

The Status of Historical Drama Films in South Korea in the 1960s: *The Relevance between the Film Industry and Genre Films*

Gilsung LEE

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to reexamine sageuk (historical dramas) that were screened from the late 1950s to the 1960s in regards to the Korean film industry and their reception by the audience. During this time, historical dramas occupied an important position in the film industry and were the leading genre during the peak box office seasons. In an effort to examine the status and the significance of historical films, this paper divides the relevant time period into three phases. The first phase, the latter half of the 1950s, was a time when historical films were being established as big pictures. The second phase, the first half of the 1960s, established the custom of screening these big-budget historical films during the peak box office seasons around major holidays. The Third phase was the latter half of the 1960s, during which the popularity of historical dramas declined due to the industrial crisis and the rise of a younger audience. This article attempts to expand the scope of the discourse on historical dramas, which has been focused on the text analysis and their socio-historical significance, and examine the perspective of the film industry and reception of the films at the time. Based on this discussion, I aim to take a multifaceted look at the study of genre films.

Keywords: historical drama, Chun-Hyang Story, big picture, big-budget spectacles, Seong Chun-hyang, peak box office seasons

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to reexamine *sageuk* (historical dramas) that were screened from the latter half of the 1950s to the 1960s in regards to the Korean film industry and their reception by the audience. During this period, referred to as the heyday of Korean films and the corporatization period of the South Korean (hereafter, Korea/Korean) film industry, historical dramas occupied an important position in the film industry and responded more quickly to the audience's preferences compared to other film genres. Historical films that were created during this time often featured stories that the audience was already familiar with—stories that had been published in books and magazines or performed on stage. Most of the viewers enjoyed the “novelty” of “familiar stories” told through film, as demonstrated by the fact that new techniques and technologies were tested on films based on “Chunhyangjeon” (The Tale of Chunhyang).¹ The viewers wanted to see similar stories reborn in color, as action dramas, and on 70 mm widescreen; film producers tried to reduce the risks of their new attempts by using a popular epic. In addition, at the time, historical dramas were synonymous with big-budget films often described as “spectacles” and “must-sees,” functioning as an important genre that determined the course of the Korean film industry. In the 1960s, in particular, historical films were the yardsticks whose success or failure during the peak box office seasons determined the success or failure of film production companies.

To examine the status and the significance of historical films, this paper divides the relevant time period into three phases. In the first phase, from 1955 to 1956, I will examine the increased production of historical dramas and the rise of historical drama as an important genre. Since the success

1. “The Tale of Chunhyang,” which was a familiar story to the Korean public, was adapted into films in nearly every innovative period in Korea's history of film technologies. The very first sound film produced in Korea told the story of Chunhyang. In 1955, the same story was turned into the highest budget film since Korea's liberation from the Japanese rule, as well as the first color CinemaScope film in 1961 and the first 70 mm Korean film that was screened in 1971. In addition to the “firsts,” film versions of “The Tale of Chunhyang” continued to be made throughout the years, as it was a story Korean viewers loved the most.

of *Chunhyangjeon* (Chun-Hyang Story) in 1955, historical dramas created by experienced directors shifted viewers' interest from other media to film. This genre was also the most responsive to technological changes of the time, which were focused on color and CinemaScope. The second phase concerns the first half of the 1960s when the Korean government forced the corporatization of production companies into major studios, and I will examine the tendency for historical films to be produced as "big picture" (*daejak*) and their increased importance in the film industry. During this period, big-budget historical drama films born out of technological progress in the Korean film industry, combined with peak box office seasons, had a huge impact on the whole industry. The third period of the late 1960s, when problems that arose from the Korean government's stringent control and censorship accumulated and culminated in a serious economic crisis for the film industry. This industrial crisis led to a decline in the production of big-budget historical films. In addition, the rise of younger audience and the change in their preferences also hastened the withdrawal of historical drama from the dominant position it held in the film industry. I will examine the changes in the status of historical dramas in the film industry and the various attempts that were made to overcome this crisis.

As explained above, this paper will scrutinize and analyze the status of historical dramas in a certain period in the Korean film history as well as the changes the genre underwent. This is an attempt to reexamine the genre from the perspective of the Korean industry and the audience's reception, which had been neglected in the discourse that focused on the narrative or social significance of genre films. Before delving into this discussion, it is important to explain the use of the term "historical drama" (*sageuk*). There is a strong sense of "history" in the term historical drama, and while it may be correct to describe films that are set in the Joseon Dynasty as historical dramas, the same term may not be suitable for film adaptations of "The Tale of Chunhyang" and other folk narratives, for which "period drama" (*sidaegeuk*) or "costume drama" may be the more appropriate term. (Oh 2007, 110) Although historical drama and period drama are similar in meaning, the frequency of the terms differed depending on the time period. Since *Chun-Hyang Story* in 1955, there has been a deluge of films

that were set in historical time periods, and different terms were used to describe them. “Period drama” (*sidaegeuk*) was the term that was most often used during this time, which seems to have been borrowed from Japan where dramas were categorized into modern dramas and period dramas. In 1955, when only about 20 Korean films were produced, and even until 1956, when only about 20 out of over 130 films screened in first-run theaters, such as Gukdo Theater, Sudo Theater, and Danseongsa, were Korean films, perhaps there was no need to narrow down the categories further. In addition to period dramas, the term classic historical drama was also used but soon fell out of use. The term that was used most to describe this genre since 1956, when the production and screening of Korean films increased drastically, was “historical drama” (*sageuk*). In the 1960s, most dramas set in historical time periods were classified as historical dramas and were rarely called period dramas. In fact, the term “period drama” was often used to refer to Japanese swordsmen films or other foreign films. This paper asserts that the change from the use of “period drama” to “historical drama” clearly demonstrates the growing tendency in the Korean film industry to produce big-picture films or films set in the Joseon Dynasty from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s. In addition, as this paper focuses on the analysis of the industrial production and the audience reception of big-budget, big-picture films rather than the overall historical drama genre, it is more appropriate to use the term “historical drama.” It is important to note that films such as *Jiok-mun* (The Gate to Hell), *Jinsi huangje-wa mallijangseong* (Qin Shu Huangdi and the Great Wall of China), and *Daepokgun* (Tyrant) were set in foreign countries or ambiguous time periods, were not classified as historical dramas even at the time of screening. However, in terms of the industrial significance of Korean films and the audience reception of the genre of historical dramas, these films were produced, advertised, and consumed with the same purpose and direction as films that were classified as historical dramas at the time. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the abovementioned films will also be discussed as historical dramas.

The Historical Drama Boom in the Latter Half of the 1950s and the Development of Korean Film

At the onset of 1954, the Korean film industry was mired in despair after the war, which “affected the already difficult Korean film industry deeper to a point where production was virtually impossible.”² Yet at the same time, it was anticipating dynamic growth owing to the measure for the exemption of entrance tax for Korean films, which had been passed by the National Assembly the same year. For instance, despite the difficult circumstances, Yeong-jin Oh had hopes for Korean film, supported by the entrance tax exemption policy, an increased number of film professionals, and better equipment (although they were only 16 mm cameras) compared to the time period immediately after Korea’s liberation from the Japanese rule, and the ease of acquiring film (Oh 1954). His hopes did come true not long after, as *Chun-Hyang Story*, which was released in January 1955, became an “unprecedented Korean box office hit,” signaling a green light for the Korean film industry. Regarding the success of this record hit that drew over 180,000 viewers, Yeong-il Lee explained that while “films created after the war could not avoid being tacky and crude due to the low quality of equipment, films, and the incompleteness of the production process,” *Chun-Hyang Story* overcame such problems. (Lee 2004, 243) This movie was a huge shock for the film production industry that numerous articles and essays mentioned the government’s entrance tax exemption measure for Korean films and the success of *Chun-Hyang Story* as the two factors that sparked the growth of the Korean film industry in the second half of the 1950s. In addition, the success of *Chun-Hyang Story* led to a boom of historical drama films. In the same year, plans for the production of *Wangj hodong-gwa nakrang gongju* (Prince Ho-Dong and Princess Nak-rang) were made, and *Jeolm-eun geudeul* (The Youth) and *Mangnanibisa* (Sad Story of a Head Cutter) were produced. In the following year, Chang-geun Jeon’s *Danjong aesa* (The Tragedy of King Danjong, 1956) and Bong-chun Yun’s *Cheonyeo-byeol* (The Virgin Star, 1956) both became successful, and historical drama films gained momentum.

