

Korean Film History and <Chihwaseon>

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1. <Chihwaseon> as the prehistory of film culture

The background to the film, <Chihwaseon> is set at a time not very distant from the point when film culture first emerged in Joseon. In the last subtitle of <Chihwaseon> we discover that Jang Seung-ub died in 1897. On October 10th, of that same year, motion pictures were first introduced in Joseon. On October 19th, 1897, the London Times published the following:

“ Motion pictures have finally been introduced into Joseon, a country located in the Far East. At the beginning of October 1897, motion pictures were screened for the public in Jingogae, Bukcheon, in a shabby barrack that was borrowed from its Chinese owner for three days. The works screened included short films and actuality films produced by France’s Pathe Pictures.”¹⁾

In the film, a Japanese reporter from the Hansung Daily named Kaiura tells Jang Seung-ub that night is falling on the Joseon dynasty, and that Jang’s paintings are the last flicker of life that is left in this dying country. The usage of Jang’s paintings, which are defined as bringing comfort to the people of Joseon during a period of great chaos- “The people have nothing to console them, if I can bring them comfort by painting fantasies, I will have been faithful to my calling.” - is not very different from the effect motion pictures, which would arrive in Joseon in the not so distant future, would have on the country. The prehistory of Korean films is described through Jang’s fantasy paintings as an exaggerated version of plain reality. In addition, Jang, showing a black stone to his student, emphasizes that painters should paint living stones, not dead ones. “A humble stone must be alive in a painter’s eye. If a stone is alive, it’s dynamic. If it’s dead, it’s static”.

Jang’s approach to painting is closely connected to the role of motion pictures, which also place great importance on the concept of motion.²⁾ <Chihwaseon> criticizes the existing Joseon painting style, which basically consisted of imitating Chinese styles, and uses the painter Jang Seung-ub

to describe the immediate prehistory of film culture. If we were to compare film to Jang's paintings, we could perhaps argue that film makes it possible for us to ask what Joseon films are, and furthermore, what Korean films should be. For instance, in the film, Kim Byung-moon encourages Jang Seung-ub to "paint pictures that breathe with your own spirit". In order to create his own unique paintings, Jang must overcome the limitations of Chinese paintings. He should also stop trying to satisfy the tastes of the Chosun Yangban, who themselves have been influenced by Chinese paintings. However, Jang does not have many resources that he can call upon to create works that are inherently different from his predecessors. His sole possession is an extraordinary talent that he can only express when drunk, a talent thus readily conceivable as a divine gift. If we consider a person's worth to be dictated by their modernity, Jang, who does not belong to the noble class and thus had no access to education, but overcame those feudal limitations through the force of his own creative will, should be included among those figures who emerged in the period of incipient modernity. In addition, as outsider, Jang is well-situated to observe the new world that must arise after the collapse of the old one. Jang incorporates these notions in his work and is able to reproduce the new world through his paintings. However, the problem lies in the fact that this new world is for all intents and purposes, also devoid of any hope. The Enlightenment Party, which was waging a pitched battle with the existing power structure, was dependent on Japanese support for its survival. Meanwhile, China and Russia were involved in a competition for dominance in East Asia. The Chosun dynasty started to collapse, and the sovereignty of the nation fell into the hands of foreign powers. While Jang strived to create a new painting style during this period in which the old traditions were fading away, no new traditions had yet been born. People, especially those who were included in the middle class, seeing a ray of hope emanating from Jang's paintings, began to abandon their interest in Chinese paintings. The reformists depicted in the film, such as Kim Byung-moon (An Seong-ki) and Lee Eung-heon, a Chinese interpreter, can be regarded as Jang Seung-ub's translators. Their role is to explain Jang's paintings to the viewers in a manner that they can understand, and to act as the connection between Jang and the Yangban class. This was a period of rapid change throughout the world, and tastes

in art were also changing. Jang's paintings are proof positive of these changes, and <Chihwaseon> emphasizes them. However, the hope reflected in the arts was in no way connected to any political hope for the country. The Donghak revolution had failed. The attempt to pursue an independent opening policy had also failed. As the result, the sovereignty of the state was lost to imperial Japan. These are the main themes that <Chihwaseon> attempts to convey to the viewers. This chapter focuses on the paradox and irony that emerge during the process of a new creation, as well as on the implications of such creations, and strives to correlate these matters to problems related to the Korea film industry.

