in an effort to create an unmediated sense of reality (Lee 2004: 233).

Shin’s next project was *Korea* (1954), a documentary about Korea’s history and culture. When making this film, Shin worked with actress Choi Eun-hee, and they became a couple later on. Choi’s popularity, which had already been established through her theatrical career, gave additional strength to Shin’s developing his career. With support from Choi, who willingly worked for Shin’s projects for a minimal fee, Shin directed and produced diverse films including *Dream* (1957), *A College Woman's Confession* (1958), *Flower in Hell* (1958), *Independence Association and Young Syngman Rhee* (1959) and *Seong Chun-hyang* (1960).

Of them all, *Independence Association and Young Syngman Rhee* (hereafter *Independence Association*) shows that Shin’s work with the government dates back to 1959 during the Syngman Rhee government. Upon the request of Syngman Rhee’s Liberal Party, Shin directed state-funded and propagandistic film *Independence Association*, which was financed by the Liberal Party and produced by Im Hwa-soo,

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<sup>136</sup> The film no longer exists, and thus it is hard to know of its aesthetics. Film reviews of this film were non-existent since it was war-time, and newspaper and film magazine activities were reduced to a minimum.

who was an experienced producer and exhibitor at the time.<sup>137</sup> At the same time Im was basically a thug, too. As head of the Anticommunist Artists Association, a right-wing entertainers' organisation, Im forced popular actors and actresses to attend political events held by the Liberal Party and to star in his films. Those who resisted his command were beaten, and actor Kim Hee-gap was hospitalised (Ho 2000: 109). Using coercion, Im brought all top talents in the film industry to make *Independence Association*. Shin Sang-ok was recruited as director and top stars such as Kim Jingu, Kim Seung-ho and Choi Eun-hee were cast as main and supporting characters.<sup>138</sup>

Designed to be an advanced promotion for the upcoming presidential election campaign scheduled for early 1960, the film portrayed a brave image of Syngman Rhee, who was losing popularity due to his dictatorial leadership style. The bio-pic portrays Rhee's patriotic life and his dedication to defend Korea's independence at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by illustrating his works with the Shanghai-based Independence Association. After directing *Independence Association* Shin developed techniques necessary for large-scale films. Shin described the film as a project that was completed under the 'omnipotent' direction of the government. He was not 'forced' to work, although others such as actor Kim Hee-gap were. Thus, Shin enjoyed this as an opportunity to work with an all star cast under the best possible production conditions (Shin 2007: 64-65). With this film project, Shin learned how satisfying working with the political powers. Being friendly with Korea's top power might have been another gain, which continued to the next regime.

### **1) Ideological Conformity: Escape From Poverty**

By the time the military coup occurred in 1961, Shin Sang-ok became one of the established directors of the industry due to the box office success of the colour cinemascope film *Seong Chun-hyang*. This film, which demonstrated his direction

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<sup>137</sup> Im owned Pyeonghwa Cinema in Seoul and produced nineteen films between 1957 and 1960, including *An Exotic Garden* (1957), Korea's first co-production film with the Shaw Brothers in Hong Kong (KMDB).

<sup>138</sup> After the military coup in 1961 Im was arrested by the military for directing his gangs to beat up students who participated in the student demonstration of the April Revolution in 1960. He died after receiving the death sentence from the military government (*Chosun Daily* 23 August 1961: 3).

coming to maturity, was based on a traditional folk story of a love that defies class differences and was marked by critics and scholars as an important film in Korea's film history because: 1) it brought a generational change to the industry and 2) it provided a vast opportunity for Shin to develop his film company as a major studio (Ho 2000; Byon 2001; Lee 2004). At the time Shin Sang-ok competed against senior director Hong Seong-gi for films based on the same folk tale. In making films, Shin worked with his wife Choi, and Hong worked with wife Kim Ji-mi, another popular actress. Both were colour Cinemascope films, which was the first in Korea's film history.<sup>139</sup> Hong represented a senior filmmakers' group while Shin represented young blood and thus members of the film industry were split, supporting either Hong or Shin. It was a battle between the old and new generations in the film industry (*Seoul Newspaper* 16 January 1961: 4). Hong's film *The Story of Chunhyang* was released ten days earlier than Shin's, and yet larger audiences turned up to watch *Seong Chunhyang*. It was perceived as interesting by audiences because of the modern interpretation of the traditional love story and dramatic character development, and its colour turned out to be more vivid than the competing film (*Chosun Daily* 30 January 1961: 4; *Kyeonghyang Daily* 1 February 1961: 4; *Seoul Newspaper* 2 February 1961: 4; *Hanguk Daily* 23 April 1961: 5).<sup>140</sup> As a result, the film was screened over 74 days in Seoul and attracted audiences of more than 380,000. It was the highest box office record in Korea's cinematic history by both local and foreign films (*Chosun Daily* 28 April 1961: 4). At the time the average box office record for a local film release was for audiences of about 40,000, and the previous box office record at its highest was less than 150,000 in Seoul.<sup>141</sup> The film's success brought Shin wealth and reputation. Shin and Choi rose as invincible partners in the industry. The film's financial success also provided a firm ground on

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<sup>139</sup> Hong was already an established director known for quality melodramas. His reputation helped attract enormous funding from provincial exhibitors (investors). Shin, on the contrary, was a rising director who was perceived as a junior and far short of Hong's reputation. Shin had difficulty of recruiting funding for the same type of film project and had to sell Choi's jewellery to aid the production budget (Shin 2007).

<sup>140</sup> *The Story of Chunhyang*, on the other hand, was described to be 'boring' (*Donga Daily* 22 January 1961: 6), 'plain' (*Haguk Daily* 19 January 1961: 4), and even described as a film that did not deserve to be reviewed (*Seoul Newspaper* 2 February 1961: 4), showing the film received quite a negative reception from film critics.

<sup>141</sup> According to Korean Movie Database, the final box office record of *Seong Chunhyang* was an audience of 420,000 in Seoul. Yet, the box office record for *The Story of Chunhyang* is not found in any of the news articles nor in Korean Movie Database.

which Shin could build Shin Film as a film empire. In contrast, Hong did not even recoup the investment, ending up with a huge financial loss. The failure of *Story of Chunhyang* badly impacted on Hong's film career as well as his personal life. In 1962 Hong divorced his wife Kim and his reputation as a director went downhill.

Hence, when Park Chung Hee's new political leadership was established, Shin was well prepared to take the next step. Shin found that his ambition of building a major production company fitted well with Park Chung Hee's pursuit of national reconstruction and industrialisation. Shin nurtured a collaborative relationship with the Park regime and his career as well as his company's business flourished. Shin's relationship with the government was one of the key elements that explained his successful career and he worked very hard to build close ties with the powerful political regime. The opportunity of working with the regime first came from Park Chung Hee himself. As is generally known, impressed by *Evergreen Tree* (1961), Park invited Shin and his wife Choi to dine with him, officially opening a close working relationship between them (PIFF 2006: 25). Shin, like most Koreans including Park Chung Hee, had grown up as a poor farmer's son in a farming village under colonial rule, struggling to escape from poverty. As Park Chung Hee himself confesses, 'economics precedes politics or culture' (1963: 20), meaning that his priority was set on the country's economic development. Knowing this, Shin supported the Park regime because it might provide the answer to make this dream come true via the nation's industrialisation and economic development.

Whereas Shin may have been recruited casually to work on *Independent Association*, his subsequent work with the Park government was more calculated. Shin's work with the government was inspired by his ideological orientation – that is, his attempt to 'escape from poverty', which was closely aligned with the Park regime's agenda (Yi 2008: 18). In fact, the attempt to rise above one's socio-economic predicament had been a recurrent theme in Shin's films such as *The Flower in Hell* (1958) and *To the Last Day* (1960). Main characters in these films suffer from economic difficulties and are forced to choose questionable pathways in life. *The Flower in Hell* illustrates life in post-war poverty by showing lives of prostitutes and gangsters attached to the US Army base. Gangster Young-shik steals PX (Post Exchange) materials from the US Army base to make money on the black market. While his means were ignoble, he had few alternatives in life. Likewise,

Hye-gyeong in *To the Last Day*, who is a primary carer of her family (a wounded war veteran husband and a daughter), tenaciously looks for whatever jobs to support them. Being strong and not giving up is the only way she can survive and support her family.

Shin became a political favorite by participating in Park's industrialisation drive in two primary ways. First, he helped the MPI draft the MPL. Second, he made films promoting Korea's national reconstruction plans to help the government carry out national policies. In his own words, Shin said that filmmakers living in a developing country should make 'necessary' films for national development (Shin 2007: 77). Yet, Shin's collaboration with the political powers was seen differently by other members of the industry, earning him the reputation of being opportunistic. Inasmuch as he was acknowledged for his contribution to the industry, as explained in chapter 2, Shin was also regarded as someone who 'ruined' Korean cinema because of the negative influence he had on the industry by helping the MPI design the restrictive film policy and production system (Yi 2008: 41). Nonetheless, Shin embraced working with the government because it provided him vast opportunities of developing his company. Thus, when the government needed a film professional who could liaise between industry people and the government, Shin became the key person, taking a role of creating the types of propaganda that the regime wanted. This was before the National Film Production Centre was rolling in full scale for the production of feature propaganda films. Shin was in a 'unique location in the nexus adjoining the fields of art, industry and power' (Chung 2008: 70). Shin, who caused the industry's transition and lived through it, was in the middle of where these individual sectors contacted, corresponded and conflicted with each other.

Films such as *Evergreen Tree* (1961) and *Rice* (1963) clearly showcase Shin's philosophy of 'escape from poverty'. These films, which were known as representative enlightenment films advocating the importance of a rural development campaign, illustrated Shin's philosophy – that is, 'overdetermination and ideological fluidity of developmentalist discourse' (Chung 2008: 13). Similar to cultural films produced by the NFPC, these enlightenment films promoted educational themes such

as national policies and financial savings initiatives within feature film length, offering public endorsement for specific government initiatives.<sup>142</sup>

*Evergreen Tree*, which was released right before the coup and which impressed Park Chung Hee, as previously mentioned, is a film based on Shim Hun's novel of the same name published in 1935.<sup>143</sup> *Evergreen* is a metaphor describing hardworking young farmers who never give up hope of a better future. In this film, young college students come to rural communities, educating villagers about modernisation. The original story and its spirit from the colonial period, which emphasised rural village enlightenment, were perceived by Shin to be still important for the development of post-war Korean society. Shin's idea of delivering the social message to the public and awakening people was successful.<sup>144</sup> Shin's developmentalist ideas expressed in this film were so similar to those of President Park. Park needed the political support of the countryside, and thus needed to modernize the production methods. This idea of enlightening the rural villagers was ultimately materialised in a constructive by launching the New Village Movement (*Saemaeul Movement*, or *Saemaeul Undong*) in 1970. The objective of this movement was the 'escape from poverty', aiming at modernizing the rural community by building up the necessary infrastructure such as the water system, roads and bridges.<sup>145</sup>

While *Evergreen Tree* advocated the rural development as a solution to escape from poverty from Shin's personal point of view, *Rice* strengthened this idea

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<sup>142</sup> Other well-known enlightenment films catering to the rural development campaign included Park Jong-ho's *Lover of the Earth* (1963), Shin Sang-ok's *Land* (1966), Yu Hyun-mok's *The Sun Rises Again* (1966) and Gang Dae-jin's *Hometown* (1967).

<sup>143</sup> *Evergreen Tree* was first introduced in 1934 as a serial novel published in *Donga Daily*, supporting the *vnarod* movement. *Donga Daily* initiated the *vnarod* movement, which was adopted from a rural development campaign led by young students in Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, to educate and modernise rural communities. Nonetheless, Korea's *vnarod* movement was criticised for agreeing to the colonial government's rural development campaign, which intended to raise the productivity of Korea's farming industry to support the building of the war system (Lee 2007: 165-166).

<sup>144</sup> Shin (2007: 78) claims that the film also touched North Korea's leader Kim Jong Il and Kim later announced his intention to show the film for public education. While this may sound promotional, it is true that Shin's direction of conveying strong social messages is something similarly utilised by socialist countries such as Stalinist Russia, the PRC and North Korea. The socialist characteristics noted in Shin's film are probably part of reasons that Kim abducted Shin in 1978 to North Korea to construct his cinematic kingdom.

<sup>145</sup> For more detailed explanation regarding this movement and its development over the years, see the official website promoting the *Saemaeul Undong*: <http://saemaul.net/saemaulundong.asp>

by engaging with the regime's perspective. Furthermore, as the next section will show, the overt endorsement of the military government in *Rice* advanced Shin's relationship with Park Chung Hee by riding the surge behind the government's drive toward economic development.

## **2) The Pure Endorsement Film: *Rice* (1963)**

As explained in chapter 2, *Rice* was used as part of Park Chung Hee's presidential election campaign. *Rice* portrays Park Chung Hee's vision of how rural development should be organised and governed. The prologue subtitles specify the reasons behind the making of this film: to share a true story of *evergreen trees*, that is, the hardworking young farmers, who helped rebuild the nation one tree at a time. By putting this statement at the front, *Rice* imposes a certain ideological view on its audiences.

*Rice* extols the virtues of young farmers who have successfully created an irrigation system for their barren rice fields. Ultimately it portrays a compassionate and caring government bending over backwards to help villagers to overcome hunger because their dreams of making an irrigation system are ultimately achieved with the arrival of the new military government, which sends trucks and soldiers, as well as explosives to the construction sites. This familiar story of struggling farmers and their success attracted over 50,000 people in Seoul and it received the Special Consideration Award at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grand Bell Award in 1964. It was later exported to Thailand (KMDB).

The film's explicit propaganda is hard to miss. At the time of its release, it was praised as a rural village film claiming the righteousness of the military revolution (Choi *Donga Daily* 20 December 1963: 5). Decades later, it is still seen as a film promoting the military regime and its revolution (Kim 2002: 207). So, nothing has changed. Scholar Byon Jae-ran (2001) even reads the film as a fantasy that offers Koreans an opportunity, albeit brief, to escape from the poverty. At the core of this mythology is a hero, who is a strong believer in economic development as the shining pathway toward survival. Our hero Yong, who completes making the irrigation system by coping with his physical difficulties, bureaucratic officers, superstitious villagers and natural environments. Yong's physical status as a war

veteran with a permanent leg injury adds drama to the story. Further on Byon sees Yong as a representation of Park Chung Hee. The great hero Yong's story helped form a positive image of the Park regime, to gain support from people and to mobilise them toward following Yong's vision, that is, the vision of the Park regime.

The film begins by unfolding Yong's frustrated life in Seoul. As expressed by Yong's soldier friend Choi, who complains to bar girls with anger for no reason, wounded war veterans are having difficulties fitting back into society. They are treated like losers because of their physical disadvantages. While Yong's going back to his hometown is directly caused by his father's sickness, this short sequence in the beginning provides a reason for Yong's leaving Seoul. At the same time, this sequence is comparable to the end of the film where war veterans are respected by the new military government, criticising the previous government's inadequate treatment of them.

On his way home Yong encounters the morbid reality of starvation in his hometown. He is surprised to see kids playing with dirt and eating it as if it were rice. Yong's shocking experience continues after arriving home. Yong finds out that his father died of malnutrition. At the funeral, Yong scatters a handful of rice over his father's coffin. Seeing him crying, a kid talks to him: "Why are you crying? Are you crying because you are hungry? Don't cry. When you cry, you get hungrier."

Seeing the level of poverty in the village, Yong decides to stay in his hometown and works on a plan to develop the village, where the land is dry and barren due to the shortage of water. Yong plans to build an irrigation system through rocky terrain to water the village's rice paddies. While most peasants welcome this idea, executing it does not come easily because of obstacles coming from the old system. Firstly, it is landlord Song, representative of the feudal class system. Song does not welcome Yong's plan because the success of it will deprive him of his superior economic and social position amongst the villagers, and thus Yong is a threat to his current position. Secondly, it is corrupt, inefficient, lazy and bureaucratic government officers, who represent Korea's previous civilian governments (Syngman Rhee and Chang Myon). What they give Yong is only lip service, treating him as a clown. Yong is even accused by the government officers, who are friends to Song, of being pro-communist for adopting the collaborative working style, which is believed to be that of communists. Thirdly, it is the village

shaman representing the pre-modern legacy of superstition, which goes against Park's modernisation and industrialisation. She, who has connection with Song, scares villagers away from participating in Yong's project because the mountain the waterway will go through is believed to be a holy mountain. All three obstacles inherited from the old system are something that the Park government is also trying to defeat. Yong and the Park regime share the same enemies and that is why the new military government actively supports Yong's project. Thus, Yong's eventual triumph over obstacles comes when the military government is established. Song is finally imprisoned because of his corrupt connection with the previous government; the uncooperative officers are all changed after the military regime is established; and the shaman turns her back on Song, supporting Yong.

One of the film's sub-plots is a romance between Yong and Song's daughter, Jeong-hee. Despite Song and Yong's antagonistic relationship, Jeong-hee has developed her relationship with Yong, standing by him. She projected an image of a strong woman dedicated to the national development. Hence, when Song is in jail, Yong visits the police chief, asking to pardon Song. Their dialogue at the police station reveals the film's explicit propaganda message:

Police Chief: Whatever happened to your project was something from the corrupt old government. Please continue your work. The new revolutionary government supports you.

Yong: I have resented him treating me badly, but now is the time we all have to work together for the national reconstruction. I will appreciate it if you give him one more chance to work with us.

Showing military trucks loaded with soldiers and explosives delivered to the project site is another method of underscoring the efficiency and the might of the military government. Shin Sang-ok's kow-towing to the new government was never more obvious. The closing shot of Yong and the villagers smiling while holding a bunch of rice-sheaf in their arms promises audiences that the same thing can happen to their villages. *Rice* apparently appealed to the heart and soul of Koreans by paralleling bright rich images of smiling faces and plentiful rice harvest behind them.

There is a noticeable absence of the gloomy images of the poverty that was introduced at the film's start.

Shin's work with the Park government continued. As the following analysis of *The Red Muffler* (1964) shows, Shin's endorsement for the government's policy is expanded from 'escape from poverty' to the promotion of other popular ideological messages such as anticommunism and nationalism. In all, Shin was becoming increasingly attached to pleasing the regime.

### **3) Glorification of Militarism: *The Red Muffler* (1964)**

*The Red Muffler* is a large-scale anticommunist war film that used innovative technologies never before seen in the Korean Cinema by employing aerial shots, speed camera and wide screen.<sup>146</sup> Chris Berry (2003: 218) once stated 'Hollywood blockbuster films have commanded attention by virtue of their exceptional bigness – big budgets, big stars, big effects, big publicity campaigns'. If applying this concept, *The Red Muffler* was the then-contemporary 'Hollywood style' blockbuster packed with visual spectacle and top star casting. It was the film made with the largest budget ever witnessed in Korea. Even before the film was released in March 1963, Shin Film ran a series of newspaper film advertisement over two months, communicating with the potential audiences to inform the project's progress.<sup>147</sup> The use of advanced technology, as well as star casting including Choi Eun-hee, Lee Min-ja, Kim Jin-gyu and Shin Young-gyun, were the marketing points of the film. Director Shin Sang-ok's international reputation also lured audiences to the cinema. Shin's films had been often invited to major international film festivals such as the Berlin International Film Festival, the Venice International Film Festival, the Asian Film Festival and the Academy Awards. International critics were drawn to his exploration of Korea's traditional values, sentiments and landscapes depicted in films such as *Gate of Chastity* (1961); *Mother And a Guest* (1961); and *Deaf Samryongi* (1964). *The Red Muffler* made Shin's reputation and pride soar higher.

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<sup>146</sup> It was advertised as a colour cinemascope film with spectacular aerial shots (*Chosun Daily* 17 March 1964: 6).

<sup>147</sup> Using the newspaper advertisement, Shin emphasised to the readers that the film was a never-done-before large-scale project and thus taking a longer time to complete than expected, making the readers' expectation high (*Hanguk Daily* 3 March 1964: 7).