2. *Hankook Ilbo*, August 2, 1954.

The year 1955 could be remembered as the year of *Chun-Hyang Story*, but there was another incident that had a huge impact on the Korean film industry. A Hollywood film produced in CinemaScope was released for the first time in Korea, giving Koreans a taste of the technological progress in Hollywood. Not only such technological lag but also the huge gap between the quality and level of Korean films and American films were issues that the Korean film industry began to recognize since American films began to be imported after Korea's liberation from the Japanese rule.

The biggest problem the Korean film industry faced after liberation was competition with foreign films, which had taken over Korean theaters. The deluge of American films, which accounted for nearly 80 percent of the films screened in Korean theaters, was particularly a huge blow to Korean films. At the time, Korean films were mostly produced on 16 mm and in an environment where there was not enough adequate equipment. As a result, it was no match for the spectacles of Hollywood films, which dominated Korean theaters. During this period, newspapers and magazines often published articles about Hollywood, and one of the frequent topics was technological development, such as technicolor films, CinemaScope, and the emergence of 3D films. These articles at times contained intimidating news about American films, which were already characterized as "spectacles" that "attracted viewers,"³ forecasting that the emergence of "innovative forms" of films, such as CinemaScope and 3D, would "result in boosting its already prominent amusement factor" (Heo 1954).

A couple of Hollywood CinemaScope films, which had been causing much concern in the Korean film industry were finally released in 1955. Gukdo Theater, Sudo Theater, and other first-run theaters were installing the required facilities in anticipation of the releases. Amid high expectations, *The Robe* (1953) and *Knights of the Round Table* (1953) were screened, and the curtains went up for the era of color and widescreen films, mainly centered on foreign films. As if motivated by such developments, Korean films gradually shifted toward becoming big pictures, and this movement was led by historical dramas. In addition, careful attempts began to be made

3. *Jungoe Shinbo*, May 9, 1946.

at films in color and CinemaScope, which had seemed miles away only a few years prior. In 1957, the first Korean color film in 35 mm, *Seonhwa gongju* (The Princess Seon-Hwa), was produced, and the first widescreen (CinemaScope) Korean film *Saengmyeong* (Life) was screened in 1958. Considering that even 35 mm black and white films had not even been the standard in the industry in 1954, Korean film technologies progressed at an astonishing rate within four to five years.

At the time, film critics believed that among the Hollywood films, only the technological aspects, such as color and widescreen, had a huge impact on Korean films, but there was one thing that they neglected. Around this time, the films that were central to American films produced in color and CinemaScope were “epics,” set in a historical period or based on stories in the Bible. There were two sets of distinguishing characteristics in this genre: one, they were set in historical or ancient worlds, and two, they were large-scale films made with new technologies and high production budget (Neale 2000, 85). Biblical films, such as *The Robe*, *Quo Vadis* (1951), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), and *Ben-Hur* (1959), as well as costume dramas set in ancient periods, such as *Helen of Troy* (1956), were filmed in color and widescreen formats. They also relied heavily on big spectacle scenes and dynamic action sequences (Langford 2010, 398). Large-scale sets and exciting action scenes in the films’ climax increased the entertainment value of already “spectacular” American films. Most advertisements for these films emphasized and promoted the words “technicolor” and “CinemaScope.” It became customary for these film advertisements to list the film’s production budget, the scale of the set, and the number of extras. These characteristics, evident in the large number of foreign films in color and CinemaScope that were imported to Korea, had a huge impact on Korean historical drama films, which was increasing in scale and diversifying at the time.

Possibly due to the influence of such foreign films, historical drama films from 1956 to 1957 were promoted with phrases, such as “first” and “big budget.” The advertisement for *The Tragedy of King Danjong* opened the floodgates, promoting the film as a big picture with the largest, sumptuous cast. Other films were described as “a big picture produced with a huge investment” (*Sado seja* [The Tragic Prince], 1956), “an unprecedented, large-

scale spectacle” (*Nongae*, 1956), or “the first Korean technicolor feature film” (*Seonhwa gongju* [The Princess Seon-Hwa], 1957). In addition, the number of cast members, props such as horses and the scale of the sets, and budgets began to be mentioned in advertisements. Moving beyond familiar ancient stories and epics, such as “Chunhyangjeon” or “Shimcheongjeon” (The Tale of Sim Cheong), which were continuously adapted to film, films featuring spectacular action scenes, such as *Pungun-ui gungjeon* (The Palace of Ambition, 1957), began to be produced. However, historical dramas were high-risk films since they required relatively bigger budgets, and as a result the production of historical films came to a halt when a few failed. Meanwhile, melodramas became popular during this time. The success of *Jayu buin* (Madame Freedom) in 1956 ushered in the era of melodramas in 1957 and 1958. In particular, melodramas directed by Sang-ok Shin and Seong-ki Hong became commercial successes and received favorable reviews that were comparable to the reviews for American films.

After a bit of a lull, historical dramas experienced a boom once again with the success of *Kojong hwangje-wa uisa An Junggeun* (King Gojong and Martyr An Jung-Geun) in 1959, which was produced to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the March First Movement. The series of films that followed were centered on Korean independence activists from the relatively recent past, and these films were promoted as big-budget, big-picture films. “Life-sized sets reminiscent of the streets of Jongno in the past and mob scenes involving nearly a thousand extras” were spectacles that were not only “true to historical facts” but also “enough for the audience to experience a thrill” (Oh 2007, 144). These films differed from previous historical dramas, as they were often set in the late Joseon Dynasty and Korea’s colonial period under the Japanese rule. Secondly, these films were much bigger in terms of scale compared to the “spectacles” that previous historical drama films claimed to be. Revolutionary developments in film technology led to people’s interest in realistic reenactments of past events and the ability of the Korean film industry to create spectacles, which drastically expanded the depth and scale of Korean films.⁴ These films were able to be made one after another, as

4. *Dong-A Ilbo*, December 23, 1959.

the process of film production became organized and streamlined with the corporatization of film production companies, which laid the foundation for organized corporate activities in the Korean film industry.

As explained above, historical dramas in the second half of the 1950s was a pioneering genre that ushered in the beginning of the heyday of Korean films. The success of *Chunhyangjeon* signaled the growth of Korean film, and the success of following historical drama films seemed to indicate that the audience still preferred classic narratives from the olden days. However, the success of *Madame Freedom*, supported by a fresh and solid narrative and innovative technologies, disrupted the playing field, and historical dramas competed with such films by becoming higher budget big pictures. In this competitive structure, historical drama directors focused on creating exciting spectacles out of familiar classic narratives, using large-scale sets and dynamic images that were inspired by American films. Then with the growth of the corporatized film industry and the turbulent changes in society in the 1960s, people began to demand more complex narratives and spectacles of bigger scale in historical films.