Jang Seung-ub, who is described as a wanderer in <Chihwaseon>, in many ways overlaps with the general portrait of the director Im Kwon-taek, a fact that many critics and the director himself have pointed out. Jang Seung-ub is in several aspects similar to the legendary Na Woon-kyu. An Seok-young's preface to book <*Famous Film Directors: The Late Na Woon-kyu*> opens as follows:

"Na Woon-kyu, the man who left us so many films, such as <Arirang>, <The Field Mouse>, <Mong-nyeo Oh>. He was a wanderer. His bohemian lifestyle prevented him from becoming a great person. However, he left behind for the public films that were the result of his wandering ways. He who regarded poverty as a natural phenomenon is now gone, but he has planted the seed of films on the Korean peninsula. In other words, he is the origin of Joseon films. The nihilistic themes found in his films made it so that he could not have lived a long life. However, if he had left the framework of his nihilistic themes behind and chosen to see a bigger world, the melancholic temperament that still exists in modern films might have been removed from the face of Joseon films."³⁾

These similarities - wanderer, ingeniousness, and incompleteness - found in both Na Woon-kyu and Jang Seung-ub are common features of extraordinarily talented individuals. However, these similarities have originated from the rhetoric of the traditional heroic form reproduced during the colonized era.

From the standpoint of the history of Korean film, Na can be included among those who helped to develop Joseon films during the Japanese

colonial era. By playing the persona of the crazy Yeong-jin in <Arirang>, Na Woon-kyu became the archetypical hero of Joseon films, heroes that are usually imbued with an aura of borderline madness resulting from their unfailing resistance to the oppressors. Na Woon-kyu's achievements during the Japanese colonial era, despite the lack of any resources available to him, can be regarded as having stemmed from his extraordinary creativeness and genius. Na Woon-kyu is described in the following manner: Na becomes a legendary figure in *North Korean Film History: Na Woon-kyu and His Films during the Period of Extreme Suffering*, in which he is described as follows, "The people (inmin) of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea are filled with overwhelming joy and passion after having finally encountered the legend of Arirang, a legend that once seemed so distant. The dawn of the national liberation had finally begun to rise."⁴⁾ As such, Na Woon-kyu's <Arirang> is often referred to as a perfect example of the national allegory. Even Seo Kwang-jae, who was a member of the KAPF (Korea Artista Proleta Federatio), who criticized Na on ideological grounds, mourns over Na's death, "For those in the Joseon film industry, whenever you think of Joseon films, you think of <Arirang>. Whenever people think of <Arirang>, they always mention Na Woon-kyu."⁵⁾

Descriptions of the Joseon film industry during the Japanese colonial era are generally focused on the period when the first film was produced, the greatness and fall of Na Woon-kyu as a nationalistic film hero (Lee Yeong-il, Choi Chang-ho, and Hong Kang-seong), as well as the nationalistic realism (and new-style Korean drama, which is opposed to nationalistic realism) he created. These descriptions of the origins of Korean films, as well as of the birth and decline of a hero produced by critics and film historians, have over time taken on the trappings of official theories. In keeping with this, the Ministry of Culture & Tourism in 1991, the Year of Drama and Film, selected Na Woon-kyu as the person best representing the history of Korean film. Moreover, the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs designated Na Woon-kyu and Yoon Bong-chun as meritorious subjects. Finally, in April 1995 a statue of Na Woon kyu was unveiled at the Seoul Studio Complex located in Namyangju, Gyeonggi.⁶⁾

The renown of Na Woon-kyu has now been passed on to Im Kwon-taek. Despite such memorable works as, <An aimless bullet>Yoo Hyun-mok, who was actively engaged in the film industry during the 1950s and 1960s,

never became regarded as the father of Korean films or as a national director. Rather, Yoo is regarded as the successor, or even as the resurrection of Na's nationalistic realism.