Set in the Korean War period, the film deals with stories of combat pilots, who are brave in both battles and love (*Donga Daily* 33 April 1964: 4).



Figure 5-1. Poster of *The Red Muffler* (*Donga Daily* 4 March 1964: 4)

The red muffler, which goes around the neck as part of the uniform, is also an emblem of the Korea Air Force pilots, declaring that the story is about this particular group of soldiers. The original song of the film, which is also known as *The Red Muffler* and became one of the official theme songs for the Korea Air Force, is played for the flying scenes, delivering a vigorous marching feeling to audiences. During the Korean War, rookie pilots are dispatched to the Air Force Gangryeung Base located near the war zone. Under the instruction of seasoned Wing Commander Na, they practise their flying skills by day to participate in the upcoming raid on North Korea, and release their stresses over drinks by night. At the bar, First Lieutenant Bae meets war-widow Ji-seon and falls in love with her. They get married with the blessing of their friends. Soon they fly a series of sorties over North Korea. One of them is to blow up a bridge and Na completes the mission by crashing his plane into the bridge. Surviving pilots come back to the base, crying over his death.

The film ends with the demonstration of Air Force flying in formation with the music of 'The Red Muffler'.<sup>148</sup>

From a commercial perspective, the film was a success. It was an instant box office hit, attracting an audience of 250,000 in Seoul and was later exported to Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan (KMDB). Part of the film's success comes from the technical innovation Shin adopted. The aerial shots in *The Red Muffler*, which was the first such tried in Korea, received a complimentary reception in the popular press (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 4 April 1964: 5; *Seoul Newspaper* 4 April 1964: 8). The key aerial shots included: F-86 Sabre jet fighters flying in formation; parallel editing of aerial and ground attack to flights; emergency landing; emergency escape; rescue mission delivered by C-46 command; and Na's suicide attack on the bridge. In order to reach this level, Shin said that he had to go through many rounds of trial and error. When shooting these scenes, Shin attached a camera to an F-86 jet fighter to capture aerial shots and used four times more raw film stocks than necessary for making one film (Shin 2007: 92-93). As a result of this effort, the film was created as an A-class entertainment film filled with positive publicity for the Korea Air Force (*Chosun Daily* 7 April 1964: 5). It won numerous awards including best director, best editing and best actor at the #11 Asian Film Festival.<sup>149</sup> With the success of this film, Shin was referred to as a man with the 'grit of phoenix' (*Chosun Daily* 29 December 1964: 5).

By showing pilots sacrificing their lives for their country *The Red Muffler* attempts to inspire viewers' nationalism and anticommunism. The film was based on a radio drama about the Korea Air Force written by Han Un-sa, which was in fact requested by the military government (Lee *Cine21* 2008). The film's ending with impressive air show, which had nothing to do with the main story, is especially placed after the scene mourning pilot Na's death as if it was to honour his death. With the background marching music of *The Red Muffler* this ending scene praises the beauty of the Korea Air Force in the sky, aiming at evoking audiences to see how developed the Korea Air Force is and how important they are. This last scene serves

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<sup>148</sup> The song is written by Han Un-sa, original screenwriter, and composed by Hwang Mun-pyong. *The Red Muffler* became popular with its easy to follow melody and animating lyric.

<sup>149</sup> *The Red Muffler* received the best cinematography and the best actress awards from the 4<sup>th</sup> Grand Bell Award, and also received 7 awards from the Blue Dragon Awards including best screenplay, best supporting actor, best cinematography and best editing awards.

to nurture ‘a feeling of national euphoria’ (Diffrient 2005a: 171) by adding an overt propaganda message endorsing nationalism.

## **2. Downward Spiral**

As demonstrated above, Shin shared a collaborative rapport with the Park Chung Hee Government: it enabled him to build his career and the government to raise feature-length publicity films. Yet, inasmuch as this relationship was based on the short-term benefits that each sought, it was also susceptible to fractures. It was mentioned before that Shin Sang-ok’s political ties reached a high point in 1966 when he purchased Anyang Studio with the regime’s support.

Since then, Shin’s career met with a series of challenges. Firstly, production regulations were changed. In late 1966 the MPI initiated the production quota distribution system, imposing on all registered companies to equally share a production quota of 120. As a clever way of attracting more quotas Shin established two new companies (Anyang and Shina) in 1967 and 1968 respectively. However, this sudden business expansion made Shin suffer from cash flow problems.

Secondly, censorship became tougher. Shin was apparently stressed by the MPI’s strengthening censorship because it affected his directing:

If not for censorship, artistic achievements of Korean cinema would have been higher and its development would have come earlier. There were too many no-nos. ... Directors who had to compete against ever-advancing foreign films were forced to devise ways of avoiding censorship. Korean cinema could not be developed under this situation (Shin 2007: 80-81).

It is ironical to see that Shin believed censorship to be the main cause of the film industry’s deterioration because he was the one who had helped the MPI design the MPL and its censorship regulations. Nonetheless, Shin’s position in the late 1960s in the industry was no better than that of other producers. As the film analysis of *Eunuch* (1969) below shows, Shin was also a censorship victim, who experienced the accusation of the prosecutors’ office.

Thirdly, it was the change of the media landscape, that is, the advancement of television, which threatened the exclusive status of film as a national entertainment and the government's tool for information dissemination. As in other countries such as the US, the UK and Japan, television in Korea was seen as a strong potential competitor to the film industry. Understanding the level of threat they faced, film companies in these countries sought 'convergence at all levels' (Hilmes 1996: 466). For example, the neighboring country, Japan, was already restructuring its media industry, opening up a new era of collaboration between film and television industries.<sup>150</sup> However, these changes caused by the advent of television came to Korea belatedly. At the same time, because television meant not just the arrival of a lethal opponent to cinema, but also a substitute of the unique position film had had as a propaganda tool, the waves of change the film industry had to face were larger than the impact television had on the film industries in the abovementioned countries.

In the 1960s the television industry achieved a rapid development. Starting from the opening of the KBS (Korea Broadcasting System) in 1961 as a government-run broadcasting station, two commercial stations TBC and MBC (Tongyang Broadcasting Company and Munhwa Broadcasting Corp) started telecasting in 1964 and 1969 respectively. MBC in particular launched TV serial dramas with a melodrama format, beginning to take middle-aged female audiences away from cinemas. Later in the 1970s television received the nickname of bedroom cinema (*anbang geukjang*). With increased accessibility and nationwide diffusion level, television quickly became a replacement for film as the most powerful means of spreading propaganda.<sup>151</sup> Tied to this change, Shin's utility level also decreased.

As pointed out in chapter 1, the government had a continuous battle against the film industry in the course of controlling it and transforming it into a propaganda factory. Compared to the film industry, the TV industry, which the Park regime

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<sup>150</sup> After noticing the drop in the number of cinema attendances and the subsequent loss of profit, six major film companies led by Toei quickly changed their hostile attitude toward television and joined forces to raise the profile of the television industry by organising a new broadcasting company, beginning to use it as a new channel for raising revenue (Anderson and Rich 1982: 255).

<sup>151</sup> The Park regime had been interested in supporting the broadcasting industry from the beginning. In 1961 the Park regime disseminated 20,000 television sets on the instalment plan. The government announced the Electronic Industry Promotion Act in 1969, boosting the growth of the electronic industry by encouraging the nationwide spread of television sets. The impact of this initiative was maximised by the introduction of the government's reduced tax on television set purchase (Jo 2003: 151-154).

helped to construct from the beginning, had few managerial problems such as the government had had with the film industry. Furthermore, it enabled the government to give direct access to the broader market of the people, who were interested in not only the new technology but also the new form of entertainment. Propaganda films such as anticommunist and literary films still remained a large part of film productions, and the utility of film as a national propaganda tool remained important. Nevertheless, film's utility as an exclusive avenue for nationwide appeal was challenged by television. Naturally the utility of film as a propaganda channel, as well as the concept of filmmakers as propaganda creators was also challenged. In this way, Shin's career was also affected by the coming of television. As a film director his political ties weakened due to the decreasing value of film in the eyes of the Park regime. As a consequence, Shin became an ordinary member of the industry without the backing of friends in high places. Shin might have not been treated as harshly by censorship as directors Lee Man-hee and Yu Hyun-mok, whose stories will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7, but Shin was, like them, forced to sacrifice, to a certain extent, his freedom of expression.

In response to this dramatic change, Shin's films covertly began to question Korea's political power. As previously mentioned, Shin had been deeply influenced by Italian Neo-Realism, as was demonstrated by early films such as *Evil Night* (1952) and *Flower in Hell* (1958). Shin had held a critical view toward scrutinising society and this ability was in use again. His frustration at falling from the political favorite and having to bear with censorship pushed Shin to embed social and political criticism in films like *Eunuch* (1968) and *Women of Yi Dynasty* (1969), showing Shin's social critiquing of society without being found guilty of a national crime.

### **1) Soft-pornography as Political Satire: *Eunuch* (1968)**

*Eunuch* is a historical drama that portrays love, sexuality and politics in the royal palace during the Chosun Dynasty. This film is different from Shin's early historical dramas such as *Prince Yeonsan* (1961) and *Tyrant Yeonsan* (1962), which introduced audiences to the principles that the king usually has to follow (Kim 2000). By showing Yeonsan's bad administration of the nation that caused chaos and

disarray, and by suggesting that social order needed to be restructured at any cost, these films promoted the government in ways similar to those done by films *Rice* and *The Red Muffler*. They were stories of King Yeonsan's bloody revenge over his mother's death and his inability to live within the Confucian system. Nevertheless, *Eunuch* retains opposing characteristics of criticising the Park regime.

In *Eunuch*, nobleman Kim's daughter, Ja-ok and a lowly government officer's son, Jeong-ho fall in love despite their class difference. In order to get a high place in the palace, Kim sends Ja-ok to the palace to work as a palace girl, strengthening his connection with the Queen Mother. Jeong-ho, who becomes impotent by Kim, enters the palace as a eunuch to to see Ja-ok. The chief eunuch finds their secret meeting and puts them in a secret jail. After hearing this, the King, who has been ignoring Ja-ok in order to disregard the Queen Mother's political ambition, sleeps with her with some twisted idea while having Jeong-ho sit next to his bedroom. The chief eunuch frees Ja-ok and Jeong-ho from the palace after realising their true love, but Jeong-ho is killed and Ja-ok is sent back to the palace. She officially becomes a concubine of the King because of her pregnancy. The King forces her to serve him with both mind and heart. Then one night, Ja-ok kills the King and then kills herself.

*Eunuch* was released in December 1968 and was successful at the box office, attracting an audience of 320,400 in Seoul (KMDB). The film's main attraction was its strong eroticism, showing 'meretricious' scenes to viewers (*Donga Daily* 24 December 1968: 5). As film critic Cho Hee-moon (1986: 221) observes fifteen years later, *Eunuch* showcased an unprecedented level of sexuality on the screen compared to other films produced at the time. As the provocative film title states, it was a story about a eunuch (*naeshi*), that is, a man who is castrated in order to work in the palace, because the only 'male' living in the palace should be the King. As the film poster below kindly explains, this was a common tradition found in other countries such as Egypt, Persia, Turkey, India and China, and was designed to protect the political leadership of the dynasty while keeping secrets of the palace from the commoners, but rarely were their stories told in public. By bringing *Eunuch* to public attention, the film declares to audiences that it explores the secretive and forbidden side of sexuality during one of Korea's most conservative periods. As the poster states, it is a story previously untold and one not to be told to 'commoners'.



Figure 5-2. Poster of *Eunuch* (Kyeonghyang Daily 7 December 1968: 4)

The film opens with a shot of a closed palace gate. The narration (voice of God) explains how the palace is separated into two parts: one for the King's political administration and the other for his private life. The King's private space is called *naejeon* (the inner palace) where no other men were allowed to go, except eunuchs, who are 'seedless' according to the King. While the narration progresses, the camera moves through the gate, the palace girls dancing, and the eunuchs working in and around the *naejeon*, and eventually stops at the King. From the beginning, the film declares this is a story not about the King, but about the Forbidden City and what's happening inside. *Eunuch* appeals to the curiosity of audiences, inviting them to become like a 'peeping Tom'. Looking into someone else's private life – in this case, the lives of the King and other people living in the palace – was a definite selling point of this film. Characters' actions often start from entering doors, curtains, corridors and rooms, suggesting things happening in the palace are secretive. The camera moves become more intimate with the King's bedroom scenes, showing

close-ups of partially naked bodies and faces ardent with sexual excitement, satisfying the eyes of curious audiences.

All characters in *Eunuch* including the King are all sexually suppressed and distorted. King's sexuality is oppressed by the Queen Mother for the burden of generating a prince, and thus his sexual intercourse with girls is more from obligation rather than for pleasure. The palace girls' sexuality is oppressed by the law of keeping their chastity and loyalty to the King – the only man in the palace – and thus their sexuality sometimes is seen as contradictory, coming out as a form of homosexuality. For example, the middle-aged court lady Min, who has not been 'favored' by the King and thus remains a virgin, is attracted to Ja-ok, trying to seduce her. The eunuchs' sexuality seemingly does not exist, but because of this reason they suffer from disdain by women. As the chief eunuch says, he married four times before and all four wives ran away from him.

The film's overt sexuality, however, brought negative attention from the prosecutors' office. At the time, the Seoul prosecutors' office conducted an extensive investigation into various media that were considered to have violated the obscenity laws. Starting from the publication industry after accusing several writers and editors of entertainment magazines such as *Arirang* for publishing obscene material, the investigation moved to the film industry (*Chosun Daily* 15 July 1969: 7). Yet, it was surprising because it was Shin who was investigated, suggesting that there was change in the relationship between Shin and the regime. Targeted films included Shin Sang-ok's *Eunuch* (1968), *Women of Yi-Dynasty* (1969), Park Jong-ho's *A Woman in the Wall* (1969) and Lee Hyeong-pyo's *Your Name is Woman* (1969). Both completed films and film parts cut during the editing process were subjected to the investigation because 'producing obscene materials' was considered as a crime by the prosecutors' office regardless of their being shown to the public or not. As a result of this investigation, three above-mentioned directors were accused and arrested for violating the obscenity laws. After undergoing a trial, Shin was sentenced to pay a fine.

Putting sexuality aside, the film exposes the deeper theme of corruption at the highest level of political power. Even though the then-contemporary critics and the prosecutors' office all focused on the film's sexuality, *Eunuch* can be also read as concealed political criticism. The film covertly critiques the suppressive nature of the

political power, its corruption and lies. One way to show this is by directly mentioning it by characters including the Queen Mother and the King. For example, when the Queen Mother gets pregnant by a monk, she kills herself. Her last word to the King is to keep the secrets of the royal family inside. Following her wish, the King kills the monk. Another way to show this is by the use of mise-en-scenes that are articulately constructed to block the full view of the inside of the palace from the audience. For example, corridors are aligned with doors to the room, and inside the door there is a long curtain. The best example of this is the palace prison secretly placed underground, showing the level of efforts involved to keep the palace secrets from the commoners. The prison is inhabited by prisoners such as elderly palace ladies, who ‘sinned’ by surviving the previous king. It is governed by eunuchs who torture, murder, and jail anyone who challenges the royalty.

However, there might have been a different reason for Shin being interrogated by the prosecutors’ office. The political power described in the film shares similarities to the Park government. President Park was authoritative and his womanising was well-known. The description of the palace’s secret chamber is reminiscent of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA). Despite the fact that the film could be interpreted as a political analogy, the most disturbing part of the film might have been the King being assassinated by Ja-ok in his own bedroom as he reached his sexual climax. This could have been regarded as treason, and may have been the real reason behind Shin’s being interrogated.<sup>152</sup> Likewise his other film *Women of Yi-Dynasty* (1969), another film that went under investigation, also shows the corruption in the palace, oppressed sexuality of palace girls, and their resistance to the power, which could have been disturbing to the political power. Shin’s censorship experience evidenced a drastic change that happened in the relationship between Shin and the Park regime.

This wholly unexpected phenomenon, given the favoritism that Park had extended to Shin in the past, progressed further in the 1970s. In 1970 Shin Film’s

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<sup>152</sup> Years later, when director Lee Doo-yong tried to remake *Eunuch* in 1986, the film failed to pass the censorship process because the censor suspected the chief eunuch’s saving Ja-ok and Ja-ok’s assassinating the King as a coup. As a strategy, director Lee explicitly exposed the sexuality of eunuchs to pass censorship (*Cinematheque de M. Hulot* 21 January 2008).

registration was cancelled because it failed to satisfy registration requirements.<sup>153</sup> This was an ultimate sign of the Park regime's turning against Shin. Coupled with the industry's downward spiral, his career was also going downhill. Inasmuch as Shin's rising to the top represented the golden age of Korean cinema in the 1960s, his falling also represented the decline of the Korean cinema in the 1970s.

The 1970s were turbulent years for Shin and he experienced a series of hardships including the loss of his company, divorce from Choi Eun-hee, and abduction to North Korea. Screenwriter Lee Sang-hyeon (2007: 185), who worked with him in making films such as *Prince Daewon* (1968) and *Women of Yi Dynasty* recalls that in the 1970s Shin spent most time dealing with MPI officers, debtors, and provincial exhibitors rather than making films. Shin Sang-ok's last registered company Shin Production was forced to close in November 1975 for violating preview censorship regulations. According to the MPL, when a released film, including a preview film, contained uncensored parts, its penalty was to suspend screening. Canceling Shin's company registration in conjunction with the preview censorship regulations seemed to be the MPI's arbitrary and harsh treatment of Shin. Film scholar Kim Su-nam (2003: 121) speculates that Shin's becoming more and more critical of Park's totalitarian regime probably was the reason behind the decision. Yet, given the fact that Shin's getting bitter about the Park regime was largely caused by the larger media landscape and the subsequent changes it brought in, Kim misses that Shin's falling should be understood as part of the natural course of industry development. As Shin was unprepared for the advance of television, so was the film industry. The price they had to pay was materialised as the dark age of the Korean cinema.

### **3. Conclusion: Perseverance and Survival**

While Shin Sang-ok is well-remembered as one of the master filmmakers in Korea's cinematic industry, until recently it has been largely unrecognised that his

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<sup>153</sup> At the time of inspection it lacked one Arriflex 16mm camera and one studio because Shin Film's Yongsan Studio, which was about to be demolished for a new railroad construction, was not counted as part of Shin Film's assets. However, in reality Shin Film owned two Mitchell 35mm cameras instead, which were more expensive and more valuable than the Arriflex camera for feature filmmaking, and the Yongsan Studio had not yet been demolished (*Chosun Daily* 24 July 1970:6).

collaboration with the government played a significant role, at least initially, in reaching this level of success. Shin's ambitions, philosophy and talent for creating propaganda films such as *Rice* (1963) and *The Red Muffler* (1964) generated a synergy effect, enabling him to become one of the most influential members of the film industry. It was Shin's way of surviving, developing and continuing his career that made him. Amongst other directors who struggled to find ways to cope with and negotiate between the ever-changing production environments, Shin successfully landed on this new production turf, even if temporarily. The Shin and Park relationship was built upon the principle of 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch your back' more than any other directors working during this period enjoyed.

Nonetheless, their relationship weakened in the mid-late 1960s when the Park regime established political stability and its control over the film industry, and when television advanced as the alternative national media. Shin Sang-ok's usefulness to the Park regime dramatically decreased, making him one of the filmmakers working for the government rather than one working with it. As discussed above, Shin's link to the political leadership unraveled at the end of the 1960s as demonstrated by Shin's being accused of violating censorship and his company's registration being cancelled.

Shin's filmography in South Korea ended in 1978 after he was abducted to North Korea, but his filmmaking still continued. In North Korea with Choi, who had been abducted to North Korea six months before, and with support from North Korean film buff Kim Jeong-il, Shin produced a total of eight films in North Korea, including *On My Love* (1984), *Bulgasari* (1985) and *Salt* (1985). Shin and Choi escaped from North Korea in 1986, seeking political asylum in the US. After coming to Hollywood, Shin quickly adapted himself to the Hollywood filmmaking system and produced the *3 Ninjas* series during the 1990s, proving his ability to survive in the new production system. Shin came back to Korea in 2002 and directed his last, unreleased film *The Winter Story* in 2004.