Historical Dramas as Big Picture Films in the Peak Box Office Seasons in the 1960s

The popularity of films set in the late Joseon Dynasty and colonial period that peaked in 1959 seemed to be a one-off phenomenon. In 1960, the film promotion policy (measure for entrance tax exemption for Korean films) was abolished, and the Korean film industry experienced a lull in their activities, laying low and feeling out the changes. As a result, it seemed as though the big picture boom was dying down. However, the Chung-hee Park military regime implemented the Motion Pictures Act, which enforced involuntary mergers of film studios, and as a result, the Korean film industry came to be run by fewer bigger companies on the surface. While film production companies had been unable to guarantee to produce films continuously due to their poor financial strength in the 1950s, stable production became possible for production companies in the 1960s, supported by relatively strong capital power and

expanded market. Sang-ok Shin's Shin Film, in particular, took the lead in this movement and later became a production company that swayed the course of Korean historical drama films.

Attempts at Filming in Color and Cinemascope

The Princess Seon-Hwa from 1957 was filmed in 35 mm color; and *Life* from 1958, in CinemaScope. Their results, however, were not desirable. "Due to various technological imperfections and difficulties...the dark and murky colors, inadequate lighting, and other technological deficiency were frankly exposed on the screen."⁵ Despite these technical flaws, however, these films had decent the box office results. *The Princess Seon-Hwa* drew over 40,000 viewers and was ranked third on the box office list that year. *Life*, the first Korean film to be filmed in CinemaScope, was directed by Kang-cheon Lee and its box office results were also average. These box office figures show that the audience were delighted with these new technologies. *Life* was the first widescreen film, but the fact that it was not a historical drama and that it was directed by a rising director indicated that big pictures were no longer exclusively produced by experienced directors. In 1957 and 1958, newspaper articles pointed out the inactivity of experienced directors. As mentioned earlier, directors Chang-geun Jeong and Bong-chun Yun returned to the screen in 1959 with films set in the late Joseon Dynasty or colonial Korea. Shin emerged as a big-budget, big-picture director with *Dongniphyeobhoe-wa cheongnyeon I Seungman* (Independence Association and Young Rhee Syngman), and Gang-yun Kim who started his film career as a screenwriter directed *Ireum eopneun byeoldeul* (Nameless Stars), which received favorable reviews. New, rising directors like them gradually became a leading force in historical dramas as well. They were no longer "new directors" but a group of directors who formed the backbone of the Korean film industry.

In 1961, the biggest issue in Korean film was the match between Seong-ki Hong's *Chunhyangjeon* (The Love Story of Chun-hyang) and Sang-ok Shin's *Seong Chun-hyang*. These two historical dramas attracted attention

5. *Seoul Shinmun*, September 15, 1957.

as the first to be filmed in 35 mm, color, and CinemaScope. From the fact that the directors' wives were starring as the main character *Chun-hyang* to the problems with purchasing film and developing color prints, the two films became big issues that were constantly featured in newspapers in 1960. They were both released for the Lunar New Year holidays in 1961, and as we know Sang-ok Shin's *Seong Chun-hyang* rose out of the competition as the winner. It was an unprecedented box office hit that laid the foundation for the corporatization of Shin Film. There are various reasons that determined the success of one and the failure of the other, but Seong-ki Hong's *The Love Story of Chun-hyang* had distinct technical problems: "Although the drive to attempt filming in color and CinemaScope was admirable, the mechanical inferiority is apparent on the screen. The lack of lighting on the set and the use of primary colors failed to produce color nuances, and the camera did not zoom in on the actors, making the audience feel as though they are watching a magic lantern slide show."⁶ This review helps us to speculate about the cause of the film's failure in addition to the criticisms about miscasting and flat directing. On the other hand, *Seong Chun-hyang* was an "unexpected" success that was filmed "in color and in CinemaScope." Supported by a suitable cast, a nice balance between the scenes filmed on-set and on location, and a narrative that emphasized the common people and popular customs with humor, it became a big commercial success. Sang-ok Shin successfully made use of color and CinemaScope technologies and recreated classic characters and events with a modern touch, striking a balance between filming on-set and on location. Through this, he laid a firm foundation for the historical drama genre as commercial films that can sustain the audience's interest for two hours. His success can be better explained in comparison to the failure of Seong-ki Hong's *Emilejong* (Emile), which was filmed in color and CinemaScope and on the largest set in Korean film history at the time in an effort to "wipe out the stain of the defeat of *The Love Story of Chun-hyang*." *Emile* was released amidst much public interest for the scale of the film set, as the first color film developed in Korea, and other issues, but it was a disappointment in many ways. The

6. *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 22, 1961.

general assessment was that the quality of the colors was not up to par, and the storyline and characters lacked a modern touch. The two rounds of competition between Sang-ok Shin and Seong-ki Hong drastically changed the fate of their two rival film production companies, Shin Film and Seonmin yeonghwasa. Big-budget, big-picture historical drama films came to play an important role in the Korean film industry, to the extent of determining the success and collapse of production companies.

Since the success of *Seong Chun-hyang*, Sang-ok Shin ambitiously prepared the production of *Yeonsangun* (Prince Yeonsan) as a two-part film. The two parts of the film were respectively released for the New Year and the Lunar New Year holidays in 1962 and became both a critical and commercial success. It was lauded for “greatly surpassing *Seong Chun-hyang* in terms of color and technology,” and was praised as an entertaining royal tragedy with “meticulous direction and fancy costumes.”⁷ The historical dramas that followed after the success of *Prince Yeonsan*, including *Jang Huibin* (Lady Jang), *Yeoin cheonha* (Women Rule), *Inmon daebi* (Queen Dowager Inmok), *Juyu cheonha* (A Wanderer), *Ganghwa doryeong* (A Reluctant Prince), and *Danjong aesa* (A Sad Story of Danjong) formed a subgenre of historical dramas called the Joseon Dynasty historical dramas, and color and CinemaScope became distinctive characteristics of big-picture historical drama films. From over 80 films produced in 1961, ten were filmed in CinemaScope, most of which were big-picture historical dramas and action films. Starting at this time, big-picture films shot in CinemaScope were planned for screening during the peak box office seasons in order to compensate for the risk of big-budget films. In the first half of the 1960s, when the Korean film industry was becoming corporatized, production companies began to form a general outline of film production that centered on big-budget, big-picture films targeting the holiday seasons—New Year, Lunar New Year, and Chuseok (harvest festival).

7. *Seoul Shinmun*, January 15, 1962.

Coupling of the Peak Box Office Seasons and Big Pictures

Starting in the mid-1950s, phrases such as “special feature” for the Lunar New Year or Chuseok or “Chuseok season” occasionally appeared in film advertisements. Then in the 1960s, this custom of linking the film releases to holidays in newspaper advertisements during the New Year, Lunar New Year, and Chuseok holidays, using expressions such as “a special feature for the New Year” or “a special feature for Chuseok,” became an established tradition. Around 1959, newspapers regularly began to print articles introducing films that were scheduled to be released for certain box office seasons under titles such as “Theaters in Chuseok.”⁸ Some articles described the weeks of New Year, Lunar New Year, August 15 (Liberation Day), and Chuseok holidays as “golden weeks” for the box office, while others named the New Year, Lunar New Year, Chuseok, and Christmas holidays as peak box office seasons. In any event, at least the New Year, Lunar New Year, and Chuseok holidays become established peak box office seasons. Newspaper articles introducing new films mainly consisted of points that the audience should note—descriptions such as big-picture spectacles made by a famous director, names of leading actors and the original author, when necessary. For melodramas, some articles explain that they are for women audience. In this way, the idea of peak box office seasons became an established reality in the late 1950s, and theaters strived to screen money-making films during these seasons. In the 1960s, major production companies whose planning and production capacity were more stable compared to the past began to set plans for the whole year, with a focus on peak box office seasons when they could rake in the most profit.