Im Kwon-taek has been actively engaged in the film industry during the two most recent periods of Korean film history: the Chungmooro era and the Korean style blockbuster era. Compared with Na Woon-kyu's, the public persona of Im appears blurry. Im looks like an ordinary father. However, his ordinariness has developed into extraordinariness as he has become a success story. Im survived the Japanese colonial era, the Korean War, and the era of the military dictatorships. More importantly, Im has used the wisdom that he learned from his survival, to upgrade the Korean film industry to the international level. Let us look at how Im Kwon-taek has been perceived. "... Based on the image of a stubborn father in <Sopyonje>, Im Kwon-taek has been able to reproduce his own image as a strict, tragic, and noble spirit." Moreover, Im, it is argued, "refuses to fall prey to the temptations of the self-fashion and self-orientalization era as a means of achieving post-modernization or of getting the attention of Western markets".⁷⁾

Critics have been able to discover a few additional fragments of Im's cinema portrait from <Chihwaseon>, which was released after <Sopyonje>.⁸⁾ Im has helped consolidate this image through statements such as the following, "I always wanted to make a film about Kim Hong-do, Jeong Seon, or Chusa Kim Jeong-hee. However, Jang Seung-ub attracted me because he and I share certain similarities that I felt I could more easily project. What I mean is that Jang's achievements during his lifetime in many ways mirror those I have been able to achieve in my own."

Unlike the image of the strict, tragic, and noble father found in <Sopyonje>, we find in <Chihwaseon>'s Jang Seung-ub a character that has either refused to be a father or failed to do so. In search of the new world, he drinks as he paints. At some moment in Chosun and Korean film history, Na Woon-kyu, as the crazy man, and Jang Seung-ub as Chihwaseon, collide. It is the moment when Chosun and South Korean films mesh like a Mobius band. However, this moment is quite paradoxical. They become the fathers of Korean film by taking hostage the very history, that has prevented them from becoming fathers and from overcoming this irony. This is dramatically achieved, by replacing damaged women's

bodies with moments of salvation and sublime beauty. For example, in the film <Arirang> Yeong-jin saves his sister from being raped, while in <Sopyonje>, the father deliberately blinds his daughter as an attempt to imbue her with a profound sense of the national sentiment known as *han*.

2. Flashback

<Chihwaseon> opens with a scene in which Jang Seung-ub is painting as Yang ban look on. The camera maintains an objective distance as it frames the conversation between Jang and the Yang ban, as well as its eventual catastrophic end. The Yangban praise Jang's painting, "It emanates divine strength, as if ghosts were dancing around it. He seems to paint by the rules, yet he doesn't. He follows and breaks them at the same time." To this Jang answers, "One stroke is worth ten thousand. Ten thousand strokes in one. How can a bumpkin dauber claim to question the rules of arts?"

At this point, one Yangban criticizes Jang for having wasted his life thinking he is talented, and reminds him that he is a painter from the lowest of classes. The camera then follows Jang as he leaves the market street, and the following textual introduction appears on screen: "The period around 1882 was one in which Koreans were rebelling against foreign invasions and the presence of a corrupted government." Along with the opening credits, we learn that the country was in rapid decline during this period, and that these were the days of the artist Jang Seung-ub. A Japanese reporter from the *Hansung Daily*, Kaiura comes to ask Jang for a painting, and begins asking him how he had been able to start painting from such a low station in life. This scene, in which Jang receives respect from a Japanese reporter as he produces a painting in this low-class residential area, is in fact a subtle and ironic jab at the social hierarchy that existed between those who belonged to the Japanese empire and those from the lower classes of Joseon. Jang scornfully answers Kaiura, "Genius shows, even in a baby!" The sound design employed in this scene demonstrates a well-harmonized orchestration that is composed of real sounds and exaggerated effects intertwined with the lyrics of beggars' songs. The film then goes into a flashback sequence. Jang Seung-ub, the boy, is being beaten by the leader of a beggars' gang for having painted a

picture of him hitting a woman who took care of Jang. Most of the scenes in <Chihwaseon> come in the form of flashback sequences. It is significant that this film unfolds in the form of conversations between Jang and Kaiura.