Apart from his use of the political connection to rise to the top, Shin's enthusiasm for films was the undercurrent persevering spirit, which helped him overcome a series of life-changing events. Likewise, in the next chapter director Lee Man-hee demonstrates how hard it is to survive as an artist in Korea's authoritarian regime while bearing the pressure of censorship and commercialism.

## Chapter 6. Lee Man-hee: Anticommunism Chaser and Genre Experimenter

As an extension to chapter 5, this chapter analyses the pathway that director Lee Man-hee followed under the Park Chung Hee regime. It traces director Lee Man-hee's filmography to see how he negotiated a space for creative expression, albeit a different space from the one created by Shin. Chapter 1 explains how constant meddling by censorship suppressed their creativity and led them to promote the government's national ideology of anticommunism. Censorship by the authorities meant rejection to show certain films or certain parts of a film in public. More exactly, censorship is something that 'ultimately rests on the idea that someone has to decide what the general public should or should not be allowed to hear, read or see' (Robertson 2005: 159). In order to achieve this goal, as explained previously, by the late 1960s Korea's censorship was established as an all-encompassing system overseeing a film's life: 1) production application and script censorship; 2) production suspension; 3) preview and completed film censorship; and 4) post-release supervision.

As already explained, the MPI blocked all problematic films (or parts of films) before they could reach the public by creating multiple stages within the censorship process. The prosecutors' office worked with the MPI from the mid-1960s in order to ensure that films met censorship standards particularly with regard to anticommunist and obscenity laws, helping the Park government establish itself as a censorship regime. This chapter is about how director Lee survived this censorship regime by extending and diverting his aesthetics into a new field. Lee offers an interesting case of how censorship could not control a creative mind.

It first explores how Lee made anticommunist propaganda into an opportunity to work with large-scale film projects, an achievement not possible with private funding alone. Lee directed at least one anticommunist film per year, many of which were large-scale productions with generous support from the government. As a detailed case study, Lee's representative anticommunist film *Marines Who Never Returned* (1963) is analysed to show how Lee exploited the government's helping hand.

Second, the chapter follows and analyses the discourse developed around Lee's censorship case with *Seven Female POWs* (1965), explaining how Lee became

a scapegoat of the Park regime's extending political leadership. Lee's censorship trial, which was pushed by prosecutors' office as well as the KCIA (Korean Central Intelligence Agency), showcases the magnitude of state censorship exercised on the creative minds.

Third, it examines how the development of Lee's genre experimentation occurred after the censorship experience. Between 1966 and 1970, Lee directed twenty-four films, shifting directorial focus from propaganda to popular genre filmmaking such as melodrama. While melodrama was the most popular genre produced for all time in Korea's film history, it also had its characteristics of being 'the most efficacious mode of realism' (McHugh and Ablemann 2005: 4). Lee engaged the social realism in his films while adopting melodrama conventions, and thus followed the genre's tradition developed in the 1950s by American directors such as Vincente Minnelli, Nicholas Ray and Douglas Sirk, whose works are considered to be 'the most socially self-conscious and covertly 'anti-American' films ever produced by the Hollywood studios' (Schatz 1981: 225). Lee Man-hee's most critically acclaimed works such as *Full Autumn* (1966), *Homebound* (1967) and *Holiday* (1968) came from this period, showing his experimentation with melodrama was a success. *Holiday* (1968) is analysed as a case study to provide how Lee adapted melodrama in his way.

## **1. Anticommunist Filmmaking: Collaborating with the Powers**

From early on since his debut with *Kaleidoscope* (1961), Lee received a warm reception from critics and was claimed by them as one of the most popular commercial directors for his proclivity toward war and thriller filmmaking.<sup>154</sup> Often selected by contemporary Korean critics as one of the best war films and comparable to the contemporary blockbuster war film *Taegeukgi* (2005), *Marines Who Never Returned* (hereafter *Marines*), which was considered as a never-before-seen large-scale anticommunist war film in Korea at the time, and other war films like *A Hero without Serial Numbers* (1966) earned him the reputation of a master war filmmaker,

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<sup>154</sup> During the 1960s the top three popular genres were melodramas, action films and comedies, and the remaining films ranged across anticommunist, war, thriller, action, melodrama and literary adaptation genres. Significantly, Lee's focus on war films and thrillers was something rarely seen in other filmmakers.

and a top-selling commercial director. Lee's other films *Dial 112* (1962) and *The Devil's Stairway* (1964) were regarded as Hitchcock-like thrillers. Lee became outstanding amongst his peers with war and thriller genres comprising the majority of his filmography.

Lee's anticommunist films occupy about 30% of his filmography. While Lee officially made only eight anticommunist films out of a total of fifty-two films according to the KMDB, chapter 3 reveals that the anticommunist genre is a super genre, which is built upon ideological coherence rather than any particular conventions. This genre includes a greater number of films than previously recognised, and thus all of Lee's films containing this ideology (a total of seventeen films) should be categorised as anticommunist films. Lee's anticommunist films used the backdrops of the different ideological battle grounds such as the Korean War, the Vietnam War and North Korean espionage stories to emphasise the brutality of communism. The first anticommunist film Lee directed was *Until I Die* (1962), a love story about a South Korean marine and a North Korean female officer who met at war and married when the war was over. This film, which can be understood as a melodrama with a dash of anticommunism, like *North And South* discussed in chapter 3, contains battle scenes in the beginning, and was advertised as one of the 'marine' films such as *Five Marines* (1961) (Chung 2006). Screenwriter Han Wu-jeong, who wrote *Marines*, *Seven Female POWs* (1964) and *Soldiers Without Serial Numbers* (1966), began his working relationship with Lee in this film as a publicity officer from the Korean Army. *Marines* was Lee's next film. It only took Lee two years after his debut to begin making the anticommunist war films, which he continued throughout the 1960s.

Most anticommunist films were large-scale productions with support from the various government institutions such as Ministry of Defence, Marines, and Korea Air Force. All of them partially offset the financial burden of making a large-scale spectacular, and also enabled Lee to gain valuable directorial experiences such as constructing dynamic mob shots and trying out new techniques. For example, in *Marines*, an analysis of which will be discussed below, Lee constructed a larger-than-life battle scene where soldiers were under fire. *Harimao in Bangkok* (1967), Lee's first color cinemascope shot on location in Thailand, was produced with the help of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. *Living In the Sky* (1968), a story of

air force pilots with a few impressive aerial shots, was completed in cooperation with the Air Force Headquarters. *Bridge over Gobo River* (1970) was shot on location in Vietnam's battle fields, recruiting soldiers and camera crews of the Korean Armed Forces Motion Picture Studio under the Ministry of National Defence. Lee directed and even starred in the film as one of the main characters. Lee's reciprocal relationship with the military blossomed when he directed *Marines*. The following analysis of *Marines* illustrates how the interconnection that occurred between Lee and the military helped in the making of anticommunist films.

### 1) Quintessential Anticommunism: *Marines Who Never Returned* (1963)

Lee's fifth film, *Marines* was the largest-scale war film ever made at the time. In the early 1960s the average war film was too expensive to make. According to veteran cinematographer Seo Jeong-min, who filmed many of Lee's pictures, the average budget for a war film was nearly double that of all other films (Lee 2003: 256). If in-kind support from the military was computed in terms of hard currency, the actual budget for a war film would have quadrupled. In other words, war films such as *Marines* could never have been made without the military. In fact, the film was under threat of being cancelled on several occasions because of funding shortages. After shooting of the opening scene, producer Won Seon of Daewon Film Company nearly stopped the project for fear of going bankrupt in the midst of the film's production. This situation settled when Won held a rough preview for provincial exhibitors. Excited by the spectacle, exhibitors clamored to invest in the *Marines* project. Thanks to their pre-sales, Lee resumed shooting (KOFA 2003: 245-246). However, due to this delay, *Marines* was completed in six months, while most films only took four weeks to complete.

The spectacle, the quality of widescreen cinematography and the acting of the all-star cast were given high praise by the press (*Chosun Daily* 26 April 1963:6; *Yeonghwa Segye* March 1963: 102). In order to create realism, the marine headquarters sent two regiments to the set and provided real explosives, tanks, machine guns and bullets. Due to this unprecedented contribution, Lee was able to create a war spectacle comprised of a series of battle scenes that projected images of brave South Korean marines.

Given that all bullets and explosives used were real, a number of accidents occurred during shooting. One extra lost his leg from a bomb explosion in the field and over ten crew members were inflicted with minor injuries during shooting. In addition, one very expensive Ariflex camera was destroyed (*Chosun Daily* 24 March 1963: 5). *Marines* attracted 227,800 patrons in Seoul and won numerous domestic film awards including best director, best new actress, best sound recording and best cinematography. The film's box office success and subsequent positive publicity toward the marines was a win-win for both the military and director, providing the impetus to make more anticommunist films. By setting an example of success, *Marines* led a boom of war filmmaking in the mid-1960s (*Gukje Yeonghwa* March 1964: 112). The success of *Marines* ensured the government that Lee's talent was effective for promoting the government's military force, and it also ensured director Lee that making films with a military partner would guarantee him for directing large-scale films in Korea.

According to the poster for *Marines* presented below, a special preview was held for the VIP guests at Kukdo cinema in Seoul.



Figure 6-1. Poster of *Marines* (*Donga Daily* 10 April 1963:6)

President Park, high ranking officers from the US Army in Korea, officers from the Ministry of Defence and the Marine headquarters as well as the press were invited to

this special screening. All enjoyed watching this film, which was jam-packed with images of brave Korean soldiers. Cinematographer Seo recalls that *Marines* received a standing ovation, and both he and director Lee received certificates of appreciation from the Marine headquarters (KOFA 2003: 247-48). The political leadership loved the film too and thus granted a special censorship treatment to the film: not a single scene was cut, which is surprising given that films such as *Defiance of the Teens* (1959), *Aimless Bullet* (1961), and *Happy Solitude* (1963) were heavily censored at the time (*Youngwha Segye* July 1963: 62-63).

The film ran for two and a half hours, which was extraordinarily long compared to other films produced at the time, but the well-constructed plot and character development sustained excitement.<sup>155</sup> The film follows the events of the Korean War chronologically: it opens with the Incheon Landing Operation in 1950, a strategic amphibious operation that led to a major turning point in the war in favor of the UN forces and South Korean military. At the start of the film thousands of marines rush the Incheon beach, providing a grand spectacle with marching music playing while the audience is presented with close-ups of marines and their battleships. Dynamic movements of marines on the battle ground open the viewers' eyes and ears with awe in similar ways achieved in Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). A marine squad is dispatched to a town to reclaim it from the communists. In the village a little girl named Young-hee is the sole survivor. She is a war orphan, whose mother has been killed by communist soldiers. Having no place to go, she is taken to the base with the squad members who become closer and eventually the squad treats her like their little sister. At their last battle against the Chinese army in North Korea, the squad members promise each other they will survive the battle and live to take care of her. However, only two marines survive, mourning at the grave where they bury their friends.

Early scenes showing war casualties in the village where they rescue Young-hee create a sense of brutality perpetrated by the communists during the war. This scene contrasts the feeling of victory to that of tragic loss. When the joy of reclaiming the village reaches its climax, marines step into a factory only to find it

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<sup>155</sup> According to the Korean Movie Database, the running time of this film is 109 minutes. This is based on the print that currently exists. About 40 minutes of the original print is lost or has been re-edited for the convenience of exhibitors.

filled with dozens of dead bodies. The loud noises of bullets and hand grenades quieten down while they slowly walk around this hidden area. Some are hung from the ceiling with blood on their faces, and others are piled up on the side. One of the marines finds his younger sister among them, letting out a cry. This scene viscerally revisits painful memories of war that at the time were still in the mind. This scene sets the context of anticommunism by directly appealing to the lived experiences of the then-contemporary audiences. This entertainment spectacle is juxtaposed with emotional scenes showing casualties and war orphanage, and increases the emotional impact of the tragedy brought to audiences.

Scenes showing South Korean soldiers' military camps, which contrasts with the cold-blooded battle fields, are vivacious. Back at the camp, there is a strong brotherhood forming amongst squad members. Naïve and cheerful war orphan Young-hee appears, projecting a scarred and lost image of Korea. She was one of the lucky ones who found protection amidst the civil war. Young-hee calls the marines 'oppa' (older brother), creating an image of pseudo-family, and thus an image of brave marines fighting for the nation because this relationship becomes synonymous with men fighting for their families. The brotherhood of squad members becomes stronger toward the end of the film after they exchange their life stories, and laughs, wrestles and crashes the bar. Yet, the building-up of the family environment in the marine squad crashes during the last battle against the Chinese Red Army. Marines die, one by one, failing to keep their promise to Young-hee that they will return alive to greet her.

The successful release of *Marines* created new opportunities for Lee to work with spectacle films. *Marines*'s box office success, critics' praise for the film, and the government's positive reaction all signified that there was consensus concerning his talent. After *Marines*, Lee directed at least one anticommunist film each year, creating spectacle films that dealt with either the Korean War, the Vietnam War or North Korean spies. As director Im Kwon-taek once said in an interview, only a few directors made war films in the 1960s and Lee was the best (Jeong 2003: 253).

Director Lee Man-hee shares similarities with director Shin Sang-ok in the sense that he made propaganda films that endorsed the Park regime's anticommunist agenda. As discussed in the previous chapter, Shin advanced his career through overt cooperation with the political power, and used the propaganda filmmaking as a way

of gaining the government's favor. Lee Man-hee embarked on a similar path. However, there is an essential difference between Shin and Lee. Shin's cooperating with the government was largely due to his political ambition of raising Shin Film as the top major of the industry. Lee did not share such political aspirations with Shin, even though he also owned his film company, Lee Man-hee Production, in 1967. Lee's establishing his 'independent' company was related to his desire to take creative control over filmmaking. Lee's collaboration with power was for his personal reason, gaining access to larger film projects.

Hence, while *Marines* is built upon the anticommunist propaganda, its subplots are developed around the issues of orphanage, broken families and wasted youth, adding complexity to the representation of war and trauma. Lee captured a sense of desperation, which was against the common binary view of North Korea as evil and South Korea and its allies as good. The review of *Yeonghwa Segye* magazine shows that the film was considered unique even to the then-film critic:

... the film's exploration about the soldiers' mentality fraught by fear to death and passion for life, which exposes the other side of the war rarely presented in films ... (Lee March 1963: 196).

It was different from other 'typical' red-scare anticommunist films such as *I Accuse* (1959) and *Beat Back* (1956) in Korea, and *I Married a Communist* (1949) and *My Son John* (1953) in the US. These films adapted the binary view of separating sides: the evil communist and those not. *I Accuse* was a story of a North Korean escapee from a dreadful labor camp, and *Beat Back* was based on a true story of a brave South Korean officer during the Korean War. *I Married a Communist* was the story of an ex-communist man struggling to get out of his dark past. *My Son John* is about the attempts of two American parents to save their son from the temptations of communism.

Perhaps the film's strong point was inspiring audiences to rethink the war on multiple sides. For example, in one scene, a Korean soldier is scorned and rejected by bar girls who are more interested in the US GIs. By showing the closed sign 'Off limits to ROK [Republic of Korea] soldiers' hanging outside the bar the film shows

that there was ‘unfair’ treatment going on between Korean and US soldiers, suggesting Korea’s dark history of having the bars catering for UN and US soldiers with *yanggongju* working around the military bases. This scene reveals the lesser-known side of U.S.-Korean relations, which had been ‘codified over the years as a set of economic subsidies and sexual transactions’ (Diffrient 2005a: 44). At the same time the last battle scene against the Chinese soldiers, rather than North Koreans, implies Korea’s civil war was somehow the result of international politics surrounding the Cold War. The film ends by asking a philosophical question instead of celebrating a great victory. The portrayal of two surviving marines mourning over the graves of their fellow soldiers implies war is nothing worth fighting for. Standing in the battle field, one surviving soldier utters: “Ask people if this war is necessary and for whom we have fought.” This statement reveals that Lee was interested in exploring the complex nature of the war. *Marines* was not a stereotypical propaganda film that the government would create on its own. Lee combined several facets of the war, offering a comprehensive view that had been oversimplified in previous anticommunist films.

Lee’s future seemed promising. He was the kind of director who, as Shin Sang-ok (2006: 102) once described, was able to balance artistic quality and commerciality. The government loved him. Nonetheless, the time ahead of him was not the most favourable for his career development. As previously mentioned in chapter 1, the Park regime was gradually strengthening its political leadership by imposing surveillance over people and it interfered with the freedom of expression by using the KCIA (Korean Central Intelligence Agency), another supporting pillar of the Park regime, along with the military, reinforcing censorship standards and expanding it to criminal laws (anticommunist and obscenity laws). At the end of 1964, ironically right after completing another anticommunist film, Lee was accused and arrested by the KCIA and the prosecutors’ office of violating the Anticommunist Law, becoming the victim, that is, the scapegoat in the art field to exhibit the government’s strong will to monitor creative minds. It was the time when many student protesters, journalists, artists and civilians were falsely accused of being pro-communist in a bid to raise the KCIA’s reputation. Among those victims, director Lee Man-hee was included.

## 2. Conflicts with Censorship: Becoming a Political Scapegoat

Lee served in the military as a code breaker during the war. During this time, he saw death first-hand and experienced what it was like to be pinned down under fire, and felt the intensification of fear while seeking shelter in the trenches on the battle field. According to screenwriter Baek Gyeol, one of Lee's regular partners and close friends during the 1960s, Lee's experiences of war gave him opportunities of thinking about life and death, and the purpose of war and he wanted to show this vision of the war on screen (Cho 2006: 14).<sup>156</sup> Lee's reconstruction of realistic battle scenes portrayed the unimaginable scale of the war as well as its emotionally painful side, as demonstrated in *Marines*. This tendency increased and developed into a quest for the human condition.

'Poet of night' (Cho 2005: 33), a title given to Lee Man-hee at the Pusan International Film Festival in 2005, highlights his talent in revealing darkness. This is not just about the portrayal of night scenes and the dark side of human nature, but about the fatalism found in Lee's characters. Lee's characters are all but limited to their destiny, walking toward the tragic end just like the heroes of Greek tragedies (Cho November 2005: 116). The manifestation of fatalism is in fact an attempt to search for meaning in life, which always needs to be considered in his films as a fundamental aspect of his aesthetics. From this point of view, the common binary view of South Korea and North Korea as good versus evil was not the main theme of his films. Yet, Lee's attempt to push new boundaries in anti-communist films was caught by the KCIA, which falsified and amplified as many pro-communist cases as possible in the midst of augmenting its control over society. Lee was a victim of this authoritative political milieu.

### 1) Portraying A Few Good North Korean Men: *Seven Female POWs* (1965)

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<sup>156</sup> Lee preferred working with a hand-picked team of actors and crew. For example, Lee enjoyed working with the so-called Lee Man-hee Troop, that is, '17 Group' comprised of people who worked for *Marines*. Members included actors Jang Dong-hui and Park No-sik and extras Kim Ung, Kim Un-ho and Choi Sang-ho (Cho 2006: 18). Besides them, Lee worked with cinematographer Seo Jeong-min for 24 films, which is half of his entire filmography. Screenwriters Han Wu-jeong and Baek Gyeol also worked with him for seven and eight films respectively. Apparently, Lee's highly valued commerciality enabled him to pick up his own teams to work with.