Since the success of *Seong Chun-hyang* during the Lunar New Year holidays in 1961, film studios concentrated on the production of historical dramas to be screened during the peak box office seasons. This trend intensified after Shin Film achieved huge success with *Prince Yeonsan* for the New Year holiday season in 1962 and *Pokgun Yeonsan* (Tyrant Yeonsan) for the Lunar New Year holidays, and historical dramas in color and CinemaScope became the standard for peak box office seasons until

8. *Chosun Ilbo*, September 16, 1959.

1965. Film companies produced big-picture films, targeting these box office seasons, and their plans for the year centered around these films.

“Abundance of Shin Film’s cinematic tours de force’ ... the films that will go on the screens in 1962 are mostly filmed in CinemaScope.... the five-and-a-half hour-long *Prince Yeonsan* will be followed by *Jang Huibin-ui ilsaeng* (The Life of Lady Jang), *Daesimcheongjeon* (The Story of Sim Cheong), *Mujeong* (Heartlessness), *Kkum* (Dream), *Areumda-un suui* (Beautiful Shroud), *Geompung yeonpung* (Swordsman and Love), and *Bulleodo daedap eomneun ireumi-yeo* (A Sad Cry).... A mix of modern films with urban settings and period films to be planned and produced in the second half of the year....”

“Geukdong’s impressive lineup’ ... led by *Cheonha ilsaek Yang Gwibi* (Yang Kuei-Fei, A Destructive Beauty), followed by *Baram buneun sijeol* (The Windy Days), *Ulmite seon bongseonhwa* (Garden Balsam), *Sinibsawon Mr. Lee* (A New Recruit, Mr. Lee), *Sarang-eun baramdungi* (Love Is Unfaithful), *Geomeun kkonnip jil ttae* (When Black Flowers Fade)....”

“Yeongbae, Full of Big Pictures’.... Aiming to produce big pictures, Jeonguk Yeongbae has produced ... *Im Kkeok-jeong* by Yu Hyun-mok, *Taejo Yi Seong-gye* (Yi Seong-gye, King Taejo), *Samyeongdang*, *Daedajeon* (Great Challenge), *Sarang-gwa mium-ui sewol* (Times of Love and Hatred), *Janhokhage jugyeora* (Kill Brutally), etc. ... which were generally historical dramas. ... [M]odern films will be planned and produced in preparation for the decline of the historical drama boom sometime in the future....”⁹

The above excerpts are from a film magazine’s article on the production plans for major film studios—Shin Film, Geukdong heungeop, and Jeonguk yeongbae. All three production companies placed importance on historical dramas for the peak box office seasons and planned to follow up the aftermath of large-scale historical films: *Prince Yeonsan*; *The Story of Sim Cheong*; *Yang Kuei-Fei: A Destructive Beauty*; *Im Kkeok-jeong*, *Samyeongdang*; etc. with mid-sized historical dramas or popular melodramas. Melodramas, comedies, thrillers,

9. *Yeonghwa segye* (The World of Film), February 1962, 63–65.

and other genres were planned for the remaining time of the year. Many of the historical films were adaptations of popular radio dramas for production companies to play it safe for guaranteed profit. Other films that were scheduled for the year included biographical films—about So-wol Kim and Nan-pa Hong—which were expected to be a trend for the year, as well as swordsmen films and thrillers as experiments for a new trend. Smaller production companies that were not mentioned above planned melodramas and folk tale films rather than historical dramas. In this way, the practice of planning and producing genre films was established in the 1960s, based on the massive corporate growth of production companies, and it was spearheaded by historical dramas, which determined the success or the failure of the film studios.

Starting in 1962, it became more or less official for big-picture historical drama films to be screened in the peak box office seasons, and theaters were fully devoted to screening big-picture historical dramas during the Chuseok holidays, which was the biggest box office season of the year. In 1962, all five Korean films that were screened around Chuseok were historical dramas, including *Qin Shu Huangdi and the Great Wall of China* and *The Story of Sim Cheong* which vied for the audience's attention with splendid sets and huge budgets. A noteworthy fact is that *Ben-Hur* was one of the foreign films that were screened during the New Year and Chuseok holidays in 1962. It was the second film to be screened in 70 mm, following *South Pacific*, the first 70 mm film screened in Korea during the Chuseok season in 1961. Aiming for the Lunar New Year holidays, *Ben-Hur* was released at Daehan Theater on February 1. It became so popular that it remained in theaters until July 25. Its enduring popularity led to encore screenings at the same theater for the Chuseok season, reopening from September 13 to October 8. In total, it was screened for nearly 210 days. The popularity of *Ben-Hur* had a profound impact on big-picture historical films in the years that followed. *Qin Shu Huangdi and the Great Wall of China*, which was released during the Chuseok holidays in the same year, emphasized imposing sets that seemed to have been motivated by *Ben-Hur* although it was nowhere near the same scale. One critic called Jin-kyu Kim, the lead actor in *Qin Shu Huangdi and the Great Wall of China*, “Kim-Hur,” criticizing the relationship between the characters Jin-kyu Kim and his rival Nou-sik Park played in the film, which

was a blatant imitation of the relationship between the lead character and his rival in *Ben-Hur*, as well as the costumes that seemed to be of unknown nationality and other aspects that were copied from *Ben-Hur*.¹⁰

It is debatable as to whether films like *Qin Shu Huangdi and the Great Wall of China* and *The Gate to Hell* can be classified as historical dramas. However, there was an implicit understanding that historical films screened during the peak box office season referred to big-budget, large-scale spectacles, and therefore these films were called historical dramas at the time. There were criticisms about sloppy historical research and imitations of foreign films, but the important fact is that historical dramas were the leading genre that quickly absorbed the popular materials and styles of the time. This also means that historical dramas required huge budgets that were too much of a burden for the production companies, and therefore the companies had to guarantee enough entertainment for the films to be box office hits. In this way, directors and production companies turned out big-picture historical films, imitating and borrowing from popular foreign films or Korean films. One of the popular trends at the time included films with Buddhist influences, such as *The Gate to Hell*, *Samyeongdang*, *Seokgamoni* (Sakyamuni Buddha), and *Tyrant*. These films generally entailed impressively elaborate sets and a huge number of extras. Many critics questioned the possibility that these religious-themed films were conceived from the fact that most Hollywood epics were biblical films and particularly called attention to the scenes that were similar to the ones in *Seokka* (Buddha), which was a huge hit in Japan in 1961.

Sang-ok Shin had a huge influence in the historical dramas of this period, and most of the public retrospectively believe that *Prince Yeonsan*, *Cheong-il jeonjaeng-gwa yeogeol Minbi* (The Sino-Japanese War and Queen Min the Heroine), and other historical films that were set in the royal court of the Joseon Dynasty swept the theaters. And *Queen Dowager Inmok*, *Lady Jang*, *A Sad Story of Danjong* and other historical dramas set in the royal court indeed gained popularity. However, *Qin Shu Huangdi and the Great Wall of China*, *Apyeon jeonjaeng* (The Opium War), *Dalgi* (The Last Woman

10. *Kyunghyang shinmun*, September 18, 1962.

of Shang), and other big-picture films that seemed neither Korean or of a particular nationality, and other large-scale spectacles of Buddhist-themed films mentioned earlier also occupied an important position in Korean film industry at the time. *The Last Woman of Shang* and *Tyrant*, in particular, were joint productions between Korea and Hong Kong, and therefore these films emphasized fancy film sets and visually-striking performance and display in an exotic atmosphere. Screened during peak box office seasons with descriptions such as big-budget, big-picture, and spectacle, these films were produced not only for frequent moviegoers but also for a mixed audience of all ages, such as women and the elderly, who only came to the theaters during the holidays. As a result, they aimed to entertain all viewers regardless of age or gender as much as possible, using scenes, characters, events, and other spectacles that had drawn attention in other popular films. Kings were generally tyrants, like the Roman emperor Nero; the righteous hero fell in love with an innocent woman, and their relationship was plagued by conspiracy and manipulation. Numerous Korean historical dramas at this time featured an army of soldiers, marching in two lines, as in *Ben-Hur*, and some even contained a large-scale exodus scene, similar to the impressive shots in *The Ten Commandments*.