The structure of the first half of the film, which shows Jang painting amid the gazes of Yangban, and goes back to Jang's childhood using flashbacks brought on by the questions of Kaiura, serves to establish Jang's position as a painter and his status as a member of the lower class. The gazes and questions of the Yangban class and Kaiura serve to establish Jang's position as a painter. In fact, in many ways, the Yangban and the Japanese own Jang and his paintings. Paradoxically, it is his desire to resist against these Yangban's gazes and run away from this group, who are both his economic and cultural sponsors, that becomes the dynamic energy of both Jang and of <Chihwaseon> itself. Interestingly, those standing on the boundary of this dynamic are the reformist intellectuals.

Kim Byung-moon and other reformists begin to search for Korean-style paintings that are different from those favored by the established Yangban class. At one point, Kim criticizes the famous <Winter Pine Tree> drawn by Chusa for being an expression of art steeped deeply in Chinese culture. Eventually, the Enlightenment Party is able to seize power for three days with the help of the Japanese. In the film, the indigenous modernity of Jang Seung-ub and the Enlightenment Party are negotiated types, rather than something that has emerged through negotiations. <Chihwaseon>, which looks back on the past from the viewpoint of the year 2000, employs a double flashback technique. If the diegesis-style flashback arises as a result of the Japanese reporter's questions, the flashback that begins in the year 2000 is the result of many factors. These historical flashback sequences are not limited solely to the film production process.

"The period after 1876, especially from 1894 to 1910, has received a lot of attention. The terms used to describe this period, such as the opening period or the enlightenment period, are clear indications of the main characteristics of this period. This period is also well reflected in literature. As the origins of modernity and of the approaches to defining Korea's modernity can easily be found here, the period spanning from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th

century carries with it significant implications.”⁹⁾

The formation of the social classes, nation, and state, which all have their roots in the origins of modernity, is expressed in Park Kwang-Soo's <The Uprising, 1998> and Im Kwon-taek's <Chihwaseon> and <Fly High Run Far>. In 1901, the so-called Lee Jae-su uprising broke out as a result of conflicts between Catholics and Shamans, the local and central governments, the *hyangri* and *minjung*, as well as of the competition between French and Japanese imperialism. While in <The Uprising> Lee Jae-su (Yi Jung-Jae) is portrayed as having been born as an object of history, <Chihwaseon> is based on the viewpoint of a viewer who sees history unfold before him. Jang Seung-ub meets Kim Ok-kyun, watches Chun Bong-joon's funeral procession, and stays at Cho Byeong-kap's house, the man at the center of the outbreak of the Donghak Peasants' Revolution. However, while on the one hand the royal family, Yangban, and the governor of the Kobu area, Cho Byung-kap, have financed many of his paintings, he also exchanges freely with members of the Enlightenment faction. As such, Jang's political allegiance is obscure. Although he supports the Enlightenment faction in his mind, his life and art cannot be actualized without the support of the ruling yangban class. Refusing to stay in one place for long periods of time, Jang wanders from place to place, thus assuring himself that his dependence on his benefactors will only be temporary. Jang, who plays the role of the observer of history and who maintains a certain distance from his benefactors, is motivated to create a unique style of painting. Kim Byung-moon, who takes on the role of being a spiritual benefactor to Jang, is reticent to praise his paintings. Jang's desire is to create his own world through his paintings, not to become a member of the literati, or to follow Chinese and traditional painting techniques. Jang's position as the beholder of history is changed by a painting he made while staying in the house of the governor of Kobu that depicts little birds being chased by a brutal hawk. Although Jang never made such a painting, which symbolizes the minjung's suffering at the hands of the tyrannical rulers of the land, Im decided to insert it into the film. As such, this scene can be understood as the present era's intervention in the film. This scene also expresses the political position of Jang Seung-ub.