Understanding the way the Anticommunist Law was applied is key to understanding this whole situation. The Anticommunist Law was established in 1961 as a special aspect of the National Security Law, which was initially announced in 1948. The National Security Law was already designed to suppress leftists (communists) and their sympathisers. But, the Park government desired something stronger and more explicit to help it combat communist threats. It aims at preventing any pro-communist activities and ruling out all anti-government activities, spreading ‘McCarthyism’ in Korea. The political power abused this law by rooting out any potential anticommunist activities by arresting and imprisoning people, infusing fear of authority (National Human Rights Commission of Korea 2004: 24). For example, innocent jokes people exchanged at drinking places could cause accusation and arrest because they could be interpreted as praise, encouragement and agreement with the activities of North Korea. Thus, the Anticommunist Law naturally earned the nickname of *Makgeoli* (Korea’s cloudy rice wine) anticommunist law (Song *OhmyNews* 23 June 2004): *Makgeoli* is Korea’s traditional alcohol people enjoy after a day’s work, like beer in Western culture. That is, even a joke over a drink was censored. Lee’s victimisation under the Anticommunist Law occurred under this circumstance. Director Im Sang-soo’s contemporary film *President’s Last Bang* (2004), a black comedy based on Park Chung Hee’s assassination in 1979, shows how this law was abused in a scene where KCIA agents gather at the KCIA centre, playing pool while joking and laughing about the Anticommunist Law:

Agent 1: For Korean-Japanese, especially pro-North sympathisers, the defense security command guys can easily make them spies.

Agent 2: If I say like North Korea’s no-tax policy?

Agent 3: Clause 3, Section 2. Praising North Korean Communist Party.

Agent 2: If you’re just being polite and say “I see, yes, of course”.

Agent 1: Clause 3. Sections 3, 4, and 5. Encouraging, glorifying and congregating.

Agent 2: Asking news to be passed on to your hometown in South Korea.

Agent 1: Secret instructions. Clause 4, Section 1.

Agent 2: If that person enters South Korea, it’s an infiltration. A visit to your

hometown is collecting information. Taking a flight back to Japan is a getaway. A phone call saying that your hometown has the best dog meat is a contact, communication and responding back. And there you've got your espionage conviction under the Anticommunist Law.

Agent 1: That's why the defense security guys are always staking out at Kimpo Airport, checking the list and picking out their victims.

Agent 2: Those fuckers all got their big breaks doing that, earning a special rank promotion to General.

This scene at the pool table with agents playing, joking, smoking and cleaning guns moves to the underground torture chamber where people are verbally abused, stripped naked, physically beaten, and threatened with death, showing the brutality of the Park regime and what it stands for.

According to various newspaper reviews, magazine articles and interviews with industry people published now and then, *Seven Female POWs* (hereafter *POWs*) highlights the growing humane relationships between one North Korean officer and some South Korean female POWs (four nurses and one *yanggongju*). Jang Dong-hui, a popular action star, was cast in the leading role of a North Korean officer, adding charm to this character as a handsome brave young man full of compassion. As veteran costume designer Lee Hae-yun (*Cine21* 2002: 131) remembers, the uniforms made for North Korean soldiers used high quality materials to accommodate Lee's wish to create Jang a 'cool' North Korean officer. Nurses were cast from popular actresses such as Moon Jeong-sook, Choi Ji-hee, Jeon Gye-hyeon and Lee Min-ja. On the way to a military base with the POWs, they meet with a couple of Chinese soldiers. Attracted by the beauty of the ladies, the Chinese soldiers attempt to rape them. Jang kills them to rescue the ladies from the danger, but he gets himself into trouble for killing comrades, Chinese soldiers. Appreciating his action and understanding his trouble the ladies talk Jang into defecting to South Korea together and they successfully arrive in the land of freedom. The original film was confiscated by the MPI due to the censorship case that followed, so it is hard to know exactly how the narrative was constructed and what the aesthetics were like. Yet, combining all the reports from the newspapers and film magazines it seems that the film

endorses the superiority of South Korea as a 'better place to be' than North Korea. However, apparently the Park regime did not 'get it'.

*POWs* instantly became a hot potato for the government as well as the film industry. While the film passed the final product censorship on 8 December 1964, the ideological integrity of *POWs* was questioned by the KCIA, which was expanding its power over all parts of society to secure the Park regime's political leadership. In the meantime, the MPI Committee was quickly convened to examine the film in mid-December 1964, confirming it to be a 'real' anticommunist film, and suggested it be released after editing a couple of parts (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 8 Feb 1965: 5). The KCIA's arrest warrant for Lee was overruled by Judge Won Jong-baek, who watched the film and believed it to be an anticommunist film (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 5 Feb 1965: 3). Nonetheless, Lee was accused as pro-communist again by prosecutor Kang Yong-gu, notorious hard-line anticommunist, because his film: 1) recognised North Korea as an independent nation by describing a scene in which nurses saluted the North Korean officer; 2) inspired anti-American sentiment by talking about *yanggongju* and the barbarous and inhumane US soldiers (her clients); 3) implied the weakness of the Korean military by featuring a silly South Korean soldier; and 4) praised North Korea by having nurses' compliments about the North Korean officer, who saved them (*Seoul Newspaper* 5 Feb 1965:3). Chief prosecutor Lee Jong-seong on the case made a special announcement when briefing Lee's case: *POWs* typifies a case where an artist abuses his freedom of expression and every artist should pay extra attention not to violate the Anticommunist Law (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 5 Feb 1965: 3). This was a direct warning for each and every filmmaker, promising there would be consequences for those who crossed the fine lines of anticommunist ideology.

This case was not about what the film promoted or represented. It provided an opportunity for KCIA agents and other anticommunist hardliners like prosecutor Kang who wanted to get their 'big breaks' in order to 'earn a special rank promotion to General', which seemed to happen frequently. The best-known case of being falsely accused is the Inhyeokdang incident in 1964. A group of young university students was accused by the KCIA of being an underground pro-communist organisation that attempted national disturbance by order of North Korea. Forty-one people were arrested and tortured, and ended with 12 people receiving jail-sentences

of one-to-three years. Three prosecutors assigned to this case found it to be unfounded and resigned. The whole case had been fabricated to distract public attention from the Park regime's crack-down on the press (Kang 2004b: 318). As film critic Lee Young-il posits, Lee's arrest was absolutely the beginning of thought control (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 8 Feb 1965: 5). Lee was a scapegoat in the middle of larger power struggles.

As a consequence of Cold War politics and the subsequent surge of the 'red scare' that was sweeping post-war Korea, Lee was targeted by the KCIA and the prosecutor's office for publicity purposes. A similar case is found in the US with the rise of McCarthyism and the intensified investigations of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in the post WWII era. The HUAC investigated communist infiltration of US society, including the film industry, with the intention of eliminating any communist influences in various industries. Hollywood became one of the best-known targets of the HUAC for its publicity value (Maltby 2003: 283).<sup>157</sup> Similar to the HUAC, the KCIA and the prosecutors' office targeted the film industry and carefully chose Lee Man-hee, one of the most popular directors of the time, as a scapegoat because the case would generate much anticipated publicity and enhance the impact the government wanted on the creative industry and society in general.

After two months of ineffectual investigation, on 5 February 1965, Lee was arrested by the prosecutors' office and imprisoned for violating the Anticommunist Law. It was the first case of the Anticommunist Law ever being applied to an art work and, thus, shocked the film industry and the whole of the art community.<sup>158</sup> Lee's arrest by the prosecutors' office automatically brought concerns to the members of the industry that the government's surveillance over creative minds may have only just begun. All the press, which had a battle with the government over the

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<sup>157</sup> Under the scrutiny of these institutions, some filmmakers were blacklisted by the government and subsequently damaged their careers. In the US, the so-called 'Hollywood Ten', director Edward Dmytryk and nine screenwriters, who were accused by the HUAC, were forced to leave their work, or work under pseudonyms (Maltby 2003: 283).

<sup>158</sup> The next case occurred in regard to a novel. Earlier, in July 1965, novelist Nam Jeong-hyun was arrested because his short novel *Land of Excretions* (Bunji) that described the US as another intruder to South Korea after Japan was re-published in North Korea's official gazette *Unification Front* (Tongil Jeonseon). Nam was set free after fifteen days with no charges, but for the next year he was under investigation by the prosecutors' office and was charged again in 1966 for violation of the anticommunist law (National Human Rights Commission of Korea 2004: 134-135).

Press Ethics Commission Law earlier in the year, understood the seriousness of this case and stood by Lee's side from the beginning. For example, it was *Chosun Daily* (20 December 1964: 4) that defended Lee first by nailing down the accusation much earlier than the actions taken by MPAK.

The MPAK's reaction occurred after Lee was arrested by the prosecutors' office. This belated reaction might have been caused by the fear of standing against authority, but the fear of losing creative ownership that they had built since 1945 seemed to be greater. The interference of the prosecutors' office in the censorship process threatened to overpower the MPI, which was more sympathetic to the industry. Seeing what happened to Lee and understanding the impact the prosecutors' office brought on the industry, directors such as Han Hyeong-mo and Yu Hyun-mok showed their concerns for the future. Han pointed out the fact that the prosecutors' office failed to see the bigger picture and the overall context of the film while focusing on 'details' (*Daehan Daily* 9 Feb 1965: 6). Yu, who had always been an opinion leader amongst peer directors, boldly accused the prosecutor's office of affecting artists' creative force (*Hanguk Daily* 9 Feb 1965: 7). The MPAK also defended Lee by making a public statement, asking for mercy by refuting the alleged accusations: 1) the nurses' saluting the North Korean officer was either being forced on them or they were showing appreciation for his saving their lives; 2) a silly and weak South Korean soldier was used as comic relief and that was why popular comedian Ku Bong-seo was cast for the role; and 3) comments about *yanggongju* had no implication of anti-American sentiment because it was used as a personal statement. On 16 March 1965, after serving over one month of his jail-term, Lee was released on probation.

Eleven prints were confiscated and approximately 40 minutes of the original print was cut by the producer (*Chosun Daily* 6 May 1965: 7). Part of the film was re-shot by an anonymous director and released under a new title *Returned Female Soldiers* because the original title, *Seven Female POWs*, connoted the South Korean army being defeated and captured by the North Korean army. The new film was released at Myongbo Cinema in August 1965 with only a 50-minute running time as opposed to the original 1 hour and 30 minutes (KOFA 2005a: 431). The film failed at the box office and its producer Choi Dong-gwon went bankrupt. According to a film review, *Returned Female Soldiers* was a unique story, but its quality was scored low

(*Shina Daily* 7 August 1965: 5). Like the original film, the re-edited film no longer exists, making us wonder what it would have looked like.

This case foretold the coming of a more restrictive censorship regime and a power struggle between governmental institutions. It clearly demonstrated that while the Park regime's industrialisation agenda facilitated the building of the production infrastructure, lower priority was given to the development of the creative talent. As mentioned in chapter 1, what the Park regime wanted to do was transform the industry as a propaganda factory as opposed to making it a creative pool. Industry discussions about Lee's case and the threat to freedom of expression soon disappeared in response to the government's effective fear campaign: challenging and arguing against the Anticommunist Law was pointless and time-consuming, and landed people in jail. It scared artists and tamed their minds to work with the government in a certain way. A few members of the industry, such as director Yu Hyun-mok raised questions about freedom of expression at a public seminar, only to be accused by the prosecutors' office of defending Lee. Resistance to the regime's direction came back with a harsh legal battle and Yu had to go through his own censorship trouble, which is discussed in chapter 7. Coupled with the MPL's censorship regulations and the upcoming KMPPA's self-regulation (script censorship) in 1967, artists' self-censorship added another layer to censorship, suppressing their creative activities.

It seems that his experience made Lee realise that attempting to push the boundaries was dangerous. The case shows that the Park regime broke Lee and blocked any potential for him to be 'out of the box.' The censorship case was closed, but the physical and emotional distress Lee suffered made an impact on his future filmmaking in three ways. First, he began directing anticommunist films as a way to secure his safety as a filmmaker. Hence, while his anticommunist filmmaking continued, they began losing vitality. *Soldiers Without Serial Numbers* (1966) and *Legend of Ssarigol* (1967) are two exceptional films that received critical acclaims because Lee directed them with intention to impress the regime by showcasing his ongoing loyalty to the regime. *Soldiers without Serial Number* in particular was the film planned and completed by Lee and screenwriter Han Wu-jeong, who worked with him in projects such as *Marines* and *POWs*, to regain the regime's trust in him as an anticommunist filmmaker. Therefore, as they had defended Lee in the

censorship case back in 1965, the popular press welcomed the return of the master war filmmaker by writing positive reviews, praising it as the second best masterpiece after *Marines*. It was emphasised that this film was at the core of anticommunist sentiment, suggesting that the Park regime's prosecution of director Lee early in 1966 was a total mistake: 1) it is a very convincing anticommunist film criticising the North Korean communists as a cause of the nation's separation and mass war casualties (*Chosun Daily* 22 March 1966: 5); and 2) Lee's poignant analysis on the inhumanity of communists adds intensity to the film and his artistry in combining the ideological agenda with a dash of spectacle, something rarely seen (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 23 March 1966: 6). The exploration of human conditions and family relationship in the civil war, which put Lee's signature on the film, added philosophical weight to it, making it one of the top films of the year 1966. With this film Lee proved his loyalty to the Park regime and demonstrated that it was possible to brand his signature while complying with the government's requests. However, his interest in war filmmaking decreased dramatically. Lee continued directing anticommunist films, but it became more of an annual routine maintenance job, confirming his line with the government.

Second, as a way of circumventing censorship pressure, Lee turned to making different types of films. After the censorship case was over, Lee apparently applied self-censorship in making films. What is seen in changes in Lee's filmography as a result is the increase of other genre films such as melodramas rather than anticommunist films and thrillers, which presumably would receive less censorship interference.

Third, connected to the second change his exploration of the human condition became deeper. Lee's works became more emotionally charged by engaging with films with little spectacle and focusing on human relationship.

### **3. Melodrama: Cinematic Experiment and Social Realism**

Between 1966 and 1970, Lee directed twenty-four films, many of which included melodramas such as *Full Autumn* (1966), *Homebound* (1967) and *Holiday* (1968). In making these melodramas, Lee engaged with the traits found in the arthouse cinema from the West, implanting social realism, experimenting with

symbolism, and utilising sound and mise-en-scène as a device for narrative development. For example, *Full Autumn* (1966) is a love story of a man on the run and a female prisoner that occurred during her three-day special parole period.<sup>159</sup> Lee's construction of mise-en-scène, and the use of visual images and montage was regarded by the media as fresh compared to other melodramas using the same old stories of love and family relationship (*Donga Daily* 6 December 1966: 5; *Joongang Daily* 10 December 1966: 5; and *Chosun Daily* 4 December 1966: 6).<sup>160</sup>

Some people wondered how Lee's transition from war films to melodramas would turn out because Lee had been best known as a director of 'cold-blooded' war and thriller films and his moving into a complete opposite direction of making a 'squishy melodrama' sounded unrealistic (*Shina Newspaper* 12 November 1966: 5). Yet, Lee's change in directorial style turned out to be successful: about 100,000 people in Seoul saw the film at Myongbo Cinema. According to producer Ho Hyeonchan, producer of literary film *Seaside Village* (1965), the film appealed to a variety of audience groups: it was not only popular for the middle aged women, but also for intelligentsia and salaried men, making the night run a full house (Group For Our Films 2005).<sup>161</sup> Lee's experimentation with a new genre was a success and he proved his ability for balancing artistic quality and commerciality.

Lee's shift in filmmaking was in a sense a forced and negotiated move because he was facing the limit in creative freedom. As screenwriter Baek Gyeol (2005) states, the censorship trial made Lee suffer from the immense level of physical and emotional stress.<sup>162</sup> So, he suggested to Lee to venture into a different

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<sup>159</sup> The idea of making *Full Autumn* ironically came from Lee's short prison experience. When Lee was shooting *Market* in late 1965, he met with one of the prison inmates, who was on a three-day leave as a reward for being a well-behaved prisoner. Lee instantly converted his story to that of a female prisoner falling in love with a man on the run in her three-day leave from the prison (*Chosun Daily* 6 November 1966: 6).

<sup>160</sup> The film received the best picture awards from the Korean Theatre and Film Art Award and the Buil film festival in 1967. It is still claimed by contemporary critics such as Kim Jong-won, who had watched the film at the time of release, to be one of the masterpieces of Korean cinema and would replace Yu Hyun-mok's *Stray Bullet* (1961) for its artistry, if it still existed. Currently there is no print left of *Full Autumn*.

<sup>161</sup> At the time melodrama in Korea was known as a genre popular for middle-aged women. They were also called 'rubber shoes audiences' (*gomushin gwangaek*) because they were known for wearing rubber shoes for durability.

<sup>162</sup> Baek's statements were collected in the guest visit arranged at the Pusan International Film Festival in 2005 after the screening of *Homebound* (1967).

genre to express his artistic visions rather than to stick to making a slew of stereotypical anticommunist films. Lee chose the melodrama.

In conventional Hollywood melodramas of the 1950s, tear-jerking storylines are entangled with the family and love relationship, which had been similarly noticed in Korea's melodramas. They were characterised by blending 'family trauma, pathos, and heightened emotionalism' (Maltby 2003: 101). Yet, in the mid-1950s the genre evolved in different ways when American directors such as Vincente Minnelli, Nicholas Ray and Douglas Sirk appeared, beginning to engage social context into the narratives. Lee's melodramas are similar to this latter type of melodrama in that it was a social drama with critical comments. What is noticed in Sirk's melodramas, that is, 'aesthetic complexity and social commentary' (Volosinov 1994: Xii), is also noticed in Lee's films. What Elsasser points to as characteristics of Douglas Sirk's melodrama, 'style and technique is related to theme' (1976: 116), can be seen as equally necessary in reading Lee's works.<sup>163</sup>

*Homebound*, for instance, shows how Lee critiqued society under the authoritarian regime while telling a familiar melodramatic story of a married woman having an affair and coming back home. *Homebound* was the first film produced and directed by Lee Man-hee through the *daemyeong*. While it is considered as one of the representative modernist films in the 1960s by contemporary critics such as Kim Soyoung and Huh Moon-young, at the time of release it was regarded as one of the best melodramas dealing with loneliness and nihilism (*Kyughyang Daily* 29 July 1967: 8) and one revealing a woman's delicate emotional transformation (*Jugan Hanguk* 30 July 1967). By showing a woman's days of confusion and loneliness, and her attempt to have an affair that ended up as her suicide, *Homebound* at first seems to promote the ultimate principle of patriarchy, suggesting overt disapproval of infidelity.

Yet, seeing it from a contemporary point of view, this film is a more thought-provoking drama criticising society by effective use of mise-en-scène and sound. The army marching music, the army uniform and her claustrophobic dark house suggests society under the repressive military regime. The husband's being impotent,

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<sup>163</sup> Three films of Douglas Sirk were introduced to Korea in 1958 and 1959: *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *A Time to Love And A Time to Die* (1958), and *Imitation of Life* (1959) (KMPPC 1977).

the wife's restricted life-style and the barren city space all point to what Lee visualised from Korea's society. The husband signifies Korea's past (the experience of the war) as well as Korea's present (authoritarian regime), which tries to command his family (wife), though crippled and unable to move forward, and thus, it contextualises the film as a social critique. By visualising what it is like to live under continuous repression the film presents the heroine's suicide as one possible answer to it: liberation from her husband in the world. This somewhat provocative idea was not noticed by the then-critics, who simply read it as a story about adultery and her atonement for it. Her death was the price she had to pay for: 'an expense of spending one night with a man' (*Jugan Hanguk* 30 July 1967).

The covert critique of society was totally missing in the previews published in the popular press at the time. A smart censorship officer would have noticed this film's nature of resisting patriarchy and military fascism and would have then refused its application to the script censorship (Huh *Cine21* 2005). Polish filmmaker Andrzej Wajda (1997: 109) once suggested that a director should be able to find a way of circumventing censorship by creating a space to which the censors could not relate. This is precisely what Lee did in order to survive the censorship regime. Nonetheless, Lee's new-found way of resisting the censorship regime was still challenged by censorship. As is discussed below, *Holiday* (1968), another film containing social messages, added fuel to Lee's battle against censorship.