Such production of films that targeted a broad audience regardless of age or gender began to change after 1965. There was a perceived sense of the rise of the young audience, as youth films were already becoming popular, but it only became apparent after 1965. Around this time, the trend in the production of Korean films was largely divided into action-entertainment films and literary films. Young people began to be considered as major consumers of films, and the widespread distribution of televisions was emerging as a significant threat to the Korean film industry.

Various Attempts Made by the Dethroned Historical Dramas in the Latter Half of the 1960s

Historical dramas, which were powerful box office hits around major holidays, mainly the New Year, Lunar New Year, and Chuseok, began to

wane in popularity in 1965. The direct cause of this decline was the release of *From Russia with Love* in April, which drew a phenomenal 500,000 viewers, leading to the rise of action films as a new trend. In the same year, *Licence to Kill* was also released, once again attracting over 350,000 viewers. The 007 series had a huge impact on both Korean films and foreign films that were brought to Korea. In the past, costume dramas and epics, such as *El Cid* and *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, used to be box office hits, but now spy action films rose to popularity. Likewise, the number of Korean historical dramas decreased during the peak box office seasons, mainly replaced by action films. In 1967, the release of Hong Kong martial arts film *Come Drink with Me* (Da Zuixia) 大醉俠 became an unprecedented hit for an Asian film, and the arrival of spaghetti westerns in Korea led to action films with more violent scenes dominating the screen.

Korean melodramas and historical dramas, which had been popular in the past, faltered while action films and literary films were on the rise. The audience was gradually divided into two groups: ones who watched literary films and films with a strong visual aesthetic and those two preferred martial arts and violent action films. Housewives, middle-aged and the elderly audience turned to television dramas. There was no longer a single group of uniform audience but was dividing into smaller groups depending on their gender, age, and level of education.¹¹

The dramatic decline in the popularity of historical dramas since 1965 is evidenced by the fact that not a single historical film was released during the peak box office hit seasons in 1966 aside from *Daepokgun* (Tyrant). In fact, the two films that received spotlight during the most important peak season—the New Years and Lunar New Years—were *Gukje gancheop* (International Spy) and *Yujeong* (Affection), based on Gwangsu Yi's novel of the same title. Both films had been filmed on location in Japan. With scenes filmed in Sapporo, Japan, *Yujeong* became the first Korean modern film to draw over 300,000 viewers, which was a record hit at the time. The keywords for films released

11. This phenomenon was relative, compared to the previous years. In 1968, *Miweodo dasi han beon* (Love Me Once Again) became a huge success, which showed that housewives and middle-aged to the elderly audience were still significant to the Korean film industry.

for Chuseok were also “joint production” and “foreign location.” There were many historical dramas that were produced for the autumn holidays, but they fell behind in the competition. In the end, the films that were screened in first-run theaters were ones that promoted the fact that they were filmed on foreign soil, such as *Gukje geumgoe sageon* (International Gold Robbery), *Jal itgeora Ilbonttang* (Goodbye, Japan), *Talchul myeongryeong* (A Rescue Order), and the Korea-Hong Kong joint production *Tyrant*. The only exception was the melodrama *Somunnan yeoja* (A Popular Woman).

Until 1969, only a single historical drama—rarely two—was screened in most peak box office seasons. In 1967, *Gongju myeoneuri* (A Princess Daughter-in-Law), *Munjeong wanghu* (The Queen Moonjeong), and *Pungun Samgukji* (History of the Three States) were each released for the New Year, Lunar New Year, and Chuseok, respectively. In 1968, *Yohwa Jang Hui-bin* (Femme Fatale, Jang Hee-bin) and *Chunhyang* were released for the Lunar New Year holidays, and *Bangrang daegun* (Prince Yang-nyeong) was screened during Chuseok. One peculiarity was director Sang-ok Shin’s *Naesi* (Eunuch), which was released in December 1968 for Christmas and the year-end holidays. It became such a huge hit that it remained in theaters during the New Year season as well. Lasting in theaters for nearly 50 days, *Eunuch* became a huge success that drew over 320,000 viewers. This film was later embroiled in controversy for sexual content, which was a major factor in its commercial success. In 1969, historical drama films that were in theaters for the New Year were *Eunuch* and *Taeja bawi* (Rock of Crown Prince); and for Chuseok, *Jeonha eodiro gasinaikka* (Destiny of My Load).

In the years after 1966, however, the void left by historical dramas was not necessarily filled by the films that were filmed in foreign countries or even big-picture action films. Melodramas, comedies such as *Gongcheoga samdae* (The Three Hen-pecked Generations) and *O dae bokdeokbang* (Grandfather’s Bokdeokbang), and at times horror films like *Sok han* (Grudge) and *Sanyeo* (Snake Woman) were screened in theaters. Occasionally some films advertised the fact that they were filmed in foreign countries, but they no longer used the words “big picture” or “a big-budget spectacle” to describe such films. This was also evidence of the crisis that the Korean film industry faced in the late 1960s. The Korean

government's excessive conglomeration policy and control policy were the two major reasons that stemmed the industrial self-perpetuation of Korean film companies. The crisis of the Korean film industry was consistently reported in newspaper articles since the mid-1960s but became visible in the late 1960s with numerous film companies declaring bankruptcy. In 1968, Kim Seung-ho, a famous actor, went bankrupt after straining his financial resources for film production and passed away. This occurrence was symbolic of the crisis that the Korean film industry was facing. In the following year, the two largest Korean film companies at the time—Shin Film and Geukdong—went bankrupt one after another. A few foreign location films were created to replace the historical dramas in decline, but film companies facing an economic crisis in the late 1960s completely lacked the means to turn out big-budget films for the peak box office seasons as before. Since *Tyrant* in 1966, there were no more big pictures that required a large-scale set and hundreds of extras. In 1968, one newspaper assessed the film trend in the first half of 1968 and pointed to the “authorities’ inconsistent and neurotic attitude toward censorship” and “excessive intervention in the direction of film production through the promotion of anti-Communist films” as the reasons that there were no “groundbreaking masterpieces” or “great films with outstanding technology, direction, or acting.” It further explained that companies could “not even plan big pictures that require huge budgets.”¹²

Historical drama films did not disappear completely or were reduced to folk dramas for general screening. Production companies continued to look for ways to overcome the crisis from various angles and attempted technical experiments in order to survive in the competition with television dramas, which were gradually becoming a threat. In the late 1960s, films in color and CinemaScope became the standard, and “color” and “widescreen” became common descriptions in film advertisements. New technological attempts were made, using 70 mm films and 3D films or trying synchronous recording, and historical films were the first to respond, as usual. *Chunhyang*, which was released in the Lunar New Years in 1968, was promoted as the

12. *Shina Ilbo*, June 25, 1968.

first 70 mm film in Korea; *Cheonha jangsa Im Kkeok-jeong* (A Man of Great Strength: Im Kkeok-jeong), whose release had been originally planned for the Lunar New Year but was delayed to February, was the first 3D film. In April of the same year, *Daewongun* (Prince Daewon) was released, promoted for its synchronous sound recording. These three films seem to have been ambitious attempts targeting the Lunar New Year holidays in 1968 to recover from the slump during the peak box office seasons the previous year, but two of them were released after the holidays due to problems. These new attempts, however, seem to have been problematic, as *Chunhyang* was screened in 35 mm, parts of *Prince Daewon* were recorded after filming and therefore it was not a full synchronously-recorded film, and *A Man of Great Strength: Im Kkeok-jeong* could not be considered a perfect 3D film.¹³ Film companies continued to shoot films in 70 mm, and one newspaper article from February 1969 reported that *Seongung Yi Sun-sin* (Sun-sin Lee, The Great Hero), *Hwangsanbeol daegyoljeon* (The Final Battle of Hwangsanbeol), and *Jeongbokja Jinghis Khan* (Conqueror Genghis Khan) were under production to be released for the Chuseok holidays.¹⁴ However, considering that these films have not been uncovered, it is likely that they were never completed. *Chunhyangjeon* (The Story of Chunhyang), released in 1971, became the first 70 mm Korean film.