The timeline of <Chihwaseon>, which depicts the period from post 1876 to 1910, a period in which the origins of modernity can be found, ends in 1897. The flashback sequences, which began with Jang's childhood, end with Chun Bong-joon's execution. Kaiura reinforces Jang's identity as a painter with the following, "Night is falling on the Joseon dynasty. Your painting is the last flicker of life in this dying country". After being humiliated by the Donghak peasant soldiers and exiled from the governor's house, Jang throws himself into the kiln in a manner akin to someone conducting a cremation ceremony.

The gaze back on the 19th century found in <Chihwaseon> originates from the desire to gain knowledge about the origins of modernity. This gaze also incorporates global perspective, including those of the people attending international film festivals and of those responsible for the distribution of films within foreign markets. While Kaiura functions as the stimulus to the flashback sequences in the film, his gaze and his questions represent the global gazes and questions posed by modern-day film viewers. Despite the historical burden and traumas internalized in Korean films, as well as the curtailment of the right to free expression through government censorship, which have been the main causes of a phenomenon in which directors are unable to transparently convey their intentions, Im Kwon-taek is able to incorporate the gaze of foreign viewers into the film by making the film's foreign viewer (Kaiura) unfold the story through his questions and insinuations.¹⁰⁾ This can be regarded as a form of self-orientalization. However, the possibility also exists that by incorporating a non-Korean viewer in the film, the makers of <Chihwaseon> were attempting to turn Kaiura's gaze into a multi-formalized one. As the background of this film is the end of the Joseon dynasty, a period which served as the point of origin of a modernity achieved as a result of the growing tensions with foreign powers, such as Japan, China, Russia, and France, it can be assumed that the people of Joseon first came into contact with these other worlds through such foreign powers. As such, <Chihwaseon> provides a framework through which the present South Korean problems under the globalization era can be rethought. In addition, if it can be argued that the politics surrounding international film festivals have emerged as a space in which experimental

globalization can be carried out, then it can also be argued that Jang, who strived to actualize his own world through his paintings, (rather than simply imitating Chinese paintings) is in fact the cross bearer for Im Kwon-taek. The majority of Im's works after <Mandara>, which was produced in 1981, were screened in European film festivals, thus escaping the confines of the Korean film market. Therefore, it was only natural that a foreign viewer's gaze would be included in his films. However, rather than focusing on his subjugation to foreign gazes, more attention should be paid to whether or not Im is able to carry out the process of signification, while maintaining his comparative autonomy, introspection, and critical eye.

3. non-national / transnational and national cinema

The concept of self-orientalization has been used in the Korean film industry ever since modernization, in the form of the commercialization of goods, has been achieved. While it is necessary to carry out a critical analysis in order to breakdown any evidence of self-orientalization, repetitive criticism of this self-orientalization can lead to becoming trapped in the closed mechanism of orientalization.

The intertextuality of Im's films, which are usually mixed with foreign views, can be found even in some of his works prior to 1981's <Mandara>. The book entitled <Im Kwon-taek speaks of Im Kwon-taek> published in 2003 provides good examples of this transculturation. Im's activities over the last 40 years as a film director provide an opportunity for us to reconsider what is the role of Korean films in the history of Korean film. For example, what is the implied relationship between the 'Korea' projected in Im's non-national films, such as <One-eyed Park>(1970), and <Eagle of Wild Field> (1969), and 'Korean films'? Can the film, <Sopyonjae>(1993), which has been referred to as the most Korean-style film of the modernization era, really be regarded as a Korean-style film? Furthermore, as modernization was replaced by globalization at the end of the 1990s, how did <Chunhyang> and <Chihwaseon>, which made their ways to overseas markets and the Cannes International Film Festival, translate 'Korea' for the globalized world and vice-versa? What are the similarities and differences between borderless, transnational, and Korean-style films? Let us listen to a conversation between Chung Seong-il and Im Kwon-taek.