### **1) A Life of Living Hell: *Holiday* (1968)**

Although it was produced in 1968, *Holiday* was first released to the public in 2005. At the time, the film could not pass the completed product censorship. While the record of the film having been made exists through interviews with screenwriter Baek Gyeol and others connected with the production, most believed there were no surviving copies of the film. Yet, this film was accidentally found in 2005 at the warehouse of the Korean Film Archive after spending thirty-eight years in the dark,

offering a rare opportunity of seeing what Lee's film might have been like before censorship.<sup>164</sup>

*Holiday* was produced by female producer Jeon Ok-suk of Daehan Yeonhap Film Company, who had been impressed by Lee's previous films and wished to work with him. Hence, when they decided to make a film together she gave full support for Lee. *Holiday* deals with Huh-wook's one-day journey on a Sunday in winter. Huh-wook and his girl friend Ji-yeon, both in their twenties, meet in the park for a date though the air is chilly and the wind is gusty, because this poor couple does not have the money to meet in a warm café. Though they are in love and Ji-yeon is pregnant, they cannot plan for their future, being penniless. Instead they decide to abort their baby, visiting a clinic, and Huh-wook goes out, looking for money. He manages to get money by stealing it from his friend, but instead of going back to the clinic immediately he drinks and flirts with a girl at a bar, trying to shake off his nervousness. At dawn, back at the hospital he finds Ji-seon has died during the operation. Her father vents his grief on him, hearing the news. He gets beaten by his friend, whose money he has stolen. He takes the tram, trying to go back home, but on the street off the tram, he stands still, undecided where to go.

Lee had few funding worries, thanks to Jeon's support, but the making of this film was rocky with censorship battles because it was a project reflecting on the then-contemporary Korean society. The censorship office returned Baek Gyeol's script several times before finally passing it because society as described in the film was too dark. According to Baek (2005), the original script experimented with a circular plot using a prologue and an epilogue, showing Huh-wook's corpse being retrieved from the Han River. In the prologue an unidentified body found dead starts the narration. In the epilogue, upon his friends' failing to identify the body, the policeman put his name down as John Doe. This plot experimentation was removed because of the ominous atmosphere of the film, and the narrative was developed in a more familiar linear way. Yet, passing the completed film censorship was still not easy because the characters seemed to be too depressed without any passion for life and hope for the future. Lee made changes to the completed version, but the

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<sup>164</sup> *Holiday* was first screened to public audiences at the #10 Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF). It was screened to the public as part of the Korean Retrospective Section of director Lee Man-hee.

exhibition permit still was not granted. Baek Gyeol (2005) states that at the time, censorship officers tried to make a deal with director Lee that they would pass the film if he changed the ending: Huh-wook gets his hair shaved and decides to enlist for military service, belittling his experiences as ad hoc happenings before going to the army. The original ending of Huh-wook standing on the street at dawn, completely lost. Lee, Jeon and Baek all agreed that the change of ending would ruin the whole context of the film and refused the deal. The film was not released and disappeared from people's memories.

When the film was first screened at PIFF in 2005, it received instant acclaim from critics for Lee's living social critiques. The aesthetic style of mixing extreme long shots and close shots, and alternating low angles and high angles proves Lee's known-proclivity in experimenting with how the camera works. The content of the some-30-year-old film still provided the fresh look on how it was like for young ones to live in Seoul by projecting images of people desperately craving to escape. As a taxi driver, who contacts people on a daily basis, talks to Huh-wook, all passengers look tired. No-one in this film has any goal in life, just trying to spend day after day while doing nothing. One friend, who graduated from university first on the list, claims himself as a loser and lives in a drinking bar. Another friend bathes himself six times a day out of boredom. A lady at the bar complains of having nothing to do on Sundays. Somehow they all hate Sundays, which is supposed to be the day of rest and relaxation. The problem of our protagonist, Huh-wook and others is the lack of a life force. The movie is full of despair and depression. This overwhelming sense of helplessness in the film was probably something that upset the censors (Huh *Cine21* 2005).

Nevertheless, while censors were busy interpreting Lee's direct critique of society they seemed to have missed his other social commentaries. These were delivered in two recognisable ways. First, the *mise-en-scène* was constructed to convey meanings. The most outstanding use of *mise-en-scène* occurs at the park scenes. The park is swept by a gusty, sandy wind storm. The swirling yellow dust is so thick that it often muffles the couple's conversation and obstructs the views of both themselves and the audience. In one particular scene, in which Ji-seon is waiting for Huh-wook to return, she is completely overwhelmed by the wind, and almost seems to be blown away. The park scenes with the sand storm all signify their

uncertain future. Second, Lee used an alienation effect to deliver a message to audiences. Lee provided audiences with uncomfortable film-viewing experiences, alienating them from being immersed in the film. The park scene in which he used the ‘unrealistic’ large scale of the sand storm in the middle of Seoul is again effective in understanding this point. This alienation effect, which was created and used by theatrical writer and director Brecht and later adapted by film director Sirk, aimed at ‘creating distance between the viewer and the subject matter through stylization’ (Schatz 1981:248). Even though his use of the alienation effect might not be as sophisticated as it was in films of Sirk, Lee was able to remind audiences of the current social condition by using this technique.

The film ends with Huh-wook’s narration: “Seoul, Namsan, the tram, the bar owner, the landlady, Sunday ... I loved them all ... Soon the sun is up. Shall I go out to the street, shall I meet people, or shall I drink coffee? I should have a hair cut. I should have a hair cut.”<sup>165</sup> Huh-wook’s nonsense signifies a lost soul. Even after experiencing the death of his girl friend, Huh-wook does not seem to be changed. Or, there is nothing he can do about it. All things he mentioned he loved here are ironically all things he does not love. As Baek Gyeol (2005) recalls, the alteration to the ending, Huh-wook’s going to the army, would have made it as an enlightening film, endorsing the importance of military service. Censors’ attempt to make the film a vehicle of government propaganda, nonetheless failed because the director, the screenwriter and the producer all chose to bury the film rather than allow it to become propaganda. It was an obvious resistance to the censorship regime. For the contemporary audiences, the film’s not receiving the exhibition permit was in a sense a blessing.

#### **4. Conclusion: Negotiating Spaces For Integrity**

For an artist, complying with the government is sometimes not a choice, but rather a survival strategy. As the regime’s political leadership became firmly

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<sup>165</sup> Watching director Hong Sang-soo’s *Tale of Cinema* (2005) was like déjà vu because of its similarity in the plot. After showing the main character watching a film, meeting friends, having an affair with an actress, and visiting a friend at hospital, it ends with the main character’s narration: “I have to start thinking.” Ironically Hong’s mother is Jeon Ok-suk, producer of *Holiday*. *Tale of Cinema* was released before *Holiday* was discovered.

established, its quest for power and control over surveillance increased. Lee was a scapegoat of the Park regime in the midst of rising state control. Under the repressive regime, control over artists came in two ways: overt physical threat as demonstrated by Lee's arrest and imprisonment, and covert thought control, which was the subsequent outcome of the physical detention. The thought control caused by self-regulation was what the regime ultimately sought because of its greater impact on the artists. Lee was one who was victimised by this, but also one who developed and kept a negotiated space alive.

Lee initially helped the government build its propaganda machine while taking advantage of military support. Propaganda production was beyond Lee's central concern. He was more concerned with developing the kind of storytelling techniques and production skills needed for making large-scale films. Exploring the human condition during war was his pet theme. This way of creating spaces for freedom, however, was soon challenged when the government tightened state surveillance in the mid-1960s. As a result, Lee experienced a grueling censorship trial that ultimately forced him to develop a new strategy. While sustaining anticommunist filmmaking as an annual maintenance duty guaranteeing his survival, Lee experimented with the melodrama genre, which used his theme of the human condition to deepen social criticism within soppy love stories. Lee Man-hee was one of the directors that Park's censorship regime failed to control. His professional life as a director hinged on negotiations with producers and the government, and he never quit. Lee outwitted censorship by creating a space that accommodated his creativity and critical view-finder to the world, to which censors would not link. The next chapter moves on to discuss how director Yu Hyun-mok rose to the auteur status and how he sustained his auteurship in various ways, illustrating how some directors struggled to safeguard their careers.

## Chapter 7. Yu Hyun-mok: Auteurship Challenges

Chapters 5 and 6 have demonstrated how difficult it was for directors to survive under the authoritarian regime by showing that constant negotiation with those in power was necessary. Linked to this, this chapter examines how director Yu Hyeon-mok tried to free himself from the restraining production environments by insisting on the virtue of his faith in arthouse filmmaking and attempts to understand him within the context of the auteur theory. Whilst directors Shin Sang-ok and Lee Man-hee achieved a reputation largely as commercial filmmakers, other directors such as Yu Hyeon-mok, Kim Ki-young and Lee Sung-gu established their reputations as arthouse filmmakers. Their unique film styles enabled them to distance themselves from the burden of having to direct propaganda and commercial films.

When French critics writing for *Cahiers Du Cinéma* first introduced the auteur theory in the 1950s, they proposed the concept of the director as the creative centre in the making of a film, like an author or a painter completing his artwork alone. An 'auteur' is a director equipped with a distinguished style and professionalism to achieve artistic potential of a film (Sarris 2004: 562). An 'auteur' is the 'most centrally responsible for a film's form, style and meanings' and his works contain an expression of his 'view of life' (Thompson and Bordwell 2003: 415). Among all of the directors in Korea, Yu Hyun-mok best fits the auteur model because of the signature he marked on his films. As he frequently stated in public, he admired directors Ingmar Bergman and Robert Bresson, trying to emulate their aesthetic styles in his films. As a result, Yu developed his style of mixing realist, expressionist and modernist elements and created the 'aesthetics of devastation' exploring themes around the human condition in an age of despair (Lee 1995: 196). Many of Yu's films were based on modern Korean literature that dealt with Korea's recent history, that is, the Korean War, the territorial and ideological split, and its aftermath. Yu represented the 'flow' of western-style philosophies in the post-war period such as Italian Neo Realism, experimentalism and existentialism. For example, he is especially associated with the idea of 'photogénie,' which was previously explored in the French impressionist cinema, projecting emotional values through visual images by 'the use of framing, light and shade, and directorial movement' (Aitken 2001: 82). It was the quality and principle Yu was searching for in order to

capture the essence of the objective and present it on screen. Adopting this rather abstract concept as the main method of realising his aesthetics, in his biography Yu Hyeon-mok claimed his intended film style as a 'cine-poem' (Yu 1995: 109).<sup>166</sup> Yu's exploration of existentialist themes through sound experiment and image constructions enabled him to achieve the art of *photogénie* on the screen.

The idea of 'auteur', and different usage between an 'auteur' and a 'director' were frequently noticed in the popular press since the 1950s, and the lack of authorship in Korea's film industry in relation to censorship and the PRS was often mentioned by critics (*Yeonghwa Yesul* May 1966: 71-81).<sup>167</sup> In Korea, directors had limited choice in developing one particular set of styles and techniques, and sometimes were forced to make different genre films. Acknowledging this particular type of production condition, a few scholars such as Kim Su-nam have noted the need to create a localised auteur theory to contextualise Korean cinema. Kim (2002; 2003) claims the 'Korean auteur theory', emphasising the importance of a director's view of life in understanding his films, and suggests its linking to understanding of the film history. However, while the need to create a new approach to Korea's 'auteurship' seems to be valid, Kim fails to articulate how similar or different his Korean auteur theory is compared to the Western concept. Besides, Kim's theory is a composite of already-published auteur theory in the West. The importance of a director's view of life was the original notion of the auteur theory and using the auteur theory as a way of reconstructing a country's film history has already been attempted by Andrew Sarris (1962) in regard to understanding of the US film history.

It is said that the auteur rises and shines more when he works through demanding production environments because 'if auteurs exist in the most restrictive film-making system in the world, then they can exist anywhere' (Nelmes 2003: 136).

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<sup>166</sup> Yu inherited the tradition of Korean realist films originated by Korea's colonial filmmakers such as Na Un-gyu, Lee Gyu-hwan and Choi In-gyu (Kim 2003). He was titled as 'the Pathfinder of Korean Realism' by organisers of the Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF 1999).

<sup>167</sup> When a panel was organised by *Yeonghwa Yesul* magazine (May 1966: 71-81) to discuss the status of the then-contemporary Korean cinema, film critics Hwang Un-heon, Byon In-sik, Lee Young-il, and Lee Jin-hyung all agreed that social restriction represented by the PRS and political censorship prevented directors from developing their own consistent styles and themes. It seems there was a consensus amongst them that an auteur simply meant one who could develop his own style and theme despite all obstacles.

Having this in mind, auteurs can be found anywhere, including Korea, where the authoritarian government maintained a heavy hand over the industry structure.

This chapter first contextualises the auteur theory within Korea's context and how Yu fits into this localised concept. As a case study, *Aimless Bullet* is used to demonstrate the theme, mise-en-scène and visual style of 'aesthetics of devastation'. His most well-known film *Aimless Bullet* (1961) used montage and sound effect as a medium to capture the run-down post-war Korean society.

Then, it examines how Yu expanded his auteurship by spreading his beliefs about film art and freedom of expression. He emphasised the importance of art filmmaking by advocating its value through the media and teaching, and by initiating a film club. *The Empty Dream* (1965), a rare experimental film, dealing with a male sexual fantasy happening in a surreal, dreamy world, is examined in order to show how Yu put theory into practice and how he confronted censorship.

Finally, the chapter highlights the divergent productive strategies that Yu used from the mid-1960s for survival. In addition to his usual art filmmaking, Yu began directing other popular genre films for political and economic reasons. He introduced and made amateur films using 8mm technology, and produced cultural films. In doing so, he gradually moved away from the Production Registration System (PRS).

## **1. Authorship Within the Korean Context**

Yu (1925-2009) was the pre-eminent arthouse filmmaker in Korea, who directed a total of 44 films. Yu was born and raised in Hwanghae province in North Korea and moved to Seoul after the liberation in 1945. Influenced by his mother, who was a faithful Christian, Yu once tried to enter a Christian College to become a priest, but failed the entry (English) test. However, his ongoing interest in and exploration of Christianity since his childhood continued, becoming an important part of the themes he explored in his films. In 1947 Yu entered Dongguk University to study literature and theatre. Watching foreign films such as *Crime et Châtiment* (1935) after liberation, which had been banned for exhibition since the late 1930s under Japanese colonial rule, Yu became interested in scriptwriting and directing films. In order to gain knowledge about filmmaking, he studied film books and

frequently visited production sites, including that of director Choi In-gyu's *Hurray For Freedom* (1946). In 1948, his second year of university, Yu organised a student film club, one of the earliest in Korea. In 1948 he directed and produced a 45-minute-long sound film *Sea Wind* with help from director Kim Seong-min and cinematographer Won Young-il, who were working in the industry at the time, showing how serious he was in pursuing filmmaking from early on.<sup>168</sup> It was before Korea had any established film institutions, which meant that Yu had to acquire the technical knowledge necessary for filmmaking all by himself through books and personal connections. Korea's first film institution, Seorabeol Art College, was established in 1953. After graduation, he began working in the industry as an assistant director. Some of his work included assisting Shin Sang-ok's debut film *Evil Night* (1952) and Lee Gyu-hwan's *Story of Chunhyang* (1955).

In 1956 Yu debuted with *The Crossroad*, dealing with a love story of twin girls (H. Yu 1995). With his fifth film *The Seizure of Life* (1958) portraying the life of a businessman who faked his death to escape tax evasion, embezzlement and swindling but ended up in bigger trouble, Yu received the best director award from #2 Buil film festival in 1959, making his name known to the industry.<sup>169</sup> Along with other directors Kim Ki-young and Lee Byeong-il, Yu was regarded as one of the up and coming talents (*Donga Daily* 29 December 1958: 4) and soon considered as a creative talent necessary for the progress of Korea's film industry for his uncompromising faith in film art (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 5 November 1960: 4). The release of his eighth film *Aimless Bullet* (1961) was considered to be a watershed in Korean cinema for its rare attempt to capture the realistic picture of Korea's run-down post-war society while other films, mostly melodramas, had little reference to real life (*Chosun Daily* 28 April 1961: 4).<sup>170</sup> Yu's exploration of aesthetics and the

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<sup>168</sup> Yu said that the film dealt with a fisherman's son who became crazy after losing his father at sea (Yu 1995: 65). While this student film is listed as Yu's first film in his autobiography and other websites such as Korean Movie Database, the film no longer exists and there are no newspaper or magazine articles covering this particular film. Hence, there is no way of knowing what the film was like.

<sup>169</sup> The film also won, with best film, best actor, best supporting actor, best supporting actress and best original score, awards from the Buil film festival. Later in the year the film was submitted to #6 Asian Film Festival.

<sup>170</sup> The other watershed film mentioned, together with *Aimless Bullet*, was director Shin Sang-ok's *Story of Chunhyang* for its unprecedented box office success. The audience number of 380,000 in Seoul broke the previous records in both local and foreign film box

human condition deepened in *Aimless Bullet*, marking Yu as Korea's most representative arthouse filmmaker – auteur. The following analysis of *Aimless Bullet* explains his film style and aesthetics, and then demonstrates Yu's firm belief in arthouse filmmaking by introducing background stories of production, exhibition and censorship experiences.

### 1) Auteur Canvas: *Aimless Bullet* (1960)

Yu's fame and reputation notably stemmed from *Aimless Bullet*'s domestic and international acclaim at the time. The film is praised by most Korean critics as the 'best' Korean film of all time and has been consistently judged the number one film, reminiscent of the position *Citizen Kane* occupies in US film history. For example, it was listed as the first of the top fifty films of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in 1998 and was also selected as the top film of the Korean monthly film magazine *Screen*'s 100 best Korean films in 1999, attesting to the fact that the film's aesthetics and theme still appeal to contemporary viewers.

*Aimless Bullet* is based on Lee Beom-seon's short novel of the same name published in 1959. This book represented the trend in the post-war novels dealing with Korea's problems such as poverty, national separation and separated families, questioning the meaning of life in an era of despair, anger and frustration (Jeong et al. 2000: 67-69). Yu's critical description of society as it was (poor, dark and miserable) is largely indebted to this poignant original novel. The film's production was possible thanks to the April Revolution of 1960, that is, a joint-democratic movement of students, teachers and other civilians that led the authoritarian regime of president Syngman Rhee to collapse. A new democratic government (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Korea), inaugurated as a result of the April Revolution, implemented democracy during its 8-month rule and relaxed censorship. For the first time in Korea's film history, the government gave censorship authority to a civilian organisation – the Motion Picture Ethics Committee (Yeonghwa Yunri Wiwonhoe). Compared to the previous censorship regulations built upon the film laws from the Japanese colonial era as well as the US occupation period, this new censorship apparatus provided a

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office, reminiscent of the contemporary film *Shiri* (1999) taking over the box office record of *Titanic* (1998).

liberated production environment, enabling Yu to complete *Aimless Bullet*, casting a critical view of society. *Aimless Bullet* was a film born out of this short period of relative freedom.

Kim Seong-chun, pioneer lighting technician, produced the film as his first after he established Daehan Film Company.<sup>171</sup> Using his network, Kim recruited rising director Yu and veteran cinematographer Kim Hak-seong, star actors and actresses including Kim Jin-gyu, Choi Mu-ryong and Moon Jeong-suk, and other crew. Inspired by the quality screenplay, they all agreed to work on the film for free (*Hanguk Daily* 8 August 1960: 4). When *Aimless Bullet* was released in April 1961, it was praised for reaching a new level of artistry, inspiring Korea's young filmmakers (*Chosun Daily* 28 April 1961: 4). The film was praised for its bold attempt to reveal the 'truth' about the dark side of living in Korea (*Hanguk Daily* 14 April 1961: 1). The intensive use of sound effects and camera techniques [montage] was highly complimented as a technical achievement of the film (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 17 April 1961: 4; *Seoul Newspaper* 20 April 1961: 4). Yu's status as arthouse filmmaker was firmly established by the film's artistic achievement, and it is still appreciated by contemporary film scholars and critics in similar ways: the theme exploring the human condition, pioneering use of montage and sound effects, and the mise-en-scene influenced by an expressionist element (Ho 2000; Lee 2004; Paquet 2004; Kim 2008).