While production companies searched for ways for historical drama films to regain popularity through technical experiments mentioned above, they also attempted to attract viewers by incorporating new materials or exploring new territories. One of the major examples were Sang-ok Shin's historical dramas with elements of eroticism. *Eunuch*, which was released at the end of the year in 1968 gained popularity for its sexuality. The setting was the royal palace in the Joseon Dynasty, but instead of focusing on kings or the royal family as before, this film concentrated on eunuchs (*Naesi*) and court ladies (*Sanggung*). After *Eunuch*, Sang-ok Shin released *Snake Woman* and *Cheonmyeonho* (Thousand Years Old Fox) in the first half of 1969, and *Ijo yeoin janhoksa* (Women of Yi Dynasty) in May. *Eunuch* was a huge success,

13. *Seoul Shinmun*, December 28, 1968.

14. *Daehan Ilbo*, February 22, 1969.

attracting over 320,000 viewers, and *Ijo yeoin janhoksa* also drew over 100,000 viewers. The two films were named the first and fifth highest-grossing films of the year. *Thousand Years Old Fox* also attracted over 60,000 viewers, and Sang-ok Shin and Shin Film's strategy to introduce new materials for historical films was a success. One critic remarked that *Eunuch* achieved sexiness; *Thousand Years Old Fox*, the aesthetics of fantasy; and *Ijo yeoin janhoksa*, the aesthetics of sadism.¹⁵ Other historical dramas films in this new trend pushed violence and grotesque aesthetics. Such elements existed in earlier historical dramas as well, as *The Gate to Hell*, *A Sad Story of Danjong*, and *Tyrant* had flaunted violence and gruesome torture scenes. The difference, however, was that Sang-ok Shin boldly incorporated elements of eroticism, which used to be considered a taboo due to government censorship, alongside violence. The result was a huge success. Possibly due to his success, films with erotic elements such as *Byeoksok-ui yeoja* (A Woman in the Wall) and *Dangsin* (Darling) were produced in 1969. These films became highly controversial, as they were socially criticized as sex films. Actors in these films were subjected to investigations by the authorities, and the producers and directors were arrested. This kind of government control was not restricted to films but also included novels and magazines as well under the government policy for "cracking down on pornography." In the highly-publicized court case concerning *Chunmong* (The Empty Dream), the film was found "guilty" on obscenity charges, and even the deleted scenes in other erotic films mentioned above were subjected to government censorship. Such a rigid atmosphere in the Korean film industry acted as a warning to films that explicitly displayed eroticism, violence, or brutality. As a result, new attempts that began to be made in historical drama films were stemmed once again, and the popular genre of historical dramas centered on Korean dynasties were turned into TV dramas for viewers to enjoy in the comforts of their homes. In the following years, Sang-ok Shin continued to produce historical films, such as *Gungnyeo* (A Court Lady) and *Banhonnyeo* (A Woman with Half Soul), but they failed to become box office hits. He also planned to produce 70 mm big-picture films, such as *Joseon chongdokbu* (The Governor-General of Joseon), but they

15. *Dong-A Ilbo*, May 1, 1969.

never saw the light of the day. As can be seen from the trajectory of Shin Film, which was faced with difficult financial circumstances and strict government censorship, historical drama films never regained the same popularity it enjoyed years before. Besides, Korea's Yushin regime in the 1970s grew harsher in their film censorship policy, solely demanding wholesomeness and patriotic hero narratives in historical films.

Conclusion

The conditions of the Korean film industry took a turn for the worse in the 1970s. Upon entering the Yushin period, Korean government tightly controlled and managed the film industry through censorship and policy. Shin Film, the symbol of the corporatized Korean film industry, also struggled during this period. In 1975, the "era of Shin Film" came to an end when the government canceled its registration as a production company. The demise of Shin Film was a symbolic validation of the failure of the Korean government's corporatization policy to create big production companies modeled after the ones in Hollywood. *Lee Sun-sin, the Great Hero* was produced with a huge budget of ₩150 million for Chuseok in 1971, but the production company went bankrupt, unable to recover the funds. The film flopped as well, criticized for excessively focusing on the lead character as a national hero, as the title suggested. With this, historical films vanished during the peak box office seasons, and theaters mainly showed foreign films during the New Year, Lunar New Year, and Chuseok holidays. The few historical films that were produced around this time mostly featured hero-centric narratives with national policy propagandist character. The exploration of new ways to develop the historical drama genre by introducing erotic elements, which began in the late 1960s, continued intermittently into the early 1970s but never succeeded. It was because such historical films were unable to meet the expectations of the audience, and the downsizing of the film production industry prevented production companies from looking for breakthroughs. Moreover, the Korean film industry did not have the capacity to meet the changed preferences of the younger film audience.

On the other hand, the historical dramas set in the royal court of the Joseon Dynasty, which dominated the screen in the 1960s, were turned into popular television series. The historical narrative of “Yeonsangun,” a young boy who lost his mother and as a result became a tyrannous king, or the narrative of “Jang Huibin,” where an evil woman controls the affairs of the state, were a couple of the major themes in historical TV series since the 1970s. These themes remain useful to date, as the 2005 film *Wang-ui namja* (King and the Clown) drew over 10 million viewers.¹⁶

These two phenomena in the 1970s show an interesting expression of the characteristics of the genre of historical dramas. The popularity of televised historical drama series set in the royal court of the Joseon Dynasty attests that the audience who enjoyed the narratives of this genre in the early 1960s now made up the television audiences. At the same time, moviegoers grew younger and demanded something new from the historical drama genre. Unfortunately, the continued government censorship and regulations of the film industry prevented film production companies from flexibly responding to the changing circumstances, and this rapidly reduced the commerciality of historical drama films. The production companies were drastically cut down as well and were unable to produce big-budget, spectacular historical films. As a result, historical dramas no longer had the attraction it used to.

In this paper, I have examined the process in which the historical drama genre rose to prominence in the Korean film industry and their reception in the Korean society from the late 1950s to the 1960s, as well as the impact historical dramas had on film production and screening practices as an unparalleled genre during the peak box office seasons. Once it was ousted from its position as box office hits in the second half of the 1960s, the genre searched for various ways to reclaim its position. However, the crisis the Korean film industry faced, as well as the government’s stringent control policy, stemmed such attempts. As a result, in the 1970s, historical dramas showed the tendency of becoming national policy propagandist films for the Korean government to promote the national policy. Through this discussion,

16. For more information regarding the traits of narratives of historical dramas set in the royal court of the Joseon Dynasty, see Park (2009); Han (2012).

this paper expanded the scope of the discourse on historical dramas, which is focused on the changes in text and narratives of the genre, to the film industry, institutions, and reception of the films at the time. I hope that this paper can provide an opportunity to discuss the impact of foreign films on Korean films, which has not been explored in the study of Korean film history as of yet. Unfortunately, due to the lack of sources relevant to the film industry and the difficulty of access to existing resources, this research is only in the initial stage of sketching a rough outline. It will be important for future research on genre films and Korean film history to discuss the issues of the Korean film industry and the audiences' reception in the different time periods from various aspects.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