Chung Seong-il: I think that when you directed <One-eyed Park> and <Eagle of Wild Field> you were attracted by borderless cinema. It appears as if you were feeling the limitations of producing 'Korean' films during this period. What I mean is that, well, wasn't there a concentrated effort on your part to remove Korean preferences from these films?

Im Kwon-taek: Probably, I remember thinking that these films had no possibility of succeeding if they only appealed to Korean tastes... However, soon after that I started to feel a deep connection with Korean tastes and culture. When I made those films, I tried to differentiate my work from regular Korean movies in order to survive... When I directed <Lightening Sword>, I was smitten with King Hu's <Come Drink With Me>. On the other hand, <Eagle of Wild Field> was based on the Sergio Leone film, <A Fistful of Dollars>. To tell the truth, at that time I greatly admired these new genre films... At that time, Hollywood films were regarded as the standard.

Chung explains, "Im Kwon-taek eventually started to resist against Hollywood films in his own manner. Why can Hollywood style classics not be properly reproduced as Korean films? While Im still admired Hollywood classics, he also became interested in <A Fistful of Dollars> directed by Sergio Leone, a spaghetti western. This was remade as the uniquely 'Korean style' Western film, <Eagle of Wild Field>."

Im's borderless films are a part of the phenomenon in which countries with small-sized film production systems reproduce the films they have come across in the contact zone linking them with industrialized transnational films, films such as those made in Hollywood and Hong Kong. Putting aside the issue of whether <Come Drink With Me> and <A Fistful of Dollars> had the mode of address – as the relationship between the speaker and listener (viewer) must inherently be set in the script, scriptwriters have the ability to preset their target audience in accordance with the mode of address they plan to use- needed to overcome their domestic markets, it is clear that these films were transnationally distributed. On the other hand, the films made by Im during this period were limited to the Korean market. Nevertheless, there has been several other Korean-style Western film's made besides <Eagle of Wild Field>. Thus, if I distort Chung's description somewhat, Im's borderless film,

<Eagle of Wild Field> can in fact be considered as a form of unconscious resistance against existing Korean films. For the most part, Korean-style Western films are reproduced as continent martial art films, films such as <The border between Russia and Manchuria> in the 1960s, and <Break up the chain> in the 1970s. The problem here revolves around discovering exactly what kind of films these directors wanted to make, and why audiences were drawn to them. It becomes possible to answer these questions by extending the mode of address of these martial art films that have Manchuria or Hong Kong as their background, as well as those of other Korean-Hong Kong jointly made films.

“These two films, which mix aspects of the propaganda and thriller genres, demonstrate the insecurity that spread throughout the country during the 1970s. According to the Korean Film Archive <Golden Operation 70 in Hong Kong> is classified as an anti-communist martial art film, and <Code name Tokyo Expo '70> as an anti-communist propaganda film. In 1967, Korea launched its 2nd 5-year Economic Development Plan. To modernize the infrastructure of the country, the military government strived to attract international investment capital. Moreover, the government strongly desired to internationalize the country, while limiting people’s ability to go overseas. The tension between internationalization and repression is well depicted in <Golden Operation 70 in Hong Kong> and <Gallant Man>.”¹¹⁾

These non-national films emerged from the cracks that appeared between the repressive policy created as part of the Cold War structure and the need to internationalize as a result of the apparition of the export-oriented economic development structure. As such, the negotiation of signification was created as the Korean action genre began to be produced in the contact zone Korea shares with the external world.