*Aimless Bullet* is about a family from North Korea, trying to find their way in the impoverished post-war society. The film depicts characters whose lives are driven by social deprivation rather than their desire and aspiration. The story revolves around a family of seven living in a small and wretched house located in Liberation village (*Haebang-chon*) in Seoul. It was a poor neighborhood that had been established in 1945 after the liberation from Japan and mostly inhabited by North Korean escapees. Unlike the wishful name, Liberation village, the family was unable to liberate themselves from poverty. In a small and bleak weatherboard house, the grandmother is sick in bed, crying out deliriously, "Let's go, let's go (*gaja*,

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<sup>171</sup> Kim Seong-chun (1903-1977) is Korea's first professional film lighting technician, often respected by other lighting technicians as 'master'. In the 1920s Kim was trained and apprenticed for the job of film lighting technician in Japan. Kim came back to Korea in 1934, beginning working in Korea's colonial film industry. Debuting with *The Sprinkler* (1935) Kim participated in a total of 73 films as a film lighting technician.

*gaja*).” While not specifying where she would like to go, and being unable to go anywhere, the sick grandmother symbolises the country and its people that were lost and struggling to find their way out. Cheol-ho, first son and household head of the family, works as an accounting clerk and suffers financial difficulties. He has a constant toothache, but cannot afford to go to a dentist. His wife is pregnant and experiences malnutrition. Yeong-ho, second son, is a maimed soldier, who can’t find a job. Their sister Myeong-suk becomes a *yanggongju* to support the family. The family does not seem to have a future. Out of desperation, Yeong-ho robs a bank and is arrested by the police. Cheol-ho’s wife rushes to the hospital to deliver her baby, but dies of complications during delivery. A motherless baby arrives in the world. Seeing all these happenings, Cheol-ho visits the dentist, having his tooth pulled out. Bleeding badly and stupefied by the pain, Cheol-ho grabs a taxi to go ‘somewhere.’ When asked by the taxi driver, Cheol-ho keeps switching where to go: ‘To Liberation village [where mother is]’, ‘To Central Police Station [where brother is]’ and ‘To Seoul National University Hospital [where the wife is].’ The film ends with an out-of-focus night shot of Seoul, while the taxi driver’s voice comes with a sigh, “Such an aimless bullet, not knowing where to go.”

The feeling of desperation and an urge to escape from the hopeless life is amplified through each character’s journey, racing to the climax of the film. Yu’s experimentation with German expressionist elements, which he had been strongly influenced by, in the use of sound, lighting and set design, intensifies his depiction of the listless post-war society, and effectively captures the characters’ psyche as they struggle with their given condition of life. Life of each character escalates toward the end in ways similar to that of Italian Neo-Realist films such as *Bicycle Thief* (1948), the influence of which on his works Yu admitted in an interview (2005). If Yu’s goal was to deliver the suffocating atmosphere of the post-war society on screen, it seems to have been successfully achieved by presenting Cheol-ho being completely lost in despair at the end, and thus blocking any hope for the future.

At the time of its release on 13 April 1961, the film received the media spotlight for its artistic achievement, and yet failed to appeal to general audiences. As a result, the exhibitor (Gukje Cinema) took the film down earlier than its original schedule to screen a more ‘profitable’ film (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 26 April 1961: 4).

Whilst Yu recalled how the film received passionate reception from audiences in an interview, it was a different story in reality:

It [cinema] had full house showing for five or six days from the opening day. Audiences were comprised of more intellectuals than middle-class filmgoers though. I think even the title seemed estranged to the middle-class audience. However, people seemed to be compelled by the feeling, “just can’t leave like this,” upon the screening, staying at bars talking about the film. I heard about fifteen bars near the theatre were full-housed with people who just viewed the film. Some told me it’s because the film shared the suffering of the time with audiences (PIFF 1999: 93).

The response from this particular audience might have been passionate and strong, but the film was a failure in terms of box office. In other words, it only appealed to certain audiences, the so-called intelligentsia (*jisigin*).<sup>172</sup> Korea’s intelligentsia was defined as those highly educated, such as academics, scholars and journalists, which at the time occupied a small portion in Korea’s population (Hong 1999: 199). According to *Statistics Korea* (1995: 80), in 1955 people aged over 25, with higher degrees (high school degree holder and above) occupied only 1.7% of the whole population. In ten years in 1966 this number rose about threefold to 5.6 %. Hence, it is fair to say that the film appealed to much less than 5% of Korea’s population at the time, which was not much. Besides, not all people in this category went to see the film.

To make things worse, in July the film became the first censorship victim under the military government’s new censorship guidelines. After the May 16 Coup, as discussed in chapter 1, the new military government required all exhibiting films and cultural events to pass censorship. When the film was submitted for censorship in July for re-release for 2<sup>nd</sup> run cinemas, the military regime refused passing its censorship, relegating *Aimless Bullet* to storage, in order to suppress this rising sense

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<sup>172</sup> One of Yu’s known followers was literary critic Yi Eo-ryeong. Yu and Yi had an open talk organised by a film magazine concerning filmmaking trends and production conditions in Korea and other countries such as Italy, Sweden and France. During the conversation, Yu expressed his agony at dealing with the PRS and censorship, and Yi expressed his strong support to Yu’s films and his exploration over arthouse filmmaking (*Silver Screen* January 1965).

of relative freedom as represented by the completion of *Aimless Bullet*. In his biography, Yu mentioned that the film was banned for two reasons: 1) sick mother's recurrent shout, "let's go, let's go (Gaja! Gaja!)", which was understood by the Park regime as "let's go to Kim Il-seong regime (North Korea)" (whilst it could be interpreted to go to or escape from anywhere)<sup>173</sup>; and 2) the society was portrayed as being too poor and too dark (H. Yu 1995). However, perhaps the real reason behind the screening suspension was that the Park regime was afraid of intellectuals gathering and sharing their thoughts on society after seeing the film. In a sense, these intellectuals should be concerned because they were essentially revolutionaries who succeeded in turning the previous authoritarian Syngman Rhee government over, establishing the new democratic government. This incident was not publicised in newspapers and movie magazines and the film did not receive a single award from domestic film festivals held in 1961. The exhibition ban on *Aimless Bullet* continued for two years.

In 1963 the film's screening ban was lifted unexpectedly with a help of foreign film scholar Dr Richard McCann. At the time he was a lecturer at the University of Southern California and visiting as consultant for the National Film Production Centre (NFPC). During his four-month stay, Dr McCann not only taught and advised the NFPC staff, but also accessed extensive numbers of Korean films to enhance his understanding of Korea and Korea's film culture. Amongst them was *Aimless Bullet*, which he picked up as the best Korean film he had seen because of its outstanding narrative structure, visual styles and techniques (*Chosun Daily* 14 July, 1963: 5). Dr McCann, who had connections with the selection committee of the San Francisco Film festival, personally met Im Seong-hee, Minister of Public Information, and director Yu, inviting the film to the 7th San Francisco Film festival scheduled for November 1963. While the regime banned the film for fear of exposing this much-too-realistic poverty level in Korea to overseas audiences, this foreign scholar showed the government what he cared more about was the film's quality and aesthetics, not some descriptive scenes of society in the film. It took a

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<sup>173</sup> This simple sentence in Korean 'Gaja' can be interpreted in various ways, opening how to read it to the viewers. While it literally means 'Let's go', it can also be interpreted as 'Let's get outta here!' (Kim 2004: 52). In this case, 'here' can be her miserable living conditions. Or it can be interpreted as 'Let's go to North Korea' as mentioned above, depending on how a viewer would like to understand the words.

foreigner to have the Park regime recognise how great Korea's cinema was. The exhibition ban on the film was lifted and the newspaper advertisement for *Aimless Bullet* reappeared before the film festival was held.



Figure 7-1. Poster of *Aimless Bullet* (*Donga Daily* 21 October 1963: 4)

The poster above presented a mosaic of *Aimless Bullet* reviews consisting of six domestic newspapers (*Donga*, *Kyeonghyang*, *Seoul*, *Chosun*, *Hanguk* and *Daehan Daily*), and one Japanese and one English newspaper, the titles of which were unrevealed. The critical acclaim that *Aimless Bullet* had received in the past was the obvious re-selling point of this advertisement. Given the fact that the film's newspaper advertising campaign, which was the dominant way of promoting a film at the time, only lasted for one week, the film failed to attract enough people to continue screening. However, seeing this film again in the market proves that producers and exhibitors remembered and wanted to take advantage of the excitement surrounding the film at the time of its release.

In November 1963 the film was screened at the San Francisco Film Festival and director Yu and main actor Kim Jin-gyu (Cheol-ho) attended the event.<sup>174</sup> According to the festival website, Dr McCann posted:

<sup>174</sup> The print sent to the festival later became the only surviving print of the film. Preservation of film prints began only in 1974 with the establishment of the Korean Film Archive. Before then, most film prints depended upon the care of production companies and directors, which in most cases ended up with the prints being lost or corroded. This worn out

the production of a country [Korea]'s films can gain attention through the influence of one director [Yu Hyun-mok]' and the film was considered as 'high quality production which could lead the Koreans to a foreign language Oscar for their recently developed industry.'<sup>175</sup>

The timing of the festival invitation and the lifting of the ban on *Aimless Bullet* occurred in the middle of a political transition. The military regime was preparing to hand power over to the civilian government as was promised in the revolutionary pledge. Park Chung Hee was running for president and the official presidential campaign began in September 1963. As explained in chapter 2, Shin Sang-ok's propaganda film *Rice*, endorsing the benefit of having the military government, was released in cinemas. Considering this political background, it might be said that the talk and press coverage on recovery of *Aimless Bullet* came out of a friendly gesture by the military government towards the film community to attract more votes. The election occurred on 15 October 1963 and Park Chung Hee became the president of Korea.

*Aimless Bullet* made a significant mark on Yu's career. Receiving critical acclaim, the film being banned and then the revocation of the censorship decision reinforced Yu's position as Korea's top arthouse director. Newspapers and magazines eagerly sought him as a panel discussant and a commentator concerning industry issues, including censorship. In the meantime, his thematic pursuit of existentialism deepened in *Kim's Daughters* (1963), *The Extra Mortals* (1964) and *The Martyrs* (1965), all of which were based on novels about people challenged by social transformation – namely colonial modernity and the war.<sup>176</sup> *The Extra Mortals* was seen as a 'sister film' to *Aimless Bullet* for its similar theme critiquing post-war society and realist film style (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 18 April 1964: 8; *Hanguk Daily* 14

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print with English subtitles is now the only print of *Aimless Bullet* left to the world. In 2003 the film was released in DVD, providing easier access to this film.

<sup>175</sup> Dr McCann's review can be found at the festival website: [http://history.sffs.org/films/film\\_details.php?id=116](http://history.sffs.org/films/film_details.php?id=116) (Accessed 26 November 2007)

<sup>176</sup> *The Martyrs* is the first feature film Yu produced and directed under the *daemyeong* practice (See chapters 1 and 2). It is based on *The Martyred* written by Richard E. Kim (Kim Eun-Kuk) in 1964. In this book, published in the US, the author explored the meaning of Christianity against the backdrop of the Korean War. In an interview Yu expressed pleasure at working on his own project. Since he was the producer, Yu expressed whatever he wanted on screen with little commercial consideration (*Seoul Newspaper* 7 January 1965: 8).

April 1964: 4). *The Martyrs* explored heavy theological issues, apparently targeting the intelligentsia as the main audience. While the completed film showed little concern about what audiences would like, or how much in ticket sales was necessary to recoup the film's funding, it manifested Yu's increasing faith in art filmmaking (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 19 June 1965: 5).<sup>177</sup> While *Aimless Bullet* failed to receive awards from local film festivals, these other films brought Yu an abundance of awards including best film, best director, best actor and actress, best art director and best cinematography from various local film festivals. Yu was becoming known for directing literary films, the quintessential arthouse film genre in Korea.

## **2. Expansion of Auteurship: Spreading Beliefs in Film As An Art**

After being recognised as an auteur, Yu began actively sharing his beliefs in art filmmaking with others. He published his opinion pieces in newspapers and magazines and spoke for the general interest of the industry and his beliefs about film art in public seminars and private gatherings. Through these activities Yu achieved three things.

First, Yu urged students and directors to transcend conventional storytelling techniques and develop their own film style. It was associated with his preference towards directing arthouse films rather than commercial films. As the analysis of *The Empty Dream* will show, Yu used sound effects, set design, editing and montage as important narrative devices to intensify the film's emotional impact. Second, Yu encouraged people to open their hearts and minds to new film movements happening outside Korea. In order to lead the way Yu created the Cine Poem Club in 1964 introduced the experimental filmmaking trend to students and other industry members through seminars and film screenings. Yu's basic message was to join him in search of new styles of expression that were popular at the time in the West. Third, Yu emphasised the value of freedom of expression. As the next section will show, he was involved with censorship trials after releasing *The Empty Dream*. Yu chose to fight against the regime rather than to give in.

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<sup>177</sup> In his autobiography Yu self-selected four films as his most representative films: *Aimless Bullet*, *Extra Mortal*, *The Martyrs* and *Son of Human Being* (Yu 1995: 213).

### 1) Vanguard of Art Filmmaking: *The Empty Dream* (1965)

Before discussing *The Empty Dream*, it is necessary to mention that Yu had been interested in experimental filmmaking for a long time. Yu began teaching at Dongguk University in 1963, which enabled him to add a level of credibility to his published opinions and to support his living to relieve his financial burden. Working at the university and sharing opinions about new film theories with film scholars apparently brought him to question how to put theory into practice, and thus in 1964 Yu created a Cine Poem Club to answer this query with like-minded people such as literary critic Choi Il-soo and television producer Im Hak-song (Byon 1995: 180). The Cine Poem Club's regular activities consisted of organising seminars and screenings concerning avant-garde and experimental films (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 8 June 1964: 5). Yu talked about the importance of experimenting with new ideas, expressions, form and styles in filmmaking and he produced two short experimental films *Lines* (1964) and *Hand* (1964) to manifest his belief out loud. These films had running times of 13 minutes and 50 seconds respectively.<sup>178</sup> The experiences of working on them later provided him with the basic knowledge necessary in directing a feature-length experimental film *The Empty Dream* (1965), Korea's so-called first avant-garde film (Kim 2003; Kim 2008). Both films demonstrate how much Yu desired to hold creative autonomy.

*The Empty Dream* is a remake of the Japanese pornographic film *Daydream* (a.k.a *Hakujitsumu* 1964), directed by Tetsuji Takechi who is one of the forefathers of the pink film that swept the Japanese cinema in the 1960s. Renowned as one of the first soft pornographies, 'pink films', made and released in Japan, the film explored a male sexual fantasy with the backdrop of a dentist's office and showcased a variety of sexual activities including rape and torture scenes in dream sequences. *Daydream* became a box office hit in Japan, and was released in the US in the same

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<sup>178</sup> According to *Donga Daily* (9 June 1964: 6), *Lines* was about an orphan in the war looking for humanity in the world restricted by abstract lines. Both films are lost and thus it is impossible to know how 'experimental' these films were.

year, with the addition of newly-shot footage created by American director Joseph Green (Sharp *midnighteye.com* 2001).<sup>179</sup>

Guk Koae-nam of Segi Sangsa, one of the registered producers, saw this film during a business trip to Japan and recognised its commerciality and high-grossing box office potential. At the time, as has been mentioned briefly above, official cultural exchange between Korea and Japan was banned, and thus importing and releasing Japanese films in Korea was impossible. Knowing that the original Japanese film would not be released in Korea, Guk bought the remake right of this film. On returning to Korea, Guk talked to Yu about this project. Guk seemed to have believed that Yu's reputation as an art filmmaker would help complete this potentially problematic film project and enable it to pass censorship with little problem (Yu and Cho *Oral History of Korean Arts*).

At the time, Korean filmmakers worked on many Japanese film remakes. Some such as *The Empty Dream* were official remakes that went through buying copyright of a film, and the rest were simply plagiarism cases, taking part or all of the storylines from Japanese films. Most plagiarism cases occurred at the level of the screenwriters, who could read Japanese film magazines such as *Kinema Junpō* that published original scripts of Japanese films. To make a joke out of this situation, film critic Lee Myeong-won nominated two requirements for a screenwriter: 1) knowing the Japanese Language; and 2) having good eye-sight (*Silver Screen* August 1965). Figure 7-2 describes the shameful portrayal of a Korean screenwriter working at the time. In the picture a screenwriter is busy working with a pen, scissors, glue and a book of Japanese screenplays.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> For more information, see Jasper Sharp's *Tetsuji Takechi: Erotic Nightmares* (2001) and *Review: Daydream* (2001) published at *midnighteye.com*, website specialising in Japanese cinema (accessed on 1 December 2009).

<sup>180</sup> Though there were respectable screenwriters known for their original works such as Han Wu-jeong (*Marines Who Never Returned*), Kim Ji-heon (*Late Autumn*) and Baek Gyeol (*Homebound*), they were a minority. The lack of professionalism amongst screenwriters obviously became a chronic problem for the production industry. The need to raise awareness amongst young screenwriters was often raised within the film community. This interesting history of remakes of Japanese films by Korea's film industry needs further research.



Figure 7-2. This Is How A Screenwriter Works (*Silver Screen* August 1965: 58)

However, given the fact that this strategy could only exist with consent from producers and directors, this widespread industry practice simply suggests there was poor awareness of copyright. The MPI also showed no intention of dealing with this issue.

The pervasiveness of illegal remakes of Japanese films was regarded by the media as shameful, because copying other films without any process of creative adaptation discouraged Korea's young talent to be creative (*Yeonghwa Segye* July 1963: 50; *Silver Screen* January 1965: 55-57 and 132; *Silver Screen* August 1965: 58; *Yeonghwa Yesul* January 1966: 107). Conscientious industry people such as film critic Lee Young-il, screenwriters Oh Young-jin and director Yu Hyun-mok also shared their concern about the ongoing practice of plagiarising Japanese films and how it lowered quality of Korean films. Oh criticised 'some' registered producers who exploited the remake of popular Japanese films only to make quick profits as a major reason behind plagiarism (*Silver Screen* January 1965: 57).

Yu refused to produce a replica of the original film, and transformed *The Empty Dream* into an experimental film. According to Yu, it was to 'save his face' (Yu and Cho *Oral History of Korean Arts*). 'Save his face' probably was related to Yu's conscientiousness as Korea's top arthouse filmmaker. Yu even edited the film himself in order to realise what he envisaged during the shooting on screen. Jaspere Sharpe, Japanese film scholar, who viewed both the original Japanese film and this Korean remake, evaluates *The Empty Dream* to be quite different from the original:

Though the Korean film adheres to the structure of its model with an almost unerring fidelity, in terms of art direction, cinematography, montage and other related technical aspects, it is a far superior work, reminiscent of early French surrealism or German expressionism (2008:181).

At the start, a short stage play by children appears. Two boys (one boy wearing a beard and walking with a cane, and the other wearing a beret) dance with and chase a girl in a white dress on stage, implying what is happening in the film. Straight after this scene, come montage sequences for about four minutes, juxtaposing close-ups of mangled and swirling dental equipment (milling/drilling devices and chemicals), screeching machines at iron foundry (drilling/scraping machine), and doctor and patients' eyes and lips, thus, amplifying the nightmarish experiences of going to the dental clinic. This sequence has a noticeable absence of dialogue, suggesting visual images as a dominant technique of the film's narrative development.