- Chosun Ilbo*. 1959. "Chuseok-eul manneun geukjangga, heunghaeng wijuna goru gatchun puro" (Theaters in Chuseok, An Assorted Program of Films for Entertainment). September 16.
- Daehan Ilbo*. 1969. "70-miri sageuk bum" (A Historical Drama Boom in 70 mm). February 22.
- Dong-A Ilbo*. 1959. "59-nyeon yeonghwagye, sasang choecho-ui hwanggeum sidae" (The Film Industry in 1959, The First Ever Golden Era in History). December 23.
- _____. 1961. "[Sin yeonghwa] Binyakhan pyeongmyeonseong-ui nochul / Hong Seong-ki gamdok-ui 'Chunhyangjeon'" ([New Film] Exposure of Meager Flatness / Director Hong Seong-ki's *The Love Story of Chun-hyang*). January 22.
- _____. 1969. "Hiteu-eopseo heodeogineun banghwagye" (The Korean Film World Struggles without a Box Office Hit). May 1.
- Hankook Ilbo*. 1954. "Hanguk yeonghwagye-ui hyeonhwang" (The Status of the Korean Film Industry). August 2.
- Heo, Baek-nyeon. 1954. "Oeguk yeonghwa-ui gyeonghyang, mi, yeong, bul 3 guk-ui jakpum-eul jungsimeuro" (The Trend of Foreign Films: Focusing on the Films

- of the United States, Great Britain, and France). *Chosun Ilbo*. November 29.
- Jungoe Shinbo*. 1946. “[Yeonghwapyeong] Bi-neun onda, 20 segi pokseusa jakpum” ([Film Review] The Rains Came, a Film by 20th Century Fox). May 9.
- Kyungghyang shinmun*. 1962. “Chuseok banghwa gaepyeong, moduga keoleo daehyeong-ui sageuk” (A Review of Films Screened during Chuseok, All Are Big-Picture Historical Films in Color). September 18.
- Oh, Yeong-jin. 1954. “Hanguk yeonghwa-ui gal gil” (The Future Path of Korean Film), *Dong-A Ilbo*. May 9.
- Seoul Shinmun*. 1957. “[Sinyeonghwa] ‘Seonhwa gongju’ silpaehan kalla” ([New Film] Princess Seon-Hwa, A Failed Color Film). September 15.
- _____. 1962. “[Saeyeonghwa] Pokgun byeonho-ui ‘seupekteokeul’, Shin Young-kyun juyeon ‘Yeonsangun’” ([New Film] A Spectacle of Defending a Tyrant, Prince Yeonsan Starring Shin Young-kyun). January 15.
- _____. 1968. “Munhwagye 68-nyeon, yeonghwa, panchin choerutan-hyeong melodrama, gajja dongsinogeum...” (In the Cultural World in 1968, Film Industry Rife with a Tearjerker and Fake Synchronous Recording). December 28.
- Shina Ilbo*. 1968. “Sangbangi yeonghwa, han chi jeonjin-do eopsi dapbo, dangguk-ui gwaing gwanyeo-do jiyang-doeeoya” (Films in the First Half of the Year, Remains at Status Quo without Progress, Authorities Should Avoid Excessive Intervention). June 25.
- Yeonghwa segye* (The World of Film). 1962. “62-nyeon-eul pungmihal daejakdeul” (Big Pictures to Dominate 1962). February: 63-65.

Secondary Sources

- Han, Sang-yun. 2012. “1960-nyeondae gungjung sageuk yeonghwa yeongu: Joseon wangjo sojae jakpum-eul jungsim-euro” (A Study of Korean Historical Films Set in the Royal Court of the Joseon Dynasty in the 1960s). Master’s thesis, Korea University.
- Langford, Barry. 2010. *Yeonghwa jangneu: halliudeu-wa geu neomeo* (Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond). Translated by Hye-jin Bang. Seoul: Hannarae. Originally published as *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).
- Lee, Yeong-il. 2004. *Hanguk yeonghwa jeonsa* (The Complete History of Korean Film). Seoul: Sodo.
- Neale, Stephen. 2000. *Genre and Hollywood*. London: Routledge.
- Oh, Yeong-suk. 2007. *1950-nyeondae, hanguk yeonghwa-wa munhwa damnon*

(Korean Films and Cultural Discourse in the 1950s). Seoul: Somyeong chulpan.
 Park, Yu-hee. 2009. "Sageuk yeonghwa-ui beonseong-gwa jangneu-roseo-ui seongnip" (The Prosperity of Historical Films and Its Establishment as a Genre). In vol. 2 of *Daejung seosa jangneu-ui modeun geot: yeoksa heogumul* (All About Popular Narrative Genre 2: Historical Fiction), edited by Daejung seosa jangre yeonguhoe and Jiyoung Kim, 174-203. Seoul: Iron-gwa silcheon.

Film Works

- A Court Lady* (Gungnyeo). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Anyang Film. 1972.
A Man of Great Strength: Im Kkeok-jeong (Cheonha jangsa Im Kkeok-jeong).
 Directed by Kyu-woong Lee. Seoul: Jeil yeonghwa jusikoesa. 1968.
A New Recruit, Mr. Lee (Sinibsawon Mr. Lee). Directed by Kee-duk Kim. Seoul: Geukdong heungeop. 1962.
A Popular Woman (Somunnan yeoja). Directed by Hyung-pyo Lee. Seoul: Hapdong yeonghwas. 1966.
A Princess Daughter-in-Law (Gongju myeoneuri). Directed by Kyu-woong Lee. Seoul: Saehan Film. 1967.
A Reluctant Prince (Ganghwa doryeong). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Shin Film. 1963.
A Rescue Order (Talchul myeongryeong). Directed by Beom-gu Gang, Seoul: Daeyeong yeonghwas; Jungheungyeongeob yuhangongsa. 1966.
A Sad Cry (Bulleodo daedap eomneun ireumi-yeo). Directed by Eung-ju Jeon. Seoul: Shin Film. 1962.
A Sad Story of Danjong (Danjong aesa). Directed by Kyu-woong Lee. Seoul: Donga yeonghwa heungeop. 1963.
A Wanderer (Juyu cheonha). Directed by Hyun-chul Ahn. Seoul: Dongseong yeonghwa gongsa. 1962.
A Woman in the Wall (Byeoksok-ui yeoja). Directed by Jong-ho Park. Seoul: Segi sangsa. 1969.
A Woman with Half Soul (Banhonnyeo). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Shin Production. 1973.
Affection (Yujeong). Directed by Soo-yong Kim. Seoul: Yeonbang yeonghwas. 1966.
Beautiful Shroud (Areumda-un suui). Directed by Hyung-pyo Lee. Seoul: Shin Film. 1962.
Chun-Hyang Story (Chunhyangjeon). Directed by Gyu-hwan Lee. Seoul: Tongmyong Film. 1955.
Chunhyang (Chunhyang). Directed by Soo-yong Kim. Seoul: Segisangsa. 1968.