When <Mandara> was released, international film festivals recognized it as a Korean film. As Im acquired fame as a national director with works such as <Sopyonje> and <Chunhyang>, films that were introduced into the American market, Im’s films began to be classified as Korean-style transnational films, and no longer as borderless films. Based on the above, the non-national cinema that developed as part of the history of South Korean film should be considered to have been the result of the above-

mentioned negotiation of signification and of the restricted production opportunities that occurred in the contact zone, which in turn led to the creation of Korean-style transnational films, rather than as something that should be forgotten or written off as a humiliating chapter in our film history. Jeong Chang-hwa directed such non-national films in Korea and then went on to produce such films as <The Witch of a Thousand of Faces> and <E Lang Gu> in Hong Kong. Chung's 1972 film, <5 fingers of Death> was a box office hit in America in 1993. As Im Kwontaek began his film career after having worked for Chung Chang-hwa's production team for some time, a small genealogy of the Korean borderless films of the 1960s can be created.¹²⁾

If we were to insert this borderless cinema somewhere on the map of the history of Korean-style transnational cinema, we could locate these borderless films on the boundary between national and transnational films, that is, as the mode of address used to speak to viewers who share a similar culture. These borderless films should not simply be regarded as being the result of a certain national cinema struggling with the tensions that exist between national and transnational films, but also as a fight between the nation and the state.

Let us now reconsider <Chihwaseon> by inserting it in this borderless film category. This makes it possible for us to read the various gazes - those of the Japanese reporter Kaiura, who is the principal gazer in this film, as well as those of foreign viewers and critics - of others. These others can read the complicated and tangled dynamics that belie the consistency of the self-internalized non-Korean gazes that are exposed in these borderless films. The structural characteristics of <Chihwaseon>, Jang Seung-ub's position as a Korean painter, and the process through which Korean films are distributed in international markets provide the basic materials with which to better comprehend Im's life as a film director, as well as the complicated dynamic energy of this film.

Korean film historians should not try to complete the history of Korean film by focusing on the early developmental stages of Korean films, such as the prehistory era, imitation era, golden era, borderless era, or the self-orientalized transnational era, thus assuming that the history of film has developed as part of a linear process of creating nationalistic Korean films or "national" films. Rather, they should pay more attention to the delay that

has occurred in Korean films and to the productive tension and creativity that have been caused by this delay. Paradoxically, this delay is the very dynamic that Im Kwon-taek, the national film director, strives to demonstrate in his films.¹³⁾ Of course, at this point, such an approach will be regarded as a new theory-based means of reproducing the history of Korean films, rather than as a historical approach to Korean films. The term, 'delay' implies a sense of difference, supplementation, and complementariness. Moreover, these delayed Korean films have existed amid dynamics of tension. As such, the historical and textual tensions that exist in Korean films (both in Joseon films and South Korean films) make it such that there can be no such thing as a truly 'Korean' film.

Historians have used the nation/state units and the concept of historical intervals to classify Korean films into the following: the Joseon films made during the colonial era, the liberation films made under the U.S. military government, the borderless film era, the South Korean films made during the divided period, and the transnational films made during the globalization era. This classification method bares the mark of a signification process that has been waged against an oppressive state, and of one that has resulted from the presence of institutional cinema regulations, including the censorship of films. While he is now labeled as a 'national' film director and maker of national films, Im and his films will become even more productive as his fame as nationalistic filmmaker begins to fade and his works join the ranks of other great suspended Korean films.

¹⁾ The London Times, October 19, 1897; Kim Jong-won, Chung Jung-heon, *The 100 Year History of Korean Film*, Hyunamsa Publishing Company, 2001, p.20; On June 23rd 1903, the Hwangsung Shinmun reported, " Motion pictures will be screened by the Dongdaemun Electric Company from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00p.m., except on Sundays. The beautiful natural sceneries of the Taehan Empire as well as those of Western countries will be introduced. The entrance fee is 10 copper jeon." *The 70 Year History of Korean Film Planning*, p.25