The subsequent patients' treatment scenes are also utilised by the short insertion of montage that peeps into the psychology of each patient. For example, a child patient sees a fan, followed by an image of a propeller plane. An older patient, who is advised by the dentist not to drink, sees a cup, and the image of a drinking cup shows up. The main female character sees lighting kits and an image of flowers comes up. The real world images are immediately replaced and presented by those they wanted on screen with accompanying sound effects and music. The female character's treatment scene is again articulately devised montage, suggesting sexual behavior to the eyes of the male character, who is on the other side of the room waiting for his turn. The montage mixes close-ups of her lips, clenching fists, sweaty neck, and moving legs, with a drilling device that is being prepared and being put into her mouth, water dripping into a cup. Throughout the treatment she moans and pants, and after the treatment is done, she rinses her mouth and winces with pain. While watching this sexually-suggestive treatment scene and seeing that the dentist remains rather close to her, the male character becomes interested in her. When he becomes sedated for his rotten tooth to be extracted, he goes to sleep and his dreamy fantasy world begins with his pursuit of a lover, the female patient, and their running away from a villain, the dentist.

Constructing this dream-like world using striking sound effect and cubical set design is reminiscent of the German expressionist art. His experiment with expressionist elements showcased in *Aimless Bullet* was intensified in this film. The sets designed for the dream sequences such as a club and department store were constructed with many slanting poles and asymmetrical vertical/horizontal line alignments, creating a surreal atmosphere similar to that found in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), giving audiences a feeling of instability and weariness. According to the Korean Film Archive website:

It is all but impossible to find a commercial film in Korea, from the 1960s to the present day, that has so boldly faced the problem of form as *The Empty Dream*. In this sense, *The Empty Dream* is a film that marked a rare moment in Korean cinematic history.<sup>181</sup>

As producer Guk anticipated, the completed film passed censorship and its posters appeared in newspapers in early July 1965, attracting audiences to come and watch the film. The picture of the film poster below suggests the obvious sexuality, and the promotional lines in the poster state ‘two bodies and their lusts’.

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<sup>181</sup> In 2006 the Korean Film Archive selected 100 representative Korean films that were released between 1936 and 1996, and published the titles and brief explanations of each film in both Korean and English. *The Empty Dream* was selected as one of them. More information about the film can be found at [http://www.koreafilm.org/feature/100\\_37.asp](http://www.koreafilm.org/feature/100_37.asp) (Accessed 10 Sept 2009)



Figure 7-3. Poster of *The Empty Dream* (*Donga Daily* 3 July 1965: 5)

According to the poster, the film was released on 3 July 1965. Promotion of the film lasted for only about 10 days and there were no follow-up reviews or other related reports published in the media. The next newspaper article to appear about Yu was his arrest in January 1966 by the prosecutors' office in regard to the violation of the anticommunist and obscenity laws, explaining the lack of any media coverage about the film. Yu's arrest was due to two reasons: 1) his public speech prioritising the freedom of expression over the anticommunist policy, which occurred when Yu defended director Lee Man-hee in early 1965; and 2) *The Empty Dream* containing a scene of a 'naked body' (*Chosun Daily* 5 January 1966: 7). *The Empty Dream* was withdrawn from cinemas, and believed to be lost by many, including Yu Hyun-mok, since then. However, the film was accidentally found at the Korean Film Archive in 2004 during the process of identifying its un-catalogued films. After going through a restoration process the film was publicly screened for the 2004 Puchon Fantastic Film Festival.

While the film demonstrated Yu's aesthetics, affirming what he emphasised, that is, film as art occurred intertextually, the censorship cases that occurred outside of the film also serve to demonstrate his attitude and his beliefs toward filmmaking extratextually. Earlier, in March 1965, Yu made a public presentation regarding

freedom of expression, appealing director Lee Man-hee's case to the art community. Yu read a paper titled *Freedom on the Silver Screen (Eunmak-ui Jayu)* at the public seminar held by an organisation called International Conference For Cultural Freedom (Segye Munhwa Jayu Hoeui), supporting freedom of expression. Yu proclaimed that Korea's national policy (*guksi*) was freedom, not anticommunism, and that an artist should be free from any regulatory policy in pursuing his artistry (*Kyeonghyang Daily* 24 Marc 1965: 5). Considering Yu's censorship experience with *Aimless Bullet*, it is understandable why Yu was vocal for Lee's case. Nonetheless, this strong protest against the government, which tried to make a scapegoat out of Lee Man-hee to rein other artists under its control as explained in chapter 6, triggered the prosecutor's office immediately to start a similar investigation on director Yu. Choi Dae-hyon, who was infamous for his hard-line anticommunist orientation and political ideology, was put in charge of the case, interrogating Yu and other film industry people in order to find Yu's hidden agenda.

The release of *The Empty Dream* with 'obscene scenes' provided the prosecutor's office with an optimal excuse for indicting Yu for violating both the anticommunist and obscenity laws. Though the film showed only a glimpse of the back of the actress wearing a skin-coloured body stocking, this particular scene gave enough reason for the prosecutor's office to take action to charge Yu. The evidence they had were a still picture of a 'naked' lady and scrap print parts that had been cut during editing. This case symbolised the government's retaliation toward outspoken views concerning freedom of expression. Yu was simply another scapegoat for the government.

Nonetheless, Yu's crime, if there were any, was his overt advocacy for freedom of expression, which the Korean Constitution guaranteed for each and every citizen, and thus it became obvious that it was impossible to indict Yu for the first charge. Realising this, the prosecutor's office pursued Yu's indictment more fiercely with the second charge, trying to prove that Yu directed a pornographic film. Yu defended himself by stating that the evidence provided by the prosecutor's office was invalid because the problematic part of showing a full frontal nudity of the actress was cut out of the completed film and the actress was in fact wearing a skin-coloured

full body stocking.<sup>182</sup> The trial lasted for more than 18 months, exhausting Yu's physical and mental capacity. In the end, the court dropped the first charge (the Anticommunist Law) and fined him a total of 30,000 won for the second charge. Unsatisfied with the result, Yu appealed to the court again for the second charge and received the suspension of its indictment (Yu and Cho *Oral History of Korean Arts*).

The trial experiences made his spirit weakened, and his energy and money gone. However, with the closure of these charges, Yu became known as a director who survived two major censorship issues without compromising his artistic loyalty. Yu's fighting spirit against censorship was respected, and his opinions were more valued and shared in articles of newspapers and magazines. Just as he used to do, Yu was again often invited to public seminars organised by the KMPPA and the MPI to talk about the industry's current issues. But as will be seen below, Yu was slowly preparing himself to move away from the PRS to free himself from a stressful and regulatory working environment.

### **3. Beyond the PRS**

After trials were over, Yu made a couple of divergent moves to advance his career, experiencing transition in life. Some of them complied with his previous direction of pursuing film art, but others followed government and market rules. Yu developed multiple strategies to sustain his position while liberating himself from the limiting production environment. His established auteurship played a critical role in implementing his new strategies.

First, Yu managed to sustain his auteurship for an extended period, thanks to the government's film policy of supporting the literary adaptation genre through the Import Licence Reward System (ILRS) and the PRS that lived on the import licences (See chapters 1 and 2). In the midst of political and commercial demands that forced him to bend his artistry, cinematic vision and themes, Yu found a pathway to continue making films of his own style thanks to the government's support of literary

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<sup>182</sup> According to Yu, producer Guk was a womaniser and has filmed nudity of actress Park Su-jeong alone before shooting of the problematic scene with an excuse of a camera test. When Park was brought into the trial as a witness, she confessed that she was naked before the camera. Despite the fact that this incident occurred without the knowledge of Yu, her testimony worked against Yu (Yu and Cho *Oral History of Korean Arts*). After this incident, Park retired from the film industry.

films as art films. As mentioned previously in chapter 4, when producing a literary film, producers aimed at gaining a lucrative import licence attached to the MPI accredited award winning films, not the box office profit. Yu understood how the system worked and where his standing was:

... Thanks to that [an import licence] I could make art films ... it was the time of making literary films only to get the import licence even if the completed film ended up staying in storage. Hence, good films were produced a lot though not all of them won awards (Yu and Cho *Oral History of Korean Arts*).<sup>183</sup>

While registered producers estimated Yu's value as a commercial director to be low, they knew Yu's reputation as an award-winning filmmaker, which would bring them import licences. Yu's award winning films produced during this time included *The Guests of the Last Train* (1967), and *Descendants of Cain* (1968). His thematic pursuit of existentialism still continued and his authorial signature of exploring social critique and the human condition was easily noticed. For example, *The Guests of the Last Train* shows characters wandering around the city until the curfew begins, and taking the last train back home. While the film was mostly considered as a modernist film exploring the impact of urbanisation on people, as was similarly found in director Kim Su-yong's *Mist* discussed in chapter 4, Yu embedded social criticism in it: By showing that their daily routine is set by the mandated curfew, Yu implied that they live a life of no exit, being suffocated by the authoritarian regime. In an ironic way the MPI was helping Yu make this type of film and sustain his auteur position throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Second, Yu began directing multiple genre films including anticommunist films, comedies and horror films for survival. They included: anti-communist films – *I Want to Be Human* (1969) and *Nightmare* (1968); comedies – *The Three Hen-pecked Generations* (1967) and *I will Give You Everything* (1968); and Horror films – *A Regret* (1967), and *Grudge* (1968). Film critic Lee Young-jin (1999) observes

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<sup>183</sup> *Son of A Man* (1980) was a literary film exploring the meaning of religion and a man's quest for redemption. The box office outcome of the film was minimal, but the film received the best picture award from the # 19<sup>th</sup> Grand Bell Award. The production company Hapdong recouped the loss thanks to the import license it received.

that this mixture in Yu's filmography is a signifier of the time, which hardly allowed a filmmaker to be an auteur, and yet suggests that it shows Yu's attempt to capture multiple sides of Korean society in diverse genre formats. While agreeing with his notion of the age of zilch auteurs as a result of the government and the PRS intervention, it is hard to believe that Yu was inspired to make different genre films as a means to project society. In his own words, when referring to anticommunist filmmaking, Yu said 'I loathed making such a silly drama' (Kim 2008: 78). Yu's 'genre expansion/experimentation' was not by his choice. It was a time for survival and a little compromise was necessary even if he was displeased about it.<sup>184</sup> Simply put, Yu decided to collaborate with the government for survival and played his part in keeping the film industry under the state's heavy hand throughout the 1970s.

Third, as a result, his next move was to move away from the PRS. Yu began taking pleasure in making amateur films as a way of seeking freedom – feeling free from external intervention (the government and the PRS). Yu was exposed to amateur filmmaking during his trip to visit studios in Europe in 1969 and came back to Korea with a Bolex camera purchased in Switzerland (Yu 1995: 99). Yu began talking to friends and industry people about this new film movement. In 1970 Yu established the Korea Amateur Filmmakers Association (KAMA) with film critic Byon In-sik, cinematographer Jeong Il-song and over 80 other like-minded industry people in order to spread this movement in Korea.<sup>185</sup> The news of Yu's involvement with amateur filmmaking spread out quickly and raised a question among industry people as to whether Yu would end his directorial career or not (*Yenye Japji* October 1970: 33).

In 1972 Yu moved further away from the PRS by establishing a cultural film production company, Yu Production. Contrasted to other directors such as Shin Sang-ok and Lee Man-hee who were still struggling to survive within the PRS, Yu made himself busy outside the PRS while producing cultural films. The number of Yu's feature film directions naturally decreased to less than one film a year: during

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<sup>184</sup> Yu's financial crisis contributed to his decision to make these other films. In 1966 Yu was still broke due to the box office failure of *The Martyrs*, which he produced through *daemyeong*, and to make things worse his house was burned down by an accident caused by a tenant, leaving him little choice of refusing any projects offered to him.

<sup>185</sup> The KAMA is still in operation, contributing to further advance Korea's filmmaking culture.

the 1970s Yu directed a total of seven films. As a producer working for money, Yu produced promotional films for the government and private enterprise, catered to the clients' requests and put his artistic views aside (Yu and Cho *Oral History of Korean Arts*). The government, which was busy with promoting policies and national movements such as the rural development campaign (a.k.a. Saemaeul Movement), was the biggest client for Yu Production.<sup>186</sup> The government might have expected high quality cultural films from Yu in relation to his established reputation as an arthouse director. While it may also be Yu's collaboration with the government, he utilised this business opportunity to support and connect with young artists. Besides the normal business of producing cultural films, Yu provided networking and money-making opportunities to other directors. By opening a door for anyone to walk in, letting him discuss matters and drink with him, as critic Byon In-sik states in an interview conducted in 2005, Yu still kept and spread his belief in film as an art and provided essential inspiration to young filmmakers' groups such as Visual Generation (*Youngsang Sidae*) in the 1970s, upgrading his image as an auteur to that of a mentor.

#### **4. Conclusion: Auteurship As Privilege**

Under the Park regime directors were expected to follow the regime's way, not their own way. A director had to appear subservient to secure his artistic integrity while maintaining a degree of perseverance in dealing with the authorities. This notion is equally applied to director Yu Hyun-mok, who tried hard to liberate himself from the PRS in a way that was characterised by the simultaneous exclusion of artistic freedom and overriding concerns about commerciality.

Yu's career moves in the 1960s show how difficult it was for an auteur to sustain his position. Yu believed in art filmmaking, and tried to act as if he were free in a system that was not free. Compared to other peer directors such as Shin Sang-ok, Yu was less bound by propaganda and commerciality. Challenged by censorship, as director Lee Man-hee was, Yu fought against it. Yu's unyielding faith in art cinema

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<sup>186</sup> In 1973 the government established a new award category for the best cultural film in the Grand Bell Award in order to encourage production of cultural films. Yu Production received the best cultural film awards for 1975 and 1976, with films *Dangerous Happiness* and *Deprived Desire* respectively.

was the base of his authorship that enabled him to go through these external pressures. Yu truly believed in making art, and in the process he developed a distinctive film style, earning him status as an auteur. Even though he was shackled by the PRS and censorship, Yu always kept his beliefs on film art, advocating creative autonomy and freedom of expression at every chance – in front of students, in the public eye on stage or in the newspaper. Yu made films based on his faith, not based on other variables such as box office takings, commercial interests and government's demand. Yu wanted to be unrestrained in his mind. Yu made films because he believed in them, not because the films would be screened. He envisaged his being free of the system.

The aesthetics in his films and his battle against censorship affirmed that Yu lived by his principles. A mixture of realist, experimental and modernist film styles, and themes questioning mortality, solitude, and religious beliefs became his trademark style, proving that auteurs could exist in Korea's restraining production system of the PRS. Yu used his auteur status as a privilege. Yu decided to move away from the PRS rather than struggle to survive within the stressful PRS environment, because he could do it. Not many directors had the luxury of moving into a different area as Yu did. Yu could make this transition largely thanks to his reputation as an auteur and support from his followers that he had established over the years. In doing so, Yu's career as a feature filmmaker declined and after the ILRS was abolished in 1981 he made only two more films: *Broken Reed* (1984) and *Mom, the Star and the Sea Anemone* (1994). Nonetheless, Yu is still respected and honoured by industry people as a 'true' auteur in Korea's film history for his long lasting dedication to art filmmaking and for his surviving the difficult times.

## **Conclusion. Cinema of Perseverance**

The initial idea behind this project was to enhance understanding of Korea's cinematic history by investigating previously unrecognised connections between the method of operation of the Park Chung Hee's authoritarian government in the 1960s and its impact on films, producers and directors. It is known that Park's military, anticommunist government controlled all political, social and industrial activities. For the film industry this heavy-handed approach limited the creativity of producers and directors, who formed the backbone of the cultural industry. Under this regime, filmmakers' artistic impulses were guided by strict censorship regulations that ultimately led to the industry's downturn at the end of the 1960s. During the subsequent 'dark age' in the 1970s, local hostess films (soft pornography) were produced as a strategy to compete against Hollywood and Hong Kong martial arts films. Today, film censorship is illegal, and the current civilian government rarely rules over the film industry as military governments once did.

Despite these difficult circumstances in the 1960s, the Korean cinema experienced market expansion and significant development, which was supported by growing audience numbers, the building of new cinemas and a rise in the number of domestic productions. The relationship between the State and the fostering (or otherwise) of local film industry is something that seems to have been present in South Korea since then, but notably absent in many other 'Asian' nations who have not seen fit to protect their industries in this way (Lee 2005). Film policy guided the industry through this industrialisation process. In turn, a so-called industrialisation craze drove producers, on the one hand, to scramble for money-making opportunities, thus prioritising profitability. Directors, on the other hand, were trying to highlight new aestheticism in their work whilst restricted by film policy or commerciality. This thesis has investigated and analysed these elements, or what could be termed 'cinema of perseverance', which bound these players together.

With this in mind, this thesis has examined the peak of the so-called golden age of Korean cinema in the 1960s and has investigated how the elements of policy, production, genre and direction have been interrelated. It has analysed the development of film policy and its subsequent impact on the industry through rare government archive documents, popular and trade press articles, and industry

interviews. It has explicated how the industry operated in the 1960s, that is, how it reached an apex and a low point all within the same decade. In doing so, the thesis has offered a deeper understanding of the golden age, which began its rise in the late 1950s, by focusing on Korea's cinema of perseverance, which helped each industry player manoeuvre through this uncertain and turbulent period.

The thesis relies on a variety of materials: interviews, newspaper and film magazine articles, archival documents, books and dissertations. However, a major impetus for the views developed has come from the extensive interviews, discussions carried out over an extended period with significant figures in the film industry (See Appendix A). This thesis points to four main arguments. First, as chapter 1 demonstrates, the Park regime used film as a propaganda tool to systematise and to accelerate the industry's growth and development. It built the National Film Production Centre (NFPC) and transformed the private film industry into a factory that generated propaganda materials throughout the year. In doing so, this film factory legitimised the new military government's sovereignty and stabilised its political leadership. Here, the Motion Picture Law (MPL) facilitated the Ministry of Public Information's control over the industry by enforcing three things: 1) the Producer Registration System (PRS); 2) import control mechanisms; and 3) censorship. All three measures were used by the Ministry of Public Information (MPI) as a 'carrot and stick' incentive system for filmmakers. Throughout the 1960s while the government controlled all sectors of society, the MPI, Korean Motion Pictures Producers Association (KMPPA) and Motion Pictures Association of Korea (MPAK), as would be expected, constantly negotiated with the government regarding industrial issues such as the PRS and day-to-day operation of the film industry.

Second, as chapter 2 shows, the PRS adapted the assembly line approach to filmmaking from the Hollywood studio system as its core aim in the industrialisation process, resulting in an oligopoly that controlled key import, export and production aspects of the business. As members of the PRS, producers gained direct and privileged access to funding and thus potential prosperity. It is no wonder then that all producers tried everything possible to become formally registered and to maintain this privileged status. Here, increasing productivity and export capacity were among the government's primary goals for the industry. Simply put, registered producers

were the biggest beneficiaries of the 1960s golden age because of their connections with the government. They employed both legal and illegal production, import and export practices. Studying their business activities helps to understand how influential the PRS was at the time, and how this oligopoly of producers wielded influence over the industry.

Third, chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate the initiation of new types of genre, especially the anticommunist and literary genres, that resulted from a changing policy framework, which dictated changes for subsequent productions. The anticommunist genre, which was the government's overt vehicle for disseminating propaganda, became a 'super genre' that crossed between conventional genre boundaries. Almost any film containing coherent anticommunist ideology pleased the government beyond expectations. By comparison, the literary genre became the government's covert instrument for disseminating propaganda. Films in this category encouraged directors to explore narrative themes and visual styles that represented the nation's cultural richness and distinctive local traditions. The government, producers and directors collaborated to increase the number of these particular films, resulting in the unexpected birth of a local art house cinema. Ironically, the sustained development of the anticommunist and literary genres was due to the government's policy support rather than any rapport that the genre had with audiences and their tastes.