- Darling* (Dangsin). Directed by Seong-gu Lee. Seoul: Yeonbang yeonghwas. 1969.
- Destiny of My Load* (Jeonha eodiro gasinaikka). Directed by Kyu-woong Lee. Seoul: Taechang heungeop. 1969.
- Emile* (Emilejong). Directed by Seong-ki Hong. Seoul: Gukje yeonghwa gongsa. 1961.
- Eunuch* (Naesi). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Shin Film. 1968.
- Femme Fatale, Jang Hee-bin* (Yohwa Jang Hui-bin). Directed by Kwon-taek Im. Seoul: Hanguk yeonghwa jusikoesa. 1968.
- Goodbye, Japan* (Jal itgeora Ilbonttang). Directed by Soo-yong Kim. Seoul: Yeonhab yeonghwas. 1966.
- Grandfather's Bokdeokbang* (O dae bokdeokbang). Directed by Hyung-pyo Lee. Seoul: Daehan yeonhab yeonghwa jusikoesa. 1968.
- Great Challenge* (Daedojeon). Directed by Pil No. Seoul: Jeongug yeongbaesa. 1962.
- Grudge* (Sok han). Directed by Hyun-mok Yu. Seoul: Hanguk yeonghwa jusikoesa. 1968.
- Heartlessness* (Mujeong). Directed by Kang-cheon Lee. Seoul: Shin Film. 1962.
- History of the Three States* (Pungun Samgukji). Directed by In-hyeon Choe. Seoul: Daeji yeonghwas. 1967.
- Im Kkeok-jeong* (Im Kkeok-jeong). Directed by Hyun-mok Yu. Seoul: Jeonguk yeongbaesa. 1961.
- Independence Association and Young Rhee Syngman* (Dongniphyeobhoe-wa cheongnyeon I Seungman). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Korean Entertainment co. Ltd. 1959.
- International Gold Robbery* (Gukje geumgoe sageon). Directed by Il-ho Jang. Seoul: Yeonbang yeonghwas; Geonhwa yeongeob yuhanhoesa. 1966.
- International Spy* (Gukje gancheop). Directed by Il-ho Jang. Seoul: Yeonbang yeonghwas. 1965.
- King and the Clown* (Wang-ui namja). Directed by Joon-ik Lee. Seoul: Eagle Pictures. 2005.
- King Gojong and Martyr An Jung-Geun* (Kojong hwangje-wa uisa An Junggeun). Directed by Chang-keun Jeon. Seoul: Taebaek yeonghwas. 1959.
- Lady Jang* (Jang Huibin). Directed by Chang-wha Chung. Seoul: Hwaseong yeonghwas. 1961.
- Life* (Saengmyeong). Directed by Kang-cheon Lee. Seoul: Sudo yeonghwas. 1958.
- Madame Freedom* (Jayu buin). Directed by Hyeong-mo Han. Seoul: Samseong yeonghwas. 1956.
- Nameless Stars* (Ireum eopneun byeoldeul). Directed by Gang-yun Kim. Seoul: Aseayeonghwas. 1959.
- Nongae* (Nongae). Directed by Bong-chun Yun. Seoul: Gukje yeonghwas. 1956.

- Prince Daewon* (Daewongun). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Anyang Film. 1968.
- Prince Ho-Dong and Princess Nak-Rang* (Wangj hodong-gwa nakrang gongju). Directed by So-dong Kim. Seoul: Donggwang yeonghwas. 1956.
- Prince Yang-nyeong* (Bangrang daegun). Directed by In-hyeon Choe. Seoul: Cina Film. 1968.
- Prince Yeonsan* (Yeonsan-gun). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Shin Film. 1962.
- Qin Shu Huangdi and the Great Wall of China* (Jinsihwangje-wa mallijangseong). Directed by Yeong-sun Gwon. Seoul: Hanyang Films. 1962.
- Queen Dowager Inmok* (Inmok daebi). Directed by Hyun-chul Ahn. Seoul: Donga heungeop. 1962.
- Rock of Crown Prince* (Taeja bawi). Directed by Kyu-woong Lee. Seoul: Segisangsa. 1969.
- Sad Story of a Head Cutter* (Mangnanibisa). Directed by Seong-min Kim. Seoul: Goryeo yeonghwas. 1955.
- Sakyamuni Buddha* (Seokgamoni). Directed by Il-ho Jang. Seoul: Hanguk yeonghwa jusikoesa. 1964.
- Samyeongdang* (Samyeongdang). Directed by Hyun-chul Ahn. Seoul: Dongseong yeonghwa gongsa. 1963.
- Seong Chun-hyang* (Seong Chun-hyang). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Shin Film. 1961.
- Snake Woman* (Sanyeo). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Shin Film. 1969.
- Swordsman and Love* (Geompung yeonpung). Directed by Chan-u Gang. Seoul: Shin Film. 1962.
- The Empty Dream* (Chunmong). Directed by Hyun-mok Yu. Seoul: Segisangsa. 1965.
- The Gate to Hell* (Jiok-mun). Directed by Yong-min Lee. Seoul: Sejong yeonghwa jusikoesa. 1962.
- The Last Woman of Shang* (Dalgi). Directed by In-hyeon Choe, Feng Yueh. Seoul: Shin Films; Shaw Brothers. 1964.
- The Love Story of Chun-hyang* (Chun-hyang Jeon). Directed by Seong-ki Hong. Seoul: Hong Seong-ki Production. 1961.
- The Opium War* (Apyeon jeonjaeng). Directed by Soo-yong Kim. Seoul: Hanyang Films. 1964.
- The Palace of Ambition* (Pungun-ui gungjeon). Directed by Chang-wha Chung. Seoul: Taeyang yeonghwas. 1957.
- The Princess Seon-Hwa* (Seonhwa gongju). Directed by Sung-kwan Choe. Seoul: Cheongryong Production. 1957.
- The Queen Moonjeong* (Munjeong wanghu). Directed by Bong-han Rha. Seoul: Taechang heungeop. 1967.

- The Sino-Japanese War and Queen Min the Heroine* (Cheong-il jeonjaeng-gwa yeogeol minbi). Directed by Won-sick Lim and Bong-han Rha. Seoul: Shin Film. 1962.
- The Story of Chunhyang* (Chunhyangjeon). Directed by Seong-gu Lee. Seoul: Taechang heungeop. 1971.
- The Story of Sim Cheong* (Daesimcheongjeon). Directed by Hyung-pyo Lee. Seoul: Shin Film. 1962.
- The Three Hen-pecked Generations* (Gongcheoga samdae). Directed by Hyun-mok Yu. Seoul: Hapdong yeonghwa jusikoesa. 1967.
- The Tragedy of King Dan Jong* (Danjong-aesa). Directed by Chang-keun Jeon. Seoul: Samil Film. 1956.
- The Tragedy of King Danjong* (Danjong aesa). Directed by Chang-keun Jeon. Seoul: Samil yeonghwas. 1956.
- The Tragic Prince* (Sado seja) Directed by Jong-hwa Ahn. Seoul: Seorabeol yeonghwagongsa. 1956.
- The Virgin Star* (Cheonyeo-byeol). Directed by Bong-chun Yun. Seoul: Jungang yeonghwa munhwasa. 1956.
- The Youth* (Jeolm-eun geudeul). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Seoul Film. 1955.
- Thousand Years Old Fox* (Cheonnyeonho). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Shin Film. 1969.
- Times of Love and Hatred* (Sarang-gwa mium-ui sewol). Directed by Dae-jin Kang. Seoul: Jeonguk yeongbaesa. 1962.
- Tyrant* (Daepokgun). Directed by Won-sick Lim. Seoul: Shin Films; Shaw Brothers. 1966.
- Tyrant Yeonsan* (Pokgun Yeonsan). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Shin Film. 1962.
- When Black Flowers Fade* (Geomeun kkonnip jil ttae). Directed by Beom-gu Gang. Seoul: Hanheung yeonghwas. 1962.
- Women of Yi Dynasty* (Ijo yeoin janhoksa). Directed by Sang-ok Shin. Seoul: Shin Film. 1969.
- Women Rule* (Yeoin cheonha). Directed by Bong-chun Yun. Seoul: Daeyeong yeonghwas. 1962.
- Yang Kuei-Fei, a Destructive Beauty* (Cheonha ilsaeek Yang Gwibi). Directed by Hwarang Kim and Kee-duk Kim. Seoul: Geukdong heungeop. 1962.
- Yi Seong-gye, King Taejo* (Taejo Yi Seong-gye). Directed by In-hyeon Choe. Seoul: Hapdong yeonghwa jusikoesa. 1965.