²⁾ Even back then, there were people who loved the motion pictures, whom by today's standards we could label as cinephiles. " Reader's Contribution – I have always wanted to see motion pictures. I recently had the opportunity to see some at the Dansungsa Theater. It was only recently

that motion pictures were introduced in Joseon. I couldn't help but feel refreshed as I watched these films", Maeil Shinbo, October 31, 1919; A magazine from that period, Beolkeongon conveys how these cinephiles felt as they watched these motion pictures, describing the festive atmosphere that surrounded the screening of the first film at Gwangmudae in Dongdaemun, Seoul. "Mr. Henry Collbran, who owns the Seoul Electric Company, screened the first ever motion pictures at the Gwangmudae, using rented equipment he had borrowed from the Mr. Martel who runs a hotel in the Seodaemun area. Whenever I think back to that time, I remember feeling like I was in another world. Attracted by the advertisement slogan, <Pictures are moving> <Pictures are moving> and the sounds of flutes and drums, I rushed to the theater and paid an entrance fee that cost as much as ten cigarettes. On the curtain were depicted the American and Joseon flags. A tightrope artist began doing his thing in front of the curtain. After the curtain was raised, some Joseon women performed a song and dance. Then all the lights were turned off..." *Beolkeongon*, December Issue, 1926, p.90; Lee Joong-Keo, "Korean Film History", *Understanding Korean Films*, Yeni, 1992, p.21

³⁾ An Seok-young, *Famous Film Directors: The Late Na Woon-kyu*: Kim Kap, *Chunsa Na Woon-kyu*, Jipmundang, 2001. p.441

⁴⁾ Choi Chang-ho, Hong Kang-seong, *Korean Film History: Na Woon-kyu and His Films during the Japanese Colonial Era*, Ilweolseokak, 2003, p.212

⁵⁾ Seo Kwang-jae, *Chokwang* Issue # 24, October 1937; requoted in Kim Gap, *Collection of the Works of Chunsa Na Woon-kyu*, p. 441

⁶⁾ Cho Hee-mun, *Na Woon-kyu and His films during the Japanese Colonial Era: Na Woon-kyu as seen through the eyes of North and South Korean academics*; Choi Chang-ho and Hong Kang-seong, *Korean Film History: Na Woon-kyu and His Films during the Japanese Colonial Era*, p.361

⁷⁾ Rob Wilson, "Korean Films, toward Globalization: Tracing Global/Regional roles, Why Does Im Kwon-taek Have a Different Opinion?", *Korean Style Blockbusters: America or Atlantis?*, p.258

⁸⁾ Philippe Azoury had the following to say about Im in <Liberation>: "it is very easy to perceive Im's own portrait in this fresco directly inspired by Jang Seung-ub's life.", *Liberation*, May 27th 2002, (quoted from Cine 21)

⁹⁾ Kwon Bodeurae, preface, *The origins of Korean Modern Novels*, Somyung, 2000, p.13

¹⁰⁾ For the obstacles and repression that Korean cinema has been subjected to, please see, Paul Willemen, "Detouring Through Korean

Cinema", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol.3, No.3, 2002, Routledge

¹¹⁾ Kim Soyoung, "Genre as Contact Zone". This paper was first published in the *Hong Kong Connection: Transnational Hong Kong Action Cinema*. The revised edition is about to be published as a chapter of the same name in Meaghan Morris (ed.) (Hong Kong University Press, forthcoming). The Korean version was included the Summertime Film Lecture prepared by the Korean Film Archive and in the compilation of the papers presented during the First International Academic Symposium on Korean Films, hosted by Yonsei University.

¹²⁾ Im speaks about his career as a member of Chung Chang-hwa's production team in <Im Kwon-taek speaks of Im Kwon-taek>: I was a prop man in 1957's <Palace of Ambition>, a member of the production team of 1958's <The Island of Disappointed Love>, of 1959's <Professor Flyboy's Problem> and <Before Love is Gone>, assistant director of 1960's <Sunny Field>, and the assistant director of <Horizon>, <Bonanza>, and <Jang Hie-bin>. P.35

¹³⁾ For more information about the potential productivity of delayed Korean films, please see "Delayed Modernity: Fetishism", which is an analysis of Kim Ki-young's film <Iodo>. The 1st edition of *Hunjeokdul*, Munhwa Kwahaksa, 2001