Fourth, through chapters 5, 6 and 7 it has been shown how individual directors developed strategies for coping with the challenges brought about by strict censorship and demands from registered producers. This thesis has used the case studies of directors Shin Sang-ok, Lee Man-hee and Yu Hyun-mok to illustrate how representative directors overcame these obstacles and safeguarded their artistry and cinematic visions. In order to advance his career, Shin maintained friendly relations with the political power. Lee used his ingenuity by employing anticommunist filmmaking as a bargaining chip to further his career. Yu followed an entirely different path by keeping the concept of auteurship alive in Korea, showing an unbending faith in art filmmaking. He actively adapted the post-war philosophies in the West such as Italian Neo Realism, German expressionism and existentialism to his films, and thus showcased that the development of Korea's cinema was tied in with that of world cinema. Despite these diverse strategies, a director living under

the ever-changing political and commercial environment had to be flexible in order to overcome the government's harsh approach to the film industry.

Through an investigation of these major players and their activities, it has been shown how each persevered and achieved his own agendas for survival and success. For the government, film was a primary tool for propaganda and the film industry was a factory for producing this propaganda. For producers, maintaining their place in the oligopoly and ensuring the smooth running of their business was a priority. For directors, there were multiple ways of surviving, especially by making films without losing their creativity and sanity. Each transformed, and was transformed by, divergent quality standards in Korea's 1960s cinema depending on the aims of each major player as well as to the genre of films made at the time.

### **Cinema of 'Qualities',<sup>187</sup>**

The case studies presented in this thesis illustrate how the definition of quality kept changing as a result of the government's policy initiatives, and how producers and directors subsequently struggled to hit these moving targets of quality. Targets were often missed or repositioned by producers, directors and their films – particularly when gaps existed between the standards set by the government and the 'quality' touchstones pursued by each producer and director. Under duress and as an outcome of their perseverance these players changed the direction of quality standards by negotiating Korea's political terrain.

The Park government developed and enforced two distinct measures of quality standards, which served as a guiding light for its national agenda. One concerned the advancement of specific propaganda narratives and the other was the development of the film industry in relation to Korea's overall industrialisation process. The MPL, through the creation and enforcement of censorship regulations, authoritatively shaped notions of quality or set quality targets in these two contexts. As a result, the regime marginalised visual style and auteur aesthetics because in its view these stylistic concerns contributed little to the overall aims of producing

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<sup>187</sup> Here, the term 'quality' is used differently from what is described in Thompson and Bordwell's discussion of a 'cinema of quality' (2003: 375). The cinema of quality referred to romantic period costume dramas, which is largely based on the French literary adaptations occurred between the mid-to-late 1940s and early 1950s.

message films and increasing the size of the industry. Instead, the government prioritised and thus supported the production of certain kinds of film narratives through generous benefits to a cartel that met these needs. For example, while the literary genre is mostly perceived by critics as Korea's art films, the government supported this genre because of its perception of the genre as a form of cultural propaganda that promoted nationalism and traditionalism.

The government's second measure of quality was how well the film industry both industrialised and contributed to the industrialisation of society. The government's creation of the Producer Registration System (PRS) again equated quality with quantity and scale. While tied to the growth and development of Korea's larger economic and trade framework, the PRS measured the quality in terms of the number of local productions and exported national films. As the backbone of national film policy, the PRS remained in place for over two decades, forcing the industry to maintain these standards. All in all, for the government size and type of message equaled quality.

For registered producers, quality meant targets by which their businesses contributed to the oligopoly. If business was good, then their quality of life was good. Quality of life meant generating disposable income, which they then used to maintain a life style more lavish than the average citizen. The 'quality' of a registered producer's business was determined in two related ways: 1) by meeting registration requirements (e.g. equipment and human resource minimums); and 2) by receiving import licences, which was a key vehicle for generating profit because of the healthy box office revenues associated with Hollywood films. Since being a registered producer, that is, being part of the production cartel, was not a lifetime membership, each and every registered producer scrambled to maximise profits within their active registration period. Hence, nearly all registered producers took advantage of the system in illegal ways (*daemyeong* and faking export/co-production results). As a result, Korea's production system was overburdened by this cartel of producers who did whatever they could to gain highly-prized licences to import foreign – primarily Hollywood – films.

Directors attempted to construct and/or adhere to at least three overlapping standards of quality, which they measured by production values (scale), commerciality and art house aesthetics. While aiming for the standards and the

preferential genres set by the military government, directors remained under constant pressure from registered producers, audiences, and censorship regulations. Despite these struggles, directors such as Shin Sang-ok, Lee Man-hee and Yu Hyun-mok found different ways to practise their craft and indulge their filmmaking passions.

Lee Man-hee, who is mostly known as a master of war films, directed large-scale commercial films, such as *Marines Who Never Returned* (1963), with unprecedented support from the military in addition to private funding. The anticommunist war films that Lee made satisfied the government's deep desire for propaganda narratives, while simultaneously enabling him to explore themes of the human condition. In the early 1960s, the government initially looked the other way when Lee's blockbuster war films contained issues of the human condition, however, it wasn't long before his portrayal of gritty unpleasant views of society got him into trouble in spite of foregrounding anticommunist ideology in his films. In 1965, Lee's film *Seven Female POWs* was regarded as violating the national anticommunist law and he was sentenced to jail. Lee's pursuit of his own quality standards had upset the balance between the government's expectations for anticommunist genre films and a director's personal standards. It is worth mentioning that Lee's court case was used with 'chilling effect' to scare other filmmakers from straying away from the core themes sanctioned by the national film policy.

Around the same time, Yu Hyun-mok had established himself as an art house filmmaker who made government-friendly literary genre films while also pursuing different quality standards from the ones suggested by national film policy, that is, censorship regulations. Yu's contribution to literary genre films shines brightly in Korea's cinematic history because of his relentless passion for protecting freedom of expression. When pressured by the system to bend his beliefs and wholly embrace mainstream propaganda filmmaking – particularly after his unsavoury censorship experience with *The Empty Dream* (1965) – Yu liberated himself by making non-commercial experimental films (and later amateur and documentary films in the early 1970s), which had little chance of receiving a Grand Bell Award, and thus official recognition and support from the government. By doing so, he illustrated a loyalty to developing new visual aesthetic qualities at the risk of damaging his reputation among registered producers and other opportunities for directing. Ironically, Yu was able to become an auteur of literary films because of the Import

Licence Reward System (ILRS), which rewarded the production of literary films. Hence, although they suffered for their efforts, both Lee and Yu modified the position of quality standards in the industry, showing that there were alternatives to the standards set by the authoritarian regime.

Finally Shin Sang-ok's case is important because of the ways that he simultaneously developed quality standards as both a producer and a director. As a producer, he ensured the smooth running of his business by closely meeting PRS and other government requirements, which were only possible through a combination of legal and illegal means. As a result, his productivity successfully enabled him to raise his company, Shin Film, to the top of Korea's production cartel. As a director, he also met the narrative quality standards that were set by the government in terms of propaganda genre films by making anticommunist war and literary films. Shin increased the production values and commerciality of his films by engaging in international co-productions with Shaw Brothers in Hong Kong, such as *The Last Woman of Shang* (1965). He then used these achievements to generate private and public funding to build state-of-the-art studio facilities, which in turn, enabled him to make films in all other genre categories too. Shin's complex case ultimately shows how one of the most important filmmakers in this period created synergy between cinematic, industrial and policy standards. Yet, his case also reveals how a powerful production company failed in the end because it was too ambitious about maintaining the high level of productivity that the government expected. It was also too large and fixed in its ways to meet the changing target of standards that the government enacted with the coming of television in the late 1960s.

By pursuing multiple standards of quality, the government, producers and directors inadvertently accelerated the industry's growth to the point at which the golden age reached a peak. Yet, the industry also experienced a significant down side, which was generated by the asynchronous actions of each of these industry players. For example, the government's narrow focus on increasing production and distribution statistics caused an overflow of local films in the local market. There simply were not enough cinemas and alternative screening venues to accommodate all films that the registered producers were required to make. As a result, the delicate relationships between film policy, registered producers and directors became

overburdened, causing the golden age to tarnish and become a dark age throughout the 1970s.

Ultimately, the government's highly-focused pursuit of propaganda as the pinnacle of quality, mixed with its strict censorship regulations, caused the overall decline in narrative and aesthetic quality. Censorship blocked all content suspected of presenting anti-social and anti-government ideology in a negative light, thus restricting creativity, or at least forcing filmmakers to develop highly-creative and covert solutions for making the types of ideological films that the government desired. The inclusion of criminal laws (anticommunist and obscenity laws) in the mid-1960s as part of censorship investigations demonstrated the government's draconian and harsh approach to local production. Apart from the regime's continual amendments of the MPL, which only strengthened censorship regulations, fear of prosecution for violating national laws forced some directors to develop a style of self-censorship. This in turn inspired new standards for 'quality' that were somewhat elusive, and difficult to document in this study because no one making films in the 1960s was comfortable discussing or thinking about their near-complete surrender to the regime.

This study has explored the key people and elements that significantly impacted on the growth and development of Korean cinema in the 1960s. Given time and resource limitations, it was not possible to encompass the impact of these issues on the so-called dark age of Korean cinema, which emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet it is important to note that the industry's development continued even in this dark age. Further research on the concept of the cinema of perseverance within the Korean cinema during this dark age would be a valuable area of study, which will enable us to understand the continuum of the historiography of modern Korean cinema from the past up to present.

## Appendix A: List of Interviews

Interviews and discussions were conducted in person using an audiorecorder. Materials generated from the project are and subsequently transcribed, and maintained in secure storage. The project was subject to UNSW Ethics Clearance procedures and approved by the relevant Ethics Committee.

Name	Title/Position	Interview Date	Location	Discussion/Topics
Ahn Cheol-hyeon	Director	October 2005	Seoul	Production/market environment (immediate post-colonial era: 1945-1960)
Baek Gyeol	Screenwriter	October 2005	Busan/ Seoul	Working with director Lee Man-hee, the 1960s production environment
Byon In-sik	Film critic/ scholar.	October 2004	Seoul	The 1960s/1970s production environment
Cha Yun	Former MPEA representative in Korea	October 2005	Seoul	Historical interactions occurred between Korean cinema and the MPEA
Jang Gyeong-ik	Distribution manager at Megabox multiplex	October 2004	Seoul	Contribution of the multiplex to the rise of Korean cinema
Jang Gyeong-ik	Distribution manager at Megabox multiplex	October 2005	Seoul	Current exhibition market situation
Hwang Nam	Actor/ Producer	October 2005	Seoul	Working at Shin Film as a contracted producer
Im Won-sik	Director	October 2005	Busan	Production/market environment (Korea/HK co-production in the 1960s)
Im Kwon-taek	Director	October 2004	Busan	Production/market environment (working under the anticommunist regime)
Kim In-gi	Producer	September 2005	Seoul	Working as an independent producer in the 1960s
Kim Ji-heon	Screenwriter	October 2005	Seoul	Working with director Lee Man-hee, working under the anticommunist regime
Kim Dong-ho	PIFF director	October 2005	Seoul	Experiences as a policy officer in the 1980s

Kim Hyae-joon	Former secretary-general of KOFIC	October 2004	Seoul	Historical insights to understand Korean cinema of the 1960s and the present, role of film policy
Kim Hyae-joon	Former secretary-general of KOFIC	October 2005	Seoul	New Korean cinema and its obstacles
Kim Mee-hyeon	KOFIC researcher	October 2004	Seoul	Historical insight to understand Korean cinema from the colonial period to the present, importance of policy
Kim Mee-hyeon	KOFIC researcher	October 2005	Seoul	Market situation in the 1960s Korean cinema
Kim Hyeon-jung	KOFIC researcher	October 2004	Seoul	Historical insights to understand Korean cinema
Kim Hyeon-jung	KOFIC researcher	October 2005	Seoul	Changing market conditions in contemporary Korean cinema
Kim Tae-hoon	Policy officer the Ministry of Culture and Tourism	October 2004	Seoul	Impact of film policy on Korean cinema
Kim Soyoung	Film critic/scholar	October 2004	Seoul	Overview of Korean cinema from the colonial period
Gwak Jeong-hwan	President of Seoul Cinema Complex	October 2004	Seoul	Living as a registered producer in the 1960s, building an exhibition business since then
Lee Chang-ho	Director	October 2005	Seoul	Working as an assistant director at Shin Film in the 1960s, 1970s film movement
Lee Hyeong-pyo	Director	October 2004	Seoul	Production/market environment, industry cash flow
Lee Hyeong-pyo	Director	October 2005	Seoul	Working with Shin Sang-ok
Park Gwang-su	Director/Director of Busan Film Commission	October 2004	Busan	Industry's transformation over the years, 1980s film market
Yi Wu-seok	Former CEO of	October	Seoul	1960s production

	Donga Export Co.	2004	(written correspondence)	environment from the viewpoint of a registered producer
You In-taek	President of Kihoik Sidae production company	October 2004	Seoul	Korean cinema's internationalisation efforts, insight toward the 1960s
Yun Il-bong	Actor	September 2005	Seoul (phone)	1960s Korea-Hong Kong coproductions
Yi Hyoin	Scholar/former president of KOFA	October 2004	Seoul	Aesthetics of the 1960s Korean films
Yu Hyun-mok	Director	October 2004	Busan	Production/market environment of the 1960s Korean cinema, <i>Aimless Bullet</i>

## Appendix B: Selected Filmography

### *Piagol* (Pia-gol 1955)

Production: Baekho Production  
Direction: Lee Kang-cheon  
Script: Kim Jong-hwan  
Cast: No Gyeong-hee, Kim Jin-gyu, Heo Jang-gang

### *Madam Freedom* (Jayu Buin 1956)

Production: Samseong Film Company  
Direction: Han Hyeong-mo  
Script: Kim Seong-Min  
Cast: Park Ahm, Kim Jeong-nim

### *Independence Association and Young Syngman Rhee*

(Doglibhyeobhoe-wa Cheongnyeon Lee Seungman 1959)

Production: Korean Entertainment Association  
Direction: Shin Sang-ok  
Script: Lim Hee-jae, Lee Jeong-seon  
Cast: Kim Jin-gyu, Kim Seung-ho, Choi Eun-hee

### *Aimless Bullet* (Obaltan 1960)

Production: Daehan Film Company  
Direction: Yu Hyun-mok  
Script: Lee Jong-gi  
Cast: Choi Mu-ryong, Kim Jin-gyu

### *Seong Chunhyang* (Chunhyang-jeon 1961)

Production: Shin Film  
Direction: Shin Sang-ok  
Script: Lim Hee-jae  
Cast: Choi Eun-hee, Kim Jin-gyu

### *Evergreen Tree* (Sangnoksu 1961)

Production: Shin Film  
Direction: Shin Sang-ok  
Script: Kim Kang-yun  
Cast: Choi Eun-hee, Shin Young-gyun

### *Marines Who Never Returned* (Dora-oji Anneun Haebyeong 1963)

Production: Daewon Film Company  
Direction: Lee Man-hee  
Script: Jang Guk-jin  
Cast: Choi Mu-ryong, Ku Bong-seo, Jeon Young-sun

### *Rice* (Ssal 1963)

Production: Shin Film

Direction: Shin Sang-ok  
Script: Kim Gang-yun  
Cast: Shin Young-kyun, Choi Eun-hee, Nam Koong Won

*The Red Muffler* (Ppalgan Mahura 1964)

Production: Shin Film  
Direction: Shin Sang-ok  
Script: Kim Kang-Yun  
Cast: Shin Young-kyun, Choi Eun-hee, Choi Mu-ryong

*Last Woman of Shang* (Dalgi 1964)

Production: Shin Film, Shaw Brothers  
Direction: Choe In-hyeon, Feng Yueh  
Script: Kwak Il-Ro, Yueting Wang  
Cast: Shin Young-kyun, Lin Dai

*South and North* (Namgwa Buk 1965)

Production: Geukdong Heungeop  
Direction: Kim Ki-duk  
Script: Han Un-sa  
Cast: Shin Young-kyun, Eom Aeng-ran, Nam Gung-won

*Deaf Samryong* (Beongeorì Samryong 1965)

Production: Shin Film  
Direction: Shin Sang-ok  
Script: Kim Gang-yun  
Cast: Kim Jin-gyu, Choi Eun-hee, Park No-sik

*Seashore Village* (Gaenma-eul 1965)

Production: Daeyang Film Company  
Direction: Kim Su-yong  
Script: Shin Bong-seung  
Cast: Shin Young-kyun, Ko Eun-ah

*The Martyrs* (Sungyoja 1965)

Production: Haptong Film Company  
Direction: Yu Hyun-mok  
Script: Lee Jin-Seob, Kim Kang-Yun  
Cast: Kim Jin-gyu, Nam Gung-won

*The Empty Dream* (Chunmong 1965)

Production: Segi Sangsa  
Direction: Yu Hyun-mok  
Script: Kim Han-il  
Cast: Shin Seong-il, Park Su-jeong

*Seven Female POWs* (Chirin-ui- Yeoporo 1965)

Production: Haptong Film Company  
Direction: Lee Man-hee

Script: Han U-jeong  
Cast: Moon Jeong-sook, Gu Bong-seo, Lee Min-ja

*Soldiers Without Serial Numbers* (Gunbeon-eobneun Yongsu 1966)

Production: Haptong Film Company  
Direction: Lee Man-hee  
Script: Han U-jeong  
Cast: Shin Seong-il, Moon Jeong-sook, Shin Young-gyun

*Full Autumn* (Manchu 1966)

Production: Daeyang Film Company  
Direction: Lee Man-hee  
Script: Kim Ji-heon  
Cast: Shin Seong-il, Moon Jeong-sook

*The Guests of the Last Train* (Makcharo On Sonnimdeul 1967)

Production: Dongyang Film Company  
Direction: Yu Hyun-mok  
Script: Lee Sang-hyeon, Lee Eun-seong  
Cast: Lee Soon-jae, Moon Hee

*Homebound* (Gwiro 1967)

Production: Segi Sangsa  
Direction: Lee Man-hee  
Script: Baek Gyeol  
Cast: Moon Jeong-sook, Kim Jin-gyu

*Confession of An Actress* (Eoneu Yeobaeu-ui Gobaek 1967)

Production: Jeil Film Company  
Direction: Kim Su-yong  
Script: Shin Bong-seung  
Cast: Nam Jeong-rim, Kim Jin-gyu

*Holiday* (Hyuil 1968)

Production: Daehan Yeonhap Film Company  
Direction: Lee Man-hee  
Script: Baek Gyeol  
Cast: Shin Seong-il, Jeon Ji-yeon

*Eunuch* (Naeshi 1968)

Production: Shin Film  
Direction: Shin Sang-ok  
Script: Gwak Il-ro  
Cast: Yoon Jeong-hee, Shin Seong-il, Nam Gung-wo

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Korean Film Database (KMDB): <http://www.kmdb.or.kr/>  
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Media Gaon (Media Portal Service from Korea Press Foundation):  
<http://www.mediagaon.or.kr/>  
Korean History Database: <http://db.history.go.kr/>  
Ministry of Government Legislation: [www.moleg.go.kr](http://www.moleg.go.kr)

**Personal Interviews – See full list in Appendix A**

**Newspapers and Magazines**

*Chosun Daily (Chosun Ilbo)*  
*Donga Daily (Donga Ilbo)*  
*Hanguk Daily (Hanguk Ilbo)*  
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*Seoul Newspaper (Seoul Shinmun)*  
*Yeonghwa Japji (Movie Magazine)*  
*Yeonghwa Segye (Cinema World)*  
*Gukje Yeonghwa (International Film)*  
*Gendae Yeonghwa (Modern Movie)*  
*Shin Yeonghwa (New Films)*  
*Yeonghwa Yesul (Film Art)*  
*Yeonghwa TV Yesul (Film TV Art)*  
*Yeonghwa Munhwa Yeongu (Film Culture Studies)*  
*Jugan Hanguk (Weekly Korea)*  
*Wolgan Yeonghwa (Monthly Film)*  
*Wolgan Hanguk (Weekly Korea)*  
*Wolgan Yeonye (Weekly Entertainment)*  
*Yeonye Japji (Entertainment Magazine)*  
*Silver Screen (Silver Screen)*  
*Shin Dong-a (Shing Donga)*  
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